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The Effect of Task Repetition under Different Time Conditions on EFL Learners' Oral Performance and Grammatical Knowledge Gain

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Abstract: This quasi-experimental study aimed to investigate the effect of task repetition under four conditions on the three dimensions of oral production (accuracy, complexity and fluency) and grammatical knowledge gain of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). 40 young learners of English as a Foreign Language in four classes were randomly assigned into one of the following groups: repetition in three successive sessions during a week, repetition once a week over three weeks, repetition with one week interval in between over five weeks, and repetition with two weeks interval in between over seven weeks. A Grammatical Judgment Test (GJT) including the prepositions of movement as the target structure was designed to measure learners' grammatical knowledge both before and after the study. Also, tasks were developed for measuring oral performance of the participants. The findings indicated significant differences in the performance of the groups from pre-test to post-test in terms of accuracy (ratio of error-free clauses) and complexity (syntactic and lexical) dimensions of oral production as well as gains in grammatical knowledge; they however failed to show significant effects for fluency development across distinct time intervals. The paper discusses further findings and implications.

Keywords: Same-Task Repetition; Grammatical Knowledge Gain; Different Time Conditions; Accuracy; Complexity; Fluency.

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Introduction

Throughout most of the history of language teaching, the focus had mainly been on teaching grammar and written language until the need for meeting the changing needs of language learners emerged. By making attempts to make language teaching methods appropriate in contextualizing the language, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as a learner-centered communicative approach has received much attention over the last decades (Ellis, 2009). TBLT underscores using authentic language both in class and outside of it and values the role of interaction in the development of communicative competence. Learners learn better when they are actively involved in forming their knowledge through meaningful interaction, experience and problem solving. The term 'Task' has come to be used to refer to activities that learners carry out in the real world (more general) or to activities that are pedagogic in nature (narrower). Task is defined as an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective (Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2001). Tasks used for pedagogic purposes are of two kinds: unfocused and focused. Whereas unfocused tasks are unlikely to involve the use of linguistic forms, focused tasks involve using predetermined linguistic forms in a communicative context.

Several studies have made learners focus on form during the three stages of the TBLT cycle (Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996). Learners go through this cycle by carrying out a pre-task, main task and then some post task activities. Task repetition as a post-task strategy is essentially a kind of planning (Ellis, 2005, 2008) that refers to "repetition of the same or slightly altered task – whether the whole tasks, or parts of a task" (Bygate & Samuda, 2005, p. 43). The first performance familiarizes learners with the content of the main task, which affects their later performance. Accordingly, learners have more processing space available for formulating the language to perform the task in the second performance (Gass, Mackey, Alvarez-Torres & Fernández-García, 1999; Bygate, 2001; R. Ellis, 2003). During the second performance learners can focus more on the linguistic structure which leads to a better performance. Bygate and Samuda (2005) assert that "part of the work of conceptualization, formulation and articulation carried out on the first occasion is kept in the learners' memory store and can be reused on the second occasion" (p. 29). Thus, task repetition besides familiarizing learners with the content of the task helps them to use the previous linguistic forms again via memory retrieval. Accordingly, Date (2013), De Jong and Perfetti (2011), and Suzuki and DeKeyser (2013) highlighted the effectiveness of task repetition for automatization through the repetition of speakers' selection of words, morphemes, and

grammatical structures. Task repetition in this study means several performances of the same task by the same speakers. Calls have been made on investigating the role of task repetition in improving oral language performance in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity by several researchers. Skehan and Foster (2001) defined fluency as the ability to encounter real-time communication through a focus on meaning; complexity as a willingness to use more advanced and challenging language: such language may not be predictable and it also involves willingness to take risks, using uncontrolled language and possibly restructuring the language system; and accuracy as learners' ability to avoid error, having control in language and over more stable elements in the interlanguage system and avoiding challenging structures that might cause error. Repeating a task has been shown to positively change learners' task performance in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bygate, 1996, 2001; Gass, Mackey, Alvarez-Torres, & Fernandez-Garcia, 1999; Lynch & MacLean, 2000). Thus, giving the learners a task again may lead to gains in different dimensions of oral performance. A review of the literature illustrates the most evident and positive effect of task repetition is in fluency and complexity. Bygate (1996, 2001) found that when learners repeated a task they gained fluency and complexity. On the other hand, its effect on higher accuracy in production is not so obvious. He further reported no statistically significant effect on his general measure of accuracy.

Considering the widespread recommendations of language teaching scholars on the application of task and its repetition as the main part of teaching plans to improve the process and product of teaching and learning, this study aimed to investigate the effect of different time conditions – with no interval between tasks, repeated on the same week, and with one-week and two-week intervals - on complexity, accuracy and fluency of EFL learners' oral performance in an Iranian context, where there is little published research on the topic. In addition, the project examined-whether repeating a task led to grammatical knowledge gain.

Literature Review

Foreign and second language teaching has a long history and different methods and approaches have been devised throughout to teach language depending on how language has been viewed. In 1950's for example, language was regarded as a system consisting of discrete parts and rules that were to be taught explicitly in a decontextualised way. Later, it was argued that learning a second language like acquiring mother tongue goes through several stages; and comprehension is needed for meaningful and real use of language in

target situations. More recently, Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has come to be recognized as a communicative approach to language teaching attracting numerous language teachers and researchers. However, within the framework of TBLT, teaching methods teachers utilize in different classes different classroom activities in terms of types and amounts of interaction, goals of language learning and teaching, etc. Some tend to use language in the form of isolated sentences while others prefer to use language as a whole, such as using tasks as activities with special predetermined goals for meaningful use of language (Ellis, 2003).

Different scholars have proposed various definitions for task. According to Long (1985), by 'task' is meant everything people do and experience in different situations like everyday life, at work, at play, and in between. 'Tasks' are the things people will tell you they do if you ask them and they are not applied linguists. As Ellis (2003) clarified, 'task' is 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.

Two key sources offer good reasons for the need to use tasks in language classes. As Lynch and MacLean (2000) point out, the first source of justifications for Task-Based Learning is what we might term the ecological one: the belief that the best way to promote effective learning is by setting up classroom tasks that reflect, as far as possible, the real world tasks which learners perform, or will perform. The second source of evidence comes from Second Language Acquisition research: "those arguing for Task-based language, drawing on SLA research, have tended to focus on issues such as learnability, the order of acquisition of particular L2 structures, and the implications of the input, interaction and output hypotheses" (Lynch & MacLean, 2000, p. 222).

