Research Paper

Effect of Using First Language by Iranian EFL Learners in Task Preparation on their Speaking Accuracy, Fluency, and Complexity

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Abstract

The current inquiry aimed to examine the effect of the first language by Iranian learners of a Foreign Language (EFL) in task preparation on their speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity. For this purpose, 40 Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate level were selected based on a placement test and divided into two equal groups. Then, the speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity test was administered as the pretest. The treatment lasted for five sessions of 60 minutes. In these sessions, the learners did oral opinion tasks. In the first group, participants were supposed to spend 10 minutes cooperating with a partner to read a proposed problem, discuss their solutions, and jot down by in a planning sheet. Within 10 minutes, they prepared for the task using only their L1 (Persian) to improve both their speaking and writing skills. Following that, the participants were separated into various rooms and were given two minutes to plan the task in English prior to doing the task. In contrast, the second group completed the planning sheet and prepared the task in English as their second/foreign language. The instruction lasted five sessions. At the final session, the speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity posttest were conducted. The effects of the task planning conditions were analyzed and compared during and after the task performance. The data were analyzed via ANCOVA. The findings indicated that using L1 by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation significantly affected speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Finally, the pedagogical and theoretical implications of the study are provided.

Keywords: Iranian EFL Learners; L1; Speaking Accuracy; Speaking Fluency; Speaking Complexity; Task Preparation

پژوهش حاضر با هدف بررسی تأثیر زبان اول توسط زبان آموزان ایرانی یک زبان خارجی (EFL) در آماده سازی تکلیف بر دقت، روانی و پیچیدگی گفتار آنها انجام شد. بدین منظور ۴۰ زبان آموز ایرانی زبان انگلیسی در سطح متوسط بر اساس آزمون تعیین سطح انتخاب و به دو گروه مساوی تقسیم شدند. سپس آزمون روان گفتاری، دقت و پیچیدگی به عنوان پیش آزمون اجرا شد. درمان به مدت پنج جلسه ۶۰ دقیقه ای به طول انجامید. در این جلسات فراگیران به انجام تکالیف نظر شفاهی پرداختند. در گروه اول، شرکت کنندگان قرار بود ۱۰ دقیقه با یک شریک همکاری کنند تا یک مشکل پیشنهادی را بخوانند، راه حل های خود را بحث کنند و در یک برگه برنامه ریزی یادداشت کنند. در عرض ۱۰ دقیقه، آنها فقط با استفاده از L1 (فارسی) خود را برای این کار آماده کردند تا هم مهارت های گفتاری و هم مهارت های نوشتاری خود را بهبود بخشند. پس از آن، شرکت‌کنندگان در اتاق‌های مختلف جدا شدند و دو دقیقه به آنها فرصت داده شد تا قبل از انجام کار، کار را به زبان انگلیسی برنامه‌ریزی کنند. در مقابل، گروه دوم برگه برنامه ریزی را تکمیل کردند و کار را به زبان انگلیسی به عنوان زبان دوم/خارجی آماده کردند. این آموزش پنج جلسه به طول انجامید. در جلسه پایانی پس آزمون روان گفتاری، دقت و پیچیدگی انجام شد. اثرات شرایط برنامه ریزی وظیفه در طول و بعد از انجام کار مورد تجزیه و تحلیل و مقایسه قرار گرفت. داده‌ها با استفاده از روش ANCOVA مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفت. یافته‌ها نشان داد که استفاده از L1 توسط زبان‌آموزان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی در آماده‌سازی تکلیف به‌طور معنی‌داری بر دقت، روان و پیچیدگی گفتار تأثیر می‌گذارد. در نهایت، مفاهیم آموزشی و نظری مطالعه ارائه شده است.

