

USING SIMILAR TASKS TO INCREASE NEGOTIATION OF MEANING AND
LANGUAGE PRODUCTION IN AN ONLINE SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT

A Dissertation

by

ABDURRAHMAN ARSLANYILMAZ

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2007

Major Subject: Educational Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Using Similar Tasks to Increase Negotiation of Meaning and Language Production in an
Online Second Language Learning Environment. (August 2007)

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This study investigates the use of authentic subtitled similar task videos (ASSTVs) and their relationship to second language negotiation of meaning and language production among non-native speakers of English in an online task-based language learning (TBLL) environment. Over the course of two weeks, twenty intermediate nonnative speakers (NNSs) of English from the English Language Institute at Texas A&M University engaged in four communicative tasks in pairs using an online TBLL environment designed specifically for this study, and a chat tool in WebCT Vista, a course management system provided by the university. ASSTVs were videotaped and integrated into the online TBLL environment. Participants were divided into two groups, each of which consisted of five dyads, to test the effects of ASSTVs. Five dyads were provided with the ASSTVs and the remaining five dyads were not provided with them before the task completion process.

The first section of this study examines the effects of ASSTVs on negotiation of meaning, and the second section examines the effects on language production.

The amount of negotiation of meaning was calculated through the negotiation of meaning sequences model developed by Gass and Varonis and revised for online communication by Smith. Language production was investigated in terms of fluency and complexity with regard to lexical and syntactic complexity. A detailed analysis of the data from the chat-scripts showed that NNSs engage in more negotiation of meaning and produce more fluent and lexically diverse language when provided with the ASSTVs than NNSs who were not provided with them.

Based on these findings, this study concludes that using ASSTVs in an online TBLL environment is a viable and effective tool for promoting negotiation of meaning and language production in terms of fluency and lexical complexity.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my wife, my daughter, my sisters and brothers, my mother, and my father for their continuous support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Negotiation of meaning occurs where input is conversationally modified by second language learners so as to ensure that input is modified to exactly the level of comprehensibility they can manage, which is the key for comprehensible input as suggested by the Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996; Long 1985; Mackey, 1999). According to the input hypothesis developed by Krashen (1985) input comprehension facilitates second language acquisition as reported by Long (1981, 1983). Therefore, it is logical to assume that there is a causal relationship between negotiation of meaning and second language acquisition. Task-based language learning (TBLL) has the potential to promote this type of negotiation of meaning produced through task completion activities by engaging in authentic, pragmatic, contextual, and functional use of language.

Many variables have been examined by other research studies including the native languages of non-native speakers (NNSs) (Varonis & Gass, 1985), similarities in the backgrounds of NNSs (Varonis & Gass, 1985), gender of NNSs (Varonis & Gass, 1985), task type (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Gass & Varonis 1985; Blake, 2000; González-Lloret, 2003; Pica, Kanagy, & Falodun, 1993), and task familiarity (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Hardy & Moore, 2004; Plough & Gass, 1993; Yule, Powers, & McDonald, 1992; Robinson, 2001) in an attempt to enhance negotiation of meaning in TBLL. However, the research regarding whether task familiarity results in more or less negotiation of meaning is not enough to reach a firm conclusion.

This dissertation follows the style of *The Modern Language Journal*.

In addition, many different methods have been used to familiarize students with tasks including task repetition (Bygate, 1996; Plough & Gass, 1993), prior content knowledge (Hardy & Moore, 2004), and selection of familiar tasks (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Hardy & Moore, 2004; Plough & Gass, 1993; Robinson, 2001). However, no prior research has tested the use of ASSTVs to familiarize students with tasks even though authentic subtitled videos have been shown to improve language proficiency in other second language research areas (Baltova, 1994; Borrás & Lafayette, 1994; Duquette & Painchaud, 1996; Garza, 1991; Neuman & Koshinen, 1992; Snyder & Colon, 1988; Taylor, 2005; Weyers, 1999), and higher language proficiency has been shown to result in more negotiation of meaning than lower language proficiency (Belz 2002; Iwashita 2001; Lee 2004; Porter, 1986).

Therefore, the first section of this study examines whether task familiarity through ASSTVs has any effect on the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by students in TBLL. The research question for the first section of this study is as follows:

1. Does task familiarity using ASSTVs enhance the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by non-native speakers in TBLL?

Skehan (1998) reported that while comprehension of input is a precondition for second language acquisition, it is alone not enough for second language acquisition. In addition to input comprehension, language production in meaningful practice activities through interaction is necessary to assist second language acquisition (Ellis & He, 1999; Nagata, 1998; Ohta, 2000) as claimed by Swain's output hypothesis (1985). TBLL has been shown to be an effective method for providing this type of language production

opportunity in meaningful task completion activities (Anderson, 2000; Doughty & Long, 2003; Willis, 1996) in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity, which have been justified as three separate and distinct dimensions of language production. In an attempt to enhance fluency, accuracy, and complexity of language production in TBLL, many variables have been investigated. These include type of tasks, familiarity with the tasks, familiarity with partners, students' native languages, type of interaction, and pre-task activities. Among these variables, pre-task activities, which are designed to help students get prepared for the task completion phase (Prabhu, 1987), have been one of the most active research areas (Skehan, 2003) in terms of their contribution to language production in TBLL.

Three types of pre-task activities (planning, rehearsal, and prior knowledge) have been examined by researchers (Bygate, 1996; Bygate, 2001; Crookes, 1989; Foster, 2001; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Gass, Mackey, Fernandez, & Alvarez-Torres, 1999; Good & Butterworth, 1980; Lynch & Maclean, 2001; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Skehan & Foster, 1999; Wendel 1997; Wigglesworth, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Of these, planning and prior knowledge have been found to improve language production, but rehearsing a similar task has not been shown to enhance language production in TBLL (Bygate, 2001; Gass et al., 1999). Although rehearsing similar tasks did not show positive effects, observing the performance of similar tasks via ASSTVs, which may enhance language production in TBLL, has not been tested. Observing the performance of similar tasks via ASSTVs may enhance language production because the use of authentic videos with and without subtitles in other second language research studies has

been shown to enhance language production (Borras and Lafayette, 1994; Garza, 1991; Neuman & Koshinen, 1992; Weyers, 1999). The use of authentic videos with and without subtitles has also been shown to improved input comprehension (Baltova, 1994; Duquette & Painchaud, 1996; Duquette, Renié, & Laurier, 1998; Garza, 1991; Neuman & Koshinen, 1992; Smidt & Hegelheimer, 2004; Snyder & Colon, 1988; Taylor, 2005), which has been shown to be a pre-condition for language production (Skehan, 1998; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993).

Therefore, the second section of this study explores whether observing ASSTVs enhances language production in TBLL in two dimensions of language production: fluency and complexity. Complexity is examined in terms of syntactic and lexical complexity to provide a more comprehensive picture of language complexity. Hence, the research questions for the second section of this study are as follows:

1. Does the presentation of similar tasks during the pre-task phase of TBLL enhance non-native speakers' fluency as measured by number of words per minute?
2. Does the presentation of similar tasks during the pre-task phase of TBLL enhance non-native speakers' syntactic complexity as measured by the mean number of subordinate clauses per communication unit (c-unit)?
3. Does the presentation of similar tasks during the pre-task phase of TBLL enhance non-native speakers' lexical complexity as measured by type token ratio?

Definition of Terms

Accuracy: The ability to avoid error in production.

Authentic Subtitled Similar Task Videos: These are video segments, which were recorded in real-life settings. Although the video segments were recorded in real-life settings, the scripting was pre-planned by players, who were native speakers. The video segments were later edited and subtitled for the purpose of this research study.

Communication Units (c-units): A c-unit can be an independent clause, an independent clause with a subordinate clause attached to or embedded in it (Hunt, 1970; Kern, 1995, p. 463; Loban 1966; Long, 1991), or an isolated phrases which do not have a subject and a verb but which has communicative value (Long, 1991) (e.g., wait, ok, yes, bye).

Communicative Tasks: Tasks that are designed specifically in a way that it can only be performed when students get involved in interaction with each other with the purpose of achieving an outcome. “The aim of communication tasks is to stimulate real communication in the target language” (Willis, 1996, p. 1).

Comprehensible Input: Language or message that can be understood or acquired by students.

Complexity: The capacity to use more advanced language.

Dyad: Two students

Equal Footing: Varonis and Gass (1985) defined equal footing as one learner’s ability to respond appropriately to another learner’s last utterance, or to take turn when it

becomes available with full understanding of the preceding turn and its place in the discourse.

Fluency: It is the ability to access, retrieve, and use linguistic knowledge from memory quickly and efficiently in real-time.

Input: In this study, input is used for language directed at students.

Input Comprehension: Understanding or comprehending the input that is directed at students.

Interlocutor: Someone who takes part in a conversation.

Language Production: Expressing ideas in written and oral form of language.

Language Proficiency: The ability to perform in an acquired language.

Lexical Complexity: In this study, lexical complexity is characterized as the range of lexical items (vocabulary) produced by students.

Negotiation of Meaning: Sometimes some confusing aspects of the discourse or a non-understanding happen at some point while students engage in conversational discourse in order to complete the task in TBLL. In these negotiation of meaning instances, second language learners modify their input so as to ensure that input is modified to exactly the level of comprehensibility they can manage. Thus, negotiation of meaning is performed in order to prevent the breakdowns in communication and to sustain the conversation.

Negotiation of Meaning Sequence: It is one of the methods developed to account for negotiation of meaning instances in TBLL. When one of the students signals a comprehension problem, they get involved in negotiation of meaning instances where

they spend some time to ensure that they understand each other and they adopt the same understanding with each other. This sequence is called as negotiation of meaning sequence.

Non-native Speakers (NNSs): The term “non-native speakers (NNSs)” in this study refers to second language learners of English.

One-way Communication Tasks (Shared-information tasks): In this type of tasks, one student in a dyad owns the information to give while the other requests it

Output: In this study, output is used for language produced by students.

Shared-information Tasks: Tasks, in which two NNSs in a dyad have the same information body available, do not have to exchange information, and have convergent goals. In addition, these tasks have more than one possible outcome.