Task repetition as a kind of planning that gives learners the opportunity to decide better on what they are going to talk or write about, increases the quality of said utterances because of the available processing space. However, individuals seem to differ in their oral performance after engaging in repeating a task. Some tend to perform better in terms of fluency, accuracy or complexity while others' progress is not significant. By using Levelt's processing model, Bygate (1996) argued that choosing and using different tasks in task repetition can effect learners' oral processing positively. Fukuta's (2016) study on learners' attention orientation in second language production by repeating two tasks with different time intervals reported improved accuracy and lexical variety, but no significant change in complexity and fluency.

Language learners go through different stages in speech production. In this respect, Levelt (1989) has proposed three stages in his speech production model: conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. In his view, the first stage concerns selection of the related information to be expressed, ordering the selected information for expression, and keeping track of what has just been said; and its product is what he calls 'preverbal message'. Next, the formulator uses a lexical store and grammatical and phonological encoding to express the original message. The articulator then converts the phonetic plan to actual speech by connecting it to our physical articulation system. As he claims, each stage occurs autonomously, but each one supports the following one by providing resources. Accordingly, Bygate (2001), by applying this model to task repetition, argues that learners are primarily concerned with content generation when they are carrying out oral tasks. Therefore, once learners are familiar with the content after they have completed a task, they can focus more on the selection and monitoring of appropriate language (better quality of performance) (Bygate, 1999).

The remarkable features of task repetition have been highlighted by many experts. Ellis (2003) discusses the outcome of interlanguage restructuring and the increasing attentional resources available for focus on form. Likewise, Dekeyser (1998) describes advantages of repeated behavior (practice) in restructuring of declarative knowledge which leads to a type of knowledge that reduces working memory load.

Several studies have investigated the effect of task repetition on three aspects of language production- fluency, complexity and accuracy. These aspects seem to constitute learner's proficiency. Therefore, proficient speakers may perform tasks fluently and accurately by using complex language (Ellis, 2009). One of the earliest attempts to study task repetition was accomplished by Bygate (1996), in which participants' exact repetition of a task (i.e. watching a video cartoon and retelling it) and its effect on language production was measured. The repetition resulted in some improvement in fluency and accuracy.

An attempt was made by Gass, Mackey, Alvarez-Torres and Fernández-García (1999), who focused on the effects of task repetition on linguistic output of L2 learners of Spanish, to see whether repeating (both same and slightly altered) tasks brings in more sophisticated language use. Gass et al. (1999) concluded that task repetition had an effect on the overall proficiency and partial accuracy in the use of lexical complexity.

In another study, comparing 48 learners' performances through an interview and a narrative on two different conditions with an interval of 10-week, Bygate (2001) reached the

conclusion that there is a strong effect for task repetition in increasing fluency and complexity but not on accuracy. Sheppard's (2006) study with Japanese students that provided them with feedback on their first performance in addition to task repetition, revealed the transferability of effects of task repetition to other contexts. Hawkes (2012) focused on the effects of task repetition by having directed 13 14-year-old Japanese EFL learners' attention to form after the main task and reported boost in the number of form and pronunciation-focused corrections and concluded that students' attention to form through repeating a task was increased.

Researching the impact of learners repeating a monologue under time pressure on accuracy, complexity and fluency by using task repetition following the 4/3/2 technique twenty 10th-grade Vietnamese EFL learners' talking about their favorite movie, Thai and Boers (2015) reported positive effects on fluency. They concluded that in order to gain more accurate and complex performance learners should be provided with opportunities to modify their performance early in the task sequence. Investigating the effectiveness of task repetition as a focus on form strategy to promote the accurate use of German grammar structures involving 48 ninth-grade students studying German as a Foreign Language, Van de Guchte, Braaksma, Rijlaarsdam and Bimmel (2016) found a significant positive relationship between repetition of a similar task and the acquisition of grammatical structures, by providing students with corrective feedback at the during-task stage.

A growing body of literature has examined task repetition from different perspectives but they have failed to address the effects of the same task repetition under different time conditions employing young learners and whether task repetition under these time conditions lead to different amounts of grammatical knowledge gain. This investigation was therefore an attempt to bridge these gaps and the role played by the number of repetitions in repeating a task. The findings of this work are hoped to illustrate the effects of repeating a task for several predetermined times on EFL learners' oral performance and grammatical knowledge gain. It is believed that the outcomes brought forward through this project would be useful for language learners to improve their oral performance and knowledge of grammar by repeating the same task with different time intervals with the help of language teachers. This investigation would also contribute to the existing literature on TBLT by revealing further aspects of task manipulation as far as task repetition under different time conditions is concerned. More specifically, this study was an attempt to provide a better understanding of the aforementioned claims by probing the following questions:

1. Does task repetition under different time conditions (repetition in three successive sessions during a week, repetition once a week, and repetition with one-week and two-week intervals) affect task performance in terms of accuracy?
2. Does task repetition under different time conditions (repetition in three successive sessions during a week, repetition once a week, and repetition with one-week and two-week intervals) affect task performance in terms of complexity?
3. Does task repetition under different time conditions (repetition in three successive sessions during a week, repetition once a week, and repetition with one-week and two-week intervals) affect task performance in terms of fluency?
4. Does task repetition under different time conditions (repetition in three successive sessions during a week, repetition once a week, and repetition with one-week and two-week intervals) affect grammatical knowledge gain?

Methods

1. Participants

The study involved 40 English as a Foreign Language young learners aged 11 to 14 at two Language Institutes in Urmia (Iran) as participants. They were considered as pre-intermediate level learners according to the standards of the corresponding language centers. In order to have homogenized groups in terms of language proficiency, all the participants in this study were pre-tested with a Grammatical Judgment Test and a picture description task. The participants (20 female; 20 male) were native speakers of Turkish (Azeri) and Kurdish who had the experience of English language learning for about 3 years with no opportunity of living in an English-speaking country or being involved in real life interaction. Participants had 6 hours of English per week, 42 weeks per year. All participants were informed about the study and gave consent for their participation.