کلمات کلیدی: زبان آموزان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی ;L1; دقت صحبت کردن؛ روان صحبت کردن؛ پیچیدگی صحبت کردن؛ آماده سازی کار

Introduction

The debate on incorporating the first language (L1) in foreign language education has been a prominent topic in language teaching for decades (He, 2012; Mackey et al., 2007). According to Cook (2001), over the last 120 years, the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context has been to discourage learners' L1 use in language teaching. However, in favor of L1 use, some studies confirmed the efficacy of L1 in developing the Second Language (L2) learning process (Bui et al., 2018; De Jong, 2016; Gass et al., 1999; Plonsky & Oswald, 2014). They argued that L1 might be a psychological tool to enhance L2 acquisition. From a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky (1978) argued that the use of the first language (L1) helps learners engage within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In the same vein, Mackey and Goo (2007) found that L1 use in pairs/groups allows the learners to process language cognitively at a higher level. Similarly, Taylor (2018) enumerated the advantages of L1 use in language teaching contexts. Likewise, some researchers such as Lambert (2019), Stapa and Majid (2009). Wigglesworth and Elder (2010) mentioned that L1 use gives the learners cognitive opportunities to process the L2 and create higher-quality work than they would whether they were solely limited to the L2, as argued by Lagasabaster (2013), "We need to make headway towards the formulation of some guiding principles for L1 use". (p. 22). Thus, L1 use in language context is a complex matter, and it has been controversial for a long time. Many instructors and language learners have various attitudes, and each group possesses explanations and justifications. However, as noted by Littlewood and Yu (2011), there is no consensus on the role of L1 in the EFL context, indicating that few studies are against L1 use.

Concerning language education, Richards and Rodgers (2005) noted that L2 teaching is considered a significant pedagogical matter. They added that L1 use by teachers in EFL settings and in teacher-student negotiations has been a debatable topic among bilingual and monolingual researchers (Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2009; Gotz, 2013; Song, 2009; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). These researchers have various stands on L1 use in language teaching contexts. For monolingual supporters, L1 use in EFL classrooms should be totally abandoned. In contrast, bilingual approach researchers favored L1 use in EFL settings. Accordingly, recent studies have provided the need for a dire change in assumptions regarding L1 use.

One of the thorniest tasks for EFL learners is to communicate fluently and accurately in L2. An increasing number of studies conducted over the past few decades have confirmed that speaking skills are social, contextualized, communicative, and interactive events (Bui et al., 2018; Lambert, 2017; Taylor, 2018). In addition to the fluency and accuracy aspects of speaking skills, the complexity component was introduced by Skehan in 1989. In his model of speaking, complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) are considered the three main components of proficiency. Ellis (2009) defines complexity as "the capacity to use more advanced language, with the possibility that such language may not be controlled so effectively" (p. 475). According to Housen and Kuiken (2009), accuracy is "the extent to which the language produced in performing a task conforms with target language norms" (p. 323). As for fluency, Skehan (2009, p. 510) defines it as "the capacity to produce speech at a normal rate and without interruption."

While there is general consensus on the importance of examining the impact of using L1 in task preparation on Iranian EFL learners' speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity, no studies have been conducted within the Iranian EFL context to date. Accordingly, the current study was to fill such a gap in the literature by proposing the following research questions:

RQ1. Does using the first language by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation have any statistically significant effect on their speaking accuracy?

RQ2. Does using the first language by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation have any statistically significant effect on their speaking fluency?

RQ3. Does using the first language by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation have any statistically significant effect on their speaking complexity?

Review of Literature

The language teaching process is mainly touched upon with its relationship with the teaching method so that teaching practices are enhanced for teachers and researchers, examining the most beneficial method for teaching. Some English language teaching approaches are designed to teach a second language in EFL/ESL contexts, along with the best exercises. As stated by Tochon (2014), teaching and learning approaches shifted from conventional methods to communicative approaches, in which the learners are supposed to need to experience using another language (i.e., first language) to communicate more effectively. Brok and Gnnarsdottirs (2019) also maintained the best approaches that the instructors may choose are the teaching strategies that change the learners into active recipients who engage in classroom activities, which raise their communication practices. In the same vein, Brandi (2021) stated, "Effective approach is not about a method. It is about understanding and implementing principles of learning" (p. 22).