Second Language Acquisition: Acquiring an additional language, this, in this study, refers to English.

Second Language Learners: In this study, the term “second language learners” is used to refer to the students who are non-native speakers of English and learners of English as an additional language to their native languages.

Split-information Tasks: Tasks which are designed so that each NNS in a dyad has one part of the complete information, which requires communicating to the other NNS in the same dyad in order to exchange the information, and in which both NNSs have convergent goals toward task completion. In addition, these types of tasks have more than one possible outcome.

Syntactic Complexity: In this study, syntactic complexity means the complexity of language as it relates to the amount of subordinate clauses.

Task: In this study, the word task is used as a label for activities, the aim of which is to create a natural context and a real purpose for language use.

Task Based Language Learning (TBLL): It is a second language learning method, “in which learning is organized around tasks related to real-world activities, focusing the students' attention upon meaning and upon successful task completion” (Cook, 2003, p. 37).

Turn taking: Change of turn from one student to another while students interact in order to complete tasks in TBLL.

Two-way Communication Tasks (Split-information tasks): In this type of tasks, two students in a dyad own the same information, and share it during interaction in order to complete a given task.

Type-token Ratio (TTR): It is calculated to measure lexical diversity by the total number of different words divided by the total number of words.

CHAPTER II

INCREASING NEGOTIATION OF MEANING

Overview

This study examines the effects of task familiarity through authentic subtitled similar task videos (ASSTVs) on the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by non-native speakers (NNSs) in an online task-based language learning (TBLL) environment. Ten NNS-NNS dyads collaboratively completed four communicative tasks (two shared-information and two split-information) using an online TBLL environment specifically designed for this study and a chat tool in WebCT-Vista. Five dyads were provided with ASSTVs and the remaining five dyads were not provided with them before the task completion. The amount of negotiation of meaning was calculated via the negotiation of meaning sequences model developed by Gass and Varonis (1985) and revised for online communication by Smith (2003). The data from the chat-scripts showed that NNSs engage in more negotiation of meaning when familiarized with tasks via ASSTVs as compared to those who were not familiarized with the tasks.

Introduction

Negotiation of Meaning

Negotiation of meaning in TBLL assists second language acquisition. According to the interaction hypothesis, negotiation of meaning in which second language learners modify their input to ensure that input is modified to exactly the level of comprehensibility they can manage is the key to comprehensible input (Ellis, 1985; Long 1985; Long, 1996; Long & Porter, 1985). Accordingly, improvements in input

comprehension as a result of negotiation of meaning have been reported by several research studies (Chaudron 1983; Long, 1985; Pica, 1987; Pica & Doughty, 1985; Pica, Young, & Doughty, 1987; Rulon & McCreary, 1986). According to Krashen's input hypothesis (1985), receiving comprehensible input is an essential ingredient for second language acquisition. Likewise, there is considerable evidence for a causal relationship between comprehensible input and second language acquisition (Ellis, 1985; Gass & Madden, 1985; Krashen, 1985; Long, 1981; Long, 1983). Therefore, it is logical to state that negotiation of meaning where input is modified to obtain comprehensible input assists second language acquisition.

Task-Based Language Learning

TBLL has the potential to promote negotiation of meaning. The tenets of the TBLL method are rooted in communicative language learning. Contrary to previous language learning methods such as direct and natural second language learning, the focus of communicative language learning is the successful use of language within contexts rather than learning the language as an end in itself. Growing interest in communicative language learning represents a shift in the field of language learning from an emphasis on form to an emphasis on communication. Similar to communicative language learning, the focus in TBLL is on task completion, not on the study of a de-contextualized linguistic structure or a list of vocabulary items (Doughty & Long, 2003). Like communicative language learning, the emphasis in TBLL is not on learning the language or form per se, but on engagement in authentic, pragmatic, contextual, and functional use of language.

While using language in meaning-focused communicative tasks, students get involved in negotiation of meanings, which occur in discourse where there are some confusing aspects or there is an overt indication that understanding between students has not been achieved. “As a result, NNSs may learn to compensate by questioning a particular utterance and/or requesting conversational help” (Gass and Varonis, 1985, p. 73). In these negotiation of meaning sequences, students try to maintain an equal footing with their partners by modifying their input so that they understand each other. To test whether students get involved in more negotiation of meaning in TBLL as compared to teacher-fronted language learning methods, Rulon and McCreary (1986) conducted experimental research and demonstrated that more negotiation of meaning takes place in TBLL activities as compared to teacher-fronted traditional language learning activities.

Many research studies have been conducted to investigate the variables that affect the amount of negotiation of meaning in TBLL. These include the native languages of NNSs (Varonis & Gass, 1985), similarities in NNSs’ backgrounds (Varonis & Gass, 1985), gender of NNSs (Varonis & Gass, 1985), task type (Blake, 2000; Doughty & Pica, 1986; Gass & Varonis 1985; González-Lloret, 2003; Pica et al., 1993), and task familiarity (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Hardy & Moore, 2004; Plough & Gass, 1993; Yule, Powers, & McDonald, 1992; Robinson, 2001).

Task Familiarity through Similar Tasks

While some scholars claim that task familiarity as opposed to task unfamiliarity results in less negotiation of meaning, some state that it does not lead to less negotiation of meaning. Opponents argue that familiarity with the task results in less negotiation of

meaning because “when interlocutors share a common background and language, the turn-taking sequence was likely to proceed smoothly without enough negotiation exchanges” (Gass & Varonis, 1985, p. 150). Robinson (2001) argues that task familiarity is less cognitively demanding than an unfamiliar task, which puts functional demands on students resulting in an increased need for negotiation of meaning. In addition, Robinson claims that task familiarity reduces resource demands, attentional and memory resources, which are to be used during task completion. Another argument is that task unfamiliarity forces students to establish common ground more often in order to proceed with the task (Hardy & Moore, 2004), and task unfamiliarity brings novelty to the task completion activity causing students to be more interactive (Calvin, 1989). On the other hand, proponents express that when students are familiar with the task, they take their interactants’ needs and perspectives much more into account and are more aware of the communication problems, and thus become involved in more negotiation of meaning (Yule, Powers, & McDonald, 1992, p. 253).

The research studies have also been inconsistent as the conflicting theoretical claims about the effect of task familiarity on the amount of negotiation of meaning. On the one hand, Robinson (2001) reported that students provided with unfamiliar tasks got involved in more negotiated interaction than students did with familiar tasks. In addition, Hardy and Moore (2004) found that lack of content support provided to students before task completion significantly increased negotiation of interaction among students during task completion as compared to students with content support. On the other hand, Hardy and Moore (2004) found that familiar tasks as opposed to unfamiliar tasks had no

negative effects on the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by students. In addition, Yule, Powers, and McDonald (1992) found that providing students with sample transcripts of similar tasks prior to the task completion did not noticeably change the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by NNSs during task completion.

Because research studies contradict each other regarding the effect of task familiarity on negotiation of meaning, it is clear that additional research is needed before making firm claims about whether task familiarity has any effect on the amount of negotiation of meaning in TBLL. Furthermore, although different methods such as task repetition before task completion (Bygate, 1996; Plough & Gass, 1993), prior content knowledge (Hardy & Moore, 2004), and shared background on the assigned tasks via selection of familiar tasks (Gass & Varonis, 1985; Hardy & Moore, 2004; Plough & Gass, 1993; Robinson, 2001) have been used to familiarize students with the tasks to be completed, no research study has used ASSTVs as a method to familiarize students with the tasks. Moreover, there has not been a study in TBLL literature examining the effect of authentic subtitled video or authentic video without subtitle on negotiation of meaning. However, in other second language literature, authentic subtitled videos have been shown to enhance students' language proficiency, and the research literature indicates that students having greater language proficiency produced more negotiation of meaning than students did with lesser language proficiency.

Authentic similar task videos performed by native speakers improve students' language related to the knowledge of the assigned tasks, and build a more native-like memory store by reflecting, comparing, and relating them to their own language use an

experiences (Foster, 2001, p. 90; Willis, 1996, p. 40; Tschinner, 2001). Although the effect of ASSTVs on enhancing language proficiency has not been examined by measuring proficiency in meaningful and communicative task completion activities, authentic videos with or without subtitles have been shown to improve language proficiency as measured by posttests consisting of multiple choice questions or language production questions completed by individual students. Some of these improvements include authentic video enhanced language proficiency in terms of the number of words produced per minute (Weyers, 1999), syntactic complexity of language produced (Weyers, 1999), overall oral proficiency (Borras & Lafayette, 1994), accuracy of language produced (Borras & Lafayette, 1994), fluency of language produced (Borras & Lafayette, 1994), frequency of the use of lexical items in writing (Neuman & Koshinen, 1992), overall input comprehension (Baltova, 1994; Garza, 1991; Synder & Colon, 1988; Taylor, 2005), vocabulary acquisition (Duquette & Painchaud, 1996), and vocabulary recognition (Neuman & Koshinen, 1992).

Students with higher levels of language proficiency have shown evidence of getting involved in more negotiation of meanings by making more prompts, which are “words, phrases, or sentences added in the middle of the other speaker’s utterance to continue or complete the utterance” (Porter, 1986, p. 206). They also ask and respond to more questions, request more clarifications, have more inclination and more ability to participate in discussions, get more involved in detailed discussions, feel more confident, and take more active role in interaction with their partners.

In a study in which 12 non-native speakers of two proficiency levels (advanced and intermediate) and six native speakers participated, Porter (1986) showed that advanced students made considerably more prompts, which is a sign of negotiation of meaning, than did intermediate level students despite a non-significant result. In another study, where 24 students were divided into three groups based on their proficiency levels, low-low, high-high, and high-low, Iwashita (2001) investigated the impact of proficiency in students' interaction. The high-high group modified their output significantly more by asking and responding to more questions in one-way communication tasks and considerably higher in two-way communication tasks than the students in low-low group. In addition, although not significant, the high-high group requested more clarification than the low-low group. In a qualitative study, Belz (2002) examined language learning and language use in a telecollaboration study between non-native speakers of German at different proficiency levels in the U.S. and non-native speakers of English at different proficiency levels in the Germany. After analyzing surveys, interviews, observation, e-mail, and chat transcripts, Belz reported that students with lower language proficiency levels were less inclined or able to participate in discussions than were students with higher-level language proficiency. Furthermore, native-speakers felt more comfortable and got involved in deeper discussions and participation in the discussions when non-native students were at a higher proficiency level as compared to non-native speakers at a lower proficiency level.