2. Instruments

The instructional material used in this study was *Family and Friends* series (book 3) by Naomi Simmons and Tamzin Thompson. Other materials used were a picture description task and a Grammatical Judgment Test (GJT) used as the pre-test for homogenizing participants; the same GJT and another picture description task were used as the post-test and treatment, respectively. The GJT consisted of 25 items, with 15 items including the prepositions of

movement as a target structure (8 grammatical, 7 ungrammatical) and 10 items with irrelevant structures (5 grammatical, 5 ungrammatical). The students were instructed to decide whether the sentences were grammatical on not, and in case they identified them as ungrammatical, they needed to write the relevant grammatical form under each item. The picture description task used for the pre-test with the focus on present continuous tense needed one of the students in the pair to make 5 sentences for the activities seen in the picture without mentioning their agents and the other students in the pair were expected to say the name of the person (people) involved in the activities. The other picture description task used in the rest of the study (the main phase) required one of the students in the pair to tell where they exactly were and the location they wanted to go in 3 sentences and the other member of the pair to give directions, utilizing prepositions of movement such as *across, into, out of, over, past* and *under* as the target grammar. The students changed their roles while performing both tasks. The tasks and the test were piloted and found appropriate in terms of the level and target structure elicitation.

3. Procedure

This study was of quasi-experimental nature, with the classes randomly assigned into one of the groups with repetition in three successive sessions, repetition once a week, repetition with one week and two-weeks interval in between time conditions aiming to investigate the effects of task repetition under four time conditions on the three dimensions of oral production (accuracy, complexity and fluency) and grammatical knowledge gain of learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). At the beginning of the term, all the groups were given the same pretests; a Grammatical Judgment Test which measured students' existing knowledge of the target grammar (based on the specified course book) and a picture description task (which focused on learners' oral performance with regard to its three dimensions), all included in the appendix.

The students in each experimental group were put into pairs according to the first letter of their first names and were taught the same grammatical structure (Prepositions of movement) using the same teaching method (Inductive teaching of grammar) by the same teacher. After performing the main task and repetition tasks (Appendix 2) in the planned time intervals, they took the Grammatical Judgment Test after the last repetition as a post-test (the same as the pre-test). It is worth mentioning that instructions on how to do the test and tasks was clearly explained to students in Persian and the errors made during the tasks were neither

corrected nor given feedback. All the experimental groups' performances were recorded for later analysis.

Different researchers have used various methods for measuring accuracy, complexity and fluency. The importance of using several measures for assessing each dimension of oral production in order to have more valid results has been highlighted by Ellis (2005, 2008). Below are the techniques used for measuring CAF in this study.

a. Accuracy measures:

• Error-free clauses

• Correct verb forms

b. Complexity measures:

• Syntactic complexity

• Lexical complexity

c. Fluency measures:

• Rate A (number of syllables produced per minute of speech)

• Rate B (number of meaningful syllables per minute of speech)

Results

1. Results for Normality

Prior to the conduction of statistical procedures for the research questions, the normality of data distribution was checked by means of one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Results*

		accuracy pre-M1	accuracy post-M1	accuracy pre-M2	accuracy post-M2	complexity pre-M1	complexity post-M1	complexity pre-M2	complexity post-M2	fluency pre-M1	fluency post-M1	fluency pre-M2	fluency post-M2	GJT Pretest	GJT posttest
N		40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
Normal Parameters[a]	Mean	64.75	77.42	84.75	88.15	13.10	10.60	4.14	4.45	168.57	144.94	148.32	136.62	5.15	18.07
	Std. Deviation	18.67	12.26	11.54	7.75	1.19	2.07	.42	.36	40.39	40.32	38.85	35.52	.92	2.01
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.225	.172	.185	.151	.175	.198	.132	.171	.070	.140	.065	.138	.290	.110
	Positive	.225	.088	.185	.063	.147	.198	.132	.171	.070	.140	.065	.138	.290	.098
	Negative	-.168	-.172	-.157	-.151	-.175	-.095	-.118	-.146	-.052	-.078	-.047	-.112	-.210	-.110
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.426	1.085	1.168	.952	1.104	1.255	.836	1.079	.443	.886	.410	.872	1.832	.697
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.343	.189	.131	.325	.175	.086	.487	.194	.989	.412	.996	.432	.243	.717

a. Test distribution is normal.

M1 = correction method 1, M2 = correction method 2

As results of Table 1 show, the obtained data from all measures are normally distributed ($p > .05$).

2. Results for Accuracy

The results of analysis for the identification of task repetition (TR) effect on linguistic accuracy are divided into two sections based on the scoring criteria. Firstly, the results are presented for the scoring based on both error-free clauses (M1) and correct verb forms (M2). The results of descriptive statistics are reported in Table 2.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics Results* for *Accuracy across Repetition Groups*

	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Accuracy pretest (M1)	three-sessions	67.0000	22.13594	10
	once a week	64.0000	20.65591	10
	one-week interval	64.0000	18.37873	10
	two-weeks interval	64.0000	15.77621	10
	Total	**64.7500**	**18.67227**	**40**
Accuracy posttest (M1)	three-sessions	81.2900	8.95786	10
	once a week	69.0100	17.31367	10
	one-week interval	79.4800	7.52755	10
	two-weeks interval	79.9200	10.39570	10
	Total	**77.4250**	**12.26278**	**40**
Accuracy pretest (M2)	three-sessions	85.0000	13.54006	10
	once a week	88.0000	10.32796	10
	one-week interval	83.0000	11.59502	10
	two-weeks interval	83.0000	11.59502	10
	Total	**84.7500**	**11.54423**	**40**
Accuracy posttest (M2)	three-sessions	89.9600	6.84563	10
	once a week	86.1800	9.19756	10
	one-week interval	89.0700	6.96356	10
	two-weeks interval	87.4100	8.41948	10
	Total	**88.1550**	**7.75099**	**40**

Descriptive statistics reveal similarity of means for all the groups. After the conduction of one-way ANOVAs for the pretest scores showing no-significant effects ($p > .05$), a repeated measures ANOVA was run to investigate the posttest differences across the experimental groups. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. *ANOVA Results for Accuracy Pretest*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
accuracy M1	Between Groups	67.500	3	22.500	.060	.981
	Within Groups	13530.000	36	375.833		
	Total	13597.500	39			
accuracy M2	Between Groups	167.500	3	55.833	.400	.754
	Within Groups	5030.000	36	139.722		
	Total	**5197.500**	**39**			