Teaching approaches introduced new features and contributed to some solutions and challenges in language learning. Such approaches vary based on their inclusive or exclusive use of the first language in second language contexts. They are derived from various educational contexts and are highlighted in relation to various social and educational needs. Thus, to use them effectively, language instructors should consider these questions: What are the characteristics of the language learners, what their current language proficiency is, what type of communicative requirements do they have, and the contexts in which they will be utilizing second language in the near future. Needless to say, no single approach can promise beneficial findings. Harbord (2009) believed that there are two main teaching approaches that address various EFL practices in utilizing L1 as: the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the Direct Method (DM). He added that GTM promotes the use of L1 in EFL contexts, whereas DM prohibits it. In fact, between the 1950s and 1980s, as an active period in terms of teaching methods, the smaller language teaching approaches were raised in overall language education (Richards & Rodgers, 2005). During this time, teaching method diversity was prevalent, and the debate on L1 use was still in vogue.

Concerning the task element and speaking skill, the theoretical framework of this study was rooted in Willis's (1996) task assumption, Levelt's (1989, 1995, 1999) speech production model, and Skehan et al. (2012) task preparation assumptions.

Willis (1996) presented a task framework, including three stages. In the first stage, called the pre-task stage, the instructor presents the topic and task. *Task Cycle* is the second stage, in which the learners employ every language resource they need to complete the task. Then, they plan to recite what they have learned (*Planning*) and give their report (*Report*). *Language Focus* is the final stage, in which involves instructor underlines essential linguistic elements used in past stages (*Analysis*), and provide learners with some activities (*Practice*).

Regarding Levelt's speech production model, speech production is viewed as a modular process consists of four sequential stages, namely *conceptualization*, *formulation, articulation,* and *monitoring* with various sub-processes involved in each (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Levelt's (1995) speech production model
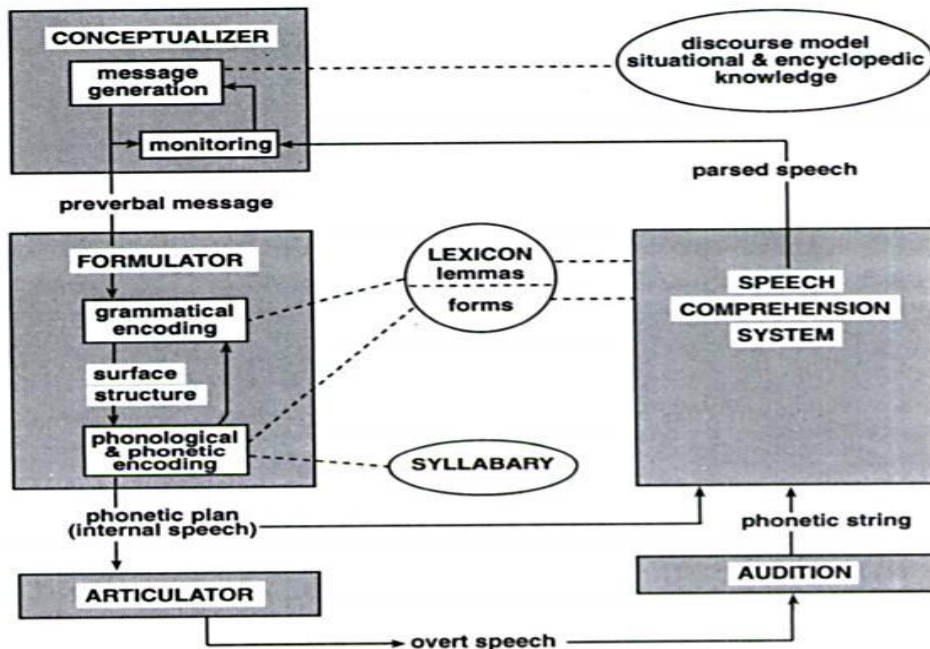
Further, as far as Skehan et al. (2012) task preparation assumption is concerned, the first component of the task preparation is strategic planning, in which the learners are provided with time before conducting the task. According to Skehan et al. (2012), asking learners to plan in their L1 production as opposed to the L2 is one option to plan tasks, which affect the speech production stages.

As stated by Cook (2001), L1 use can be in line with the task-based approach. Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) was initially put forward by Breen and Candlin (1980), Long (1985a) and Prabhu (1987), which involves the structural and the functional-notional approaches. TBLT was a reaction against traditional and presentation-practice-production (PPP) paradigms. Some studies have been conducted on the efficiency of task preparation as well as L1 use in ESL/EFL contexts.