In an online collaboration study, in which 13 non-native speakers of Spanish at a university and 13 native speakers of Spanish at another university participated, Lee

(2004) analyzed non-native speakers' experiences and opinions of the online collaboration with native speakers. Lee reported that students at higher language proficiency levels felt more confident in getting involved in negotiation of meaning and took a more active role by asking more questions to check unknown lexical items, making mistakes, asking questions, and requesting clarifications than students at lower language proficiency levels. In addition, students who felt less self-confident took a more passive role in conversation, and they were hesitant to ask questions, make mistakes, and answer questions. In another study, K. Chesterfield, R. Chesterfield, & Regino (1982) investigated the relationship between language proficiency and interaction of six Spanish-preferring children with native English speaking children after observing them for a year. They reported that verbal interaction in English with peers was significantly related to increased proficiency in that language (p. 478).

Problem Statement and Research Question

Although the effect of task familiarity on negotiation of meaning in TBLL has been examined, there has not been enough research to reach a firm conclusion. In addition, despite many different methods having been used in previous research to familiarize students with tasks, ASSTVs have yet to be tested even though authentic subtitled videos have been shown to improve language proficiency in other second language research areas, and authentic subtitled videos is known to result in more negotiation of meaning.

Therefore, this study will examine whether task familiarity through the use of ASSTVs has any effect on the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by students

during task completion in an online TBLL. This study examines similar-tasks activity in an online rather than in a face-to-face environment for three main reasons. Firstly, providing similar tasks on a computer will enable students to have full control of the similar tasks to be viewed as many times as they want. Secondly, when completing tasks online rather than face-to-face, NNSs have positive experiences (Blake, 2000), they are able to express themselves freely, comfortably, creatively (Warshauer, 1996), and without anxiety (Beuvois, 1996, p. 35), they do not feel stressed (Warshauer, 1996), they do not feel pressure of time or fear of being interrupted leading to contribution in negotiation comfortably and freely (Strambi & Bouvet, 2003), they do not feel the fear of making mistakes in front of other students (Strambi & Bouvet, 2003; Chen, Belkada, & Okamoto, 2004), and they feel confident (Chen, Belkada, & Okamoto, 2004). Thirdly, the pattern of negotiation of meaning is generally the same when second language learners perform tasks online rather than face-to-face (Blake 2000; Pellettieri, 2000; Smith 2003). Thus, the present study was conducted to answer the following research question:

Does task familiarity using ASSTVs enhance the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by non-native speakers in TBLL?

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study included 20 non-native intermediate-level students at the English Language Institute at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas during the fall semester of 2006. Participants represented a variety of first language

backgrounds including Korean, Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, and Japanese. They were recruited from two sections of an intermediate level composition course, and had been taking intermediate-level English courses including reading, verbal, oral, grammar, and listening from August 2006 until November 2006. They ranged in age from 18 to 29 ($M = X$, $SD = Y$), with the majority in their early twenties.

Participants were determined to be at an intermediate level based on the courses they were taking at the time of the study. Students were placed in the English Language Institute program based on combinations of their scores on TOEFL (Test of English Foreign Language), ELPE (English Language Proficiency Exam administered by Texas A&M University), two in-house assessments consisting of an interview with the faculty and the director of the English Language Institute, and a composition test in August 2006 (K. Clark, personal communication, November 7, 2006).

Online TBLL Environment

An online TBLL environment was developed for this research study. The environment (see Appendix A) was designed to present four tasks to be completed in dyads. The “Similar Tasks” in the environment were available only to the experimental group.

Tasks. When designing the tasks, the task typology developed by Pica et al. (1993) (see Appendix B) was used because it is considered one of the most informative of typologies in TBLL framework (Smith, 2003, p. 40). From this typology, the two task types chosen for this study are split-information (“Compare the Maps” and “Christmas Break Trip”) and shared-information (“Gifts for a Family” and “Garage Sale”) tasks.

Two task types have been chosen to ensure that the previous research findings regarding the most effective type of tasks, which show that both types of tasks have been found to be effective on enhancing negotiation of meaning (Blake 2000; Doughty & Pica, 1986; Gass & Varonis, 1985; González, 2003; Pica et al., 1993), have been addressed.

The split-information tasks are designed so that each NNS in a dyad has one part of the complete information, which requires communicating to the other NNS in the same dyad in order to exchange the information, both NNSs have convergent goals toward task completion, and the tasks have more than one possible outcome (see A-1-a, A-2-a, B-3-a, and B-3-b respectively in Appendix B). In the “Compare the Maps” task, both students in a dyad were provided with the same map, on which there are 15 buildings, six of which are clickable, along with trees, roads, and vehicles. Upon clicking one of the six clickable buildings, one activity in each building is displayed. Three of the displayed activities are the same and three of them are different for both students in the same dyad. Students in the dyads are asked to find out the similarities and differences between the activities occurring in the six buildings. In the “Christmas Break Trip” task, students in the dyads were asked to imagine that they had decided to go for a trip together during a Christmas break. Each student in a dyad was provided with information about attractions, hotels, activities, and flights to three different cities. Students in the dyads were asked to exchange the information and choose the most appropriate and appealing city to go during the Christmas break.

The shared information tasks are designed so that two NNSs in a dyad have the same information body available, do not have to exchange information, have convergent

goals, and the tasks have more than one possible outcome (see A-1-c, A-2-c, B-3-a, and B-4-b respectively in Appendix B). Task completion also involves decision-making, personal preference, feeling, and attitude. In the “Gifts for a Family” task, students in the dyads were asked to decide on gifts for each member of a family of four people with whom they would be staying in the U.S. In the “Garage Sale” task, students in the dyads were asked to imagine that they were roommates at a Texas A&M dormitory. They were asked to donate four items in their dorm room to be sold at a garage sale to help the English Language Institute at Texas A&M University raise money for a trip to Niagara Falls.

Treatment Conditions

One section of the course was randomly assigned to the “Similar Task Group” (STG) experimental group, and the other section was assigned to the “No Similar Task Group” (NSTG) control group. The decision about the equality of students in both sections were made based on the suggestion of the director of the English Language Institute, the fact that they had been taking intermediate level courses for four months (see Appendix C), and they were placed into intermediate level courses after several aforementioned examinations (K. Clark, personal communication, November 7, 2006). Because intact groups were utilized, this study should be characterized as a quasi-experiment rather than a strict experiment.

After randomly assigning the two sections to STG and NSTG, students in each group were randomly paired to form the dyads. There were 12 students enrolled in each section for a total of 24 students. Two students in each section were absent in the first

day of the experiment, and hence were excluded from the study in the second day of the experiment. Thus, there were 10 dyads in the study: five of them formed the experimental group, STG, and five of them formed the control group, NSTG. Both groups were provided with the online TBLL environment; however, the online TBLL provided to the STG group had integrated similar task videos to be watched by the students before task completion.

Similar Tasks. The same similar task videos were provided to all dyads in the STG. The videos were recorded in natural and authentic environments, and subtitles were provided at the bottom section of the videos. Students were provided with control buttons to be able to rewind, fast forward, play, stop, pause, or re-play each video. The similar tasks integrated in the online TBLL environment are described in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Description of Similar Tasks

Assigned Task	Quantity	Topics
Compare the Maps	6	Four of these are related to demonstrating and modeling an activity currently happening. These activities are playing guitar, making an omelet, getting ready to go home on a bike, studying for an exam, and asking directions.
Gifts for a Family	2	Two native speakers played the role of a couple who are deciding to choose gifts for their relatives, who they are planning to visit.
Christmas Break Trip	3	Two native speakers are playing the role of a couple who are talking about activities, attractions, hotels, flights, and costs to six different cities, where they would like to spend their Thanksgiving break. Finally, after discussing all six cities, they agreed to go to one of them.
Garage Sale	6	Speakers are talking about picking items in their house in order to sell them at a yard sale to raise money to save an endangered animal species. They talk about the value of each item, the condition of each item, the use of each item, and the reasons the customers would be likely to buy them.

Procedures

All dyads met twice during regularly scheduled class meetings. Two computer labs were used for the study. To ensure that none of the dyads worked face-to-face, one member of each dyad assigned to work in each computer lab. Dyads completed two tasks in each session. Before beginning the experiment all students were given 10 minutes of instruction on how to use the online TBLL environment and WebCT Vista. After the training, each student was sent to the computer lab to which he or she was randomly assigned.

Instruments

The interactions of the students in the dyads, which consisted of the language they produced while communicating in the chat tool in order to complete the assigned tasks, were recorded in written form. These written interactions were analyzed and scored to constitute the dependent variable and the ratio of negotiated turns to total turns found in the negotiation of meaning sequences, as developed by Varonis and Gass (1985) and revised by Smith (2003) for computer mediated communication. The independent variable in this study is the type of group, STG and NSTG.

Controlled Variables

The controlled variables are level of proficiency, length of experiment, familiarity of students with each other, instructional materials, and instructional method. The level of proficiency is controlled through recruiting students who are all at an intermediate level. The length of experiment was controlled by the time allowed for the participants to complete each task. Instructional materials and instructional method were

controlled by preparing the same online TBLL environment for both groups with the only difference of similar tasks.

Data Coding

All negotiation of meaning sequences were identified by using the model developed by Varonis and Gass (1985) and revised by Smith (2003). As defined in the model, negotiation of meaning sequences consisted of two parts: trigger <T> and resolution. The first part of the negotiation of meaning sequences is the trigger <T>, which is the utterance or portion of an utterance on the part of the speaker that results in some indication of non-understanding on the part of the listener (Varonis & Gass, 1985, p. 74). Many types of triggers have been reported in the literature including lexical, syntactic, content, task related triggers (Smith, 2003, p. 43), discourse, phonetic, language complexity, task complexity by Doughty (as cited in Gonzalez-Lloret, 2003, p.92), and any aspect of the discourse including as a question and as neither a question nor an answer (Varonis & Gass, 1985).

