

# Effects of pre-task planning on paired oral test performance: A case of beginning EFL learners

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# Research Background

# Previous Studies

1. Inconsistent results of pre-task planning effects between task-based and test-based research
2. A lack of pre-task planning studies using dialogic tasks
3. Inconsistent results of the relationship between pre-task planning and proficiency

# I. Pre-task planning in task-based research

- Crookes (1989), Foster & Skehan (1996, 1999), Skehan & Foster (1997, 1999), Mehnert (1998), Ortega (1999) etc.
- Use of tasks in a classroom or laboratory
- Effects of pre-task planning on fluency and complexity
- Limited effects of pre-task planning on accuracy

# Pre-task planning in testing research

- Use of tasks in a testing context
- Elder & Iwashita (2005); Iwashita et al. (2001); Tavakoli & Skehan (2005); Weir et al. (2006); Wigglesworth (1997, 2001); Wigglesworth & Elder (2010)
- Mixed and limited effects on oral performance

## II. Monologic or dialogic tasks?

### TBLT

- Mostly monologic tasks (e.g., Crookes, 1989, Ortega, 1999, Mehnert, 1998)
- Some studies using dialogic tasks (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999)

### Testing

- Mostly (or all?) monologic types of task

# Co-constructed performance in pairs

- Susceptibility of test-taker performance to interlocutor behaviour (e.g. Lazaraton, 1996; Brown, 2003)
- Awareness of the co-constructed nature of speaking test performance (e.g. McNamara, 1996, Galaczi, 2004)
- “Confluence” (McCarthy, 2005)

### III. Pre-task planning and proficiency

- Few studies investigating beginning EFL learners (e.g., Wendel, 1997)
- Inconsistent results of studies investigating different proficiency levels (e.g., Kawauchi, 2005; Ortega, 2005; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Wigglesworth, 1997; Wigglesworth & Elder 2010)



# So, we investigate...

Effects of pre-task planning on L2 performance

- by EFL learners with different proficiencies involving beginning levels
- in paired oral tasks
- in a testing context

# Before and after study abroad experience

- Same learners with different proficiency levels?
- Less proficient (Before study abroad) – ***This presentation***
- More proficient (After study abroad)

# Research Methods

# Research questions (for THIS study)

1. Does pre-task planning make a difference to the quality of beginning EFL learners' performance in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency?
2. Does pre-task planning make a difference to the scores awarded to the learners?
3. Does pre-task planning make a difference to the learners' cognitive processing before and during the task? How do the learners use their pre-task planning time?

# Research instruments

1. Analysis of task performance
2. Analysis of rating scores
3. Analysis of post-task questionnaires

# 1. Performance measures

- **Fluency**
  - Speed: All produced words
  - Breakdown: Number of lexicalized and unlexicalized pauses
  - Repair: Number of repetitions, corrections
- **Accuracy**: Number of errors per 100 words
- **Complexity**: (1) number of clauses per AS-unit;  
(2) number of words per turn (**Fluency?**)

## 2. Rating

- Rating scale (Iwashita, Elder & McNamara, 2001)
- Fluency/Accuracy/Complexity
- Two raters with 1.5-hour rater standardization training

### 3. Post-task questionnaire

- Adapted and modified from the “Cognitive Processing Questionnaire” (Weir, O’Sullivan & Horai, 2006)
- What participants thought of or did
  - (1) before they started;
  - (2) in planning stage; and
  - (3) while they were speaking



# Participants

- 32 EFL learners at a private Japanese university (16 pairs)
- **Proficiency:** TOEFL PBT Mean=476, around A2 (CEFR)
- **Pairing:** gender + acquaintanceship variables controlled

# Planning

- **Planned:** 3 minutes of pre-task planning time
- **Unplanned:** no planning time

# Task

- Decision-making tasks: Part 3 of the Cambridge FCE
- “Happiness Task”, “Café Task”, “Profession Task” and “Tourists Task”
- Two tasks in the same pair

## Happiness task (5 minutes)

Here are some of the things in life which can affect our happiness.

1. Talk to each other about how **important** these things are for a happy life.
2. Decide which two are the most **important**.