Table 4. *Repeated Measures ANOVA Results for Accuracy across Repetition Groups*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Accuracy M1	Intercept	404274.612	1	404274.612	1.4623	.000	.976
	time	3213.113	1	3213.113	13.644	.001	.275
	groups	630.693	3	210.231	.760	.524	.060
	Time*groups	398.793	3	132.931	.564	.642	.045
	Error	9954.635	36	276.518			
Accuracy M2	Intercept	597922.780	1	597922.780	5.4213	.000	.993
	time	231.880	1	231.880	2.517	.121	.065
	groups	63.854	3	21.285	.193	.901	.016
	Time*groups	189.155	3	63.052	.684	.567	.054
	Error	3970.965	36	110.305			

Based on the reported results of repeated measures ANOVA, using the ratio of error-free clauses, statistically non-significant effect for task repetition groups, F (3, 36) = .76, p = .52, time × group effect, F (3, 36) = .56, p = .64, on learners' linguistic accuracy is reported. There has been, however, a significant effect for time, F (1, 36) = 13.64, p = .001. Regarding the results for the second method of accuracy measurement, repeated measures ANOVA indicated a non-significant effect for time, F (1, 36) = 2.51, p = .12, for groups, F (3, 36) = .19, p = .90, and time × group, F (3, 36) = .68, p = .56. Post-hoc comparisons did not reveal any significant differences between different task repetition groups. Within-group comparisons using paired-samples t-test were conducted to note the time differences that occurred for the accuracy according to M1. Results indicated that the TR group with three-sessions interval reached a significant enhancement from pretest to posttest (p = .047), while the TR group with once a week interval did not make a significant change from pretest to posttest (p = .55). Additionally, both the TR groups with one-week interval (p = .03) and two-week interval (p = .04) made significant improvements from pretest to posttest. Figures 1 and 2 show the groups' performance according to accuracy scores.

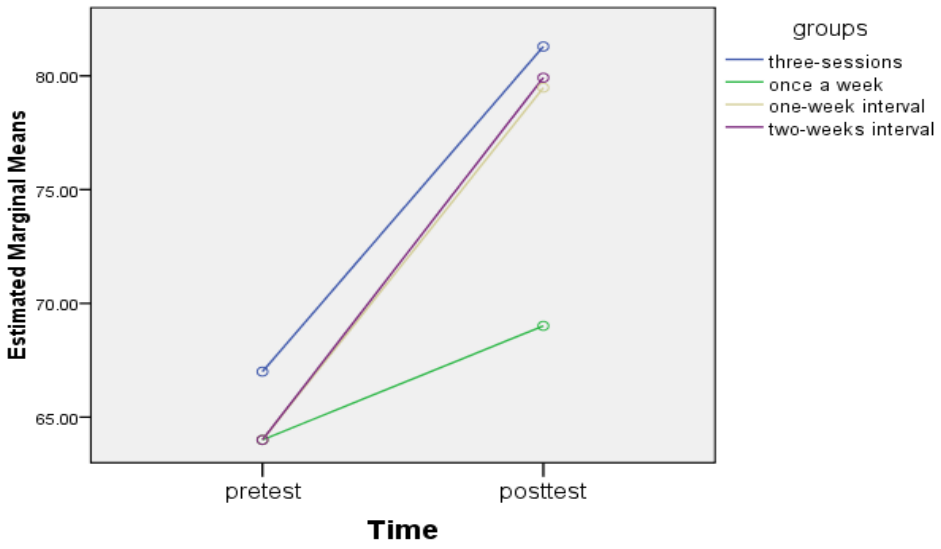

Figure 1. *Accuracy (M1) results across repetition groups*

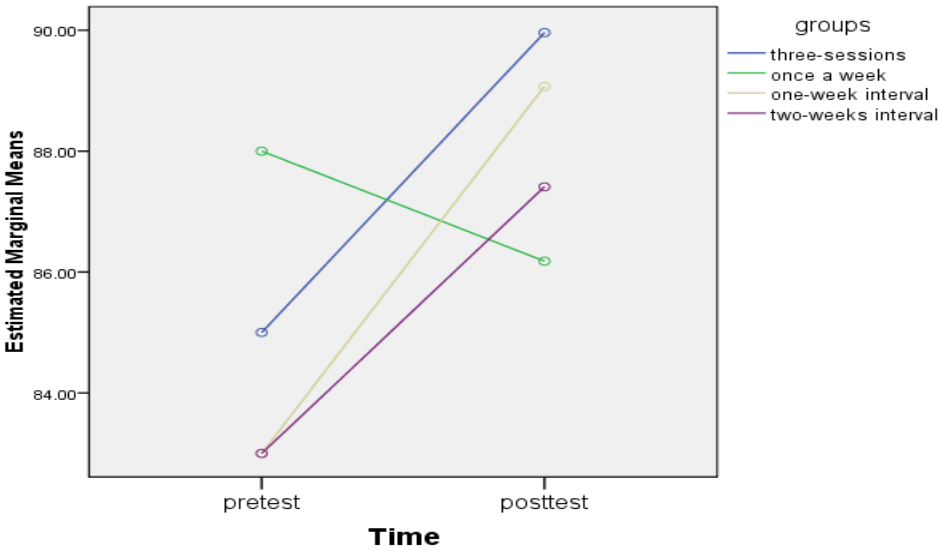

Figure 2. *Accuracy (M2) results across repetition groups*

3. Results for Complexity

Descriptive statistics for the groups' linguistic complexity according to the ratio of words per t-unit are reported in Table 5.

Descriptive statistics indicate that the higher syntactic complexity performance of the group belongs to three-session repetition (M = 13.10, SD = 2.02). And the lowest performance belongs to the group with two-week interval (M = 9.00, SD = .81). For the lexical complexity, the group with the three-sessions interval comparatively had a higher mean (M = 4.66, SD = .27). The results of one-way ANOVA for pretest scores showed non-significant differences ($p > .05$) which are presented in Table 6.