Types of triggers coded in this study were categorized as lexical, content, syntactic, task complexity, and discourse. The lexical trigger is seen in Excerpt 1, where the listener does not understand one of the lexical items in the speaker's utterance. The content trigger is seen in Excerpt 2, where the entire content of the previous message is somewhat problematic or vague and in Excerpt 3, where the listener responds incredulously to the speaker's previous message. The syntactic trigger is seen in Excerpt 4, where the structure or grammar of the speaker's message is not understood by the listener. The task complexity trigger is seen in Excerpt 5, where non-understanding is

initiated by the speaker's message because of task complexity. The discourse trigger is seen in Excerpt 6, where communication problems arise because of the general incoherence of the conversation caused by an inability to reference a pronoun correctly and in Excerpt 7, where opinions of the listener and speaker differ.

The second part of the negotiation of meaning sequences is resolution, which starts when the listener reacts to the trigger in some way demonstrating a non-understanding or non-communication. It consists of indicator <I>, response <R>, reaction to response <RR> (Varonis & Gass, 1985), confirmation <C>, and reconfirmation <RC> (Smith, 2003).

Indicators <I>, the listener's signal that there is a non-understanding and the listener pushes down the conversation to acquire an understanding, were coded. As pointed out by Smith (2003), in some cases, more than one indicator in the same resolution was coded with a delay between the initial indicator and the subsequent indicators <Ii>, <Iii>, and <Iiii> as seen in Excerpt 3. Responses <R>, the original speaker's attempt to clear up the non-understanding, were coded. In the case of more than one indicator, the subsequent responses to these indicators were coded as <Rr>, <Rrr>, and <Rrrr> as seen in Excerpt 3.

Reaction to the responses, an optional element that signals either a degree of understanding <RR+> or continued difficulty with the speaker's response <RR->, were coded. <RR+> was coded in further details in three categories based on whether they were explicit statements (<RR+>Explicit) as seen in Excerpt 4, implicit statements as contextually relevant utterances to the previous message (<RR+>Implicit<TAR>) as

seen in Excerpt 3, or implicit statements as testing deductions, which is making some inferences and testing the understanding of the original speaker, (<RR+>Implicit<TD>) as seen in Excerpt 7. <RR-> was also coded in further details in three categories. The first one is the explicit statement of difficulty in understanding (<RR->Explicit) as seen in Excerpt 4. The second one is the implicit statement in the form of testing deductions (<RR->Implicit<TD>). The third one is the implicit statement in the form of task appropriate responses (<RR->Implicit<TAR>) as seen in Excerpt 3.

The next step after <RR> in the negotiation of meaning sequence is either confirmation <C> or second response <R2>. Confirmations, which come after a positive reaction to response <RR+> confirming by the speaker and indicating some degree of understanding is achieved by the listener, were coded in three subcategories. These included simple confirmations such as “OK,” “Good,” “Right,” and “Yes” as seen in Excerpt 7, reaffirmations providing some more information about the problematic language to the listener, and comprehension checks making sure that the listener understood the problematic language such as “Do you understand?” and “Got it.” Second responses <R2>, which come after a negative reaction to a response as a second attempt to clarify the non-understanding, were coded as seen in Excerpt 3, in which <R2> was coded with <Rr2> due to the fact that the second response was to the second indicator. Reconfirmations <RC>, the final step after <C> in the negotiation of meaning sequence and consisting of a minimal response to the respondent’s confirmation, were also coded.

 Excerpt 1

Lexical Item Trigger

H.Y.: shall we but it? <T>

A.Q.A: what shall

A.Q.A.: what is shall <I>

H.Y.: shall we go to buy it? <R>

 Excerpt 2

Content Triggers / Vague Message

A. Q.: we'll get a good prise from it <T>

H. Y.: how much <I>

A. Q.: what do you think <R>

H. Y.: price? <RR->Explicit

A. Q.: yes <R2>

H. Y.: is that expensive? <RR2->Implicit<TAR>

A. Q.: I thing we'll get \$70

A. Q.: it is still new

A. Q.: and student like it <R3>

H. Y.: I think that it's expensive. <RR3+>

 Excerpt 3

Content Triggers / Incredulous

M.A.: I liked Orlando very much	<T>
Y.Y.: what kind of do you like?	
Y.Y.: would you explain?	<I>
M.A.: can you explain more about Seattle?	<R>
Y.Y.: why did you choice Orlando?	<Ii>
M.A.: because of the other advantages	<Rr>
Y.Y.: Could you tell me other advantages?	<RRr->Explicit
M.A.: the prices of the hotels are unbelievable	<Rr2>
Y.Y.: how much?	<RRr->Explicit
M.A.: the accommdation just cost about 80\$	<Rr3>
Y.Y.: Wow	<RRr+>Implicit
<TARr>	

 Excerpt 4

Syntactic Triggers

A.Q.A.: what do you thing about Brushed that machian do	
damage the papers	<T>
H.Y.: whats mean?	<I>
A.Q.A.: machian do damage the papers	<R>

H.Y.: what damage?	<RR->Explicit
A.Q.A.: it is next the referajrater	<R2>
H.Y.: ok	<RR+>Explicit

Excerpt 5

Task Complexity

S.K.: In bookstore building, a woman is looking around the shop. She has an Aggie T- shirt.	<T>
C.D.A.: In my picture she has a black coat	
C.D.A.: Has she a back bag?	<I>
S.K.: No, she wears yellow coat.	
S.K.: She does not have any bag.	<R>
C.D.A.: Ok. They are different.	<RR+>Explicit
S.K.: ok.	<C> Simple

Excerpt 6

Discourse Triggers - Reference

J. K.: I did often go there.	<T>
B. K.: in MSC?	<I>
J. K.: no...	<R>

B. K.: near by best buy? <Ii>
 J. K.: I mean outside book store
 J. K.: yes <Rr>

Excerpt 7

Discourse / Different Opinions

I. J.: expensive
 I. J.: 314\$
 I. J.: 350\$ <T>
 K. K.: I think it proper fee.
 K. K.: it's not expensive <I>
 I. J.: I know
 I. J.: But if we go there we have to spend more money <R>
 K. K.: but its our vacation!
 K. K.: If you spend more money,
 K. K.: we hane enjoy more! <RR+>Implicit<TD>
 I. J.: yes <C> Simple

Negotiation of meaning sequences produced by each dyad and consisting of a T-I-R, a T-I-R-RR, a T-I-R-RR-C, or a T-I-R-RR-C-RC were identified. After identifying the negotiation of meaning sequences, all turns, whenever there was a transfer of the

floor from one student to another and regardless of whether turns occurred in negotiation of meaning sequences or not, were calculated and counted for each dyad in both groups. Negotiated turns, turns that occurred in negotiated routines, were also counted. A ratio of negotiated turns to the total turns for each dyad was calculated to compare the data across the dyads. A ratio of negotiated turns to total turns was established because the comparison of negotiation of meaning sequences across groups may be sensitive to the amount of talk produced by the dyads in each group. That is, dyads in the STG group may produce more negotiation of meaning sequences not because they are involved in more negotiation of meaning, but because they produce more talk. It has been reported that students produced more talk when they were provided with similar tasks than when not provided with them (Arslanyilmaz, 2007). In order to remove the effect of amount of talk from the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by dyads, ratios are calculated for all dyads in both groups.

Reliability

A random selection of 10% of the language produced by dyads in NSTG and another random selection of 10% of the language produced by dyads in STG were coded by an independent rater to identify negotiation of meaning sequences using the same procedures as described in this study. The agreement for the ratings of the negotiated turns in the negotiation of meaning sequences was about 85% for the language produced by dyads in the STG, and about 90% for the language produced by dyads in the NSTG.

Data Analysis Technique to Administer

This study uses only one 2-tailed independent group t-test. The set of dependent variables is made up of the ratio of negotiated turns to total turns in each group.

Therefore, there is one dependent variable in the 2-tailed t-test.

Results and Discussions

Table 2 shows the number of negotiation of meaning sequences, total turns, negotiated turns, and ratio of negotiated turns to total turns produced by all dyads across the STG and NSTG groups. This table suggests that negotiation of meaning sequences accounted for about 17% of the total turns generated by all dyads that were engaged in task completion activity without authentic similar task videos. On the other hand, negotiation of meaning sequences accounted for about 30% of the total turns generated by all dyads that were engaged in task completion activity with authentic similar task videos. This result suggests that when provided with authentic similar task videos, students engage in negotiated interaction in about one-fourth of their total turns while students who are not provided with authentic similar task videos in an online TBLL environment engage in negotiated interaction in about one-sixth of their total turns. In addition, this result suggests that students with authentic similar task videos in an online TBLL environment produce more negotiation of meaning sequences, more turns, and more negotiated turns than do students without authentic similar task videos.

TABLE 2
Total Negotiation of Meaning Sequences, Total Turns, Negotiated Turns

Groups	Negotiation of meaning sequences	Negotiated turns	Total turns	Ratio of negotiated turns to total turns
NSTG	32	128	765	0.17
STG	94	393	1374	0.30

Table 3 shows the results of independent samples *t* test with the percentage of turns negotiated as the dependent variable and groups as the independent variable. This table shows that dyads provided with authentic similar task videos produced a significantly higher percentage of negotiated turns than dyads that were not provided with authentic similar task videos. One of the reasons for the significant result with a small number of participants is the low within group and high between group variances. This is achieved through sample selection procedure. The sample was chosen from a homogenous group of students at the English Language Institute at the university. Another reason for the significant result is that students were exposed to the treatment for an extended period of time, which increased the effect size.

TABLE 3
Comparison of Mean Percentage of Negotiated Turns to Total Turns across Groups

Group	N (Dyads)	M	SD	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	99% Conf. Int. Lower	Upper
NSTG	5	.17	.046	-4.48	8	.002*	-.23	-.033
STG	5	.30	.046					

* $p < .01$

Conclusions and Suggestions

Results from this study indicate that observing authentic similar task videos to familiarize students to the assigned tasks increases the amount of negotiation of meaning students engage in during task completion in an online TBLL.