In a study by Lameta-Tufuga (1994), the efficiency of the L1 use was expressed. They examined the effects of L1 use in a writing task. The participants were able to discuss the content of the task in L1 before writing the essays. The findings confirmed the learners engaged in the task actively, and activated their related schemata in L2. In this case, L1 use had a supportive role to achieve control of relevant L2 vocabulary.

In Song and Andrew's (2009), teachers' opinions of the role of L1 in L2 teaching and learning were investigated in EFL Chinese context. The interviews and observations were used in their study. The outcomes indicated that all Chinese teachers resorted to L1 in various classrooms to explaining language aspects in writings, defining the L2 lexical meanings, and teaching the grammar.

In a separate study, Rahmanian (2004) examined the correlation between pre-task and online planning and their effects on fluency, accuracy, and complexity. The findings showed that pre-task planners exhibited superior fluency compared to other groups. Additionally, descriptive tasks were found to be easier than narrative tasks, displaying not only significantly higher accuracy but also greater complexity. In the context of Iranian EFL learners, Jafari (2006) examined how planning conditions, task structure, and gender influenced learners' written

performance. The study found a notable difference between planned and unplanned conditions. Moreover, the impact of planning was more pronounced in personal and narrative tasks compared to decision-making tasks. However, no interaction was observed among task structure, planning condition, and gender. Hsieh and Chen (2007) conducted a study on the effect of task preparation on switching and repeating trials, taking into consideration the time interval between the response to the first task and the onset of the next task's stimulus. They concluded task preparation had a similar impact on switching and repeating trials, whatever the time was. In another research, Lambert et al. (2020) explored the possible effect of four forms of task preparation on L2 oral production. They conducted the study with 144 EFL learners. The participants were supposed to do an oral opinion task after 10 minutes of preparation. They showed various preparation options that assisted L2 learners in speech production.

In another inquiry, Levine (2003) probed into the academic students' and teachers' attitudes toward the use of L1 and L2 in language classes. She used German, Spanish, and French native speakers as ESL participants. Her results revealed that both academic ESL teachers and students frequently employed the L1 to discuss class assignments and management. Further, in 2006, Sharma (2006) did research regarding the use of L1 in English contexts for secondary school. The classroom observation was used, and questionnaire answers of 100 learners and 20 secondary school EFL teachers were also gathered. The findings indicated that EFL teachers and learners agreed to the occasional use of L1 for several purposes, such as clarifying grammar points, creating a close rapport, and simplifying the meaning of ambiguous lexical terms.

Huang (2019) examined Taiwanese EFL learners' opinions on using L1 and concluded that the participants argued their teachers should make utilize the L1 to show the grammatical points. They also confirmed that the L1 usage should be twenty-five percent of class time, and consequently, the second language should be spoken for the rest. They also liked their teachers to use L1 for brainstorming ideas, and clarifying problematic areas. Another research was run by Saito and Ebsworth (2004), in which the ESL learners' perceptions towards L1 were taken into consideration. They showed that EFL participants believed that L1 use was beneficial to them, and most of them preferred to have non-native language teachers. In the Malaysian EFL context, Carson and Kashihara (2012) investigated the role of L1. They found that most EFL students favored using L1 for comprehending checks, clarifying challenging areas, and defining new vocabulary items. The participants also showed that when EFL teachers translate in L1, they feel less anxious. As stated by Macaro (2005), the use of L1 assists "avoidance of input modification" (p. 44). He also pointed out that L1 use might build personal relationships with EFL/ESL learners. Based on Ahmad's (2009) results, EFL teachers' L1 use could give the learners an opportunity to do exercises effectively and recognize new lexicons, as well as any problematic areas in grammar. He also drew to the conclusion that L1 translation should be considered as a technique but not as a teaching method, which is used instead of other methods. In the Iranian EFL context, Nazary (2008) revealed that EFL learners with different proficiency levels were dubious to employ their L1 in the EFL settings and favored to be exposed to the L2 only. In the same vein, Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz (2019) concluded that both low and high-proficient EFL Iranian students did not favor their L1 since they both showed L2 to be the dominant language employed.

