Task Repetition in L2 Oral Instruction: A Case Study Exploring Impacts of Spacing and Complexity

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Greeting people, giving directions, and making purchases are tasks that can occur daily or even multiple times a day. In the real world, tasks are often repeated, creating natural contexts for language learning (Bygate, 2018). This case study specifically explored how variations in task spacing and complexity impact learners' oral proficiency. It involved one advanced and three upper-intermediate speakers who initially performed a picture description task. Following their initial attempts, task complexity was increased at varying levels for subsequent performances. Additionally, two participants performed the task with no interval (immediate repetition), while the other two were given a two-day interval before repeating the task. Task performance was then evaluated based on complexity, fluency and accuracy.

Text data was collected by transcribing speaking recordings. The results indicated that with the increase of task complexity, repetition of the task type with the same array (first repetition) helped learners improve the complexity and fluency of their speech production. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that spacing between repeated tasks did not influence the efficacy of task repetition. Other findings and implications will be further elaborated, with the objective of assisting teachers in selecting the appropriate task types and effectively conducting task-based lessons.

KEYWORDS: task repetition, spacing effects, task complexity, accuracy, fluency

Primary author: NGUYEN THI KHANH, Phuong (Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education)

Presenter: NGUYEN THI KHANH, Phuong (Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education)

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