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Research Article**The Role of Brainstorming and Strategic Planning as Pre-tasks on EFL Learners' Speaking Accuracy and Fluency**¹Sanaz Khademi Hossseini
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(Corresponding author, bahgorji@yahoo.com)**ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the effects of pre-speaking tasks on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' oral production including accuracy and fluency. To do the current study, the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was given to 75 students, and 50 participants whose scores were between 40 and 47 were selected. The participants were at the intermediate level. Then, the participants were divided into two groups: one experimental group and one control group through a non-random convenience sampling method. Then they were given three topics to talk about in two minutes as a pre-test. Afterward, the experimental group received the treatment through pre-speaking tasks including question and answer tasks, brainstorming, and peer discussion and the control group received traditional activities like talking about the topics and giving the word definitions. During nine sessions, the pre-speaking tasks were taught and in the last session, the two groups took the speaking post-test. Data were analyzed through independent and paired samples t-tests and the results indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test. In other words, there was a significant difference between the post-test of the two groups. The implications of the study suggest that English teachers should prepare speaking tasks before dealing with the topics for discussion to provide the learners with enough input for participating in the speaking tasks.

Keywords: Pre-speaking tasks, Oral fluency, Oral accuracy

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking, among the four major skills, seems mostly favored as every English language learner aspires to be effective in communicating with others in oral mode. The importance of teaching speaking skills is that the language is acquired through speaking and listening before one learns reading and writing. Brown and Yule (1983) state many language learners regard speaking as the criteria for knowing a language and progress is assessed in terms of success in spoken communication. One approach to teaching speaking is the Task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach which provides many advantages for teachers who make the students enthusiastic because the TBLT approach offers the language experience in the classroom. TBLT focuses on learners using language naturally in pairs or group work and allowing them to share ideas (Nunan, 2004).

In TBLT, planning can happen in different phases and can be classified into two kinds: pre-task planning and within-task planning (Ellis, 2005). In pre-task planning activities, the learners plan to use several guided or unguided linguistic structures before they start speaking. Pre-task planning includes rehearsal and strategic planning. In rehearsal, planning students perform the task before their actual performance of the task (Nunan, 2004).

Pre-task planning is preparation for later performance. Strategic planning is the students' preparation of what the content is and how it is expressed for the task. They are guided planning grammatical structures, in which learners are guided in the planning drills about what and how to plan for speaking, and unguided planning, in which learners receive no guidance or advice in the planning phase for using the grammatical structure for the speaking phase.

Planning is time allocated to the use of preparation of the learners before doing a task, solving a problem, or using linguistic devices to interact with others (Ellis, 2005). It provides the learners with a chance to access both their communicative competence of L2 for their language production (Ellis, 2005). The outcomes of many studies (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996) suggest that the amount and type of strategic planning have certain effects on the performance of the learners, to a greater extent on fluency and complexity of their language (Foster & Skehan, 1996), but to a lesser extent on the accuracy (Ellis, 2005).

Fillmore (1979) elaborates on the concept of fluency and conceptualizes it in four different ways. First, fluency is the ability to talk at length with few pauses by filling the time with talk. Second, fluency is the expression of one's message in a coherent way. Third, a fluent person knows what to say in different contexts. Finally, fluent speakers are creative and imaginative in their use of language. Skehan and Foster (1997) reported that planners had greater fluency than non-planners did. Ortega (1999) showed that L2 Spanish students who planned strategically had faster-speaking speed. Accuracy can be described as the mastery of language forms and structures and the accurate use of them (Hamdan, 2003). Ellis (2005) suggested that planning helped students use regular past tense correctly.

As speaking is the most fundamental skill for oral communication, it seems that in Iranian EFL classrooms more focus is on speaking and less attention is paid to the pre-speaking tasks. Task-based teaching of language, therefore, is most fruitful if it is guided, as students may not know how to do the tasks and need a guided plan for their performance. Therefore, the present study investigated the effects of pre-task planning time on the fluency and accuracy of intermediate EFL learners' oral production. Speaking is seen as a complex phenomenon involving a series of interrelated stages, thus attention to one of the three aspects of performance will neglect the two others. Therefore, it is a hard task for L2 learners to attend to meaning and form at the same time.



