

## **The Effect of Strategic Planning Focus and Time on Writing Fluency and Accuracy**

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Following previous studies reporting a beneficial effect for pre-task planning on learners' task performance, the present research takes into account the possible effects of directing learners' attention to meaning and form of language on their written production while they have one- and five-minute strategic planning time. The study randomly categorized 48 intermediate learners of English into six groups and asked them to undertake a narrative task under form focused, meaning focused, and unguided planning conditions each with one or five minutes of strategic planning time. Their performances were analyzed by a set of fluency and accuracy measures whose results were put into one-way ANOVA. As for the comparison under one-minute planning condition, form focused planners outperformed the other two groups in both measures. Similar results were obtained under the five-minute planning condition. The results also showed that five-minute planning condition enhanced the learners' fluency of production more than their accuracy, unlike one-minute planning condition. It is proposed that the form focused planning condition better promotes writing processes than meaning focused and unguided planning conditions; besides, the longer the planning time is, the more fluency is fostered whereas the

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shorter the planning time is, the more accurate the learners' production would be.

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Planning or the allocation of some amount of preparation time to learners before completing a task, is a problem solving activity during which learners decide what linguistic devices to use for getting their meaning across (Ellis, 2005a; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008). It provides an opportunity for learners to access both their implicit as well as their explicit knowledge of L2 for their production (Ellis, 2005a).

The outcomes of many studies (e.g., Crookes, 1989; Ellis, 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999) suggest that the amount and type of strategic planning have certain effects on learners' performance, in particular on fluency and complexity of their language, but to a lesser extent on the accuracy. Although no theory behind this effect of strategic planning has been equivocally put forward, it is generally believed that strategic planning helps learners mentally organize the content of upcoming task and/or formulate communication aspects which facilitate learners' later on-line performance (Ellis, 2005a). To allocate opportunity during strategic planning helps them decrease the processing load of the task in their actual performance and produce more complex sentences in terms of form and content with more fluency and accuracy (Bygate & Samuda, 2005, cited in Ellis, 2005b).

However, there are some vague points when strategic planning is considered. The first point is that whether or not this kind of planning helps learners over a long learning course, which remains ambiguous. The effect of strategic planning on learners' specific performance may be clear but the interrelation between the effects of learners' specific task performance and their longer period of learning time is left unstudied. Due to their limited working memory capacity, learners may be able to plan few sentences in the first two or three minutes of their speech, but they can not go much further and map out much in detail. In other

words, the functioning of the construct or outcome of planning is not clear (Ellis, 2005a).

The past few years have witnessed a great deal of research on different facets of L2 learners' task performance (Ellis, 2003). Most of this research took account of features of task design, the procedures for their implementation, and their possible influences on different aspects of language use (Skehan, 1996). Task planning is currently regarded as an implementation variable which has indicated to yield a congruous effect on L2 performance. In effect, all kinds of language productions even those that seem automatic require planning. Some studies (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996) have reported that L2 learners' language performance will improve in terms of fluency and complexity when they are given the chance to plan a task before its performance than when they are deprived of that opportunity. The role that planning plays in applied linguistics is two folded including its theoretical and pedagogical contributions (Ellis, 2005a). In fact, planning can be of assistance to both second language acquisition researchers as well as to language teachers. As for the second language acquisition, it is believed that planning roots well at the heart of current theories of SLA, and has a robust association with the role of attention in language learning. Moreover, planning paves the way for more investigation into what learners attend to and the impact it might have on the way they use language. With regard to the effects that planning can have on the pedagogy, it can be argued that teachers can reckon on planning as an efficacious apparatus for indirectly influencing learners' interlanguage development by putting them on the right track. There is also another rationale behind using planning that learners, due to their limited processing capacity, cannot attend to both conceptual and formal aspect of their production; thus, planning can free up learners' limited cognitive resources so that there are some space remained for attending to the form of their production (Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008). In a nutshell, what planning does is just to compensate for learners' limited short-term memory. It is believed that strategic planning can decrease the load of learners' later on-line production by allowing them to conceptualize and formulate what they want to

communicate; thus, this preparation leads learners to be more accurate, complex, and fluent (Ellis, 2005a).