The results of this study comply with the findings by Hardy and Moore (2004) and Plough and Gass (1993) in that familiar tasks do not have negative effects on the negotiation of meaning produced by non-native speakers. The results of this study are also consistent with the findings by Yule et al. (1992), who reported that familiarity with the task increases the amount of negotiation of meaning produced. Unlike these previous research findings, however, this study reported a significant result that task familiarity through ASSTVs increases the amount of negotiation of meaning sequences produced by NNSs in an online TBLL environment. Because, the method the three studies used to familiarize students with the tasks was different than the one used in this study, ASSTVs, the most effective method to familiarize students to tasks in order to enable students to get involved in more negotiation of meaning can be explored in a future research study.

The result of this study contradicts the findings by Gass and Varonis (1985) and Robinson (2001) that task familiarity does not lead to more negotiation of meaning. A possible explanation for this contradiction might be the difference in the methods used to familiarize students. While Gass and Varonis and Robinson used already familiar tasks in order to assess the effect of task familiarity, this study employed authentic similar task videos to accomplish task familiarity. However, in order to make conclusive remarks,

future research studies are needed to compare the methods used in the contradictory previous studies and this study.

The effect of the type of tasks, which was not explored in this study in terms of its contribution toward the amount of negotiation of meaning produced by students, can be evaluated in a future research study.

In the past, preparing videos and teaching second language through videos were cumbersome. However, with the advent in technology preparing videos and embedding them in online courses can be accomplished by any second language teacher. This research supports developing authentic videos and embedding them in TBLL courses to facilitate negotiation of meaning and thus second language acquisition.

CHAPTER III

INCREASING LANGUAGE PRODUCTION

Overview

This study examines the effects of authentic subtitled similar task videos (ASSTVs) on language production by non-native speakers (NNSs) in an online task-based language learning (TBLL) environment. Ten NNS-NNS dyads collaboratively completed four communicative tasks, using an online TBLL environment specifically designed for this study and a chat tool in WebCT-Vista. Five dyads were provided with authentic similar task videos and the remaining five dyads were not. Language production was investigated in terms of fluency and complexity including lexical and syntactic complexity. The data from the chat-scripts showed that NNSs produce more fluent and more lexically diverse language when provided with the similar task videos than NNSs who were not provided with them.

Introduction

Language Production

Language production in meaningful context and through interaction facilitates second language acquisition as stated by Anderson (2000), Atkinson (2002), Y. S. Freeman and D. E. Freeman (1992), Ohta (2000), and Swain (1985). Language production in meaningful context assists second language acquisition. According to Swain's output hypothesis (1985), language production in meaningful context (1) pushes students in their output, stretching their interlanguage to make use of linguistic resources in fullest, (2) helps students to notice the gap between what they know and what they do

not know, (3) provides opportunity for hypothesis testing, trying out different linguistic features to see whether they work, and (4) supplies feedback during interaction, which may help them to solve their linguistic problems by reflecting on their output and considering ways of modifying it (Skehan, 1998; Swain, 1985). Accordingly, several research studies showed that language production in meaningful context resulted in improvements in language acquisition (Ellis & He, 1999; Nagata, 1998). In addition to the facilitative role of language production in meaningful context to language acquisition, collaboratively producing language through interaction aids language development. Based on the work of psycholinguist Vygotsky (1978), Ohta (2000) analyzed audio and video recordings of two students and found that interaction between them improved their second language development dramatically.

In an attempt to improve language production, researchers have had a problem with operationalising and measuring language production because many different units of analysis have been used (Ellis, 2003, p. 115; Skehan, 2003, p.8). However, fluency (the capacity to use language in real time), accuracy (the ability to avoid error in production), and complexity (the capacity to use more advanced language) as three dimensions of language production have been justified theoretically, and reported empirically to be separate and distinct (Skehan, 2003, p. 8; Skehan & Foster, 1997). Ideally, language production should be fluent, accurate, and complex (Skehan & Foster, 1999, p. 97). However, many different tools have been used to measure each dimension. Ellis (2003, p. 117) provided a well-designed table, which listed all possible tools to use in measuring each of these three dimensions. Some of these tools included the number of

words per minute for fluency (Tong-Fredericks, 1984), the total number of subordinates divided by total number of communication units (c-units) for complexity relating to syntactic complexity (Gebhard, 1978; Hunt, 1970), and type-token ratio for complexity in terms of lexical richness, and number of self corrections for accuracy. All of these have been used widely in second language research studies where language production is improved through meaning-focused task completion activities.

Task-Based Language Learning

TBLL is a second language learning method that promotes language production in meaningful context and collaboration through meaning focused communicative task completion activities. The tenets of the TBLL method are rooted in communicative language learning. Contrary to previous language learning methods such as direct and natural second language learning, the focus of communicative language learning is the successful use of language within context rather than learning the language as an end in itself. Growing interest in communicative language learning represents a shift in the field of language learning from an emphasis on form, which is grammatical structures and rules of linguistic elements, to an emphasis on communication. Like communicative language learning, the focus in TBLL is on task completion, which leads students to engage in authentic, pragmatic, contextual, and functional use of language, and not on the study of a de-contextualized linguistic structure or a list of vocabulary items (Doughty & Long, 2003). As described by Willis (1996, p. 25), while language production is not the aim but the vehicle for attending task goals in TBLL, through these task completion activities students will get involved in language production in real-life

context, which is suggested by connectionist theory to assist second language acquisition. In addition, while completing the tasks, students will have the chance to practice language extensively in a real-life context facilitating language acquisition (Anderson, 2000).

TBLL does not only provide means for producing language in meaningful context and through interaction, but is also more effective in improving language production than traditional language teaching methods. Several research studies demonstrated that students produced more fluent language as measured by the number of words per minute (Pica, 1987; Pica & Doughty, 1985; Pica et al., 1987), equal or better complex language in terms of syntactic complexity (Mackey, 1999; Rulon & McCreary, 1986; Warschauer, 1996) and lexical complexity (Ellis, Tanaka, & Yamazaki, 1994; Warschauer, 1996), and more accurate language in terms of grammaticality (Mackey, 1999; Pica & Doughty, 1985) in TBLL as compared to traditional teacher fronted language learning activities.

Several research studies have been conducted to explore variables that influence language production in TBLL. Some of these variables are type of tasks (Bygate, 1999; Duff, 1986), type of interaction (Chen et al., 2004), familiarity with one's partner (Plough & Gass, 1993), students' native languages (Takahashi, 1989), and pre-task activities, which is "one of the most active areas of task research (Skehan, 2003, p.6)."

Pre-Tasks in TBLL

Pre-task activities, which are designed to help students get prepared for the task completion phase (Prabhu, 1987), have been explored in detail by research studies. Three types of pre-task activities investigated are planning, prior knowledge of task, and rehearsal activities. When students had time to plan for task completion, the fluency of their language was enhanced as measured by the number of words per minute (Foster, 2001; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Skehan & Foster, 1999; Wendel 1997; Wigglesworth, 1997) and the mean length of language units (Ortega, 1999; Crookes, 1989; Foster & Skehan, 1996). The complexity of their language increased in terms of lexical complexity as measured by the range of lexis (Crookes, 1989; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), syntactic complexity as measured by the number of subordination clauses (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 1999), and accuracy (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998). The fluency of language produced significantly increased when students were provided with prior knowledge about the task before completing it as compared to when they were not provided with prior knowledge (Good & Butterworth, 1980). When students rehearsed the same tasks, their lexical complexity improved (Bygate, 1996; Gass et al., 1999), as did their fluency (Bygate, 1996; Bygate, 2001; Lynch & Maclean, 2001) and accuracy (Bygate, 1996; Gass et al., 1999; Lynch & Maclean, 2001). However, when students rehearsed a similar task to the assigned task, in one study, their language production improved less in terms of accuracy and lexical diversity as compared to when they rehearsed the same tasks (Gass et al., 1999), and in another study, no significant result was observed in the complexity and fluency of language produced (Bygate, 2001).

Although rehearsing similar tasks has been found not to improve language production, observing performance of similar tasks in the form of ASSTVs in TBLL has yet to be investigated. Despite the lack of research for testing the use of ASSTVs in TBLL, research shows evidence that it may improve language production in TBLL because (1) authentic videos with and without subtitles have been reported to improve language production in other second language learning studies, and (2) authentic videos with and without subtitles have been reported to enhance input comprehension, which has been claimed and demonstrated to be a precondition for language production.

First, authentic videos have been reported to improve language production. For example, Weyers (1999) conducted a study to investigate the effect of authentic videos on language production. Weyers found that after watching videos, students significantly enhanced their language production in terms of the number of words produced per minute, demonstrated significantly increased confidence in their speech, and enhanced the detail of the language they produced (Weyers, 1999, p. 344).

Authentic subtitled videos have resulted in enhancing language production more than authentic videos without subtitles. Borrás and Lafayette (1994) investigated the effects of subtitling on communicative French language performance of 44 French as second language students. Borrás and Lafayette divided students into two groups: videos without subtitles and videos with subtitles groups. The same video segments were used for both groups. Students watched the video segments twice. Then, students wrote a draft of a description or a narration about the people or events they had seen in the video segments. While writing the draft they were able watch the video again. Then, students

recorded the written drafts orally. The results revealed that students who watched the subtitled video scored significantly higher on overall oral language proficiency, accuracy, and fluency. As another example, Neuman and Koshinen (1992) examined whether subtitled videos affect vocabulary use in writing. Neuman and Koshinen examined three input conditions of the same information: subtitled video, video without subtitle, and only text. One hundred and twenty nine bilingual seventh and eighth graders participated in the study. Forty segments of five to eight minutes of videos were selected from a children's television program. The results of the study demonstrated that students in the subtitled group recalled and used target words (words that were used in the video or text) in their writing significantly more frequently than those in the reading text group and those in the video without subtitle group. As another example, Garza (1991) conducted a study to examine the effects of subtitled videos in French and in English on enhancing French and English language. Forty 3- and 4-year-old students of Russian and 70 ESL students participated in the study. The videos were two sets of five Russian and English video segments. Students in the Russian and English classes were randomly divided into two groups. One group saw the subtitled video segments, and the other group saw the video segments without subtitles. Results indicated that when students were asked to retell the stories of the videos, students who watched the videos with subtitles scored higher on the use of original lexicon of the video segments than students who watched the videos without subtitles.