Oral performance is a difficult multi-faceted skill. It requires cognitive and metacognitive processing of information. In addition, human beings' processing capacity is limited and does not allow the speaker to focus his attention on all aspects of language including complexity, accuracy, and fluency at the time of task performance. On the other hand, most Iranian EFL and ESL teachers neglect pre-task planning. Thus, this study will investigate the effect of pre-pre-speaking tasks on the two aspects of fluency and accuracy and evaluate how much this will help EFL learners overcome hard oral tasks (Samuda & Bygate, 2008).

This study wanted to improve Iranian EFL learners' speaking skills. Language is a tool for communication. Communication takes place when there is speech since without speech, we cannot communicate with one another. Regarding the importance of speaking skills, this study aimed to examine the impacts of pre-speaking tasks on the fluency and accuracy of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. By applying some pre-speaking tasks like brainstorming and strategic planning, the researcher wanted to help Iranian EFL learners speak both accurately and fluently.

This study is significant since it provides some implications both for English teachers and learners to improve their speaking skills by using tasks. The findings of the current study can remind teachers to use pre-tasks in their classrooms. The findings of the study would help the teachers to use brainstorming and strategic planning in developing speaking skills including oral accuracy and fluency. Using TBLT may provide EFL teachers with pre-tasks on teaching grammar and oral activities effectively.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

TBLT follows the principles and effectiveness of experiential learning introduced by Dewey (1859) and real-life situations are rehearsed in the language teaching classrooms (Hu, 2013). TBLT is based on the constructive theory of learning referring to the 1980s as it appeared out of the Communicational Language Teaching (CLT) as a project in India and Prabhu (1987) conducted it. This was against the limitations of traditional language teaching methods like PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) which is based on behaviorism focusing on the grammatical structures through rote learning (Ellis, 2003).

Traditionally speaking, learners could only master a language if they rehearse and practice the grammar of the target language. It may be wrong since the learners know only theoretical grammatical rules and they were not able to communicate well (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007). The role of learner's motivation, cognitive abilities, and autonomy enjoy the central place in constructivism, which are also fundamental assumptions in TBLT (Ellis, 2009; Robinson, 2011). Wang (2011) asserted that constructivism emphasizes learners' autonomy, reflectivity, personal involvement, and active engagement of the learners in the process of learning; practically it is the case with TBLT principles.

There is a relationship between both TBLT and constructivism (Ellis, 2003; Hu, 2013). TBLT emphasizes that language learners may focus on meaning and then form (Ellis, 2003; Willis & Willis, 2007). According to Dörnyei (2005), language learning is a highly interpersonal issue that relates to learners' and teachers' cooperation. Therefore, there is a need to understand the purpose of this relationship (Hu, 2013). TBLT is considered a cooperative method for the participants who are risk takers, interlocutors, etc. They participate in-group and work on interactive and communicative activities for successful English language learning.

TBLT classroom is a task-oriented class and various tasks may be designed to facilitate the learners with real-life communicative situations enabling them real communicators of the target language. It is a learner-centered approach too since the learners worked together based on the constructivist school and teachers play as facilitators to communicate with the learners (Ellis, 2009). TBLT provides language learners with a



dynamic role in the classroom as they take an active role in interactive activities on the tasks to get the goal (Robinson, 2011; Ellis, 2003).

Willis and Willis (2007) believe in tasks as rehearsal tasks and activation tasks as well. Rehearsal tasks help the learners to perform accurate and fluent structures that require the learners to practice outside the classroom. These tasks are real and can be used for real situations but there is some kind of adaptation to fit in the classroom environment. Rehearsal tasks provide the learners with the ability to get a job or participate in an interview. Competent teachers are needed to use TBLT and textbook adaptation to facilitate the learning of the target language teaching (Ellis, 2003).

