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Task Repetition from EFL Learners' Perspectives: A Longitudinal Multiple-Case Analysis

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine learners' attitudes and perceptions toward the efficacy of task repetition: whether or not they appreciated task repetition as an effective classroom strategy for enhancing their oral performance. To this end, a multiple case study approach was adopted in which six intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners were investigated over a four-month period in an intact class. Four data collection tools were used: (1) multiple interview sessions, (2) learner diaries, (3) participant observation, and (4) classroom portfolios. In addition, 20 hours of the learners' audio-recorded task performances across sessions were transcribed and analyzed for signs of improvements in qualities of oral performance. Results indicated that despite the fact that repeating reciprocal narrative tasks led to gains in oral performance, learners viewed task repetition as a futile activity that did not affect their performances over time. The findings are discussed, and implications are provided in the context of education.

Keywords: task repetition, EFL learners, attitudes, reciprocal narrative task, post-task transcription

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1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has been winning widespread acceptance in second language teaching (Bygate et al., 2009). This has largely been due to many empirical studies that have consistently shown that tasks facilitate learning by providing learners with a meaningful context for language use and creating functional opportunities to help them integrate different language features that shape their interactional skills (Bygate, 2018). For tasks to be pedagogically beneficial for L2 learners, research has amply documented that learners' attention needs to be focused on forms in the context of meaningful language use (Derakhshan & Shakki, 2019; Long & Norris, 2000; Samuda & Bygate, 2008). Task repetition, considered to be a kind of pre-planning (Ellis, 2005), has been shown to be one way to fulfill this requirement. To date, a growing number of task repetition studies have investigated the impact of repetition on the three key features of oral performance, namely, complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) (e.g., Ahmadian, 2011; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bygate, 1996; Bygate & Samuda, 2005; Derakhshan, 2018; Fukuta, 2016; Gass et al., 1999; Lynch & Maclean, 2000; Wang, 2014). The results of this line of research have indicated that repeating identical or slightly modified tasks can significantly affect learners' qualities of oral performance, i.e. CAF.

However, despite the beneficial effects of task repetition on the key features of oral performance, the issue of L2 learners' attitudes and perceptions towards task repetition is still under-explored. This is a significant pedagogical issue as cognitive processes tend to interrelate and interact in very complex ways with affective dimensions (emotions, moods, and attitudes). One may, therefore, wonder whether or not improvement in CAF measures results in positive attitudes towards task repetition activities (the resultative hypothesis), or whether learners' positive attitudes toward task repetition activities trigger CAF increase (the motivational hypothesis). The following research questions are the main focus of this study:

- (1) Do learners' fluency improve within task repetition in terms of speech rate, average length of run, and reformulations?
- (2) What are learners' attitudes and perceptions toward task repetition activities?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Task Repetition Studies

Most of the task repetition studies have adopted Levelt's (1989) speech production model as a psycholinguistic frame of reference for describing what speakers do while carrying out a task. Based on this model, the process of speech production can be broken down into three related stages, namely, conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. In the conceptualization stage, intended messages and information to be communicated are selected in the form of preverbal message which is conceptual and non-linguistic. During the formulation stage, the preverbal message is converted into linguistic structures. In the articulation stage, the linguistic structures are transformed into overt speech (Levelt, 1989). Bygate (1996) linked these stages to L2 development and argued that during the initial performance of a task which involves elements of pre-task and online planning, learners are mainly concerned with generating the message they want to convey. By repeating the task, learners will be able to allocate more cognitive and processing capacity to formulation and articulation stages as a large amount of content generation had already been conducted during the first task performance. In this sense, repetition decreases the cognitive load of L2 production which could result in producing more complex, accurate, and fluent language.