The above studies investigated the use of authentic videos with and without subtitles pertaining to their impact on language production; however, none of them

tested the videos in a meaningful communicative task completion activity, where students interact with each other while negotiating meaning and modifying input. In all of the aforementioned studies, students individually responded to a language production test in the form of a picture description question (Weyers, 1999, p. 42), a description or narration of the people or events (Boras & Lafayette, 1994), a writing question (Neuman & Koshinen, 1992), or a retelling the stories of the videos (Garza, 1991).

Secondly, observing authentic videos improves input comprehension, and input comprehension has been reported to be a pre-condition for language production. Using authentic video for input comprehension has long been reported to be an effective tool because it provides natural and realistic target language (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Willis, 1983), is intrinsically interesting (Lonergan, 1984), aids comprehension (Baltova, 1994; Snyder & Colon, 1988), contributes to students' attention (Allan, 1985), and increases motivation. Along the same line, Krashen (1985) defined good comprehensible input as motivating, interesting, and native language. Moreover, Krashen suggested the use of tapes, records, and films as authentic materials in order to provide genuine and grammatically accurate comprehensible input (1985, p.48). Along with these theoretical suggestions, research studies have reported that observing subtitled and non-subtitled authentic videos improves input comprehension. For example, Baltova (1994), after asking students to watch a video, found that the video significantly increased language comprehension on a multiple choice test. Snyder and Colon (1988) showed that students with audio visual aids performed significantly better on input comprehension than students with limited audio video visual aids. In another study, Smidt and Hegelheimer

(2004) asked students to watch a video and afterwards asked a series of questions in an attempt to assess possible improvements in students' vocabulary acquisition. They reported that authentic video significantly enhanced students' vocabulary learning as measured by a vocabulary acquisition questionnaire. Baltova examined the video as a tool for teaching of French as a second language, and reported that video with sound as compared to only video and only sound enhanced comprehension in general. As another example, Duquette and Painchaud (1996) examined the effect of French dialogue videos on acquisition of vocabulary in French as compared to listening to the same French dialogue without visual aids. One hundred and nineteen students between 18 and 25 years of age who were native English and non-native French students were participated in the study. A pre- and post-test consisting of already familiar and unfamiliar vocabulary items were administered before the experiment and after the experiment in order to see the impact of the video on learning of the words. The result of this study indicated that students in the video group made more gains between pre- and post-tests on the unfamiliar words than those in the audio group. As another example, Duquette, Renié, and Laurier (1998) tested the effects of a multimedia environment consisting of audio, video, images, and text, on a group as compared to a corresponding video-only group and a group that did not receive treatment on French vocabulary acquisition and general comprehension. Seventy-eight English-speaking Canadians as non-native speakers of French participated in the study. The results of the study did not reveal a significant difference on the vocabulary acquisition test among the three groups.

However, all groups, including the video-only group, made significant gains between pre- and post-tests on vocabulary acquisition.

Furthermore, subtitled videos as compared to videos without subtitles have been shown to be more effective on enhancing input comprehension (Markham, 1989; Markham, Peter, & McCarthy, 2001; Price, 1983; Vanderplank, 1992). As an example study, Taylor (2005) examined the impact of subtitled videos as compared to videos without subtitles on language comprehension. The subtitled videos were taken from a textbook and were about 10 minutes long. Taylor found that subtitled videos had some improvements on students' language comprehension for students who were intermediate or higher proficiency level, although the result was not significant. As another example, besides examining whether comprehensible input in the form of subtitled videos affect vocabulary use in writing, Neuman and Koshinen (1992) also investigated whether the subtitled video had an effect on word recognition. The result of the study showed that the subtitled video group scored significantly higher than those just reading text and video without subtitle groups on word recognition tests. As another example, besides examining effects of subtitled videos of French and English on enhancing French and English language production, in the same study, Garza (1991) also explored the effect of the subtitled videos on language comprehension. Results showed that students of both Russian and English who watched the subtitled video segments scored significantly higher on ten content-based comprehension check questions than students who watched videos without subtitles.

The above research results clearly show that authentic videos, whether with subtitles or without subtitles, improve input comprehension, and input comprehension has been reported to be a pre-condition for language production when afterwards provided with language practice opportunity in meaningful context. Krashen (1985) claimed that enhancement in production is the result of input comprehension, which is supported by Skehan (1998) by restating that input comprehension could act as a precondition for language production. This assumption has been tested by VanPatten and Cadierno (1993), who examined second language instruction through input comprehension. The result of the study demonstrated that students who were instructed through input comprehension showed improvements on second language production tests.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Language production in meaningful practice activities through interaction has been demonstrated to assist second language acquisition (Ellis & He, 1999; Nagata, 1998; Ohta, 2000). TBLT has been reported to be an effective method in providing this type of language production opportunity (Anderson, 2000; Doughty & Long, 2003; Willis, 1996). Among other variables, pre-task activities have been one of the most active research areas (Skehan, 2003) in terms of their contribution to language production in TBLT, and three types of pre-task activities, planning, rehearsal, and prior knowledge, have been examined by researchers. Among these three pre-task activities, rehearsing tasks identical to the assigned tasks has been found to effect language production positively (Bygate, 1996; Bygate, 2001; Gass et al., 1999; Lynch & Maclean,

2001). However, rehearsing a similar task to the assigned task has been shown not to enhance language production in TBLL (Bygate, 2001; Gass et al., 1999). Even though rehearsal of similar tasks did not show positive effects, the observation of similar tasks via ASSTVs in TBLL has not been examined yet. Similar tasks via ASSTVs may enhance language production in TBLL because authentic videos with and without subtitles in other second language research studies have been reported to enhance language production (Borras & Lafayette, 1994; Garza, 1991; Neuman & Koshinen, 1992; Weyers, 1999) and to improve input comprehension (Baltova, 1994; Duquette & Painchaud, 1996; Duquette et al., 1998; Garza, 1991; Neuman & Koshinen, 1992; Smidt & Hegelheimer, 2004; Synder & Colon, 1988; Taylor, 2005). Improved input comprehension has been shown to be a pre-condition for language production (Skehan, 1998; VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993).

Thus, this study aims to explore whether observing ASSTVs, called similar tasks from now on in this study, enhances language production in TBLL in terms of two dimensions of language production: fluency and complexity. In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of language complexities, both syntactic and lexical complexity are examined in this study. The third dimension of language production, namely accuracy, is not examined in this study for the sole reason of time limitations. The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. Does the presentation of similar tasks during the pre-task phase of TBLL enhance non-native speakers' fluency as measured by number of words per minute?

2. Does the presentation of similar tasks during the pre-task phase of TBLL enhance non-native speakers' syntactic complexity as measured by the mean number of subordinate clauses per communication unit (c-unit)?
3. Does the presentation of similar tasks during the pre-task phase of TBLL enhance non-native speakers' lexical complexity as measured by type token ratio?

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study included 20 non-native intermediate-level students at the English Language Institute at Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas during the fall semester of 2006. Participants represented a variety of first language backgrounds including Korean, Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, and Japanese. They were recruited from two sections of an intermediate level composition course, and had been taking intermediate-level English courses including reading, verbal, oral, grammar, and listening from August 2006 until November 2006. They ranged in age from 18 to 29 ($M = X$, $SD = Y$), with the majority in their early twenties.

Participants were determined to be at an intermediate level based on the courses they were taking at the time of the study. Students were placed in the English Language Institute program based on combinations of their scores on TOEFL (Test of English Foreign Language), ELPE (English Language Proficiency Exam administered by Texas A&M University), two in-house assessments consisting of an interview with the faculty

and the director of the English Language Institute, and a composition test in August 2006 (K. Clark, personal communication, November 7, 2006).

Online TBLL Environment

An online TBLL environment was developed for this research study. The environment (see Appendix A) was designed to present four tasks to be completed in dyads. The “Similar Tasks” in the environment were available only to the experimental group.

Tasks. When designing the tasks, the task typology developed by Pica et al. (1993) (see Appendix B) was used because it is considered one of the most informative of typologies in TBLL framework (Smith, 2003, p. 40). From this typology, the two task types chosen for this study are split-information (“Compare the Maps” and “Christmas Break Trip”) and shared-information (“Gifts for a Family” and “Garage Sale”) tasks. Two task types have been chosen to ensure that the previous research findings regarding the most effective type of tasks, which show that both types of tasks have been found to be effective on enhancing negotiation of meaning (Blake 2000; Doughty & Pica, 1986; Gass & Varonis, 1985; González, 2003; Pica et al., 1993), have been addressed.

The split-information tasks are designed so that each NNS in a dyad has one part of the complete information, which requires communicating to the other NNS in the same dyad in order to exchange the information, both NNSs have convergent goals toward task completion, and the tasks have more than one possible outcome (see A-1-a, A-2-a, B-3-a, and B-3-b respectively in Appendix B). In the “Compare the Maps” task, both students in a dyad were provided with the same map, on which there are 15

buildings, six of which are clickable, along with trees, roads, and vehicles. Upon clicking one of the six clickable buildings, one activity in each building is displayed. Three of the displayed activities are the same and three of them are different for both students in the same dyad. Students in the dyads are asked to find out the similarities and differences between the activities occurring in the six buildings. In the “Christmas Break Trip” task, students in the dyads were asked to imagine that they had decided to go for a trip together during a Christmas break. Each student in a dyad was provided with information about attractions, hotels, activities, and flights to three different cities. Students in the dyads were asked to exchange the information and choose the most appropriate and appealing city to go during the Christmas break.