2.1. Tasks and Learning

Because task-based work involves holistic language processing, it can generate a rich range of learning processes (Long, 2009). One is the process of relating the language user's intention to meaning and meaning to linguistic form. That is, to achieve task goals, during task communication, students identify relevant meanings, and try to map them to relevant words and phrases; indeed, much learning occurs by association, simply through exposure to language input that has not been disarticulated from context, content, and purpose (i.e., the holistic task). This leads learners to explore relationships between words and meanings, interrelating meanings and appropriate language, and learning how to do things with words. This is the core of a TBLT approach: in particular, contextually relevant meanings are the reference point for developing an implicit and explicit understanding of a new language. This process often requires engaged interlocutors to signal whether they have understood or not. Successful communication is proof that learners have learned how to use parts of the language; unsuccessful communication is an opportunity for them to identify gaps in their knowledge, so they can find ways of filling them. Communication as a learning process thus requires a willingness to negotiate meaning, both referential (denoting concepts) and pragmatic (impacting other people's behaviors and attitudes).

Importantly, such negotiation can generate feedback on language gaps at the precise moment and context where learners need to learn. Researchers (e.g., Mackey, 2008) have found that negotiation for meaning, and other interactional moves such as scaffolding, recasting, and error corrections, can lead to effective learning, and that improved memory for vocabulary, grammar, and even pragmatics can be positively related to successful interaction between learners. In a similar vein, those working from a more socially grounded orientation (e.g., Mackey & Polio, 2009) have noted how by working jointly on tasks, learners can contribute mutually to each other's learning. It follows that the teacher too can play an important role in negotiation for meaning and broader interaction processes.

Task work can also help develop learners' fluency, complexity, accuracy, and appropriacy of language use. Research (Robinson, 2011; Skehan, 2014) showed that learners' attention could be drawn differentially to fluency, complexity, or accuracy in their performance with language by varying the kinds of tasks. Certain kinds of relatively simple tasks may tend to prioritize accuracy and fluency in performance, while more complex tasks (e.g., containing unstructured content or multiple elements to deal with) may lead to more grammatically complex, less fluent, and less accurate language, thereby helping to push interlanguage development (Robinson, 2011). Task conditions are also influential: pre-task planning time can lead to greater complexity and fluency, but less accuracy, whereas lack of time pressure results in greater accuracy.

Repeating tasks can enable learners successively to increase their complexity, accuracy, and fluency. Although research is not yet definitive regarding the details, these features of tasks offer teachers and materials developers clear opportunities to influence learners' attention to particular aspects of language use through the selection and manipulation of task designs (Skehan, 2014). Finally, task-based learning has implications for other types of language learning. Experience of working with a particular task can provide



a starting point for relevant "off task" learning-checking vocabulary, clarifying grammatical features, exploring pragmatic expressions-or pronunciation practice: form-focused work is made valuable by prior experience of the task and of trying to complete it (Skehan, 2014).

2.2. Tasks and Teaching

Even though task-based language education strongly emphasizes the communicative activity, initiative, and autonomy of the learner, the contribution of the teacher remains crucial. Teachers have a central role in organizing task-based work, motivating their students to become engaged with the tasks, explaining to them why performing a particular task is important, and interactionally supporting them while they are at it. In the pre-task phase (Willis & Willis, 2007), teachers typically introduce an interesting topic or challenge, and activate their students' prior knowledge; in the process of doing so, teachers can introduce task-essential vocabulary and grammatical structures. At this point of the lesson, the teacher also gives the students clear instructions (What is the task? What are students expected to do? In what order or series of steps should they do it?), organizes learner grouping as needed, and may discuss/negotiate criteria for task completion together with the students.

While the students are performing the task (the "during-task phase"), the teacher typically monitors the student's progress. Naturally, such monitoring may take very different forms depending on the type of pedagogic task underway (e.g., walking around and listening to pairs of students doing a spot-the-difference task, wherein they are trying to identify differences between similar but not identical pictures, or providing ongoing written support and feedback for individualized process writing tasks). Since tasks are designed to be challenging, aiming to extend the participants' linguistic resources, students are bound to run into comprehension/production difficulties and will need to practice more (Willis & Willis, 2007). Here the teacher takes on a crucial role in interactionally supporting the students by making use of a varied range of strategies, such as recasting, prompting, correcting errors, feeding back useful language, scaffolding, providing metalinguistic feedback, focusing on form, and asking open and closed questions. In this role, teachers are expected to tailor their feedback and support to the needs of different students and to help them in such a way that the student's initiative, autonomy, and space for producing language are maintained (Willis & Willis, 2007).

