The Impact of Readers Theatre on the Development of Preintermediate Iranian EFL Learners' Oral Proficiency

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Abstract

The significant effect of employing Readers Theater (RT) in reading comprehension, fluency, and motivation of English language students has already been established. However, this study was an attempt to investigate the effect of RT on the oral proficiency of Iranian learners of English as a foreign language. From among the learners studying English at a language school in Isfahan, Iran, a sample of 90 female intermediate EFL learners were asked to participate in this study. Having taken theQuick Placement Test tohelp the researchers make sure they were all homogeneous regarding their level of proficiency in English, 75 learners were chosen. Afterwards, an interview, which served as the pretest of the study, was run as the homogenizing test of oral ability and 60 homogenous preintermediate learners were ultimately selected as the subjects of the study. They were then assigned toeither of the two groups of control and experimental. During the treatment, the learners in the experimental group (EG) were exposed to RT, but the control group learners (CG)attended their regular classes. To gauge the oral proficiency development of the subjects, an interview was administeredat the end of the experiment. The results of data analysis indicated improvements of oralfluency and complexity because of the learners' exposure to the treatment. The results may provide further impetus for teachers to make attempts at extending the students' active knowledge for real time communication as well as providing language which is both more complex and fluent.
*Keywords***: Readers Theater, Oral proficiency, Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency**

1. Introduction

Speaking is the most common and important means of communication among human beings. The key to effective communication is speaking clearly, effectively, and eloquently, as well as using effective control of the volume, clarity, and distinctness of a voice. Speaking is linked to success in life, and thus it occupies an important position both individually and socially (Ulas, 2008).

When the students have got opportunities to speak and read a text before the audience, their overall speaking and reading fluency can be improved (Kozub, 2000). One of the greatest aids to such fluency

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development is the rehearsal of the readers' theatre text. Each day students are given time in class to rehearse their scripts and get ready to produce their performance. By reading and rereading the texts, they increase their chances of becoming fluent readers (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 1998). Keehn, Harmon, and Shoho, (2008) also state that readers theatre can promote fluency development because the teacher offers the modeling of proper articulation needed for such development.

Due to their influence on fluency development, readers theatre and other forms of drama should be methods considered by all teachers. Readers theatre is amethod which can be incorporated into the classroom relatively easily and cheaply. It does not require props, costumes, the scenery, orfurniture like other forms of theatre production. The actors also remain in the same place throughout the performance so there is not a need to plan the movement of the actors on the stage. All rehearsal time is dedicated to making sure that the script is read with the proper expression, intonation, and at the proper rate so the story is told effectively.

The aim of this research is to outline the major findings of the studies that have so far addressed Readers Theater and to report on a study into the potential transfer of benefits of repeated reading of the same story to the oral production of EFL learners. The investigation of the role of Readers Theater in the course of L2 speech development continues to be revealing for the better understanding of a balance in production among the many aspects of L2 speech production. That is, manipulating participants' attention and performance conditions so that learners practice all dimensions of speech production lead to a shift of focus between meaning and form.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Task Repetition
The positive effects of task repetition on oral task performance have plausible

explanations in the psycholinguistics of speech processing. Most of the planning studies have adopted Levelt's (1989) speech production model as the theoretical anchor and a psycholinguistic framework for their investigation. Levelt regards speakers as intricate data processors who have the ability to translate intentions, thoughts and feelings into articulated speech. In Levelt's speech production model, the whole process of producing speech is accomplished in three overlapping stages: (a) conceptualisation, during which intentions and relevant information to be conveyed are selected and prepared in the form of what Levelt dubs the preverbal message; (b) formulation, during which the preverbal message, which is propositional and conceptual in nature, is transformed into linguistic structures; and (c) articulation, during which the linguistic structure translates into actual speech. Performing a task, which is by its very nature meaning-focused and outcomeoriented, induces task performers to deal with what they want to say first, that is, conceptualization), (Skehan, 1998, 2007, 2009a). As Bygate (1996) stated during the initial task performance the task involver is mainly engaged inprocessing the preverbal message, and therefore, little attentional capacity is dedicated tolexico-grammatical search which normally occurs during the formulation stage.

Similarly, Skehan's (1998) limited-resource model, assumed that if a task demands a great amount of attention in terms of its content, then attention to language form is diminished and this is made manifest in, say, reduced performance scores all around, or a trade-off between different aspects of performance.