The shared information tasks are designed so that two NNSs in a dyad have the same information body available, do not have to exchange information, have convergent goals, and the tasks have more than one possible outcome (see A-1-c, A-2-c, B-3-a, and B-4-b respectively in Appendix B). Task completion also involves decision-making, personal preference, feeling, and attitude. In the “Gifts for a Family” task, students in the dyads were asked to decide on gifts for each member of a family of four people with whom they would be staying in the U.S. In the “Garage Sale” task, students in the dyads were asked to imagine that they were roommates at a Texas A&M dormitory. They were asked to donate four items in their dorm room to be sold at a garage sale to help the English Language Institute at Texas A&M University raise money for a trip to Niagara Falls.

Treatment Conditions

One section of the course was randomly assigned to the “Similar Task Group” (STG) experimental group, and the other section was assigned to the “No Similar Task Group” (NSTG) control group. The decision about the equality of students in both sections were made based on the suggestion of the director of the English Language Institute, the fact that they had been taking intermediate level courses for four months (see Appendix C), and they were placed into intermediate level courses after several aforementioned examinations (K. Clark, personal communication, November 7, 2006). Because intact groups were utilized, this study should be characterized as a quasi-experiment rather than a strict experiment.

After randomly assigning the two sections to STG and NSTG, students in each group were randomly paired to form the dyads. There were 12 students enrolled in each section for a total of 24 students. Two students in each section were absent in the first day of the experiment, and hence were excluded from the study in the second day of the experiment. Thus, there were 10 dyads in the study: five of them formed the experimental group, STG, and five of them formed the control group, NSTG. Both groups were provided with the online TBLL environment; however, the online TBLL provided to the STG group had integrated similar task videos to be watched by the students before task completion.

Similar Tasks. The same similar task videos were provided to all dyads in the STG. The videos were recorded in natural and authentic environments, and subtitles were provided at the bottom section of the videos. Students were provided with control

buttons to be able to rewind, fast forward, play, stop, pause, or re-play each video. The similar tasks integrated in the online TBLL environment are described in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Description of Similar Tasks

Assigned Task	Quantity	Topics
Compare the Maps	6	Four of these are related to demonstrating and modeling an activity currently happening. These activities are playing guitar, making an omelet, getting ready to go home on a bike, studying for an exam, and asking directions.
Gifts for a Family	2	Two native speakers played the role of a couple who are deciding to choose gifts for their relatives, who they are planning to visit.
Christmas Break Trip	3	Two native speakers are playing the role of a couple who are talking about activities, attractions, hotels, flights, and costs to six different cities, where they would like to spend their Thanksgiving break. Finally, after discussing all six cities, they agreed to go to one of them.
Garage Sale	6	Speakers are talking about picking items in their house in order to sell them at a yard sale to raise money to save an endangered animal species. They talk about the value of each item, the condition of each item, the use of each item, and the reasons the customers would be likely to buy them.

Procedures

All dyads met twice during regularly scheduled class meetings. Two computer labs were used for the study. To ensure that none of the dyads worked face-to-face, one member of each dyad assigned to work in each computer lab. Dyads completed two tasks in each session. Before beginning the experiment all students were given 10 minutes of instruction on how to use the online TBLL environment and WebCT Vista.

After the training, each student was sent to the computer lab to which he or she was randomly assigned.

Instruments

The interactions among students while communicating in the chat tool in order to complete the assigned tasks were recorded in written form. These written interactions were analyzed and scored to constitute the dependent variables. The fluency was measured by the number of words per minute (WPM) (O'Malley, Langton, Anderson, Doherty-Sneddon, & Bruce, 1996; Tong-Fredericks, 1984). The complexity of language produced was measured through the use of two dependent variables because it will be possible to obtain a more complete and detailed description of language complexity by including both syntactic and lexical complexity measures. Syntactic complexity of language was measured by the number of subordinate clauses per c-unit (Robinson, 2001; Li, 1999, p. 236), and lexical complexity of language was measured by type token ratio (TTR) (Newton & Kennedy, 1996; Warshauer, 1996).

The above instruments have been used to analyze oral communication, but they are used to analyze written communication in this study because written communication in the study carries the features of oral communication. The nature of the discourse produced in the chat tool “shares certain aspects of oral discourse, such as a light, familiar style, direct interpersonal address, rapid topic shifts, and frequent digressions” (Kern, 1995, p. 460). In addition to sharing aspects of oral discourse, written communication in the chat tool shares features of written language production including a greater lexical diversity (Halliday, 1989). However, “Tannen makes the point that just

because a text is written does not necessarily make it 'written' in genre: Its linguistic characteristics will depend on the context in which it is produced" (Tannen, 1988 cited in Kern, 1995, p.460). Because the main purpose of communication in written language using the chat tool in this study is natural, social, and contextual interaction, the language was analyzed with instruments that have been used to analyze oral language.

Controlled Variables

The controlled variables are level of proficiency, length of experiment, familiarity of students with each other, instructional materials, and instructional method. The level of proficiency is controlled through recruiting students who are all at an intermediate level. The length of experiment was controlled by the time allowed for the participants to complete each task. Instructional materials and instructional method were controlled by preparing the same online TBLL environment for both groups with the only difference of similar tasks.

Data Coding

Fluency. The total number of words produced by each dyad in both groups was calculated. When counting the words, any orthographic unit bound by spaces, and including proper nouns and acronyms (e.g. UCLA) was counted as one word. Concatenated forms (gonna, wanna, sorta) and contracted forms (I'm, we're) were counted as two words (Andersen & Johnson, 1973, p. 151). Each number set including money units (100\$) were counted as one word. Hyphenated words (quarter-mile) were counted as two words. Back-channeling cues (hhhhh hh, um, oh, hey) were not counted as a word when they were not supplied in response to explicit requests for feedback as

opposed to when they were part of a turn for which they were counted as a word.

Repetitions in an attempt to correct a lexical error were counted as one word (e.g., A: but I do not know what is tha, A: that).

Syntactic Complexity. The total number of communication units (c-units) and the total number of subordinate clauses was calculated in order to figure out the mean number of subordinate clauses per c-unit produced by each dyad in both groups. A c-unit can be an independent clause, an independent clause with a subordinate clause attached to or embedded in it (Hunt, 1970; Kern, 1995, p. 463; Loban 1966; Long, 1991), or isolated phrases which do not have a subject and a verb but which have communicative value (Long, 1991) (e.g., wait, ok, yes, bye). Following the definition by Rulon and McCreary (1986, p. 186), any word, phrase, or sentence that in some way contributed pragmatic or semantic meaning to a conversation regardless of grammaticality were counted as a c-unit (e.g., Mine is a old woman (one c-unit), not a girl (one c-unit)). Elliptical answers to questions were counted as one c-unit (e.g., A: “Where are you going? (one c-unit),” B: “to the store (one c-unit),” or A: “Maybe it is about \$20 (one c-unit),” B: “Yes. (one c-unit),” A: “Did you find Newton Street (one c-unit),” B: “Yes (one c-unit)”). Some words were included with the following c-units and counted as one c-unit if they seemed to form one semantic unit (e.g., B: “Now (No c-unit). I stop temporary. (one c-unit),” A: “Another girl passes. (one c-unit) Ok? (No c-unit),” B: “Ok (No c-unit). Let’s begin. (one c-unit),” A: “Ok (no c-unit). I see a man fixing a TV (one c-unit)”). Repetitions in an attempt to correct the previous c-units by the same speaker were not counted as a separate c-unit (e.g., A: “I know that on the fist school (one c-

unit),” A: “first school (no c-unit),” B: “Hihh! Myeong (one c-unit),” B: “Hi! Myeong (no c-unit)”). When the speaker’s turn is interrupted by the listener back-channeling or by the speaker’s own utterance, both halves of the speaker’s turn was counted as one c-unit if they are one clause (e.g. A: “I will not give them anything (one c-unit),” A: “Just the table,” A: “because they took 5000 dollars for eli? (no c-unit)”). When a speaker used more than one line for one communication unit, they were counted as one. For example:

A: I need for my decision (one c-unit)

A: More information (no c-unit)

or

A: The middle of screen (No c-unit)

A: right of screen (No c-unit)

A: on Six St and Access Rd (No c-unit)

A: It is a house (one c-unit)

If a single sentence was formed as a result of a combination of two simple sentences with a conjunction, then the two simple sentences were coded as two separate c-units (e.g., A: “Yes, map is the same (one c-unit) but people inside are different (one c-unit)”). Sentences with correlative conjunctions (“both....and,” “either....or,” “neither....nor,” “not only.....but also,” “so...as,” “whether...or”) were coded as one c-unit if they had a compound subject, object, adjective, or adverb (e.g., A: “it is close to many things and to the airport” (one c-unit). However, if they linked two verbs, then

they were coded as two different c-units (e.g., A: “a woman shopping (one c-unit) and buying a T-shirt” (one c-unit)).

In addition to the total number of c-units, the total number of subordinate clauses produced by dyads in both groups was calculated to find out the total number of subordinate clauses per c-unit. The subordinate clauses, which are reduced to a phrase by omitting the relative pronoun and the part of the verb, were counted as one subordinate clause (e.g., A: “We are completely the same in the building with two cars”). If the subordinate was used as an answer to a question by the other student, it was not counted (e.g., A: “why?” B: “because the children like music (no subordinate clause but one c-unit)).

Lexical Complexity. Type token ratio (TTR) was calculated by the total number of different words divided by the total number of words. For example, the phrase “there is a woman who sits on a sofa” has a TTR of .88 because there are eight different words divided by nine total words. A higher TTR is considered to indicate a greater lexical complexity. The number of different words in the language produced by each dyad was calculated by the Oxford Concordance Programme (Micro-OCP, 2004). This tool lists all unique words with the number of times they were used in the text and the context in which they were used. After calculating the unique words, each unique word was analyzed in context to see whether it was a real word because the tool considers every utterance bound by space as a real word. For example, some utterances (e.g., “T,” “LL”), back channeling cues (e.g., “HHH,” “HAHHAHA”), and typos within separate

occurrences of the same word without typing error (e.g., “YOU^^”) are considered as a separate word by the tool. These utterances were taken out from the list of unique words.