During the post-task stage, teachers guide their students into reflecting on the process and outcome of the tasks and the (linguistic and other) obstacles the students faced. When the students report back or otherwise culminate the task, the teacher can raise the stakes and demand more accurate and appropriate use of the target language: The post-task stage is a moment when the students will appreciate the need and purpose for further accuracy practice (Robinson, 2011). The teacher may organize follow-up activities that provide additional practice on task-essential lexis, pragmatics, and grammar, give metalinguistic instruction on particular structures, or ask the students to repeat particular tasks (e.g., with another interlocutor, on another topic, for another audience) in which the same language features would be reapplied to similar material but for a different problem. The similar context and material enable the students to improve their fluency and accuracy in using the new language features, while (slightly) deviating contexts may provide learners with opportunities to extend their language resources and to transfer/generalize their language competencies to other linguistic contexts (Robinson, 2011).

A common concern of many teachers is to stop using the tasks in various ways. To deal with this issue, there is a fundamental need to ensure that the students understand the purposes of any particular task. They also should know the intended outcomes while the teachers expect a clear outcome from their work. There are several activities in the pre-tasks including giving a report to the class, narrating a story, and describing an object. These abilities can be performed in a whole-class setting in some guided or unguided pre-tasks.



For instance, the teachers may compare two items, produce effective descriptions, or provide a picture. In language classes, the teachers should follow the interactive processes of pre-task phases. Thus, the teacher's key role in TBLT is to ensure that the outcome of all tasks is an integral part of a lesson, just as speakers are held accountable for outcomes of tasks in the non-classroom world (Long, 2009). This needs to be in terms of overall effectiveness as well as in the details of accuracy, complexity, and fluency of task performance. It is here that students can get a sense of achievement, and here too that the teacher can be sure of the chance to provide meaningful feedback. This of course raises the issue of assessment, to which we now turn conversation; the teacher will give score and feedback to all of the students who have been performing in front of the class.

2.3. Pre-tasks

Pre-task phase refers to preparing students to perform the tasks in ways that will promote acquisition before the task phase. Skehan (1996) refers to two broad alternatives available to the teachers during the pre-task phase: An emphasis on the general cognitive demands for tasks, and an emphasis on linguistic factors. This is needed for both linguistic and cognitive demands and then the learners should engage in activities that reduce their cognitive load. When they are ready to participate in learning the tasks, they may concentrate on the linguistic factors following one of the four ways:

- 1) Supporting learners in performing a task similar to the task that will perform in the task phase of the lesson;
- 2) Asking the learners to follow a model of how to perform a task;
- 3) Designing to prepare the learners to perform the task
- 4) Strategic planning of the main task performance.

From that explanation the researcher gives, a brief comment on the use of a 'pre-task' is a key feature of the TBLT. Furthermore, the task was carried out as an activity involving the entire class with the teacher and involved the learners in completing a task of the same type and content as the main task. Thus, it served as a preparation for performing the main task individually (Skehan, 1996). For example, if the main task involves talking about clothes and the appearance of individuals or groups; the teacher may talk to the students about how they dress and how this affects their personalities. Finally, to prevent the groups from using their L1 to complete the task, the teacher informed the class that each group had a different conversation and that each group would have to present their developing conversation to the rest of the class in English after they had completed the task. The research question of the study is as follows:

RQ1. Do pre-speaking tasks (i.e., brainstorming and strategic planning) have any impact on the oral production of fluency of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

RQ2. Do pre-speaking tasks (i.e., brainstorming and strategic planning) have any impact on the oral production of the accuracy of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

To do this study, 50 students from Sepehr Andisheh English Institute, Abadan, Khuzestan, Iran were selected among 75 students as the target population of the study. They were non-randomly divided into two experimental and control groups. Each group included 25 participants. The participants' age range was



between 13 to 20 years old. They were all female and they were at intermediate level. Their level of proficiency was determined by administrating the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT).