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics Results for Syntactic Complexity (M1) and Lexical Complexity (M2) across Repetition Groups*

	groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
complexity pretest (M1)	three-sessions	13.1000	1.28668	10
	once a week	13.1000	.73786	10
	one-week interval	13.7000	1.33749	10
	two-weeks interval	12.5000	1.17851	10
	Total	**13.1000**	**1.19400**	**40**
complexity posttest (M1)	three-sessions	13.1000	2.02485	10
	once a week	10.3000	1.56702	10
	one-week interval	10.0000	1.05409	10
	two-weeks interval	9.0000	.81650	10
	Total	**10.6000**	**2.07303**	**40**
complexity pretest (M2)	three-sessions	3.9800	.40497	10
	once a week	4.0800	.34254	10
	one-week interval	4.3400	.45265	10
	two-weeks interval	4.1800	.48488	10
	Total	**4.1450**	**.42964**	**40**
complexity posttest (M2)	three-sessions	4.6600	.27568	10
	once a week	4.5000	.41366	10
	one-week interval	4.3800	.22998	10
	two-weeks interval	4.2600	.42740	10
	Total	**4.4500**	**.36585**	**40**

Table 6. *ANOVA Results for Complexity Pretest Scores*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
complexity M1	Between Groups	7.200	3	2.400	1.785	.167
	Within Groups	48.400	36	1.344		
	Total	55.600	39			
complexity M2	Between Groups	.707	3	.236	1.307	.287
	Within Groups	6.492	36	.180		
	Total	**7.199**	**39**			

A repeated measures ANOVA was run to investigate the posttest differences across the experimental groups. The results are reported in Table 7.

The results of repeated measures ANOVA for syntactic complexity indicate statistically significant effects for groups, F (3, 36) = 9.15, p = .000, for time, F (1, 36) = 89.82, p = .000, and for time × groups interaction, F (3, 36) = 10.51, p = .000. In terms of lexical complexity, repeated measures ANOVA demonstrated a non-significant effect for groups, F (3, 36) = .44, p = .72, but a significant main effect for time, F (1, 36) = 12.86, p = .000, and for time × groups interaction, F (3, 36) = 3.16, p = .000. Results of Tukey post-hoc test for between group comparisons regarding syntactic complexity are depicted in Table 8.

Table 7. *Repeated Measures ANOVA Results for Syntactic Complexity (M1) and Lexical Complexity (M2) across Repetition Groups*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Syntactic complexity (M1)	Intercept	11233.800	1	11233.800	5.517E3	.000	.994
	time	125.000	1	125.000	89.820	.000	.714
	groups	55.900	3	18.633	9.151	.000	.433
	Time*groups	43.900	3	14.633	10.515	.000	.467
	Error	73.300	36	2.036			
Lexical complexity (M2)	Intercept	1477.480	1	1477.480	9.447E3	.000	.996
	time	1.861	1	1.861	12.866	.001	.263
	groups	.210	3	.070	.447	.721	.036
	Time*groups	1.373	3	.458	3.166	.036	.209
	Error	5.630	36	.156			

Table 8. *Tukey Test for Syntactic Complexity*

(I) groups	(J) groups	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
three-sessions	once a week	1.4000*	.45123	.019	.1847	2.6153
	one-week interval	1.2500*	.45123	.042	.0347	2.4653
	two-weeks interval	2.3500*	.45123	.000	1.1347	3.5653
once a week	three-sessions	-1.4000*	.45123	.019	-2.6153	-.1847
	one-week interval	-.1500	.45123	.987	-1.3653	1.0653
	two-weeks interval	.9500	.45123	.171	-.2653	2.1653
one-week interval	three-sessions	-1.2500*	.45123	.042	-2.4653	-.0347
	once a week	.1500	.45123	.987	-1.0653	1.3653
	two-weeks interval	1.1000	.45123	.088	-.1153	2.3153
two-weeks interval	three-sessions	-2.3500*	.45123	.000	-3.5653	-1.1347
	once a week	-.9500	.45123	.171	-2.1653	.2653
	one-week interval	-1.1000	.45123	.088	-2.3153	.1153

Based on observed means.
The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 1.018.
*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

According to Table 8, the group with three-session repetition outperformed the once a week (p = .01), one-week interval (p = .04) and two-week interval (p = .000) groups. The other groups, however, did not show any significant differences. Furthermore, a number of paired samples t-tests were conducted to examine within group differences in the groups. Results indicated that the once a week (p = .000), one-week interval (p = .000) and two-week interval (p = .000) groups could enhance their syntactic complexity from pretest to posttest. Figures 3 and 4 exhibit the variations in syntactic complexity and lexical complexity.

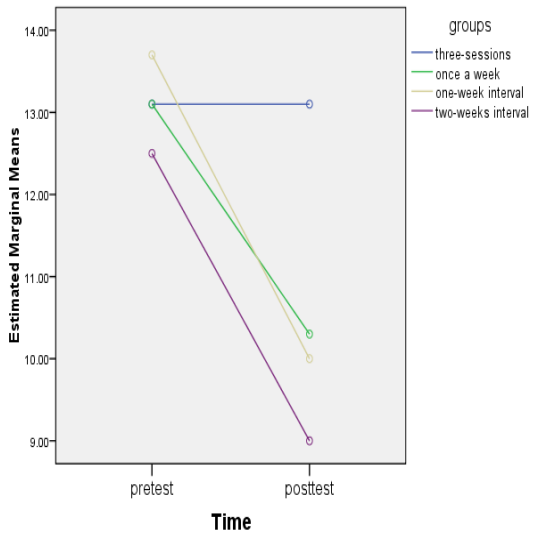

Figure 3. Syntactic complexity results across repetition groups

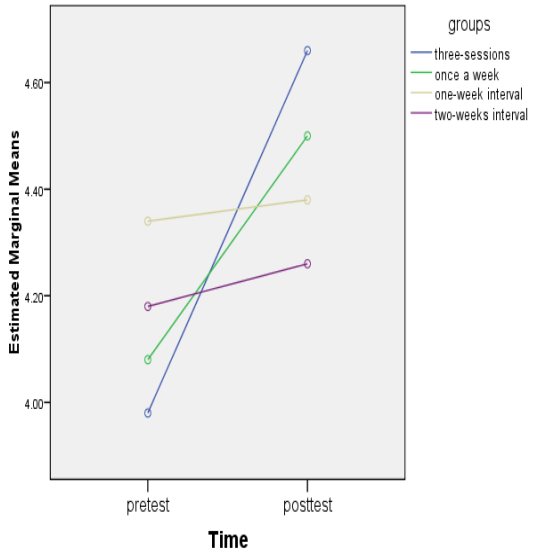

Figure 4. Lexical complexity results across repetition groups

4. Results for Fluency

The pretest comparisons across groups revealed significant differences (Table 9); thus, a repeated measures ANCOVA was run to explore the differences among the groups in both the pretest, posttest and the interaction effect.