Method

Research Design

For the purpose of the current investigation, the quantitative research design was employed, in which the effect of using L1 by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation on their speaking accuracy, fluency and complexity was taken into consideration. Thus, the current study utilized pretest posttest design by using a quasi-experimental design. It should be mentioned that the gender of the participants was controlled and not investigated.

Setting and Participants

The participants consisted of 40 out of 20 male and 20 female English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners from a language institute in Bandar Lengeh, Hormozgan, Iran. All of them studied at an intermediate level. They were randomly selected via convenience sampling. Then, the participants were administered into two groups of 20 learners, one as a control group and the other as an experimental group. Their age ranged from 23 to 28 years old.

Instruments

Oxford Placement Test

To ensure a homogeneous sample, the researchers administered the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). OPT is a placement test, which assisted the researcher to select the intermediate level participants. It is the test of language proficiency presented by Oxford University Press (2021), including 60 items in with two sections. In the first section, there are 40 multiple-choice items, and in the second section, 20 multiple-choice items are provided.

Speaking Accuracy, Fluency, and Complexity Test (Pretest & Posttest)

To assess the participants' speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity before and after the treatment, the speaking sections of the OPT were utilized. This test comprised 15 questions evaluated by two professional raters. Inter-rater reliability was also calculated to assess the agreement between the two raters in scoring the participants' speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Two raters, the researcher and a language expert with eight years of teaching experience, used OPT speaking rubrics to score the participants. The agreement of the two raters in scoring the examinees' performances was also calculated through the Pearson product-moment coefficient of correlation.

Speaking Fluency Rating Scale

Speaking fluency was evaluated using Ellis' rubrics (2008), which measure fluency based on the number of syllables produced per minute during a task. To determine this, the researchers counted the number of pauses the participants made while speaking.

Speaking Accuracy Rating Scale

Speaking accuracy was calculated as the number of error-free clauses divided by the total number of independent clauses, sub-clausal units, and subordinate clauses multiplied by 100, following the method described by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005).

Speaking Complexity Rating Scale

Speaking complexity was calculated using the proportion of clauses to T-units. A T-unit, as defined by Hunt (1966), is "one main clause plus whatever subordinate clauses happen to be attached or embedded with it" (p. 735).

Pretest and Posttest Tool

For this study, opinion tasks were created to investigate the impact of using the first language (L1) in task preparation in both the pretest and posttest. To this end, task materials were developed by the researcher and reviewed by two expert judges. Each task consisted of three parts and began with proposing a problem. The learners were supposed to find a solution to it. After proposing a problem and finding a solution, the learners were asked to express their opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of each solution.

Data Collection Procedure

First, 40 Iranian EFL learners were selected based on a placement test and divided into two equal groups. Then, two groups took the speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity test as the pretest, and their scores were collected to be compared with their post-test scores later. Next, the treatment, which lasted for five sessions of 60 minutes, started. During these sessions, learners did oral opinion tasks. In the first group, participants were given 10 minutes to work on the task with a classmate. They were instructed to skim the problem and discuss their solutions using only their first language (L1). Afterward, they moved to separate rooms and were given 2 minutes to plan the task in English before performing it. In the other group, participants completed the planning sheet and prepared the task in L2 in the same way as the participants in the first group without L1. Then, the speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity test, as well as the post-test, were conducted. Finally, the impacts of these task-planning conditions were analyzed and compared during and after the task performance.

Data Analysis

The scores from each test were entered into SPSS (version 26.00) for descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation, were used to analyze the data. Inferential statistics, specifically ANCOVA, were employed to analyze the gathered data further. However, prior to conducting the ANCOVA, the main assumptions of the ANCOVA, such as Linearity, Homogeneity of regression slopes, and Equality of variance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), were examined in SPSS.

Results and Discussion

Results

The first question in this research examined the effect of using L1 by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation on their speaking accuracy. To answer this question, ANCOVA was run and reported in Table 1.