A plethora of task repetition studies has been conducted using Levelt's (1989) useful model as a theoretical framework. Lynch and Maclean (2000) explored the impacts of repeating a communicative task called 'poster carousel' with adult L2 learners in an English for Specific Purposes context. The participants' task performances were recorded and for the purpose of their study, the performances of the two learners at the extreme of the language proficiency level were analyzed. The results revealed gains in production from the opportunity to recycle communicative content. Hawkes (2012) also examined the effects of task repetition on the accuracy gains of learners' oral language performances. Learners were assigned a post-task activity in which they were required to perform consciousness-raising activities right after conducting the main task. Subsequently, the task was repeated in completely the same procedure. The findings of the study indicated that repeating a task might be used as a useful pedagogic technique to assist learners in noticing the target structures and forms necessary for accurate production. Following this line of research, Fukuta (2016) investigated the impacts of repeating a task on learners'

attention orientation. To address this issue, twenty-eight Japanese undergraduate and postgraduate learners with an upper-intermediate language proficiency level were selected and asked to engage in narrative tasks with the researcher. The results showed that the learners' oral performances improved significantly in terms of accuracy and lexical variety during the second task enactment. Lambert et al. (2017) studied the relationship between repeating oral monologue tasks and immediate L2 fluency achievements. To this end, thirty-two Japanese English learners at three different proficiency levels performed three types of oral communication tasks (instruction, narration, and opinion). The findings provided empirical evidence in support of the significant role of task repetition in enhancing the learners' speech fluency regardless of their proficiency levels. Finally, in a recent study, Iwata (2020) investigated the impact of oral task repetition on immediate complexity, accuracy, and fluency development. Participants were 20 college students, who were asked to orally produce three speeches (of 2 minutes, 1.5 minutes, and 1-minute length respectively). The results indicated that task repetition positively affected participants' oral output in terms of fluency, but not complexity and accuracy.

2.2. Learners' Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Task Repetition

Despite extensive task repetition studies, the issue of learners' attitudes and perceptions about repetition has not been investigated as frequently. Lasagabaster (2013) divided assumptions about the relationship between attitude and language acquisition attainment into two categories: (1) the resultative hypothesis which posits that good language acquisition achievement is causal to positive attitudes and (2) the motivational hypothesis postulates that "attitudes will exert their influence on the success or failure of the L2 language learning process" (P.47). As to the latter, the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) is a good case in point. According to Krashen (1982) for L2 learners with less than optimal attitude for second language acquisition, the input that they are exposed to is very likely not to be taken in. As to the relationship between task repetition activities and learner attitudes, empirical studies have remained scarce. In an early study, Kim (2013) used a survey research as part of her study to gather data on the perception of 48 female Korean middle school students towards task repetition and procedural repetition. Her findings indicated that the students found tasks beneficial for enhancing their English skills. Payant and Reagan (2016) examined 28 second

language learners' of Spanish perceptions towards repeated use of a given task. They were assigned to the following groups: (1) task repetition group (same task type/same content), and (2) procedural repetition (same task/new content). They were also given reflective post-task prompts including questions about the tasks they had performed and also discussion on the benefits of repeating them. The results showed that all the learners had positive perceptions toward task repetition and saw its benefits in their performances. Ahmadian et al. (2017) also examined how learners and teachers interpret task repetition, and whether or not their perceptions of this pedagogic technique concur. Eight English language teachers implemented a picture description task as a speaking activity in their classes and learners performed the task and repeated it a week later. Then, both teachers and learners participated in a semi-structured interview. The analyses showed that both groups were of the opinion that task repetition could be very beneficial for developing the L2; however, teachers found repetition to be boring and could lead to learners' frustration.

In sum, there is clearly an interest in investigating the effects of task repetition on learners' oral language performances (e.g., Ahmadian, 2011; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Fukuta, 2016; Lambert et al., 2017; Lynch & Maclean, 2000; Wang, 2014). However, there appear to be only a few studies in the task repetition literature that have addressed learners' attitudes and perceptions toward the effectiveness of repeating tasks in language classrooms, and more importantly, to determine whether learners' subjective opinions about repetition correspond with their actual task performances or not. Therefore, this study is aimed to further examine how learners perceive task repetition and also investigate whether or not they place a value on repetition as a strategy for enhancing their oral fluency.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Context

This study was conducted at a state-run university in Iran. The participants were six EFL undergraduate students (1 male and 5 female) from an intact class. They were selected through purposive sampling to be observed and interviewed from among twenty-nine EFL majors. The selected participants were those who performed all the tasks and, more importantly, were consistently more articulate in voicing their genuine concerns about their performances on the tasks assigned. We could not

include more participants in this study for a range of practical constraints, including time constraints. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 23 years old and were all native speakers of Persian with virtually no opportunity to use English for communicative purposes outside the classroom context. The participants had never visited an English-speaking country. Nor did they have any opportunities to communicate in English outside the classroom. They were attending “Oral Production of Stories” class which met once a week for 1 hour and 40 minutes per week. Each session, the class was divided in two, half of the students being the listeners and the other half the tellers, and vice versa. Students formed pairs with the teller recounting a self-authored or authentic short story to a listener. The 10-week course schedule for presenting the short stories is presented in Table 1.