Table 9. *ANOVA Results for Fluency Pretest Scores*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
fluency M1	Between Groups	18449.988	3	6149.996	4.901	.006
	Within Groups	45178.856	36	1254.968		
	Total	63628.844	39			
fluency M2	Between Groups	16716.675	3	5572.225	4.759	.007
	Within Groups	42154.100	36	1170.947		
	Total	58870.775	39			

Prior to the conduction of ANCOVA, Levene's test and normality checks were carried out and the assumptions met (see Table 10).

Table 10. *Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances*

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
fluency (M1)	1.717	3	36	.181
fluency (M2)	.97	3	36	.416

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + groups + pretest + groups * pretest Within Subjects Design: test

After ensuring the repeated measures ANCOVA assumptions were not violated, the analysis was performed. The results of descriptive statistics for the groups' fluency performance according to the number of syllables produced per minute of speech and number of meaningful syllables are reported in Table 11.

Table 11. *Descriptive Statistics Results for Fluency across Repetition Groups*

	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
fluency pretest	three-sessions	146.78	40.44	10
	once a week	147.60	25.48	10
	one-week interval	192.80	23.96	10
	two-weeks interval	187.10	46.47	10
	Total	**168.57**	**40.39**	**40**
fluency posttest	three-sessions	171.14	44.46	10
	once a week	133.08	30.44	10
	one-week interval	148.08	35.37	10
	two-weeks interval	127.46	40.29	10
	Total	**144.94**	**40.32**	**40**
fluency pretest	three-sessions	125.70	40.51	10
	once a week	130.20	26.77	10
	one-week interval	168.00	22.23	10
	two-weeks interval	169.40	42.79	10
	Total	**148.32**	**38.85**	**40**
fluency posttest	three-sessions	150.73	35.65	10
	once a week	136.12	39.58	10
	one-week interval	138.66	27.43	10
	two-weeks interval	121.00	37.15	10
	Total	**136.6275**	**35.52**	**40**

The obtained results were subjected to repeated-measures ANCOVA presented in Table 12.

Table 12. *Repeated Measures ANCOVA Results for Fluency (M1)*

	Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Fluency M1	Intercept	17577.341	1	17577.341	23.283	.000	.421
	Groups	2127.482	3	709.161	.939	.433	.081
	Pretest	9936.869	1	9936.869	13.163	.001	.291
	groups * pretest	1588.416	3	529.472	.701	.558	.062
	Error	24157.995	32	754.937			
Fluency M2	Intercept	21754.767	1	21754.767	37.942	.000	.542
	Groups	3599.051	3	1199.684	2.092	.121	.164
	Pretest	7113.461	1	7113.461	12.407	.001	.279
	groups * pretest	3598.164	3	1199.388	2.092	.121	.164
	Error	18347.580	32	573.362			

The results of ANCOVA for M1 indicate statistically significant effects for pretest, F (1, 32) = 13.16, p = 0.001, but non-significant effects for groups on the post-test, F (3, 32) = .93, p = .43, and a non-significant interaction between them, F (3, 32) = .70, p = 0.55. Results of the above table also indicate small effect sizes indicating the minor prediction of the repetition types of the variations in the dependent variable (fluency). The results of ANCOVA for M2 indicate statistically significant effects for pretest, F (1, 32) = 12.40, p = 0.001, but non-significant effects for groups on the post-test, F (3, 32) = 2.09, p = .12, and a non-significant interaction between them, F (3, 32) = 2.09, p = 0.12. Results of the above table also indicate small effect sizes indicating the minor prediction of the repetition types of the variations in the dependent variable (fluency). Figures 5 and 6 show the variations in fluency in both tests.

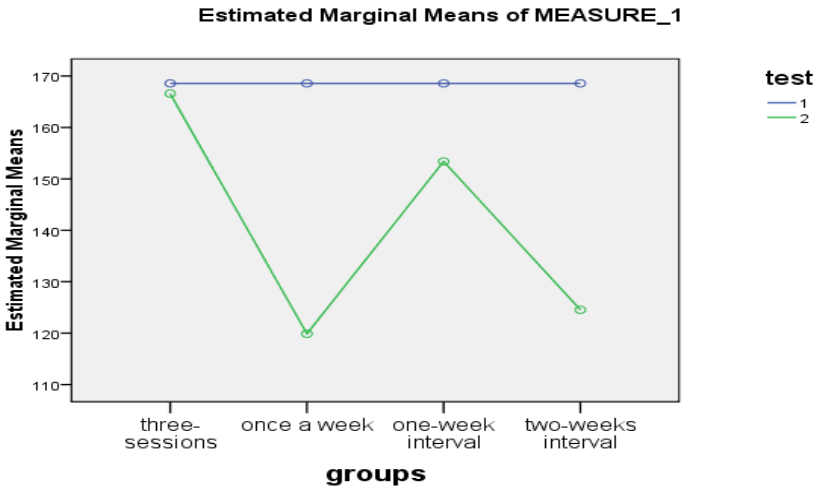

Figure 5. *Fluency (M1) results across repetition groups*

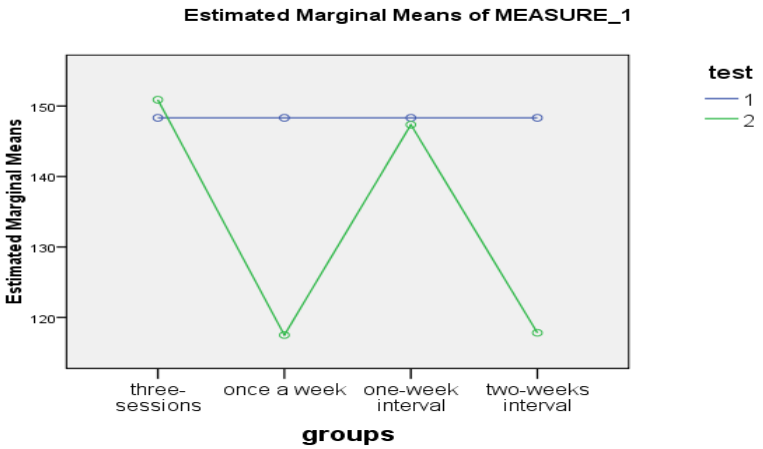

Figure 6. *Fluency (M2) results across repetition groups*

In sum, the results of ANCOVA with both scoring criteria failed to show any significant differences among the repetition groups regarding distinct time intervals. In other words, task repetition did not bring about any improvement in participants' L2 fluency.