### Review of Related Literature

There have been contradictory results obtained from the studies investigating the effects of strategic planning on accuracy unlike roughly straightforward effects of strategic planning on fluency. On the one hand, there are studies reporting that strategic planning aids learners in having more accurate production. Taking learners' use of the regular past tense into account, Mehnert (1998) compared learners' performance under zero-, one-, five-, and ten-minute planning conditions. He found that accuracy level of planners surpassed that of no-planners, especially one minute planners significantly surpassed no-planners, while all the planners performed at roughly the same accuracy level. Mehnert also argued that learners tended to first attend to the accuracy of their production. On the other hand, there are studies finding no effects for strategic planning on accuracy (e.g., Crookes, 1989). Crookes (1989) sought to investigate the effects that ten-minute strategic planning might have on learners' performing two information-gap tasks. He found no difference between the accuracy level of planned and unplanned learners while he reported more complex and fluent performance for planners than non-planners. Yuan and Ellis (2003) using a general measure of accuracy, found that unlike what they found for the effect of unpressured on-line planning, strategic planning had no effect on the accuracy level of the learners' production. Some other studies reported that strategic planning did aid accuracy but only in some particular conditions, structures or some special tasks. Of these studies, Ortega's (1999) study stated that planning proved fruitful in the case of some structures. She found that strategic planning was efficient in assisting learners to be more accurate with Spanish noun-modifier agreements but not with articles. Foster and Skehan (1996) found changing tasks can yield different effects on accuracy for strategic planning. They tried to investigate learners' performance on three different tasks, namely personal, narrative, and decision-making. Using a decision-making task, they found that both undetailed and

detailed planners surpassed the non-planners in accuracy level. In addition, on a personal task, only the undetailed planners were more accurate than the non-planners and on a narrative task, there was no clear effect for strategic planning on accuracy. They attributed this finding to the fact that accuracy might be well dependent on on-line processing during learners' task performance rather than on off line processing during pre-task planning. Foster and Skehan (1999) found that directing learners to the form of language rather than the content was no way effective in making them more accurate in their production. They further reported that, among different sources of planning they used in their research, teacher-led planning had the greatest effect on the learners' accuracy.

A great body of research has shown that strategic planning has a positive effect on fluency in L2 oral production of learners (e.g. Crookes, 1989; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Wigglesworth, 1997). It is also believed that providing learners with an opportunity to have pre-task planning helps them reduce the amount of on-line planning needed. There have been several studies considering the fluency of language production, i.e., shorter or fewer pauses or both. Foster (1996) and Foster and Skehan (1996) giving three tasks to learners, found that learners who had opportunity for planning made less pauses and stumbles and spent shorter time in total silence than learners who did not have the opportunity to plan. However, they reported that this effect was more evident and much stronger on narrative and decision-making tasks than on personal tasks. They argued that this may be attributed to the fact that personal task was much easier than narrative and decision-making tasks. Skehan and Foster (1997) found similar result regarding total pauses using narrative and decision-making tasks. Ortega (1999) asserted that when learners had the opportunity to plan strategically their production turned out to be faster in terms of speech rate. Yuan and Ellis (2003) found that strategic planning had an obvious effect on fluency. Foster (2001) found that planning had differential effects for native speakers and for L2 learners. She reported that planning led L2 learners to produce more amount of speech than native

speakers. However, she went on to say that there was no difference in L2 learners' production of lexicalized sequences in both unplanned and planned conditions; however, the percentage of lexicalized sequences changed in the case of native speakers. The result of her study suggests that due to a lack of a rich repertoire of lexicalized chunks, L2 learners, as opposed to native speakers, are forced to depend more on rule-based procedure in both planning conditions. To date, there is a significant body of research supporting the hypothesis that strategic planning positively affects learners' task performance, especially with regard to the fluency and complexity of their speech (Ellis & Yuan, 2005).

However, in the light of many studies supporting the positive effect of strategic planning, there seems to be some gap in strategic planning literature as to how this effect can be achieved. First, there has not been much research investigating the effects that directing learners' attention to different aspects of language may have during planning. Many studies (e.g., Ortega, 1999; Wigglesworth, 1997) even did not instruct learners in how to plan their speech with the result that learners attended to any aspect of language as they desired. Moreover, that body of research on the effects of strategic planning is not conclusive because, firstly, none of the studies examined whether or not the dyads in their study focused on that particular aspect of language in conjunction with the instructions given; secondly, most of those studies investigated the effects of foci of strategic planning using a general planning condition and a no-planning condition rather than comparing the effects of different kinds of focus of planning on learners speech with each other (Sangarun, 2005). Therefore, in addition to some studies examining the effects of directing learners' attention to the form or meaning of language (e.g., Ellis 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1999) or both (e.g., Crookes, 1989, Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998), more studies are needed to take into account directing learners' attention to different aspects of language.