2.2. Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency (CAF)
Most studies on L2 speech production agree that mastering a foreign language involves speaking it with complexity, fluency and accuracy (Bygate, 2001; D'Ely, 2004, 2006; Fortkamp, 2000; Skehan, 1996, 1998, to

mention but a few). Studies on task effects on speech production show that there are trade-off effects among these three competing goals of oral production, especially between complexity and accuracy (Bygate, 2001; D'Ely, 2004, 2006; Fortkamp, 2000; Skehan, 1996, 1998). These two dimensions of oral production are closely linked to controlled processes and conceptualization of messages (Levelt, 1989) or the rule-based system in Skehan's (1998) account of L2 production.

Fluency - conceptualized as the ability to sustain real-time communication through a focus on meaning; complexity - a willingness to use more challenging language, reflecting hypothesis testing and possibly restructuring of the language system; and accuracy - learners' orientation towards conservatism and control over more stable elements in the interlanguage system (Skehan & Foster, 2001). Because people have a limited-capacity cognitive system (Ashcraft, 1989), attention to one aspect of oral performance may mean that there is not enough attentional resources to be devoted to other aspects (Skehan, 1998).

For trade-off hypothesis to have substance, Skehan (2009a, p. 511) argues, "more needs to be said about the precise ways in which the performance areas come into competition, and what influences are there which mediate this competition." Thus, there is still a need for more research in this area.

2.3. Studies on RT

A growing body of research underscores the viability of Readers Theater as an instructional device for promoting overall reading growth. Martinez, Roser, and Strecker (1999) conducted an experimental study of Readers Theater with second graders and found that students who participated in nine weeks of Readers Theater made significant gains in both oral reading fluency and reading level when compared with their peers. Millin and Rinehardt (1999) conducted studies of Readers Theater with elementary students and documented its benefits on students'

oral reading ability, comprehension, and attitude toward reading. Keehn (2003) replicated those findings in a study of Readers' Theater students in second grade. Roser and colleagues (2003) investigated Readers' Theater among fourth-grade students learning English as a second language.

They found that students made measurable gains in both rate and overall reading level. Thus, research has shown Readers Theater to be a powerful intervention to promote fluency development in the grades one through four. Moreover, Readers Theater appears to promote overall growth in reading level, especially among struggling readers.

Ng and Boucher-Yip (2012), in an attempt to elicit the students' responses, asked the students to write a one-page reflective journal immediately after the RT performance to gain insights about their students' learning experiences with RT. To prevent any inbuilt attitudes on the use of drama in language learning, they instructed their students to comment freely on the activity. They were given the option of writing their comments either in Japanese or English. During the RT activity, the instructors themselves also jotted down notes and made detailed observations of the students' learning behaviors to triangulate the data from the students' journal entries.

Based on the qualitative data from the students' reflective journal entries and their notes on the students' learning behaviours, they edited, segmented, and summarized the data, then organized and assemble it. They then organized the feedback and comments into two categories which are students' response to RT as a language learning experience, and as a way to improve their oral English. The majority of students found RT quite helpful in terms of fluency, pronunciation, motivation, confidence, and communication. Findings from the teachers' reflective journal also revealed several positive impressions of using RT in the Japanese EFL classroom:

(a) RT seemed easy, fun and non-threatening to students; (b) RT provided the students with a platform for interaction with each other; (c) The students' self-consciousness in speaking English was reduced because of the theatrical elements in RT; (d) Constant learning reinforcement disguised in rehearsal activity helped improve the students' pronunciation; (e) RT provided an immediate motivation to master oral English well since the students had limited time to put on a show; (f) The students gained confidence in their spoken English when the final product was displayed before an appreciative classroom audience.

The effect of using the instructional strategy to help the reading fluency and oral proficiency of EFL students is lacking in research. With the growing population of EFL students in schools throughout the country, there is a demand for quality speaking strategies to meet the needs of EFL students. EFL students may miss opportunities to make connections with the text in order to gain meaning. All in all, although there have been some empirical studies aimed at investigating the effects of Readers Theater on language learners' oral performance, the results are far from conclusive. Hence, the present study is founded on the assumption that L2 learners need to be monitored and to be given feedback in order to manifest a better performance in expressing their thoughts and ideas.

Research Question

In line with the above sections, the present study was an attempt to provide answer to the following question:

To what extent, does Readers Theater (RT) affect preintermediate Iranian EFL learners' oral proficiency?

3. Method

The paradigm of this study was a quantitative one and it was based on quasi-experimental research using pretest and posttestdesign. In this research, it was desirable to investigate the influence of Readers Theater on the oral production of Iranian EFL learners.