5. Results for GJT

A repeated measures ANOVA was carried out to investigate the effect of different TR conditions on grammatical knowledge. The results of descriptive statistics for the experimental groups' grammatical knowledge according to their performance of grammaticality judgment pretest and posttest are reported in Table 13.

Table 13. *Descriptive Statistics Results for Grammatical Knowledge across Repetition Groups*

	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
GJT (pretest)	three-sessions	5.1000	1.19722	10
	once a week	5.2000	.91894	10
	one-week interval	5.1000	.73786	10
	two-weeks interval	5.2000	.91894	10
	Total	**5.1500**	**.92126**	**40**
GJT (posttest)	three-sessions	19.4000	1.64655	10
	once a week	18.0000	1.76383	10
	one-week interval	17.8000	2.04396	10
	two-weeks interval	17.1000	2.13177	10
	Total	**18.0750**	**2.01771**	**40**

Descriptive statistics display a similar grammatical knowledge development by all groups. A one-way ANOVA was run to investigate the pretest and posttest differences across the experimental groups. The results for pretest are reported in Table 14.

Table 14. *ANOVA Results for GJT Pretest Performance across Repetition Groups*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.100	3	.033	.036	.991
Within Groups	33.000	36	.917		
Total	33.100	39			

The results of ANOVA indicate statistically non-significant effects for pretest scores, F(3, 39) = .03, p = .99. After ensuring the non-significant pretest scores among the groups, a one-way ANOVA was carried out for the posttest scores, as shown in Table 15.

Table 15. *ANOVA Results for GJT Posttest Performance across Repetition Groups*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	27.875	3	9.292	2.555	.071
Within Groups	130.900	36	3.636		
Total	158.775	39			

As Table 15 indicates, the repetition groups' GJT performance on the posttest was similar to each other with no statistically significant difference among them, F(3, 39) = 2.55, p = .07.

Within-group comparisons using paired samples t-tests showed that all TR groups improved their grammatical knowledge from pretest to posttest (p = .000). Results are better exhibited in Figure 7.

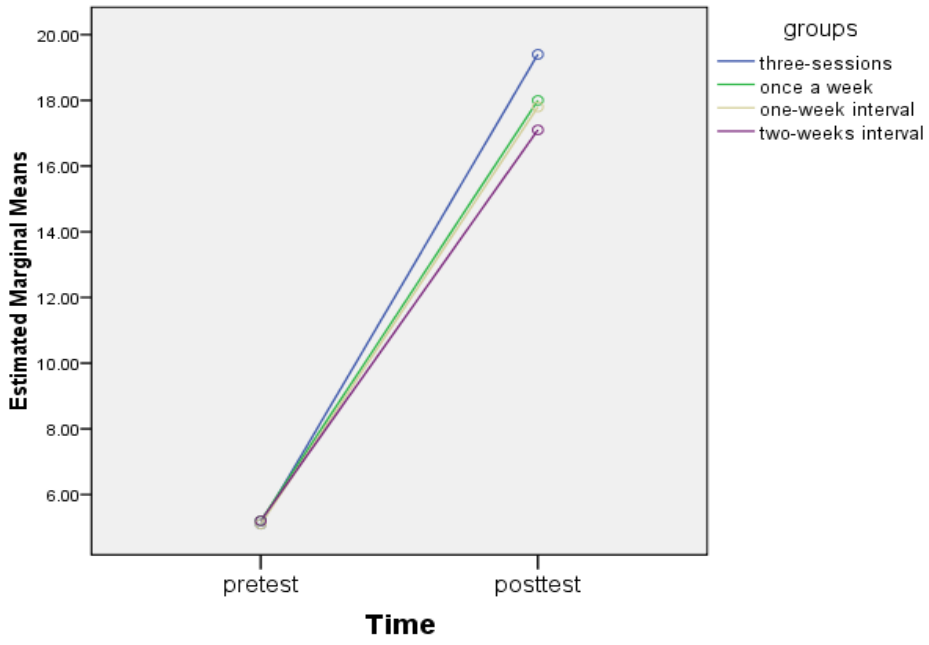

Figure 7. *GJT results across repetition groups*

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the effects of task repetition under different time conditions on the accuracy, complexity and fluency dimensions of oral L2 production. Furthermore, the impact of task repetition on the grammatical knowledge gain was explored. The tasks were repeated at different time intervals as follows: repetition in three consecutive sessions during a week, repetition once a week, repetition with one-week interval and lastly repetition with two-week intervals in between.

In Skehan's (1998) along with Skehan and Foster's (2001) account of L2 performance, although fluency is considered to be focused on meaning by using a memory-based system, accuracy and complexity would stem from a rule-based system having the focus on form that can be gained through controlling (using more stable forms in the interlanguage system) or restructuring (testing of hypothesis through using cutting-edge language) respectively. This view will be drawn on while discussing findings related to complexity, accuracy and fluency.

As for the first research question, 'Does task repetition under different time conditions affect task performance in terms of accuracy?' results on performance analysis of groups' linguistic accuracy according to the ratio of error free clauses and use of correct verb forms showed non-significant effects for task repetition in all four groups. There has been a significant effect for time regarding the results for the first method of accuracy measurement while a non-significant effect for time has been indicated using the second method. One possible explanation for this increase in accuracy, using the ratio of clauses without error, from pretest to posttest has to do with the notion of the task repetition in helping learners to have more control over the language, which results in more accurate use of the language. Additionally, the task repetition groups with one-week, two-week interval and the group having performed the task in three-successive sessions reached a significant enhancement from pretest to posttest while the once a week TR group did not make a significant change. In this case, carrying out the same task for several times can make learners become disinterested in the task given to them. Thus, task's novelty may have ended and learners' performance in terms of accuracy is less predictable and it cannot be generalized to other contexts.

While significant effects were observed for the second research question, 'Does task repetition under different time conditions affect task performance in terms of complexity?' statistically significant effects for groups, for time, and for time × groups interaction were found in the case of syntactic complexity. Although the group with three-session repetition outperformed the once a week, one-week interval and two-week interval groups, the groups

could not improve their syntactic complexity from pretest to posttest. Statistically non-significant effects on the task repetition groups' lexical complexity are shown, whereas the effects are significant for time and for time × groups interaction. In fact, being familiar with the content appears to have positive effects on the lexical complexity in this investigation from pretest to posttest. This enhancement may be due to the structured use of particular prepositions to show movement repeatedly.