Table 1*The Course Schedule for Performing Reciprocal Narrative Task*

| Session/ Week | Type of story |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Self-authored story | Session 1/ Week 1 |
| Authentic story | Session 2/ Week 2 |
| Authentic story | Session 3/ Week 3 |
| Self-authored story | Session 4/ Week 4 |
| Repeating story from session 1 once | Session 5/ Week 5 |
| Authentic Story | Session 6/ Week 6 |
| Self-authored story | Session 7/ Week 7 |
| Self-authored story | Session 8/ Week 8 |
| Authentic story | Session 9/ Week 9 |
| Repeating story from session 9 once | Session 10/ Week 10 |

Having finished telling the story, the teller would repeat the exact same task with different listeners a second and third time. All the students were required to record their tellings and transcribe them verbatim. This was not for research purposes but formed an integral part of the course. The six participants in our study were intermediate-level students according to Allen's (2004) Oxford Placement Test (OPT). They had a range of scores between 120-149. Before starting our research, we emphasized that we were collecting data for the sole sake of research and assured them about the confidentiality and anonymity of the data. Prior to signing an informed consent for taking part in the study, the participants were informed that they were entitled to withdraw from our research if they wished so.

3.2. Data Collection Procedures

3.2.1. Observation and Interview

Observation was used as a tool to study the participants by the first author who would join pairs on task systematically “as a participant as observer” (Lodico et al., 2010, P.114). This enabled her to be more prepared for the subsequent phase: Multiple semi-structured interviews (see Table 2). Being almost the same age as students, she developed a trusting relationship with the entire class. She could also genuinely display a vicarious understanding of their learning experience because she had already taken the course. The on-site interviews focused on (a) whether repeating a given task contributed to their oral language production, (b) how they felt about repetition, and (c) what aspects of oral language production they believed repetition seemed to be productive. The interview questions were designed based on Eagly and Chaiken’s (1993) categories of attitude consisting of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. The cognitive category of attitude encompasses beliefs, thoughts, and cognition that individuals hold toward particular object or situation. The affective category includes structures that are principally conceptual in nature such as feeling, emotions, and passions. The behavioral category of an attitude refers to overt responses produced in various contexts (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). The multiple interview sessions were audio-recorded by the researchers, each lasting about 6-10 minutes. The interviews were in Persian so as to provide space for the participants to express themselves fully. All the interview data were transcribed and then translated into English for thematic analysis. To ensure the reliability of translations, all of them were also checked by an independent translator.

Table 2
The Stages of Data Collection

| Course session | Data collection tools | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 |
| Session1/Week 1 | Interview1+ Diary1 | | |
| Session5/ Week 5 | Interview 2+ Diary2 | | |
| Session 10/ Week 10 | Interview 3+ Diary3 | | |

3.2.2. Transcripts Analysis in Terms of Fluency Measurements

Fluency has become an important research focus in recent years as it not only captures one of the three major components of oral language performance (CAF), but also indicates language proficiency level (Housen et al., 2012). Segalowitz (2010) suggested the underlying processes involved in speech production and stated that it is necessary to distinguish cognitive, utterance and perceived aspects of fluency. Cognitive fluency refers to the efficiency of the underlying cognitive mechanics responsible for speech production. Utterance fluency relates to the observable and measurable aspects of fluency like production speed, hesitation, and pausing. Perceived fluency deals with the inferences made by the listeners about the speakers' cognitive fluency.

To analyze the utterance fluency of the participants' oral performance, we also transcribed their audio-recorded task performances and used Ellis and Barkhuizen's (2005) fluency measurements. They included the following aspects:

- Speech rate: number of syllables produced per second or per minute on task.
- Average length of run: mean number of syllables between two pauses of a pre-determined length (e.g. 1 second)
- Reformulations: phrases or clauses that are repeated with some modification.