This research was conducted in 2014, summer semester of a language institute in Isfahan, Iran. Each semester consists of 21 sessions and each session was 90 minutes.

3.1. Subjects

The students all were female at preintermediate level whose age ranged from 10 to 15, studying English as a foreign language. This study has used non-probabilistic type of sampling:90 available female preintermediate EFL learners were selected to take part in this study. Before launching the study, in order to make sure that the sample was homogenous and all the subjects were in the same level of proficiency, they were given the Quick Oxford Placement Test (QPT). As a result, 75 learners were chosen as homogenous learners within the selected sample. To investigate theirspeaking ability, an oral interviewwas devised to confirm the homogeneity of subjects in terms of oral proficiency level. By so doing, 60 homogeneous preintermediate learners were ultimately selected as the subjectsof the study. All the subjects had at least two school years of experience in learning English. The homogeneous subjects wererandomly divided into two groups, 30 students in the control group and 30 in the experimental group.

3.2. Instruments and Materials

3.2.1. Quick Oxford Placement Test (QPT)

All the subjectssat for the QPT (Version 2, 2001)to help the researcher ensure that the groups had equivalent English proficiency at the outset of the study.

The test consisted of two parts; Part One (Questions 1-40) was taken by all candidates, and Part Two (Questions 41-60) was only for higher ability learners. The candidates' scores were found to range from 24 to 29 in the first part. As a result, they fell under the heading of lower-

intermediate level in the evaluation rubric which has considered 24-30 as lower-intermediate level. The questions in the test were in the multiple-choice format and cloze test, and it took approximately 30 minutes to administer.

3.2.2. Pretest Oral Interview

Before the experiment commenced, to make sure that the two groups were not significantly different in terms of their speaking ability, their teacher had administered a pretest interview. The interview was a researcher-made one and consisted of ten questions of high frequency in everyday conversations, on topics such as family, free time, hobbies, field of study, etc. The researcher asked two university professors to judge the validity of the test, and it was approved by both of them. Inter-rater reliability coefficients were obtained on all categories identified for analysis by two raters working independently. The analysis of the recorded audios was carried out by one of the researchers and a research assistant. Inter-rater reliability was above 88% on all measures.

3.2.3. Posttest Oral Interview

After conducting the treatment, subjects in both experimental and control groups took a posttest interview which consisted of a different set of questions, making it almost impossible for the subjects to use their prior knowledge from the pretest to answer the questions. The interviews were transcribed and then rated based on the measures chosen for complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The inter-rater reliability of the test was calculated via Pearson product-moment correlation formula. It turned out to be .83, .76, and .81 for each component of CAF respectively, which were considered satisfactory.

3.2.4. Materials

To design the lessons for this study, a number of activities suggested by different researchers for the teaching of communication strategies (e.g., Dornyei, 1995; Dornyei & Thurrell, 1991; Willems, 1987) or of English as a foreign/second language (e.g., Doff, 1990; Harmer, 1991) were used.

The first principle was to help the students to learn to work cooperatively; therefore, most of the activities had to be accomplished by group rather than individuals since students must realize that all readers are responsible for producing a polished and successful RT presentation (Walker, 1996).

During the treatment phase of the study, subjects in both groups separately attended 10 sessions of instruction in which they were involved in communication in English. As for the subjects in the control group, no special material was designed for handling the class and the teacher went through the normal routine procedure of teaching the materials available for the course in the institute. The materials consisted of tasks and activities via listening, speaking, reading, and writing, each of which was immediately followed by activities to foster discussions to the extent possible in order to maintain maximum chances for communication.

In the experimental group, however, the main part of the treatment was conducted while teaching stories via Readers Theater. This was done by working on seven different units, which were all well-designed in terms of objectives, materials, and tasks.

3.3. *Data Collection Procedure*

The learners in the experimental group were exposed to Readers Theater as the treatment, whereas the learners in the control group attended their regular classes without any form of RT.

The researcher, in collaboration with the classroom teacher, selected seven short stories from the book to be served as Readers Theater's scripts. These short dialogues were designed based upon student interest, suitability for Readers Theater format.

Each story was spread across two lessons and had a receptive and a

productive stage. In the first lesson (receptive stage), children listened to the story and followed it in their Student Books; As an alternative, the teacher read the short story, using expression, as students followed along. Occasionally she provided instructional support for new vocabulary and for understanding the different characters. In the second lesson (productive stage), the children recalled the story, listened to it again, pretended to be the people who were involved in it by reading their character's line, and gave their final performance.