Thirdly and most importantly for this research, there have been few studies in the planning literature investigating the effects of different allocations of time in strategic planning condition on different aspects of learners' language production. In fact, the

interaction between different allocations of time and strategic planning has been almost neglected. It should be noted that there has been few studies considering the role which time of planning can play in planning condition rather than in testing condition. Among the studies taking account of the time variable, Mehnert (1998) found that the length of planning time improved fluency but this effect was mainly evident between the planners and the non-planners. He found that the difference among the three planning groups was not significant. Wigglesworth's (1997) study showed that learners' performance enhanced when they were given just one-minute pre-task planning time in testing condition but this effect was not consistent across tasks and varied according to the proficiency level of learners. Grabe (2001) reported that learners allocated with 10 seconds planning time would write a predictable essay with less information (and most likely a lower quality essay) than a student who plans for 4 minutes. The mixed results of few studies on the effect of planning time on learners' production of different aspects of language warrant more research to be done on taking account of the effect of the length of planning time on different aspects of language. fourthly, whereas there has been a great body of research examining the effects of planning on learners' oral performance, there have been few studies investigating the effects of planning on learners' written production (Ellis & Yuan, 2004). Hence, as Kellog (1996) asserted that both oral and written production have commonalities, it seems beneficial to work on the written aspect of learners' production, examining in particular written task performance of learners during strategic planning.

#### A Comparison between Speaking Fluency Measures and Writing Fluency Measures

Given that both speaking and writing are productive skills, it is necessary to highlight speaking fluency measure in order to understand why some identical or similar measures have been used to assess writing fluency. Skehan (2003) identifies four measures of speaking fluency. (i) breakdown fluency or pausing, (ii) repair fluency: reformulations, replacements, false starts, and repetition,

(iii) speech rate: the number of words per minute or syllables per second, and (iv) length of bursts occurring between pauses. It can be easily noted that written fluency measures are derived from oral fluency ones. Although the writing fluency measures in the first categories are identical to the speaking measures listed by Skehan (2003), the measures in the last category are similar to speaking fluency measurement in focusing on readers' rating of written text fluency as opposed to listeners' rating of oral output fluency. Writing fluency measures are of two types: Product-based measures depending on written texts regardless of how they were produced and Process-based measures drawing upon the online observation of writers' composing processes. All the measures given below are product-based indicators of writing fluency with the exception of three (pausing, length of rehearsal text, and length of translating episodes) which are process-based indicators:

- Writers pausing ( Spelman Miller, 2000)
- Changes made to the text ( Knoch, 2007)
- Composing rate (Sasaki, 2000)
- Text quality (Baba, 2009)
- Length of translating episodes written between pauses (Abdel Latif, 2009)
- Length of rehearsed text between pauses (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001)
- Linguistics features characterizing rhetorical functions ( Reynolds, 2005)
- Number and length of T units (Storch, 2009)
- Sentence length (Johnson et al., 2012)
- Text Structure, coherence, cohesion (Storch, 2009)

The various definitions proposed for writing fluency may have resulted from the different indicators used for measuring it. Many L1/L2 writing process studies (e.g. Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001; Hastasa & Soeda, 2000) measured writing fluency in terms of the composing rate, i.e. the number of words written per minute obtained through dividing the text quantity by the time spent writing. Other reported measures of writing fluency include holistic scoring of the text (Ballator, Farnum, & Kaplan, 1999), number of words and t-units (Eloda, 2000), number of correctly



spelled words written, number of sentences written, and number of letter sequences (Rosenthal, 2007). Of all these, the composing rate has been the most frequently used one for assessing writers' fluency.

Showing how the multiple measures of writing fluency were adapted from or influenced by measures of speaking fluency and highlighting the characteristics of real-time language processing in both speaking and writing tasks performance, the present researchers decided to use composing rate and number of reformulations as indicators of fluency in writing.

### Research Questions

Two research questions which led to the present study are as follows:

1. Do the form focused planning (FFP), meaning focused planning (MFP) and the unguided planning (UGP) conditions have any effect on the L2 learners' accuracy and fluency of written production when they are allocated one-minute planning time?
2. Do FFP, MFP, and UGP conditions have any effect on the learners' accuracy and fluency of written production when they are provided with five-minute planning time?