These results provide evidence for the trade-off effects and lends support to the explorations that found trade-offs among different dimensions of oral production, especially between accuracy and complexity. In fact, more improvement in lexical complexity due to task repetition resulted in less improvement in both measures of accuracy. It is possible to say that students used more complex language at the expense of accuracy. In other words, they utilized cutting-edge language.

Considering the third research question, 'Does task repetition under different time conditions affect task performance in terms of fluency?', fluency performance of the groups according to the first and second method of analysis, respectively number of syllables produced per minute of speech and the number of meaningful syllables per minute of speech, indicated non-significant effects both for groups and for the interaction between groups, whereas the effects for the pretest were significant. Indeed, task repetition did not result in any enhancement in L2 fluency of the learners. It is argued that asking students to repeat a task orally confronted them with a heavy cognitive load, which resulted in less attention to the fluency dimension of oral performance. Since learners did not have the grammatical structure of prepositions of movement in their long-term memory before conducting this study, retrieval and application of the recently learnt structure was difficult and it interfered with the learners' fluent performance.

The last research question, 'Does task repetition under different time conditions (repetition in three successive sessions during a week, repetition once a week, and repetition with one-week and two-week intervals) affect grammatical knowledge gain?', was meant to identify potential differences across the experimental groups in terms of grammatical knowledge development. The findings did not reveal any significant effects for task repetition among groups; however, there was a significant effect for time. As within-group comparisons show, all the groups in this study improved their knowledge of grammar from pretest to posttest. Since learners took timed grammatical judgment test, the assumption is that their gains in grammar were revealed better for using implicit rather than explicit knowledge of

grammar because of time pressure. However, given that learners generally tend to guess when feeling uncertain about their judgments, all the repetition groups showed considerable improvements in the two administrations of the same test.

In this study, the first measure of accuracy, syntactic and lexical complexity showed remarkable effects for task repetition from pre-test to post-test, whereas the second measure of accuracy and fluency were not affected significantly. These findings appear to be well supported by Skehan's limited-resource model. According to this model, because of having limited attentional capacity language learners cannot focus on all dimensions of oral performance such as accuracy, complexity and fluency at a time.

Even though the results reported in this study differ slightly from those of Bygate (2001, 1996), Lynch and MacLean (2000) in terms of showing enhancements in participants' fluency dimension of oral performance, they are consistent with those of Gass et al. (1999) in indicating increase in complexity and accuracy.

Findings of this study also give credence to Ellis and Yuan's (2005) and Manchon's (2014) arguments with regard to the distinct nature of oral and written performance. In opposition to written language studies (Nitta & Baba, 2014; van de Guchte, Braaksma, Rijlaarsdam & Bimmel, 2016) that reported positive effects of task repetition on both accuracy and fluency, in this study task repetition fostered the accuracy, linguistic awareness and partial complexity (i.e., only lexical complexity not syntactic complexity). According to both Ellis and Yuan (2005) and Manchon (2014), in contrast to writing, speech takes place in real time and thus does not provide the speaker with more time to attend to formulation, execution, and monitoring and produce a more complex, fluent and more accurate oral performance. Since advancing both complexity and accuracy of performance is not an easy target, this result is noteworthy and has significant implications for teaching practice.

Conclusions and Classroom Implications

The findings validate the usefulness of repetition of the same task with different time intervals in increasing syntactic complexity of the group having repeated the same task for three successive sessions. Moreover, further evidence showing improvements in accuracy, using the ratio of error-free clauses, of all groups except the group with once a week repetition is provided. The importance of enhancements in complexity and grammatical knowledge from pre-test to post-test is highlighted by the findings. The results do not confirm any significant effects on learners' oral production in terms of fluency. In contrast to some of

the previous studies, this investigation was carried out in real classrooms setting which is a remarkable feature of the present study. A number of potential limitations influencing the obtained results need to be taken into account. To begin with, the small size of the sample may have affected the results noticeably. In addition, the tasks used for conducting this project were both picture description tasks, so the results cannot be generalized to other task types. Interpreting the findings of this work considering the context and limitations of the study might serve as a base for future research.

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Appendix

In the Name of Allah

Student's Name: ……. Allocated time: 20 Minutes

❖ لطفا جملات زیر را بخوانید و با نوشتن (G) یا (UG) در مقابل آنها ؛**صحیح (G)** یا **نادرست (UG)** بودن آنها **از لحاظ گرامری** را مشخص کنید.

- برای جملاتی که از لحاظ گرامری نادرست می باشند، لطفا **شکل صحیح** قسمت نادرست را بنویسید.

- مثال:

*That book are blue.

این جمله از لحاظ گرامری نادرست است، بنابرین مقابل آن **(UG)**نوشته، وشکل صحیح آن را به این صورت می نویسیم.

That book ~~are~~**is** blue. **UG**

1. George is climbing over a wall.
2. The birds are flying in the mountain.
3. Would you like to listen to Pop music? -No, thanks! It's terrible.
4. Four man are next to the bookstore.
5. Computer stores are boring. I always walk over them.
6. The sandwiches are delicious.
7. Paulo and Anna can swim across the river.
8. I always go out of clothes stores and pet stores because they are my favorite stores.
9. Please send your letter to we.

10. There is some milk in the kitchen.

11. They’re running into a music store to buy a CD.

12. The woman says to the taxi driver, “Stop, my house is over there.” and she gets from the taxi.

13. Don’t jump of the sea! It’s dangerous.

14. Is his ball under the seesaw?

15. Maria doesn’t has a brother or a sister.

16. I love Italian food. Can you cook pastas for me?

17. Why are you going out of the library? -Because it’s too noisy.

18. The air plane is flying over that bridge.

19. How many oil is there in the bottle?

20. I can’t find my eraser. –It’s under your chair.

21. A policeman is helping the blind man go over the street.

22. It is raining. Let’s go on that big tree.

23. Be careful when you go downstairs.

24. What are you talking with? - I’m talking with my friend Jack.

25. Walk past the bank, and then go to the cinema.

Best Wishes


Sam and Nancy
1
Peter, Tony and Michael
2
Angel
5
Stephanie and Joey
3
Ricky
4
Wendy and Carol
6
8
Albert
7
Zoe


BANK
SCHOOL
SuperMarket
PARK