Intra-rater reliability was calculated in order to ensure the reliability of the transcript analyses. In this respect, 20% sample of the data were coded for a second time after a specific time interval. The achieved agreement rate was about (0.8) for all the measurements.

3.2.3. Learner Diaries

The participants were also asked to prepare diaries registering their beliefs, feelings, and thoughts about the tasks they performed within the course. The reasons of using diaries in this study were: (1) eliciting the learners' introspection and interpretation of particular event, (2) capturing their ongoing experiences in different situations, and (3) providing rich information about individual's gradual changes and fluctuations across time (Dornyei, 2007). To meet the course requirements, all the learners were asked to submit their portfolios which included their entire set of short stories, outlines, clusters, audio-recorded performances of their narrative tasks,

and their own reflection on how they had performed them.

4. Results

For the purpose of analyzing research question 1 which focuses on investigating the learners’ oral language production through repeating the reciprocal narrative task, we listened to the learners' voices over 10 sessions and just considered the first 5 minutes of beginning their story narration without taking the pleasantry into account. The results of the analysis of the transcripts are reported in Figures 1-3.

Figure1
Speech Rate of the Learners’ Oral Language Production over 10 Sessions

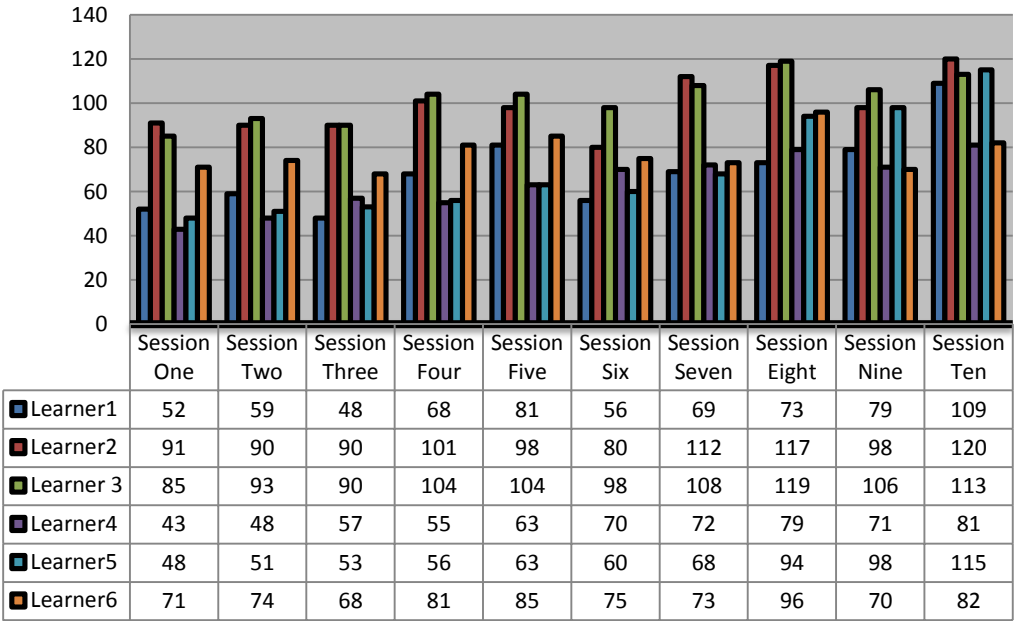
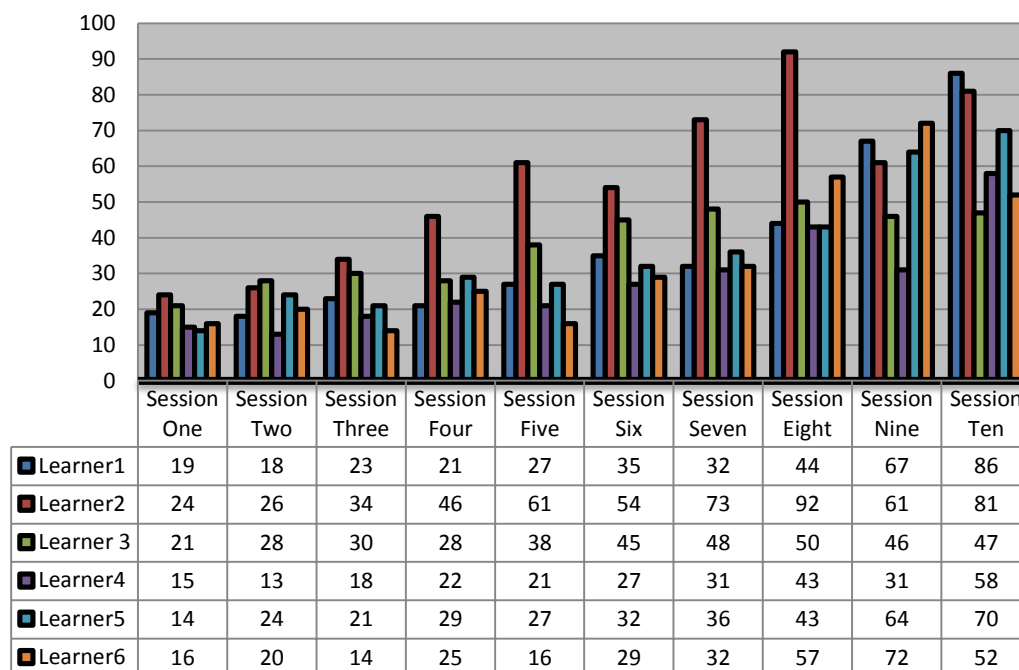