### *Participants*

The participants were 48 L2 learners of English studying at Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Qaemshahr and Sari who were randomly selected. They have been placed into the intermediate level based on an institutional placement test in the institute. To ensure the learners' actual proficiency level as well as the homogeneity of the groups, the study had 93 learners, who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and take the TOEFL test (PBT). Out of that number of students, only 54 learners whose scores ranged from 430 to 480 were invited to the study. However, six students, due to personal problems, refrained from participating in the study. The participants were randomly assigned to six groups supposed to have different planning conditions. All the L2

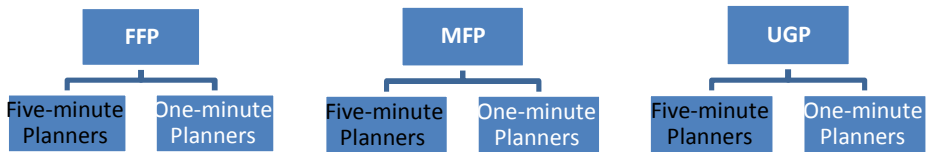
learners were Persian native speakers, none of whom had ever lived in an English-speaking country. The participants in this study were female and male L2 learners aged between 16 and 31.

### *Instruments*

A narrative task based on a set of six picture strips adopted from Heaton (1975) was utilized in the study to elicit written performance from the learners (see Appendix A). Because this particular task had been used in many studies in pre-task planning and in some focus-on-form studies, it was conceived that using it would allow a comparison with those studies and the studies using similar tasks (e.g., Ellis, 1987; Skehan & Foster, 1999). Moreover, it was supposed that by using such a task, the conditions and context needed for genuine communication would be provided, paving the way for better meeting the requirements of meaning-based focus on form (Ellis, 2001).

### *Design*

In this study, two sets of ANOVA were employed where different foci of strategic planning were utilized as the independent variable with different levels including, form-focused planning, meaning-focused planning, and unguided planning conditions each having one minute, and five minutes of planning time. The learners' accuracy and fluency of production were the dependent variables in this study. Figure 1 presents the design of the study and categorization of planning conditions.



*Figure 1.* Design of the study

*Procedure*

In this study, six strategic planning conditions were operationalized. The first two conditions involved two groups of form focused planners who were first instructed in how to plan the form of their language, and then were given one and five minutes planning time prior to their actual production. The second two conditions comprised two groups of meaning focused planners who were first given instructions in how to plan the meaning of their written production and then were allocated one and five minute planning time to engage in strategic planning before their final performance. Under the third conditions, the unguided planners were allowed to have one and five minute time to have strategic planning before writing their actual written narrative story.

In order for the learners to be directed to the form of language, they were provided ten minutes of instructions. They were reminded not to plan all the details in their drafts and not to jot down everything they wanted to write in their actual performance. It was emphasized that they would not have access to their drafts when writing their actual written story. They were also notified that their performances would be judged by considering their correct usage of the language rather than delicacy and convolution of the content of what they wanted to communicate in order to better ensure that they would be more cautious with their grammar than the content of the story. With regard to the learners who were directed to the meaning of language, a ten-minute instruction was given to them in order for them to be directed to the meaning of the language. The instructions were about the important role that cohesion plays in making a writing more strongly linked. The learners were also notified that it is their content and fluency of production which counts and they should not neglect content at the expense of form of their language. They were told that their writings will be scored regardless of their grammatical errors, but according to their interconnectedness of sentences and paragraphs and that there should be a strong link between the sentences. In order for the researchers to better make sure that the learners were directed to the content of language, they

were given a piece of paper including five questions about the story of the task (see Appendix B). The learners were reminded that their written production of the narrative task should include the answers to at least three of the posed questions. As for the unguided planning group, they were not provided with any instructions concerning the content or form of the language.

### Data Analysis

Because the test of normality showed the data to be normally distributed, the study used a set of ANOVAs in order to analyze the performance of one-minute planners under three different planning conditions, i.e., FFP, MFP, and UGP conditions. Another set of ANOVAs were performed to analyze the performance of five-minute planners under the FFP, MFP, and UGP conditions. The alpha for achieving statistical significance was set at .05.