# Results

1. Performance measures
2. Rating scores
3. Questionnaire

# 1. Performance measures

## Fluency

- No notable difference

## Accuracy

- No notable difference

## Complexity

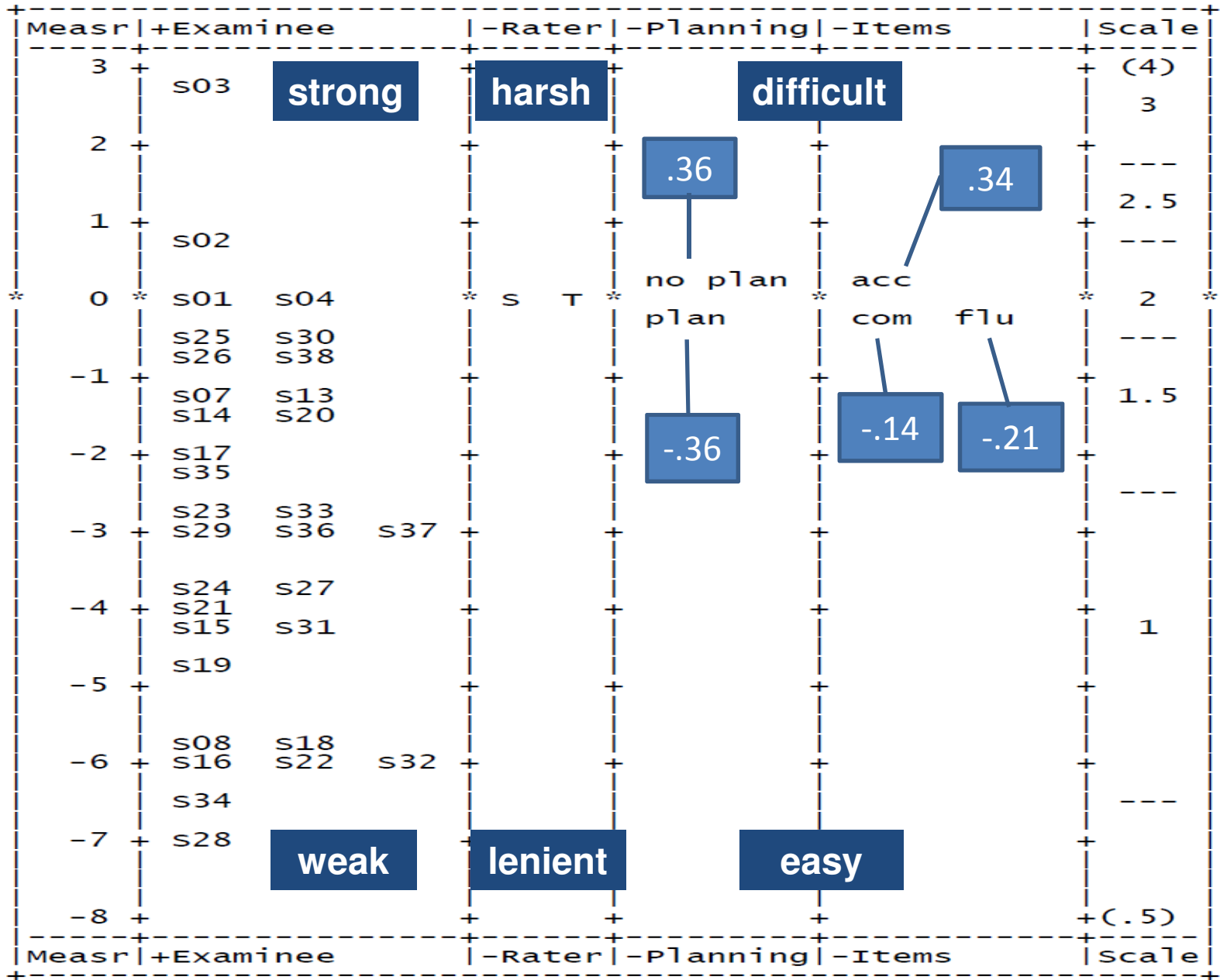
- **More words per turn in the planned condition (Sig)**
- No significant difference in the number of clauses per AS-unit

Complexity Measures	Plan M (SD)	No Plan M (SD)	T-value	Sig
All words produced per turn	10.77 (8.77)	7.45 (5.71)	-4.161	0.000

## 2. Rating Scores

- **General trend:** Participants got slightly higher scores in the planned condition than in the unplanned condition
- **Sig:** For **fluency** and **complexity**, planning made a statistically significant difference to scores
- **Difficulty:** Accuracy > Complexity > Fluency

# FACET map





# Planning measurement report

<b>Fluency</b>	Fair -M Average	Measure (difficulty)	Infit MnSq	<b>Sig</b>
<b>Plan</b>	1.45	-.70	.79 (v)	Fixed (all same) chi-square: 17.7, df: 1 significance (probability): .00
<b>No plan</b>	1.23	.70	1.16 (v)	