Teaching by Readers Theater was done according to the following procedures, based on the methodological theory of English language teaching suggested by Doff (1990) and Harmer (1991):

• *Presentation stage:* Students were introduced with clear instruction about the technique they were going to learn. The recording was played and paused after each dialogue for the students to repeat. The teacher asked comprehension questions to make sure they understood the story. They might be asked to mime the actions as they spoke (there were suggested actions in the lesson notes). Furthermore, the teacher allowed the students to make suggestions and demonstrate the actions.

• *Practice stage:* Students were divided in to groups so that there was one child to play each character. Each child said the lines of his / her assigned character. During this process, students played different roles and read out aloud their character's line. This, in turn, allowed students to consider different character perspectives and to interpret the text from a new stance. The teacher circulated through the room and gave feedback to students as they read. Indeed, the teacher had the role of a facilitator, who coached for expressive reading, modeled phrasing and intonation and kept students on task. Moreover, the teacher might encourage them to perform actions as they speak.

• *Production Stage:* In this stage, the students were required to manage the task by themselves without any help from the teacher. At the end of the exercise, the teacher invited some of the groups to perform their story at the front of the class.

Assuring that the groups were similar regarding their speaking ability, the teacher went through the normal routine procedure of teaching the materials available for the course in teacher's book to teach to both groups. In experimental group, however, techniques of Readers Theater were adopted to teach the stories.

Having completed the treatment phase of the study, the researcher set out to gauge the learners' oral language development in question. Subjects in both experimental and control groups took a posttest interview which consisted of a different set of questions. The interviews were recorded and all the recordings were then transcribed and coded by a trained rater and the researcher, using the measures described above. Inter-rater reliability was determined by looking at the percentage of agreement between the raters.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure
Measurement of CAF
Currently, there are various measures available to assess the CAF triad (Ellis, 2005, 2008, 2009a).In the present study, in choosing the measures for assessing the CAF triad, the following guiding principle was taken into consideration:

To reach more comparable results, it is advisable to use the same measures used in the previously conducted planning research (Ellis, 2005).

• **Complexity:** Syntactic complexity (amount of subordination): the ratio of clauses to AS units in the participants' production. The rationale behind choosing AS unit is that this unit is essentially a syntactic one and syntactic units are genuine units of planning (Foster, Tonkyn, & Wigglesworth, 2000), which might make them good units for analysing spoken language in this study.

Syntactic variety: the total number of different grammatical verb forms used in participants performances. We used tense (e.g. simple present, simple past, past continuous, etc.) and modality (e.g. *should*, *must*, etc.) as grammatical verb forms used for the analysis.

● **Accuracy:** *Percentage of error-free clauses-* This is a generalized measure of accuracy, and was found to be sensitive to detecting differences in students' speech (Foster & Skehan, 1996). This measure was used in Foster and Skehan (1996), Foster and Skehan (1999), Yuan & Ellis (2003), Wigglesworth and Elder (2010).

● **Fluency:** Fluency is the production of language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005). In this study fluency was measured in terms of the number of syllables produced per minute of speech. This was also chosen as a measure of fluency by Yuan and Ellis (2003).

After the data were collected from the two classes, the last phase was data analysis procedure which was the evaluation of the two groups regarding their progress in learning English via Readers Theater technique. To sift through the data, in order to investigate the effect of the RT on learning English as a foreign language as well as its utility for teaching English to the students with the same level of proficiency, certain statistical procedures were followed:

The complexity, accuracy, and fluency pretest scores of the learners in the experimental and control groups were compared via independent samples *t* tests to make sure they were homogeneous in terms of their oral ability. Descriptive statistics performed for this purpose. However, to find out whether the differences were statistically significant or not, *t* test table had to be consulted.

To come up with an answer to the research question, the posttest oral ability scores of the EG and CG were compared via independent-samples *t* test. The assumption was that the existence of any significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups was to be attributed to the treatment; that is RT, since the two groups were homogeneous before the experiment commenced.

4. Results
The results of data analysis of the present study are detailed below.

4.1. Results of the Pretest Interview
As it was previously stated, oral ability was operationally defined as a combination of complexity, accuracy, and fluency. As a result, the complexity, accuracy, and fluency scores of the learners in the experimental and control groups were compared via independent samples *t*-tests to make sure they were homogeneous in terms of their oral ability. Table 1 shows the results of descriptive statistics performed for this purpose.