Table 1

ANCOVA Results for Speaking Accuracy

		Speaking Accuracy Scores		
		Observed Mean	Adjusted Mean	SD	N
EG		81	varies	2.715	20
CG		80.5	varies	2.305	20
Source	SS	df	MS	F
EG	1024.92	39	1024.92	5.75*
CG	2628.00	39	2628.00	14.75*
EG × CG.	664.45	39	664.45	3.73*
Error	5878.08	32	178.12	

Note. $R^2 = .5101$, Adj. $R^2 = .4601$.
* $p < .10$

Table 2

Comparisons of Mean Differences in Speaking Accuracy

Achievement Comparison by Study Condition for Levels of Posttest Performance	Estimated Mean Difference	Standard Error of Difference	90% CI

Posttest = 73.36			
EG vs. CG.	0.23	7.66	-12.73, 13.20
Posttest = 59.37			
EG vs. CG.	-9.58	4.99	-18.02, -1.14
Posttest = 45.38			
EG vs. CG.	-19.42	6.54	-30.49, -8.35

Note. * $p < .10$.

Figure 2

Scatter Plot of Pre-Speaking and Post-Speaking accuracy Scores with Points for Multiple Comparisons Indicated
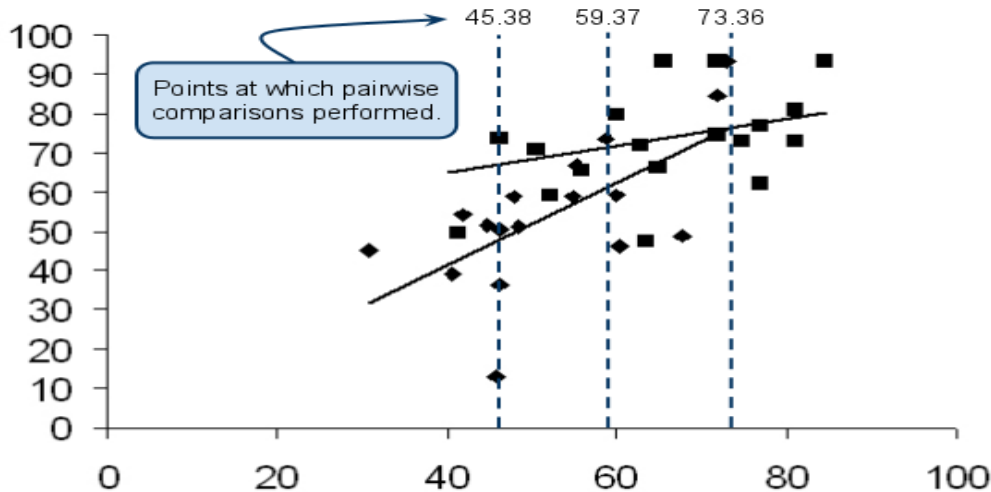
The ANCOVA results indicate a statistically significant interaction between posttest scores and the effect of using the first language (L1) at the 0.10 level. Figure 2 visually represents these findings, showing a strong, positive association between pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group. The second research question examined the impact of using L1 on Iranian EFL learners in task preparation on their speaking fluency. To this end, ANCOVA was administered to find out the difference between the performances of the two groups' posttest. Table 3 illustrates the results.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and ANCOVA Results for Speaking Fluency

		Speaking fluency Scores		
		Observed Mean	Adjusted Mean	SD	N
Experimental		78.06	varies	1.461	20
Control		77	varies	1.705	20
Source	SS	df	MS	F
Effect	5893.29	39	1024.92	5.75*
Pretest (P)	3876.30	39	2628.00	14.75*
Effect × P	14458.59	39	664.45	3.73*
Error	5878.08	32	178.12	

*Note*. $R^2 = .5101$, Adj. $R^2 = .4601$.
* p< .10

Table 4
Comparisons of Mean Differences in Speaking Fluency

Achievement Comparison by Study Condition for Levels of Post-test Performance	Estimated Value of Mean Difference	Standard Error of Difference	90% CI
Speaking Fluency. Posttest = 71.94 EG vs. CG	0.21	7.03	-12.07, 13.84
Speaking Fluency Posttest = 58.02 EG vs. CG	-9.24	4.28	-18.58, -1.25
Speaking Fluency Posttest = 44.11 EG vs. CG	-19.14	6.00	-30.77, -8.69

Note. $* p < .10$.