Figure2

Average Length of Run of the Learners' Oral Language Production over 10 Sessions



Building on the results originated from the learners' transcripts analyses, repeating the reciprocal narrative task positively contributed to their upcoming performances and they made progress in producing more fluent speech over time. All of the fluency measurements (speech rate, average length of run, and reformulations) improved within the course and the learners gained fluency in talk gradually.

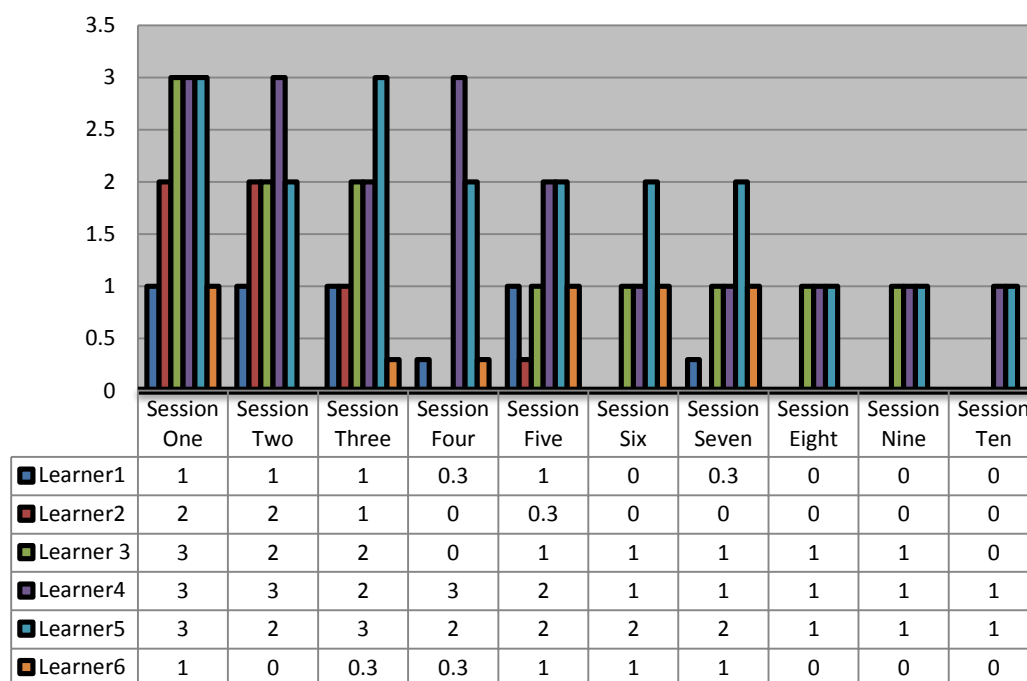
Figure3*Reformulations of the Learners' Oral Language Production over 10 Sessions*