<b>Accuracy</b>	Fair -M Average	Measure (difficulty)	Infit MnSq	<b>Non Sig</b>
<b>Plan</b>	1.15	-.31	.94 (v)	Fixed (all same) chi-square: 4.0, df: 1 significance (probability): .05
<b>No plan</b>	1.09	.31	.94 (v)	

<b>Complexity</b>	Fair -M Average	Measure (difficulty)	Infit MnSq	<b>Sig</b>
<b>Plan</b>	1.23	-.32	.79 (v)	Fixed (all same) chi-square: 5.8 df: 1 significance (probability): .02
<b>No plan</b>	1.14	.32	1.09 (v)	

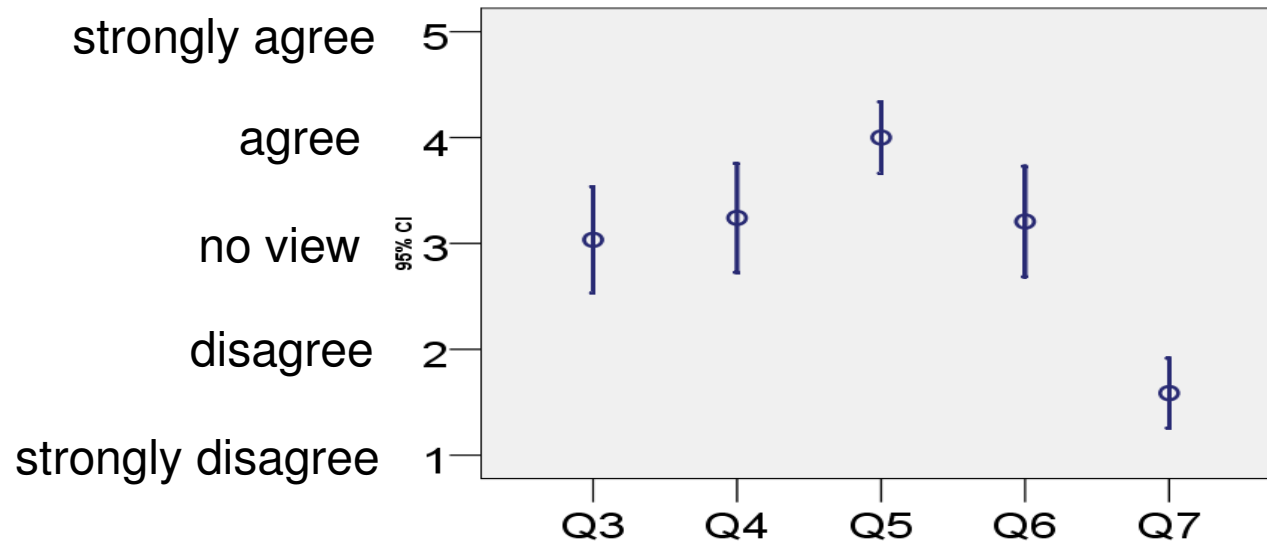
### 3. Questionnaire

#### 1) What they thought of or did before they started

	Selected items	Plan	No plan	Sig.
Generating ideas	Q5 I had enough ideas to speak about this topic	2.67	2.67	ns
	Q6 I felt easy to produce enough ideas for the interaction from memory/experience	2.00	2.59	Z=-2.30 P=.021
	Q7 I knew a lot about this type of speaking task i.e., how to interact in pairs	1.97	2.00	ns

5-point Likert scale: 1. strongly disagree – 3. no view - 5. strongly agree

## 2) What they thought of or did in the planning stage



Task specific planning	Q3 I thought of what to talk about for <b>all elements</b> of the prompt card	
	Q4 I thought of which <b>one or two elements</b> I would eventually like to choose in the decision making phase.	
	Q5 I wrote down <b>the points I wanted to make</b> based on the visual information in the prompt card	
Linguistic planning	Q6 I wrote down <b>the words and expressions</b> I needed to fulfil the task	
	Q7 I wrote down <b>the grammatical structures</b> I needed to fulfil the task	
Interaction	Q13 I thought of <b>what my partner might say</b> about each element in the prompt	Yes: 5 (15.6%) No: 27 (84.4%)