3.2. Instruments and Materials

The first instrument that was utilized in the present study to homogenize the participants was OQPT which provide the researchers with an understanding of the participants' level (i.e., intermediate). This test had 60 multiple-choice items and based on it the learners whose scores were 40 to 47 were intermediate students and were selected as the target participants of the study.

The second instrument was a researcher-made speaking pre-test. The pre-test included some topics concerned with the learners' textbook. (i.e., New Interchange 1) developed by Richards (2008). The participants wanted to talk about the topics of the units for about 2 to 3 minutes and their speech was recorded for the second rater. The reliability of the pre-test was computed through inter-rater reliability employing Pearson correlation analysis as ($r = .790$).

The third instrument was a speaking post-test. The post-test was similar to the pre-test in form but different in topics. This test included topics that were extracted from the New Interchange 1 textbook. The level of topics was the same in terms of difficulty in both pre and post-tests. The reliability of the post-test was calculated through inter-rater reliability utilizing Pearson correlation analysis as ($r = .810$). It is worth noting that both the pre-test and post-test were validated by 3 English experienced teachers. Before administering the final version of the pre and post-tests to the target population, they were piloted on a similar group at other English institutes.

The fourth instrument used in this study was the speaking checklist (Hughes, 2003). It was used to help the raters score the participants' speech. The raters scored the participants' speech based on this speaking checklist.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

To do the current study, first, the researcher attended the English institute mentioned above and administered the OQPT to manifest the participants' homogeneity in terms of English language proficiency. Fifty participants out of 75 were selected for the target population of the present study. As stated before, the participants were divided into two groups; one experimental group and one control group. Then, the experimental group received the treatment through pre-speaking tasks, and the control group was taught through the traditional method.

In the experimental group, some topics from the students' textbooks were given to the students to talk about. The researcher provided background knowledge for the students to prepare them for the main tasks. Some pictures related to the target tasks were presented to the students of the experimental group and they were required to talk about them. The researcher used brainstorming techniques to help the students produce a list of ideas on the topics. The students had the chance to express their ideas, share those ideas with others, and encourage new ideas. In addition, the experimental group was provided with pre-task or strategic planning time in which participants were given 5 minutes to plan for their speaking before performing the task. In strategic planning, the researcher prepared the students to know what the content is and how it is expressed for the task. In each session, one picture related to the target task was given to the students and they were allowed to think 5 minutes about it and then express their ideas. In addition, the experimental



group received the treatment through pre-speaking tasks including question-and-answer tasks and peer discussion. The students discussed the topic with their classmates.

On the other hand, the control group did not receive any pre-task activities. The teacher gave them the target topic to speak about without providing them with schemata. The control group received traditional activities like talking about the topics and giving the word definitions.

The treatment took nine sessions of 50 minutes each under the guidance of the supervisor. In the first session, the participants were homogenized. In the second session, the participants took a pre-test of speaking skills. During nine sessions, the pre-speaking tasks of brainstorming and strategic planning were taught and in the last session, the two groups took the speaking post-test.

Data analysis was carried out by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 17. First, the normality of distribution was investigated. For normality, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used. Then, descriptive statistics including means and standard deviation were calculated. Finally, to examine the effects of the treatment on improving the participants' speaking fluency and accuracy, an independent samples t-test and a paired samples t-test were used.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the gathered data. K-S test was used to check the normality of the pre and post-test scores. Descriptive statistics were calculated and compared. values such as means and standard deviations were computed to summarize the participants' scores on the tests.

Table 1:
One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (Groups' Pre and Post-tests)

		Pre-test control	Pre-test Experimental	Post-test Control	Post-test Experimental
N		25	25	25	25
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}					
	Mean	14.2400	14.0800	14.1200	16.7200
	Std. Deviation	2.58650	2.81247	2.71293	2.03142
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.204	.250	.220	.159
	Positive	.204	.250	.220	.158
	Negative	-.137	-.198	-.164	-.159
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.021	1.248	1.101	.793
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.248	.089	.177	.556

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

Table 1 depicts that the distribution of scores is normal. In this case, parametric statistics like independent and paired samples t-tests can be used to get the results.