### Results

Table 1 shows the result of ANOVA for composing rate, i.e. the syllables per minute measure among one-minute planners. As the table indicates, the FFP obtained the highest fluency mean score ( $M = 17.25$  syllables per minute) followed by the MFP group, and the UGP group had the lowest mean ( $M = 15.25$ ). The difference between the FFP group and the UGP group reached statistical significance ( $p = .003$ ) and reflected in large effect sizes ( $d = 2.0$ ). The FFP group also surpassed the MFP group. However, the ANOVA failed to show any differences between the scores of the two groups ( $p = .216$ ). Therefore, it seems that the participants who were directed to the form of language wrote in a quicker rate than both the meaning focused and unguided planners. With regard to the comparison among the groups, like the paired comparison, the difference reached statistical significance ( $p = .009$ ). Overall, these results show that the FFP and the MFP group repeated, reformulated and crossed out less than the UGP group; therefore, the FFP group wrote faster than the MFP and the UGP groups.

As for the number of reformulations, both the FFP and the MFP group produced a lower rate of reformulations than the UGP

group. The mean score of reformulations for UGP group ( $M = 4.88$ ) was significantly higher than the FFP and the MFP group. This shows that the participants in UGP group had more reformulations and repetitions in their production than did the FFP and the MFP group ( $M = 2.63$  and  $2.88$ , respectively). Moreover, the difference among groups reached statistical significance ( $p = .027$ ).

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA Results on Fluency and Accuracy of Production among One-minute Planners*

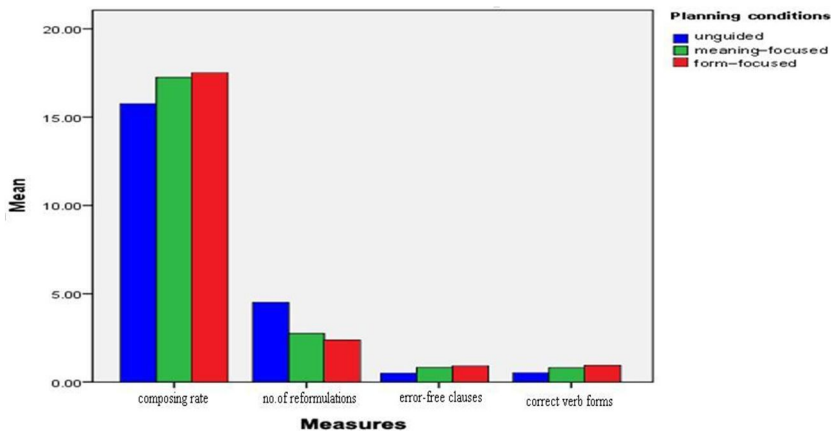
Measures	M(SD) of Planning Conditions			ANOVA		LSD (effect size)		
	MFP	FFM	UGP	<i>P</i> value	<i>F</i> value	FFP-MFP	MFP-UGP	FFP-UGP
Composing rate	16.5 (.926)	17.25 (1.669)	15.25 (.707)	.009	5.914	.750	1.25	2
No of reformulations	.85 (1.727)	.95 (1.847)	4.88 (1.458)	.027	4.285	.250	2	2.250
Error-free Clauses	.85 (.072)	.95 (.075)	.51 (.14)	.000	38.954	0.093	.33	.43
Correct verb forms	.84 (.20)	.97 (.018)	.53 (.25)	.000	17.718	0.15	.30	.450

M = mean; SD = standard deviation

In the case of error free clauses, the FFP group had the highest mean ( $M = .95$ ), followed by the MFP group and the UGP group had the lowest mean ( $M = .51$ ). The difference between the FFP and the UGP group reached statistical significance ( $p = .00$ ); however, the  $d$  index indicated a medium effect size ( $d = .43$ ). The MFP group also manifested greater number of errors in their clauses in comparison with the FFP group, but the ANOVA failed to show that the difference reached statistical significance ( $p = .082$ ); besides, the effect size was large ( $d = .9$ ). With regard to the difference between the MFP and the UGP groups, the MFP group surpassed the UGP group and the difference in scores between them reached significance ( $p = .00$ ). On the whole, the difference

among the groups reached significance ( $p = .00$ ). The results indicated that the FFP group remarkably surpassed the MFP and UGP groups in producing greater number of error free clauses and had a more accurate written production.