Figure1-3 displayed the speech rate, average length of run, and reformulations of the 6 learners' performances within 10 sessions. For instance, the speech rate of learner's 6 oral performances (selected randomly as an example to show the trajectory of her task performances) was (75.8) within sessions 1-5 and it increased to (79.2) gradually. The analyses also revealed that the average length of the run was (18.2) at the initial performances on the narrative task; however, it improved steadily to (48.4) throughout the course. In terms of the last measurement, reformulations, the data showed that the number of reformulated speech decreased steadily from (0.52) to (0.4) which is evidence to support the positive role of repeating reciprocal narrative tasks in developing oral production.

Research question 2 tends to examine the learners' attitudes and perceptions toward task repetition as a strategy for promoting their oral language production. To address this question, firstly the learners were interviewed regularly in three phases during the course (at the beginning, while, and at the end of it). The interview questions were designed based on Alice and Chaiken's (1993) cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of attitude. Secondly, the learners were required to prepare

diaries regarding the tasks and assignments they had within the course as well as their personal feelings and experiences about them. Finally, all the elicited responses during the interview sessions alongside the collated diaries were analyzed through thematic analysis. Different segments of the data which truly show learners' attitudes about task repetition (descriptors of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of attitude) were extracted and coded. The coded data extracts are shown in Tables 3-5 and some extracts from the learners' interviews and diaries are presented below which are selected randomly.

Table 3
Interviews and Diaries 1.2.3 (Cognitive Aspect of Attitude)

| Coding | Number of mentions | Examples |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| 3.1 Time-consuming | 56 | The task took a lot of time |
| 3.2 Lack of experience with before | 45 | I did not have a course such tasks |
| 3.3 Heavy work load | 86 | There was a lot of pressure |
| 3.4 Task inappropriateness | 64 | Narrating stories were really good but only once |

The cognitive aspect of attitude deals with individual's thoughts, belief, and attributes that is associated with a particular object in the world. The results from the cognitive dimension of the learners' responses showed that they considered task repetition as an extremely time-consuming activity that demanded an intensive effort to perform, as shown in the following comments:

Extract 1

It was extremely time-consuming project, especially when I had to repeat the same story for three times. I nagged all the time and wanted to refuse to do it. To be honest, I was always in a hurry to finish each story as soon as possible so that I could get another listener and complete my three times narration.

Extract 2

The process of preparing and narrating short stories took a lot of time and it was far beyond my imagination. I was so confused and concerned about my narration

specially the time. I had to narrate each of my stories three times, that was really heavy and also there was no need to repeat them three times to three different listeners. I think one is better or at least two times. Besides, finding a suitable story was a real problem and it got even worse when I had to prepare my own stories; it was my first experience of story writing.

Extract 3

During the semester, when I realized that I should reproduce short stories three times each session I got shocked. To my opinion, it was a wasting of time. Moreover, it was really scary and it was completely a new process that made me spend a huge amount of time. Writing a story needed creativity and new idea; the problem was that I was not a creative person.

Table 4

Interviews and Dairies 1.2.3 (Affective Aspect of Attitude)

| Coding | Number of mentions | Examples |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---|
| 4.1 Dislike | 61 | I did not like the tasks very much |
| 4.2 Exhaustion | 51 | Repeating the tasks three times was beyond my tolerance |
| 4.3 Anxiousness | 77 | The tasks really made me stressed out |
| 4.4 Lack of interest was | 59 | Performing such tasks not interesting at all |

The affective aspect of attitude involves emotion and feeling toward the attitudinal object. The analyses offered clear evidence that the learners had no special interest in performing the reciprocal narrative task and did not derive great satisfaction from it. They stated the following comments about how they felt about repetition:

Extract 4

I just found that narrating stories three times in the class was boring for me and I wish it would be omitted from next term. I knew that there was an educational reason behind it, but I preferred to reach that aim in easier ways. For example, telling story just one time would be more interesting. On top of that, the process of transcribing was really unbearable. There was no need to spend so much time on

transcribing. I gained nothing from that because it made me tired.