The mean fluency scores of the EG (M=1.51) and CG (M = 1.48) were not drastically different. This was also true for their mean accuracy scores (M_{EG}= 3.02, M_{CG}= 2.96) and their mean complexity scores (M_{EG}= 1.40, M_{CG}= 1.42). However, to make certain the differences were not statistically significant, *t test* table should be consulted.

According to Table 2, there was not a statistically significant difference in pretest oral ability scores for EG and CG since the p values for fluency, accuracy, and complexity measures were .77, .72, and .82, which were all greater than the specified level of significance (i.e., 0.05). The immediate conclusion could be that the two groups were homogeneous in terms of their oral ability at the beginning of the study.

Table 1. *Results of Descriptive Statistics for Comparing the Pretest Oral Ability of the Learners in the Experimental and Control Groups*

	Groups	N	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	*Std.* Error Mean
Fluency	EG	30	1.5130	.33575	.06130
	CG	30	1.4883	.32485	.05931
Accuracy	EG	30	3.0273	.75529	.13790
	CG	30	2.9613	.70309	.12837
Complexity	EG	30	1.4077	.31148	.05687
	CG	30	1.4263	.32462	.05927

Table 2. *Results of the Independent-Samples T-Test for Comparing the EG and CG Oral Ability Pretest Scores*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t* test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F.	*Sig.*	*T*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	*Std.* Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Fluency	.005	.944	.289	58	.77	.02467	.08529	-.14607	.19540
Accuracy	.074	.787	.350	58	.72	.06600	.18840	-.31112	.44312
Complexity	.001	.981	-.227	58	.82	-.01867	.08214	-.18309	.14576

Table 3. *Results of Descriptive Statistics for Comparing the Posttest Oral Ability of the Learners in the Experimental and Control Groups*

	Groups	N	Mean	*Std.* Deviation	*Std.* Error Mean
Fluency	EG	30	2.2593	.45863	.08373
	CG	30	1.7150	.44570	.08137
Accuracy	EG	30	3.2723	.87597	.15993
	CG	30	2.9837	.76347	.13939
Complexity	EG	30	1.7707	.28914	.05279
	CG	30	1.5573	.32621	.05956

4.2. Results of the Posttest Interview

The research question of the study intended to find out the extent to which Readers Theater (RT) affected intermediate Iranian EFL learners' oral proficiency. To come up with an answer to this question, the posttest oral ability scores of the EG and CG were compared via independent-samples *t* test. The assumption was that the existence of any significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups was to be attributed to the treatment (i.e., RT) since

the two groups were homogeneous before the experiment commenced. Table 3 and 4enable us to find an answer to the research question.

As for mean fluency scores on the posttest, the EG mean ($M = 2.25$) and CG ($M = 1.71$) were different. The significance/ insignificance of this difference, however, should be determined in Table 4under the *Sig.* (2-tailed) column. The mean accuracy scores (M_{EG}= 3.27, M_{CG}= 2.98) and the mean complexity scores (M_{EG}= 1.77, M_{CG}= 1.55) of the two groups were also different. Likewise, the differences' statistical significant /insignificance could be checked in the following table:

Table 4. *Results of the Independent-Samples T-Test for Comparing the EG and CG Oral Ability Posttest Scores*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t* test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F.	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	*Std.* Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Fluency	.001	.971	4.662	58	.000	.54433	.11676	.31061	.77806
Accuracy	.760	.387	1.361	58	.179	.28867	.21215	-.13599	.71333
Complexity	.366	.547	2.681	58	.010	.21333	.07958	.05403	.37264

According to Table 4, there was not a statistically significant difference in posttest accuracy scores for EG and CG since the *p* values in front of accuracy was greater than the specified level of significance (i.e., .17 > .05). However, the *p* values in front of fluency (*p*= .000) and complexity (*p* = .010) were less than the alpha level. It could thus be concluded that RT significantly affected the fluency and complexity of the oral productions of female pre-intermediate Iranian EFL learners, but it failed to improve their accuracy remarkably.

The results of the oral interview served as the posttest showed that the mean fluency scores ($M = 2.25$) and CG ($M = 1.71$) were different. The mean accuracy scores (M_{EG}= 3.27, M_{CG}= 2.98) and the mean complexity scores (M_{EG}= 1.77, M_{CG}= 1.55) of the two groups were also different. Because the mean was not a sufficient representation of the data, *t table* was checked.

