

Working Memory and Task Repetition in Second Language Oral Production

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Several studies have examined the effects of task repetition and task recycling on L2 oral production. The findings of these studies speak to the effectiveness of this task-based implementation variable on L2 production (measured in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency). However, so far no published work has addressed whether and how such individual difference variables as working memory capacity (WMC) could interact with the effects of task repetition on L2 oral production. This article reports on a study which aimed to investigate the way working memory capacity regulates the effects of task repetition on L2 oral production. Forty-two intermediate EFL learners participated in this study. A listening span task in the participants' L1 was used to measure their working memory capacity. Participants performed an oral narrative task twice with a two-week interval, and their L2 oral production was measured in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency. Results revealed that on the second occasion of task performance, participants with greater WMC produced more fluent and accurate language.

Introduction

Tasks are widely used in both EFL and ESL contexts around the world under various guises. The last two decades have witnessed a surge of interest in research on tasks. However, due to the myriad of criticisms leveled against task-based language teaching, researchers have tended to focus on the possible task-based implementation variables which are thought to foster a focus on both form and meaning (see Ellis, 2009). One such implementation variable is “task repetition” which has been the focus of several studies (e.g., Ahmadian, 2011; Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bygate, 1996, 2001; Hawkes, 2012; Lynch & McLean, 2001).