In terms of correct verb forms, the participants in the FFP group produced the most accurate production in terms of having fewer mistakes in the number of correct verb forms. The FFP group had the highest mean among the two groups ( $M = .97$ ), followed by the MFP group, and the UGP group had the lowest mean ( $M = .53$ ). In addition, the difference among the groups reached significance ( $p = .000$ ). Overall, the results showed that the UGP had the lowest mean in this measure and that the participants in this group had the highest number of wrong verb forms, followed by the MFP group.



*Figure 2.* The performance of the FF, MF and UG groups having one-minute planning time by considering different measures of fluency and accuracy.

As for the accuracy of production, figure 2 shows that the FFP group performed much better than both groups in this measure which indicates that the participants who were directed to the form of language could produce more accurate written production than those who were directed to the meaning of the language or those who were not directed to any aspect of language production.

Table 2 presents the results for fluency among five-minute planners. As the table shows, the FFP group surpassed the other two groups in this measure. It had the highest mean among the MFP and UGP groups ( $M = 18.125$ ). The FFP group and the MFP group surpassed the UGP group and the differences were statistically significant ( $p = .004$  and  $.017$ , respectively). Moreover, the difference among the groups was also significant ( $p = .01$ ). Thus, among five-minute planning groups, the FF group was the most fluent group in this particular measure and wrote faster than other groups and the MFP was, in turn, better than the UGP group, which had the slowest rate of writing and the highest number of repetitions, and reformulations.

In the case of the number of reformulations, the FFP group and the MFP group both had fewer numbers of reformulations than the UGP group. Moreover, the difference between the groups reached significance ( $p = .003$ ). Overall, the results above show that the FFP group had the lowest rate of reformulations ( $M = 2.125$ ) and had the least repetitions and reformulations in their written production. The UGP group had the highest number of reformulations, that is to say, they crossed out the most in their writing and were the least fluent group in this particular measure.

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics and Results from the ANOVA on Fluency and Accuracy of Production among Five-minute Planners*

Measures	M(SD) of Planning Conditions			ANOVA		LSD (effect size)		
	MFP	FFM	UGP	<i>P</i> value	<i>F</i> value	FFP-MFP	MFP-UGP	FFP-UGP
Composing rate	17.63 (1.6)	18.2 (2.0)	15.38 (1.5)	.01	5.76	.5	2.25	2.7
No of reformulations	2.63 (1.60)	2.12 (1.55)	4.88 (1.25)	.003	7.9	.5	2.25	2.75
Error-free Clauses	.65 (.177)	.88 (.075)	.51 (.46)	.000	28.48	0.23	.2	.43
Correct verb forms	.73 (.14)	.76 (.014)	.40 (.15)	.000	15.283	0.025	.33	.36

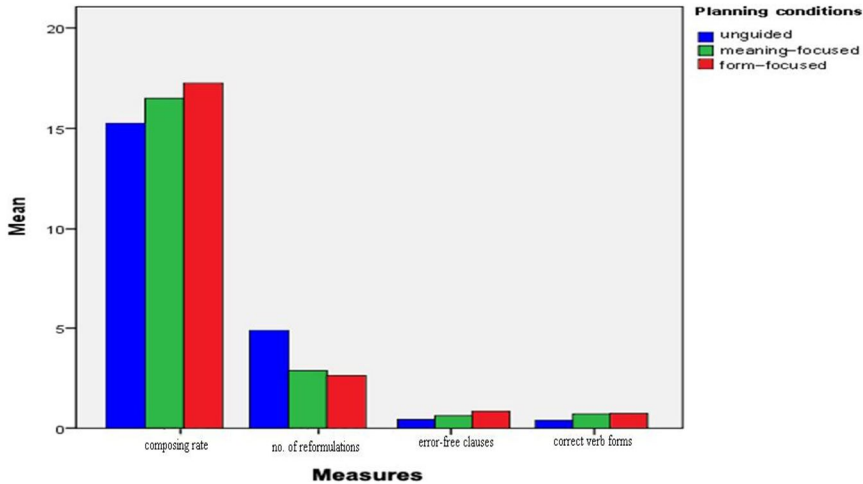
M = mean; SD = standard deviation

As far as the number of error free clauses is concerned, the FFP group had the highest mean than the other two groups ( $M = .88$  number of error free clauses). Both the FFP group and MFP group surpassed the UGP group in producing greater number of error free clauses and the ANOVA showed that this difference reached significance ( $p = .000$  and  $p = .002$ , respectively). In effect, the UGP was the least accurate group by producing the fewest number of error-free clauses ( $M = .45$ ). Moreover, the overall difference among groups reached significance ( $p = .000$ ). Overall, the results show that when directed to the form of the language, the participants were more accurate than when directed to the meaning of the language and when having no opportunity to be directed to any aspect of the language production.