Extract 5

Before beginning the course, I was eager to know how I would tell my stories. I expected that the speaker would go in front of the class and tell the story for the whole class. However, the process was completely different. Each speaker was asked to tell the story to three different listeners and after that the speaker should listen to three stories as well. At the first few sessions it seemed interesting, but gradually it became boring. I liked it more in the form of discussion. Another point was that sometimes I became very anxious while narrating my stories because I was in a hurry to finish each story soon so I could find another listener and complete my three times.

Extract 6

It was not interesting for me to repeat the stories three times. I soon got tired of this job and it seemed so boring to me. I couldn't enjoy my time because my mind was so busy with the stories all the time and the task really made me stressed out. I was under hard mental pressure and could not concentrate on anything.

Table 5

Interviews and Diaries 1.2.3 (Behavioral Aspect of Attitude)

| Coding | Number of mentions | Examples |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| 5.1 No language development | 69 | Repeating the tasks three times did not affect my speaking at |
| all | | |
| 5.2 Grammatical error continuance | 55 | There were a lot of lexical and grammatical errors in my transcripts |

Regarding the behavioral dimension (refers to individual's tendency to behave in certain ways) of the learners' responses, they placed no advantage on several repetitions of the narrative task and considered it unproductive. Here are some stated comments derived from the learners' interviews and diaries:

Extract 7

Repeating tasks three times did not affect my speaking at all and I saw no use in

repeating the same sentences for different listeners. I had many grammatical errors in my narrations and I could not speak really fast and fluently. I should confess that this activity was not effective; therefore, one time is enough for telling the stories.

Extract 8

I narrated my stories and I was not satisfied at all. It seemed that my listeners did not enjoy them mostly because of the grammatical errors in my narrations. Today was the seventh session of the course and I tried so hard to pay attention to my pronunciation, intonation, and grammar while narrating the stories, but I did not know why there are still many errors in those parts. I could not make any progress in my speaking at all.

Extract 9

The point was that when I wanted to speak with my partners about the story before, during, and after the main narration, my speaking was so much better. Therefore, I found out that memorizing and narrating stories could not have positive influences on my language. I wanted to speak about a particular without any pauses and stopping, but unfortunately I could easily observe many errors in mixing nouns and pronouns in my narrations.

5. Discussion

The TBLT has a wide appeal as a beneficial language pedagogy to promote second oral fluency by increasing interactional opportunities and engaging L2 learners in using the language rather than simply learning about it (Bygate et al., 2009). While performing a task, the immediate pressure of spontaneous communication in real time forces learners to prioritize attention to meaning over form (VanPatten, 1990). To shift learners' attention to qualities of oral performance, task repetition is considered to be a beneficial pedagogical tool, which can free up learners' processing resources to be used for different dimensions of L2 performance. There has been a large literature on the impacts of task repetition on learners' oral production and many of the studies have shown the significant contributions of repetition to language development. (e.g., Ahmadian, 2011; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bygate, 1996; Bygate & Samuda, 2005; Fukuta, 2016; Gass et al., 1999; Lambert et al., 2017; Lynch & Maclean, 2000; Wang, 2014). This study was designed to delve deeper into learners' attitudes and perceptions of task repetition to

find out whether or not they perceive it as a productive oral communicative tool for enhancing L2 oral fluency.

Research question 1 focused on examining the learners' oral performances within repeating the reciprocal narrative task building on fluency measurements by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005). The results obtained from the transcripts analyses lend support to the effectiveness of task repetition for the development of second language fluency over time. The findings of this study are broadly consistent with the previous research indicating the significant role played by task repetition in producing more fluent language (e.g., Ahmadian, 2011; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bygate, 1996; Lambert et al., 2017; Lynch & Maclean, 2000; Wang, 2014). This is largely consistent with Bygate and Samuda's (2005, P.38) theoretically-informed claim that initial "experience of processing the task as a whole together with certain elements of both pre-task and online planning" facilitates interlanguage development.