Table 2:
Group Statistics (Pre-test of Both Groups)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Control	25	14.10	2.58	.51
	Experimental	25	14.08	2.81	.56

Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics of both groups. The means of both groups are almost equal. The control group's mean score is 14.12 and the experimental group's mean score is 14.08. This means that both groups are somehow similar since they are homogeneous at the beginning of the treatment.

Table 3:
Independent Samples t-test (Pre-test of Both Groups)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.470	.496	.209	48	.835	.16	.76	-1.37	1.69
Equal variances not assumed			.209	47.6	.835	.16	.76	-1.37	1.69

Table 3 shows the scores of both groups on the pre-test. Since the Sig value (.835) is greater than 0.05, the difference between the groups is not significant at ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4:
Group Statistics (Post-test of Both Groups)

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	Control	25	14.24	2.71	.54
	Experimental	25	16.72	2.03	.40



Table 4 reveals the descriptive statistics of the post-test. The means of the groups are different. The control group's mean score is 14.24 and the experimental group's mean score is 16.72. This means that the experimental group outperformed the control group.

Table 5:
Independent Samples t-test (the Post-test of Both Groups)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	<i>t</i>	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	3.569	.065	-3.836	48	.000	-2.600	.677	-3.962	-1.237
Equal variances not assumed			-3.836	44.4	.000	-2.600	.677	-3.965	-1.234

Table 5 shows the difference between both groups is significant at ($p < 0.05$). In other words, the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test. Data were analyzed and the researchers answered the research questions and then compared and contrasted the results with the previous studies as follows:



RQ. Do pre-speaking tasks (i.e., brainstorming and strategic planning) have any impact on the oral production of fluency of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

To answer the research question, the researcher compared the scores of two groups of participants in the pre and post-tests. The pre-test was compared to the post-test to show any difference between the participants' performance on developing fluency of the participants. After analyzing the data, the results showed that there was not a significant difference between the performances of both groups on the pre-test, but in contrast, there was a significant difference between the performances of the two groups on the post-tests. Since the experimental group outperformed the control group, teaching through using pre-tasks is supposed to improve the fluency of Iranian EFL learners. During the instruction, the researcher observed the students and understood that the participants were capable to speak English fluently through pre-tasks.

Results showed that repeating tasks enabled learners successfully to increase their fluency. Pre-tasks could support the learners in performing a task similar to the task that would perform the during task phase of the lesson. The pre-tasks could familiarize the students with the target tasks and consequently, the students could do the target tasks successfully. Pre-tasks involved the learners in completing a task of the same type and content as the main task. Pre-tasks served as a preparation for performing the main task individually. These strategies were taught to enhance students' speaking ability in the areas of accuracy, fluency, and lexical resources. The results are matched with Carrell (1998) who believes that learning pre-tasks could be created by the teachers and the instruction of speaking strategies can enhance learners' speaking skills. Brainstorming and strategic planning can develop learners' motivation for the participants. This may be supported by the four pre-speaking strategies proposed by Dörnyei (1995). they are A) approximation, which involves "using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target words as closely as possible" (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994); B) circumlocution is thinking about using synonyms, antonyms, explanation, or nonverbal communication for unknown vocabularies. The data were analyzed through Mann-Whitney and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. Data analysis showed the experimental group outperformed the control group. Therefore, for effective speaking, brainstorming, and strategic planning should be coupled with pre-speaking strategies.

The results of the present study are in line with Gunawan (2016) who investigated the effect of using a task-based language teaching approach in developing students' speaking skills and explored students' attitudes toward the use of a task-based language teaching approach in teaching English-speaking. The result of the research showed that the use of a task-based language teaching approach in teaching speaking significantly improved the students' speaking skills.

Namazian Dost (2017) who examined the effect of task-based language teaching on motivation and grammatical achievement of EFL junior high school students of Ahvaz supports the findings of the present study. Generally, the experimental group outperformed the control group. The results suggested that task-based language teaching could be used in English classes to develop grammar ability among Iranian EFL learners.