As table 4 demonstrated, the probability value under the *Sig.* (2-tailed) column was greater than the specified level of significance (.17 > .05); therefore, there was no significant difference between two groups as far as accuracy is concerned. However, the *p* values in front of fluency (P= .000) and complexity (P= .010) were less than the alpha level. So, in the posttest, the difference between the mean scores of fluency and complexity in both groups was not due to chance. While thetwo groups were not significantly different at the outset of the study, they scored differently on the posttest. Consequently, it is reasonable to claim that the calculated *t* values - (4.66) and (2.86) - at0.05 level of probability was due to the independent variable, that is, Readers Theater.

5. Discussion
The results overall provided further empirical evidence for Skehan's (1998,

2009a, 2009b) trade-off hypothesis. The results, therefore, are in line with Skehan's trade-off hypothesis. These results suggested that in essence the trade-off here involved accuracy and fluency; to the effect that attending to complexity and fluency would limit the capacity for processing accurate language. From this standpoint, the findings of this study are compatible with the results of previous studies on task repetition (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bygate, 2001; Bygate & Samuda, 2005). The fact that massed task repetition has positively impacted on participants' complexity of language on a different task speaks to the contribution of massed task repetition to interlanguage development, precisely because the complexity of language is conceived of as "the scope of expanding or restructured second language knowledge" (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki & Kim, 1998, p. 4); and restructuring occurs once the procedures involved in language acquisition "become automatized, consolidated, and function efficiently" (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 138).

Robinson's (2001) multiple-pool model is not borne out by results of this research because such aperformance profile suggests that attention to one aspect has not diminished attention to any other. Robinson's model proposed that the more challenging a task is in terms of its matter, the more complex and accurate its linguistic performance will be.

The obtained results in fact match Bygate's (2001) prediction, but how can we account for this? Bygate (1999) states that language learners may lose what they learn in particular situations if one new situation is followed by another. He further claims that "for learning to take place, contexts should not be continually changed, but rather held constant" (Bygate, 1999, p. 36). By considering this argumentation, one plausible explanation is that as a result of task repetitions (10 sessions) in fixed contexts, task performers became more and

more familiar with the content of the task and thus they chose more linguistic options by which to convey the same meaning (Bygate, 2006). Furthermore, the repeated encounters with similar processing demands made it possible for the task performers to *integrate* more complexity and fluency in meaningful communication. Therefore, this finding not only lends support to the utility of task repetitions as an implementation variable which assists interlanguage development, but it also provides support for the claim that task repetition could be viewed as *integrative planning* (Bygate, 1999; Bygate & Samuda, 2005).

The construct of massed task repetitions was successfully mapped onto and clarified with reference to Levelt's speech production model and the predictions made at the outset of the study were in part based on this model. Therefore, from a psycholinguistic perspective, the findings of this study not only confirm the limited nature of attentional capacity but they also support the viability of Levelt's (1989) speech production model (which he proposed for L1 speech production) for L2 speech production research. From a pedagogical perspective, results of this study afford further empirical evidence in support of the flexibility of task-based approaches to language teaching and learning. In particular, the findings empirically confirm what Ellis (2009b) has noted as one of the advantages of task-based language teaching (TBLT) approaches, namely that while TBLT prioritizes meaning over form, it can nevertheless cater for learning form, and it has the potential to cater for the enhancement of communicative fluency while not neglecting accuracy of language.

6. Conclusion

This research sought to investigate whether Readers Theater enhanced English learners' oral production. Results revealed that Readers Theater resulted in better performance of EFL students in terms of

complexity and fluency. Accuracy, however, did not seem to be amenable to this variable.

The results of this study may provide impetus for teachers to use task repetitions more often in the classroom. As Bygate (2006) suggests, sometimes due to a superficial resemblance of task repetition to the audio lingual drills inherited from behaviorism, teachers may simply downgrade the utility of this practice. However, this kind of repetition does not at all refer to word-for-word repetitions; rather it involves the repetition of familiar form and content. Through the trial study on using RT with EFL intermediate student, it was witnessed the growth in students' language and social development, which may also provide some implications for teachers who are interested in employing such a teaching technique in their classes.

In the context of a limited capacity cognitive system, it makes sense to think of a diet of tasks and task conditions as a way to help students focus on different aspects of L2 speech performance, thus developing L2 speech in its totality. In fact, RT, by virtue of its peculiar features, seems to help learners to go beyond simply 'getting the job done' and to make attempts at extending their active knowledge for real-time communication as well as producing language which is both more complex and fluent.

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