Reliability

A random selection of 10% of the language produced by dyads in NSTG and another random selection of 10% of the language produced by dyads in STG were coded by an independent rater to subordinate clauses and c-units using the same procedures as described in this study. The agreement for the ratings of subordinate clauses was about 84% and c-units was about 83% for the language produced by dyads in the STG, and the agreement for the ratings of subordinate clauses was about 82% and c-units was about 84% for the language produced by dyads in the NSTG.

Data Analysis Technique

In an attempt to analyze the effect of similar tasks on language production, this study requires an analysis of multi variance (MANOVA) because the experiment will affect all three dependent variables separately and in combination with each other. In addition, the dependent variables share a common conceptual meaning (language production) from different dimensions (fluency, syntactic complexity, and lexical complexity of language produced), and it will be possible to account for the interaction of the dependent variables with each other. The level of significance (α) was set at .05. Hotelling T^2 was used to determine overall multivariate significance of dependent variables on the groups.

Results and Discussions

Table 5 shows the number of words, unique words, c-units, and subordinates produced by all dyads across the STG and NSTG groups. First, fluency was calculated and it was found that when provided with similar tasks in an online TBLL environment, students produce almost 74% more language than students who were not provided with similar tasks in the same time span in an online TBLL environment (see Table 5). Second, lexical diversity was calculated and it was found that the dyads in the STG produced almost 36% more lexically diverse language than the dyads in the NSTG (see Table 5). Third, syntactic complexity was calculated and it was found that the dyads in the NSTG used .11 subordinate clauses per c-unit while the dyads in the STG used .15 subordinate clauses per c-unit (see Table 5). It is clear that the dyads in the STG used almost 36% more subordinate clauses than the dyads in the NSTG.

TABLE 5
Total Number of Words, Unique Words, C-Units, and Subordinates Produced across Groups

Groups	Total words	Unique words	C-Units	Subordinates	SPC	TTR	WPM
NSTG	6557	1930	1279	147	0.57	1.47	32.78
STG	11418	2659	2055	316	0.79	1.19	57.09

Note. SPC= Subordinate clause per communication unit; TTR= Type token ratio; WPM= Word per minute

A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to assess if there were differences between the two groups (STG and NSTG) on three language production measures: words per minute (WPM), subordinate clause per communication unit (SPC),

and type token ratio (TTR). The box's test of equality of covariance matrices showed that observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups (sign. .26). Levene's Test result showed that homogeneity of variances assumption is not violated for the two of the dependent variables (Sig. subordinate clause per communication unit = .282, type token ratio = .879), but the assumption is violated for one of the variables (Sig. word per minute = .018). This lack of homogeneity of variance for one of the dependent variables can be ignored because MANOVA and ANOVA, which are based on F statistics, are robust to homogeneity of variance violation if the group sizes are equal (Glass, Peckhamp, & Sanders 1972; Stevens, 1996, p. 238), which is the case in this study. A significant difference was found: Hotelling's T = 2.427, F = 4.854, p=.048 multivariate eta squared = .708 (see Table 6). This result suggests that the students in the STG produced significantly better language overall than the students in the NSTG did.

TABLE 6
Comparison of Mean Number of WPM, SPC, and TTR across Groups

Groups	Value	F	Sig. (alpha=.05)	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power	Eta Squared
Hotelling's T	2.427	4.854	.048	.708	.630	.702

Note. WPM = Word per minute, SPC = Subordinate clause per minute, TTR = Type token ratio
P < .05

Examination of the coefficients for the linear combinations distinguishing the two groups indicated that word per minute (WPM) (Eta squared = .703, $p = .002$) and type token ratio (TTR) (Eta squared = .504, $p = .021$) contributed significantly, but subordinate clause per communication unit (SPC) (Eta squared = .204, $p = .19$) was not found to contribute significantly to distinguish the groups.

Follow up univariate ANOVAs indicated that word per minute ($F = 18.947$, $p = .002$) and type token ratio ($F = 8.143$, $p = .021$) were significantly different for the language produced by the dyads in the STG. Subordinate clause per communication unit ($F = 2.055$, $p = .19$) was not significantly different for the language produced by the dyads in the STG.

This result suggests that the students in the STG produced significantly more fluent language than did the students in the NSTG, and the students in the STG produced significantly more complex language in terms of lexical complexity than did the students in the NSTG. However, the students in the STG did not produce significantly more complex language in terms of syntactic complexity than the students in the NSTG did.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Results of the experiment described above provide the evidence necessary to maintain that students produce better language in terms of fluency and lexical complexity after observing similar tasks performed by native speakers in an online TBLL. Watching authentic subtitled videos enhances students' fluency as measured by the mean number of words per minute and lexical complexity as measured by type token ratio when they are completing meaningful communicative tasks. This has also been

confirmed with post-test language production tests by Borrás and Lafayette (1994) and Weyers (1999).

In addition, because observing authentic similar tasks was administered as a pre-task activity in this study, it is clear that pre-task activities improve fluency and lexical complexity of language produced during task completion. This is congruent with existing research with planning and rehearsal pre-task activities on increasing language fluency (Foster, 2001; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Skehan & Foster, 1999; Wendel, 1997; Wigglesworth, 1997) and lexical complexity (Bygate, 1996; Bygate, 2001; Crookes, 1989; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

While not statistically significant partly because of the small number of participants in the study, similar tasks may influence syntactic complexity of language produced by students as shown by other in previous pre-task activity research studies (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 1999). More research studies addressing the effect of similar tasks on enhancing syntactic complexity are needed before any conclusive remarks may be made.

The results also support the suggestion by Skehan (1998, p. 34) that observing similar tasks performed by native speakers eases students' cognitive processing load, which leads to allocation of more cognitive resources during task completion as observed by an improvement in fluency and complexity as it relates to lexical diversity of language production during task completion in an online TBLL.

Previous research studies reported that rehearsing similar tasks does not enhance language production, but the result of this study indicates that observing instead of

rehearsing similar tasks increases language production in terms of fluency and lexical complexity. Therefore, it is logical to assume that transfer of linguistic knowledge in the form of language production can be achieved by the suggestions of the input comprehension hypothesis rather than comprehensible output hypothesis in TBLL by exposing students to input comprehension rather than asking them to practice language before practicing a similar language. However, this claim also needs to be examined in detail in a future study.

Although students' input comprehension has not been measured directly, by looking at the difference that observing similar tasks had on language production and knowing that input comprehension enhances language production, it is logical to assume that authentic similar tasks improved students' input comprehension in TBLL.

Future research studies can be conducted to examine how much shared-information tasks and how much split-information tasks contribute to similar tasks in terms of their effect on language production. In addition, future researchers may investigate the effects of similar tasks on language production in an online TBLL environment as compared to a face-to-face TBLL environment. Because of time limitations, the effect of similar tasks on the accuracy of language production was not explored in this study, but could be investigated in a future study. Furthermore, the proficiency level of students can be tested to see its influence on language production in an online TBLL environment with similar tasks.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the effect of ASSTVs on enhancing negotiation of meaning and language production among English as second language learners. The first section of the study examined whether task familiarity through ASSTVs increases the amount of negotiation of meaning, and the second section of the study explored the effects of observing ASSTVs on language production by non-native speakers (NNSs) in an online task-based language learning (TBLL) environment.

Results from the first section of this study showed that task familiarity through observing ASSTVs increases the amount of negotiation of meaning students engage in during task completion in an online TBLL. In addition, results from the second section of this study showed that observing ASSTVs improves language production with regard to fluency and lexical complexity of language produced by students in an online TBLL.

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APPENDIX A

MAIN FRAMEWORK OF THE ONLINE TBLL ENVIRONMENT AND SIMILAR

TASKS



APPENDIX B

THE TASK TYPOLOGY BY PICA ET AL.

<i>Task activities and goals</i>	<i>Impact on opportunities for learner</i>		
	<i>Comprehension of input</i>	<i>Feedback on production</i>	<i>Interlanguage modification</i>
A. Interactional activity			
1. Interactant relationship of request and suppliance activities, based on which interactants hold, request, or supply information directed toward task interaction and outcomes:			
a. Each interactant holds a different portion of information and supplies and requests this information as needed to complete the task.	expected	expected	expected
b. One interactant holds all information and supplies it as other(s) request it.	expected if repeated, with roles reversed		
c. Each interactant has access to information and supplies it if other(s) request it.	possible	possible	possible
2. Interaction requirement for activity of request-suppliance directed toward task outcomes:			
a. Each interactant is required to request and supply information.	expected	expected	expected
b. One interactant is required to request, the other(s) required to supply information.	expected if repeated, with roles reversed		
c. Each interactant is expected to request and supply information, but not required to do so.	possible	possible	possible
B. Communication goal:			
3. Goal orientation in using information requested and supplied:			
a. Interactants have same or convergent goals.	expected	expected	expected
b. Interactants have related, but divergent goals.	possible	possible	possible
4. Outcome options in attempting to meet goals:			
a. Only one acceptable outcome is possible.	expected	expected	expected
b. More than one outcome is possible.	possible	possible	possible

APPENDIX C

COURSES AND LEVELS ENROLLED BY THE PARTICIPANTS AT ELI

Group	First Name	Composition	Grammar	Reading	Listening	Vocabulary	Oral
1	S1	200	200	200	200	100	200
1	S2	200	100	100	100	100	200
1	S3	200	200	200	300	300	200
1	S4	200	200	200	200	300	300
1	S5	200	100	200	200	200	100
1	S6	200	100	200	200	100	100
1	S7	200	200	200	200	200	200
1	S8	200	100	100	200	100	100
1	S9	200					200
1	S10	200	200	200	300	200	300
1	S11	200	200	200	200	200	200
1	S12	200	100	200	100	200	200
2	S13	200	200	200	300	200	300
2	S14	200	200	200	200	200	200
2	S15	200	200	200	200	200	200
2	S16	200	200	100	300	200	300
2	S17	200	200	200	200	100	200
2	S18	200	200	300	300	200	300
2	S19	200					
2	S20	200	100	100	200	100	100
2	S21	200	200	100	100	100	200
2	S22	200	100	100	100	100	100
2	S23	200	100	100	100	100	200
2	S24	200	100	100	100	100	200

Note. 100= Beginner level; 200= Intermediate level; 300= Advanced level

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