RQ2. Do pre-speaking tasks (i.e., brainstorming and strategic planning) have any impact on the oral production of the accuracy of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?



After collecting and analyzing the data, the obtained results indicated that the accuracy of the participants was almost the same in pre and post-tests. Students' accuracy did not improve by the pre-tasks. The results of the present study are in contrast with Moradia and Talebib (2014) who tried to find out if pre-speaking strategies instruction in strategic planning has any effects on Iranian EFL students' use of pre-speaking strategies as well as their accuracy of linguistic structures. Data analysis showed the experimental group outperformed the control group. Thus, for better oral performance, strategic planning as a pre-task strategy should be used before speaking tasks.

The findings of this study are also in contrast with Albino (2017) who attempted to assess how EFL learners improved their speaking accuracy in a TBLT approach used with ninth-grade learners at Cazenga, a high school in Luanda. The findings indicated that learners improved in terms of their speaking accuracy by maximizing their linguistic structures including sentence production, increasing grammatical accuracy, elaborating on their utterances, and developing interactional language.

Brainstorming and strategic planning as two pre-tasks can help the learners to make up their minds before speaking activities. Oral accuracy is a great help that the learners can achieve in using these two pre-task activities. Strategic planning helps the learners to be provided employing planned sentences and guided structures like substitution drills, replacement exercises, completion sentences, and cloze passages.

5. CONCLUSION

Regarding the results of the study, it can be concluded that Iranian EFL learners can benefit from pre-tasks in speaking skills. Based on the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that the use of pre-tasks in teaching and learning can produce positive results because they could improve students' speaking skills. The positive effects of using pre-tasks became obvious after treatment sessions. Those students who were taught through speaking pre-tasks could speak more accurately and fluently after the treatment. Here, it can be claimed that receiving instruction through using speaking pre-tasks can facilitate English learning. The findings of the present study proved the benefits of incorporating speaking pre-tasks in both teaching and learning. They can lead to deep learning and can be useful approaches for learning among students. In sum, speaking pre-tasks proved to be beneficial for the students. They can enhance students' English learning. As a result, it is recommended that teachers and students use speaking pre-tasks for better teaching and learning.

This study wanted to know which aspect of oral performance (accuracy and fluency) can be influenced more by brainstorming and strategic planning. Both pre-tasks were applied to improve Iranian EFL learners' accuracy and fluency. The findings showed that brainstorming and strategic planning improved the accuracy and fluency of the students equally. No difference was found between the accuracy group and the fluency group.

This study has some implications for teachers and students. Teachers can use pre-tasks as a warm-up technique. In addition, teachers can make the students familiar with the main tasks by requiring them to do pre-task activities. Through tasks, teachers can encourage cooperative learning among the students. The results of the study are beneficial for the students. Doing pre-tasks can help the students to conduct the target tasks successfully. By pre-tasks, students are involved in the learning process. Students tend to be active and participate with great motivation toward tasks and activities in a class environment. Tasks offer a platform for students to display their skills through their efforts and develop them further. Language learners work and cooperate in groups that build bonds between them. The learners who are active in groups can display and produce meaningful interaction on a given topic. In addition, the class worked together and assess the whole outcome of the lesson. Material developers can incorporate task-based activities and exercises in English textbooks.

Like any other study, this study also has some limitations, some of which could influence the findings



and restrict the generalizability of the results. Firstly, in the present study, the number of participants was limited to 50 students. However, working with bigger groups is more difficult and time-consuming. Secondly, just intermediate English students participated in this study. Thirdly, only female students were included in this study, therefore; the results may not be generalizable to the male students. Fourthly, only 13 to 20 years old students were included in this study.

Future studies are needed to verify the current study results and to continue exploring the impacts of speaking pre-tasks on the students' speaking fluency and accuracy. Future research should also extend the amount of time to determine the maintenance of treatment effects. Future studies are suggested to include both female and male students as participants. Upcoming studies are offered to determine if the treatment is equally useful in diverse populations and other geographical areas. Next studies can include more participants to get richer results. Future research should look at different ages and a wider variety of environments, to see how far the benefits of speaking pre-tasks extend.

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