Figure 3
Scatter Plot for Pre-Speaking and Post-Speaking fluency Scores with Points for Multiple Comparisons Indicated
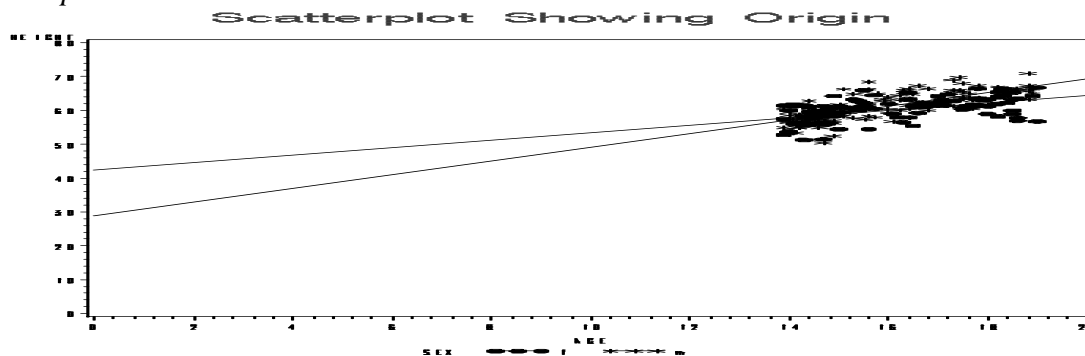
As seen in Table 4, the mean differences between EG and CG are not significant but the mean differences between the groups are significant (p<.01). In other words, using L1 by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation has a significant effect on their speaking fluency. Finally, the third research question explored the effect of using L1 by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation on their speaking complexity. This question was answered via another ANCOVA.

Table 5
ANCOVA Results and Descriptive Statistics for Speaking Complexity

|		Speaking Complexity Scores		
	Observed Value of Mean	Adjusted Value of Mean	SD	n
EG	54.81	varies	18.53	20
CG	73.52	varies	12.93	20
Source	SS	df	MS	F
EG	1024.92	1	1024.92	5.75*
CG	2628.00	1	2628.00	14.75*
EG × CG	664.45	1	664.45	3.73*
Error	5878.08	33	178.12	

Note. $R^2 = .5101$, Adj. $R^2 = .4601$.
$* p < .10$

Table 6

Comparisons of Mean Differences

Achievement Comparison by Study Condition for Levels of Posttest Performance	Estimated Mean Difference	Standard Error of Difference	90% CI
Posttest = 73.36			
EG vs. CG	0.23	7.66	-12.73, 13.20
Posttest = 59.37			
EG vs. CG	-9.58	4.99	-18.02, -1.14
Posttest = 45.38			
EG vs. CG	-19.42	6.54	-30.49, -8.35

Note. * p < .10.

Figure 4

Scatter Plot of Pre-Speaking and Post-Speaking Complexity Scores by Study Condition with Points for Multiple Comparisons Indicated
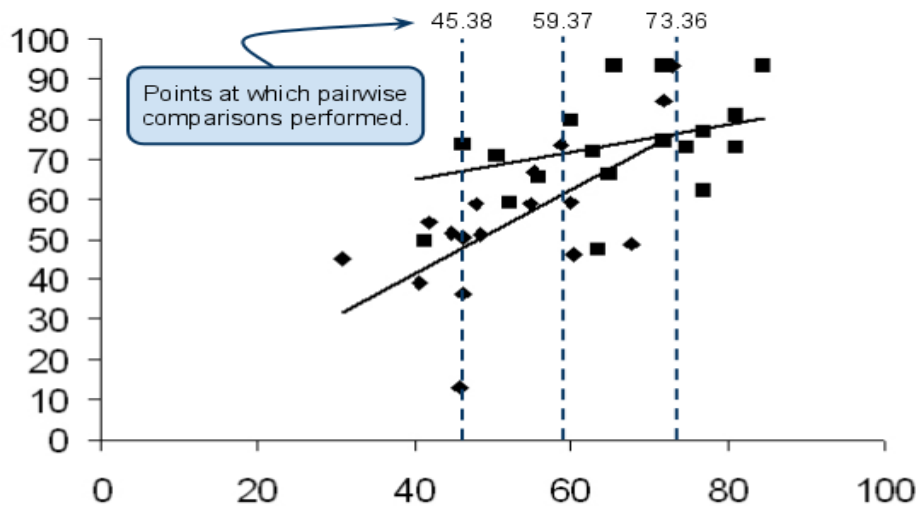
The ANCOVA results indicated a statistically significant interaction between posttest scores and the effect of using the first language (L1) at the 0.10 level. Figure 3 visually represents these results, showing a strong, positive association between pretest and posttest scores in the experimental group. This suggests an effect of using L1 by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation on their speaking complexity. In contrast, the control group obtained various results, scoring poorly in the posttest.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of using the first language (L1) by Iranian EFL learners in task preparation on their speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity. The findings revealed a significant positive effect of using L1 on their speaking accuracy, fluency, and complexity. These results support the efficacy of L1 use, which is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Atkinson, 1987; Auerbach, 1993; Cook, 2001; Edstrom, 2006; Kahng, 2018; Kormos, 2021; Mehnert, 1998; Pinget et al., 2014; Polio & Duff, 1994; Turnbull & Dailey O'Cain, 2009). For instance, Miles (2004) concluded that L1 facilitates EFL students'