### 3) What they thought of or did while they were speaking

	Selected items	Plan	No plan	Sig
<b>Idea development &amp; completing the task</b>	<b>Q1</b> I felt it was easy to give my opinions during the interaction	2.28	2.35	ns
	<b>Q2</b> I was able to express my ideas using suitable words	2.41	2.35	ns
	<b>Q12</b> I felt it was easy to complete the task	1.84	2.06	ns
<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>Q9</b> I was listening and checking the correctness of the contents while I was talking	3.34	3.55	ns
	<b>Q10</b> I was listening and checking the correctness of sentences while I was talking	3.44	3.48	ns
<b>Interacting with partner</b>	<b>Q4</b> When my partner was talking, I was fully concentrating in what he/she was talking about	4.03	4.23	ns
	<b>Q5</b> When my partner was talking, I was thinking about what I should say after he/she finishes the talk	3.47	3.42	ns

5-point Likert scale: 1. strongly disagree – 3. no view - 5. strongly agree

**Conclusion**

# Main Findings

## Planning had:

- Positive effects only on “words per turn” (**complexity/fluency**) in the planned condition (**performance measures**)
  - Positive effects on **fluency and complexity** in the planned condition (**rating**)
  - No notable difference in their perception towards their performance (**questionnaire**)
- **consistent with the previous task-based research?**

- Planning encourages “**mode-shifting**”?
  - Unplanned: **dialogic mode** (i.e., frequent turns, shorter utterances in each turn);
  - Planned: **monologic mode** (i.e., longer utterances, less hesitations)

# Thank you!

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## Iwashita, Elder and McNamara (2001) – slightly modified (adding .5 points, level 0)

### Fluency

- 5 Speaks without hesitation; speech is generally of a speed similar to a native speaker
- 4 Speaks fairly fluently with only occasional hesitation, false starts and modification of attempted utterance. Speech is only slightly slower than that of a native speaker
- 3 Speaks more slowly than a native speaker due to hesitations and word-finding delays
- 2 A marked degree of hesitation due to word-finding delays or inability to phrase utterances easily
- 1 Speech is quite disfluent due to frequent and lengthy hesitations or false starts
- 0 Speech is so halting and fragmentary that conversation is impossible

### Accuracy

- 5 Errors are barely noticeable
- 4 Errors are not unusual, but rarely major
- 3 Manages most common forms, with occasional errors, major errors present
- 2 Limited linguistic control: major errors frequent
- 1 Clear lack of linguistic control even of basic forms
- 0 No linguistic control even of the most basic forms

## Complexity

- 5 *Confidently* attempts a variety of verb forms (e.g. passives, modals, tense and aspect), even if the use is not always correct. Regularly takes risks grammatically in the service of expressing complex meaning. Routinely attempts the use of coordination and subordination to convey ideas that cannot be expressed in a single clause, even if the result is *occasionally* awkward or incorrect.
- 4 Attempts a variety of verb forms (e.g. passives, modals, tense and aspect), even if the use is not always correct. Takes risks grammatically in the service of expressing complex meaning. Regularly attempts the use of coordination and subordination to convey ideas that cannot be expressed in a single clause, even if the result is awkward or incorrect
- 3 Mostly relies on simple verb forms, with some attempt to use a greater variety of forms (e.g. passives, modals, more varied tense and aspect). Some attempt to use coordination and subordination to convey ideas that cannot be expressed in a single clause
- 2 Produces numerous sentence fragments in a predictable set of simple clause structures. If coordination and/or subordination are attempted to express more complex clause relations, this is hesitant and done with difficulty
- 1 Produces mostly sentence fragments and simple phrases. Little attempt to use any grammatical means to connect ideas across clauses
- 0 No awareness of basic grammatical means

CAF	Measures	Plan M (SD)	No Plan M (SD)	T-value	Sig.
<b>Speed Fluency</b>	All words produced	361.13 (116.09)	347.63 (91.20)	0.820	0.425
	All meaningful words produced	248.81 (86.89)	234.94 (72.94)	1.297	0.214
<b>Breakdown Fluency</b>	Number of lexicalized & unlexicalized pauses	.478 (.126)	.482 (.127)	.0313	0.759
<b>Repair fluency</b>	Number of repetitions, corrections	.091 (.024)	.099 (.055)	0.741	0.470
<b>Accuracy</b>	percentage of error-free clauses	73.30 (14.69)	73.76 (20.52)	-0.120	0.906
<b>Complexity</b>	All words produced per turn	10.43 (6.56)	7.98 (6.10)	2.781	0.014 <b>Sig</b>
	All meaningful words per turn	7.12 (4.35)	5.26 (3.75)	2.961	0.010 <b>Sig</b>
	Clauses per AS-unit	1.11 (1.00)	1.07 (.060)	-1.744	0.102