In the case of correct verb forms, the FFP group obtained the highest mean ( $M = .76$ ) and therefore had the fewest number of wrong verb forms. The FFP group had greater number of correct verb forms than the MFP group but the difference did not reach significance ( $p = .732$ ). On the whole, the results show that the FFP group had the most accurate written production and directing the participants to the form of language seems to be more beneficial than directing them to the meaning of the language or not directing their attention to any aspect of the language.

As figure 3 presents, with regard to the fluency of production, the FFP group outperformed the MFP and the UGP group in the number of syllables per minute ( $M = 18.2$ ). In the case of the number of error free clauses, the FFP group had the highest number of error free clauses ( $M = .88$ ). The MF group was better than the UGP group which had the fewest number of error free clauses.





*Figure 3.* The performance of the FF, MF and UG groups having five minute planning time by considering different measures of fluency and accuracy

### Discussion

The first research question addressed the effects that different foci of planning, i.e., the form-focused, meaning-focused, and unguided planning, might have on the accuracy and fluency of the learners' narrative writing under one-minute planning condition. In terms of the accuracy of language production, results of the present study indicated that the FFP condition had the best effect on the performance of L2 learners. In effect, after they were directed to the form of language, the processing load on their formulator and conceptualizer decreased; therefore, they had enough attentional resources for monitoring their grammatical accuracy (Sangarun, 2005). Another conceivable argument can be that after being inclined towards the form of language, the FFP group concentrated more on the forms of language for encoding their ideas and content of their production. As a result of this, the FFP learners became faster in their written production because they had better access to the forms of language after the planning and did not have to hesitate as much for the search of the

appropriate form as compared to the MFP group. As a matter of fact, because of the amount of attention paid to the content of the language, the MFP group had to take a longer amount of time as well as having more hesitations in order to find the appropriate wording for the encoding of the concepts with particular forms in their mind. In a nutshell, the FFP group's better performance than the MFP group's can be attributed to their faster access to the form of language as a result of being directed to the form of language during their strategic planning.

The second research question addressed the issue of the effects that directing the learners' attention to the form and the meaning of language might have on the accuracy and fluency of the learners under five-minute planning condition. Similar results were obtained for the five-minute planners.

The UGP group's being the least accurate and fluent group might be attributed to the fact that they did not have the merit of having treatment which means that they were deprived of the grammatical and conceptual points that could come in handy in their subsequent actual production; hence, being a bit confused how to start the writing and whether to think first and then write or the other way around, they just rehearsed what they wanted to produce and, as it is evident in the results, they did not write some parts of the story. The number of the syllables this group produced per minute compared to other two groups testifies that the UGP group avoided producing some parts of the story (Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008).

### Conclusion

The results of the study support the hypothesis that directing learners' attention to form or meaning of language can aid them in better performing of a task than when their attention is not directed to any aspects of language. With regard to fluency and accuracy of written production, the finding of the study was in consort with previous research (Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1997; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1995, 1999; Wigglesworth, 1997; Sangarun, 2005) deeming strategic planning as a helpful condition for making learners more fluent and accurate. Adding to the findings of

previous studies, results of the present study support the hypothesis that form focused planning can even be more fruitful in making learners more fluent than the meaning focused planning does.

In terms of the fluency of UGP planners, present research supports the findings of previous studies (e.g., Crookes, 1989; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Yuan & Ellis, 2003) as to the poor performance of this group when compared to the guided planners (form focused and meaning focused planners). It can be explained that just merely providing learners with planning time does not necessarily guarantee their fluency and accuracy. The reason may be that learners under this planning condition, after not getting any assistance regarding form and content of language, may have focused on rehearsing the story of the task to the detriment of their fluency and accuracy level.

The findings of the study support previous research (e.g., Mehnert, 1998; Wigglesworth, 1997) regarding the positive effects of longer amount of time on learners' performance especially on their fluency. With regard to the one minute planning time, results of this study were in parallel with those of the previous studies (e.g., Wigglesworth, 1997; Mehnert, 1998) in showing that the one-minute planners were more accurate than the five-minute planners. On the other hand, the five minute planners were more fluent than one-minute planners. It can be argued that, given some amount of time for having strategic planning, learners tend to first give priority to the accuracy of production then the fluency of production. It can be concluded that when learners are pressed for time, it is accuracy which takes precedence over fluency, and the longer the amount of planning time, the more fluent learners would be.