achievement. The students felt more secure when L1 was utilized. In the same vein, Schweers (2008) noted that most ESL instructors used L1 in their teaching profession.

Additionally, the efficacy of L1 use in a task-based class was supported by Mackey and Goo (2007). They also mentioned that L1 use helped the students in identifying unknown vocabularies, and explaining and analyzing them. Similarly, Colina and Mayo (2009) observed that various types of tasks influenced the extent and nature of L1 use. These findings align with Colina and Mayo's (2009) results, indicating task-related variations in L1 use, which offer valuable insights for task designers. Furthermore, Bao and Du (2015) emphasized the significance of L1 use in foreign language learning, proposing that it is influenced by factors such as learners' proficiency, learning context, and the nature of the tasks. The results also verify that for EFL learners, L1 use can be a cognitive means, since it paves the way for the students' scaffolding to do learning tasks. The findings also highlighted the role of L1 to simplify the L2 process. However, the results contradict with the findings of Copland and Neokleous (1993). They mentioned that EFL learners under-reported their L1 use since they might feel they are doing something wrong. In addition, their teachers might have negative attitudes towards L1 use. Additionally, in contrast to the present results, Prodromou (2002) concluded that EFL/ESL students had negative attitudes on L1 use.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as mentioned earlier, L1 use in EFL contexts is a controversial issue. In these EFL contexts, the research studies showed little attention has been given to this topic. In many EFL contexts, L1 use was considered as a contributing factor in EFL learners' success. A number of advantages are also attached to L1 use, such as saving time, increasing the practice of L2 learning, simplifying learning, and escalating understanding. In the same vein, many ELT researchers are in favor of L1 inclusion. L1 use in EFL classrooms occurs when both the instructors and students have the same first language. Further, L1 in EFL settings is employed to do various activities and tasks such as making the students socialized, ensuring the learners' understanding, translating, giving extra examples, providing explanations, and managing the classrooms. Therefore, L1 can be used for various pedagogical purposes, and the instructors' tendency to create rapport and communication in the classrooms and learners' L2 proficiency were among the essential factors for using L1.

The findings of this study could contribute to the ongoing debate surrounding the use of students' first language (L1) in second language (L2) contexts. Regarding the EFL teachers and learners, the findings showed that they should be cognizant of their L1 use as a regular practice to assist them during learning and teaching process. Further, for ELT educators and decision-makers, the findings can be beneficial to help them identify the best approaches in increasing and enhancing language learning in EFL settings.

Follow-up research might be conducted to examine EFL instructors' and students' first language use in their classes with various English proficiency levels, reasons, and implications. Moreover, future research can also be done in a various or similar EFL context in other communities. Additionally, it is suggested that similar studies on the effect of L1 on English learning and acquisition for the same and various educational settings. Finally, more studies are needed to be conducted on EFL learners with various personality traits, gender and L1 backgrounds.

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