Research question 2 investigated the perceived contribution of task repetition from the learners' perspective. To this end, two data collection methods were used (semi-structured interviews and diary studies) to capture the learners' attitudes and perceptions of the efficacy of repeating the reciprocal narrative task across time. The analyses of the interviews and diaries indicate that there is a large dissonance between the learners' stated beliefs about task repetition and their gains in oral fluency throughout the course. Participants claimed to have experienced no improvement in their oral fluency over the 10 sessions; therefore, they conceive of repeating reciprocal narrative tasks as an ineffective and uninteresting classroom activity. However, the analyses of the learners' task performances disprove their claims demonstrating the constructive role of task repetition in developing oral fluency. All measures of fluency studied (speech rate, average length of run, and reformulations) improved over the course. Our findings, hence, contradict previous findings. For example, Ahmadian et al. (2017) reported that both the teachers and learners shared the opinion that task repetition "constitutes a worthwhile pedagogic practice which could foster more efficient use of the L2" (p. 6). Our findings, however, paint a different picture of the relationship between task repetition and fluency from the learners' perspective. We suspect that the difference may well be related to our data collection method. Our data were collected through participant observation across sessions by one of the authors who could connect with the participants in the study (see Methodology for further details).

Regardless of the improvements that the participants made in producing more fluent language through repeated performances on the given narrative task, they were not able to notice the changes in their oral output and placed no premium on carrying out such task in the classroom. This finding is in line with part of Lynch and Maclean's (2000) study in which one of their participants (Alicia) claimed that she had made no improvements during the six interactions with her interlocutors. The results seem to extend Tavakoli and Hunter's (2017) study in which they explored teachers' understanding and perspective on L2 fluency and also the ways in which their personal perceptions tended to interact with the activities they used in classroom to enhance speech fluency. According to their study, most of the teachers entertained to a relatively broad view of fluency i.e., conceiving of oral fluency as a speaking ability rather than what research has meticulously unraveled. Along the same line, in our study, L2 learners tended to conceptualize the scope of oral fluency too broadly. A plausible explanation for the existing dichotomy between the learners' actual task performance improvement and their negative attitudes against task repetition should originate from their expected unfamiliarity with the elusive construct of oral fluency, its specific realizations in speech production, and development. Hence, it might possibly be pedagogically beneficial to raise learners' attention on how to self-assess their fluency improvement (Ahmadian et al., 2017; Thornbury, 2005).

To sum up, our results show that regardless of the learners' negative attitudes and perceptions about the efficacy of task repetition in the language classroom, fluency develops through task repetition. In contrast with Dornyei and Skehan (2003) who stated that learners' attitudes play a significant role in determining levels of achievement and success in the acquisition of a target language, the findings of this article indicate that the learners' attitudes and perceptions did not have a major influence on their oral language performances. Accordingly, it might be assumed that task repetition may possibly partly neutralize the effects of affective variables such as attitude and act as a catalyst for developing learners' L2 production. However, it is not clear whether this will continue to be effective in the long run if learners continue with their negativity. Our findings, hence, has to be interpreted cautiously.

6. Conclusion

Over the last few years, task repetition has been an area of scholarly research. A review of task repetition literature demonstrates that activities generated through task repetition have proven to be pedagogically useful (e.g., Fukuta, 2016; Iwata, 2020; Lambert et al., 2017), though there still remain many questions to be addressed. However, few studies have to date focused on how learners conceive of task repetition activities. In this regard, previous attitude research has clearly shown that learners do not enter instructed second language learning settings without beliefs about how instruction has to be delivered (Ahmadian et al., 2017; Kim, 2013). This study, then, set out to examine the attitude of English L2 learners towards task repetition in an intact class. While consistent with most task repetition studies that activities involving meaningful repetition promote fluency (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Tavakoli et al., 2015), our results point to an important difference between what is reported in research studies or anecdotally. Despite previous research and anecdotal evidence, this study found that L2 language learners seemed not be well-disposed to task repetition activities, which may in part attributable to the complex nature of fluency which is not amenable to direct observation in speech production. On the other hand, their negativity may as well derive from their inability to detect their progress. Interestingly, irrespective of their attitude against task repetition, the activity led to their progress.

Considering the exploratory nature of this study, results from this study have to be treated cautiously. Further appropriate qualitative research has to be conducted to see if the dispreferences found this study indeed extend beyond the context of this study. Additionally, given that this study was conducted with a small sample size (focusing on the performances of 6 participants) due to constraints of time and space, more research of this kind will certainly lead to a deeper understanding of how the cognitive interact with affective domain.

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