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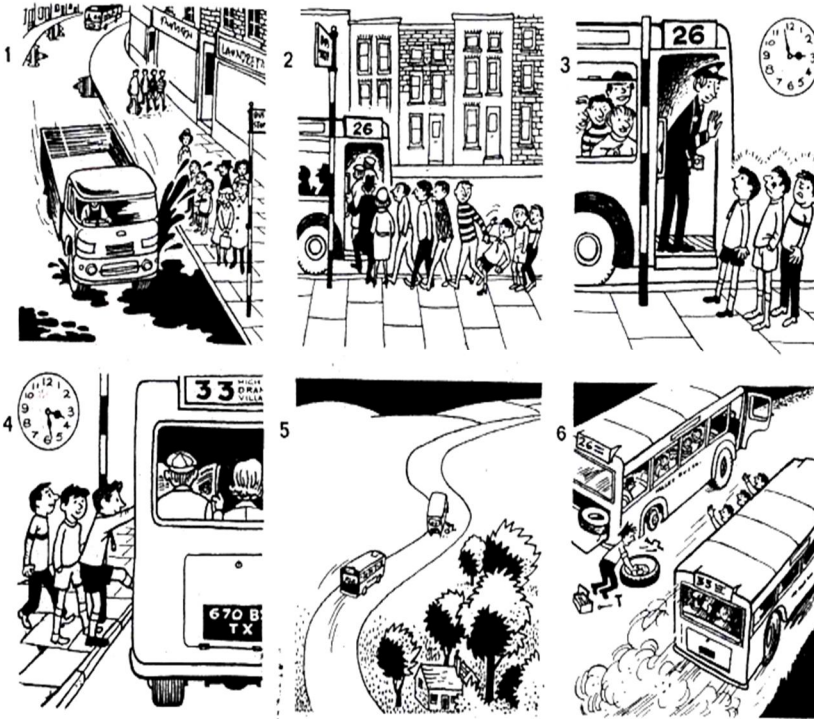
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### Appendix A: Task



*Appendix B: Questions for Meaning-focused Planners*

1. Why didn't the three boys manage to get on the first bus?
2. What did the three boys do next when they couldn't get on the first bus?
3. What happened to the first bus then?
4. What time did the three boys get on the second bus?
5. What did the three boys do when their bus was passing the first bus?



## تاثیر تاکید و زمان طراحی راهبردی بر صحت و سرعت نوشتار به زبان انگلیسی

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متعاقب مطالعاتی که تاثیر مثبت طراحی قبل از فعالیت درسی را بر عملکرد نوشتار زبان آموزان گزارش کرده اند، تحقیق حاضر بر آن است که تاثیرات احتمالی جلب توجه زبان آموزان را به سوی معنا و صورت زبانی نوشتار در قالب زمان های یک دقیقه ای و پنج دقیقه ای بسنجد. 48 زبان آموز سطح متوسط مهارت زبانی به صورت تصادفی انتخاب و به شش گروه تقسیم و هر کدام یک فعالیت نوشتاری روایی را تحت شرایط طراحی صورت محور، معنا محور و هدایت نشده در زمان های یک دقیقه ای و پنج دقیقه ای انجام دادند. عملکرد آنها از طریق آزمون های میزان صحت و سرعت اندازه گیری و نتایج آن با استفاده از آزمون تحلیل واریانس بررسی گردید. مقایسه هایی که در شرایط طراحی یک دقیقه ای انجام گرفت نشان داد طراحی صورت محور منجر به نتایج بهتری نسبت به دو گروه دیگر از نقطه نظر سرعت و صحت می شود و نتایج مشابه ای تحت شرایط پنج دقیقه ای بدست آمد. نتایج همچنین نشان داد شرایط طراحی پنج دقیقه ای باعث افزایش بیشتر سرعت نوشتار نسبت به صحت نوشتار میشود که این بر خلاف شرایط نوشتار یک دقیقه ای می باشد.

کلید واژه ها: طراحی راهبردی، طراحی هدایت شده، طراحی هدایت نشده، طراحی صورت محور، طراحی معنا محور