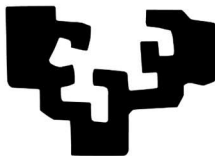


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The role of task repetition in EFL contexts

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Abstract

Different researchers have defended the use of tasks in language teaching because they offer learners the opportunity to enhance their linguistic abilities by interacting with others. Nonetheless, task-based language teaching has been criticized because as an approach it seemed to ignore formal aspects of language. Recently researchers have begun implementing task design variables, allowing learners in communicative language learning courses to develop meaning in their second language without disregarding form. Task repetition, the target of the present paper, is one of those variables in task design.

The goal of this paper is to show that task repetition seems to allow language learners to focus on the form of the language they are learning, thus developing their overall proficiency. The paper will present the theoretical rationale for the use of task repetition and will summarize several empirical studies that have implemented it in foreign language contexts. The studies chosen were carried out in English as a foreign language contexts, with both adult and child participants, and they show that task repetition helps the learners' foreign language acquisition process by freeing up their attention capacities when producing language. Moreover, the paper will showcase current lines of research on task repetition such as the use of task repetition in written modalities, the simultaneous use of task repetition and online planning, and learners' perception of task repetition.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), Task Repetition (TR), Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Focus on Form (FonF), English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

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1. Introduction

Task-based language teaching (TBLT), the use of tasks in teaching contexts, has gained relevance during the last decades in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). Long (2016) describes “task” as authentic uses of language based on emulating the interactive and communicative real-world use of language for the learners. As such, TBLT aims to offer another option for the study of the process of second language (L2) acquisition, taking into account that traditional present-practice-produce (PPP) or grammar-translation pedagogies have proven to be inaccurate and untrustworthy (Long, 2016).

Some researchers have highlighted that TBLT should primarily focus on meaning. Willis and Willis (2009) stated that this focus on meaning is what enables the grammatical system of a language learner to progress. Nonetheless, TBLT has undergone some criticism. Since focus on meaning (FoM) tasks are mostly centered on task completion, Burrows (2008) questioned whether the students’ language proficiency was being developed. Sato (2010) also had doubts about whether TBLT could address specific grammar forms when he realized how learners in one of his studies completed the tasks without employing the target forms targeted by the tasks.

Criticisms such as these questioned the idea that TBLT should focus strictly on tasks that foster meaning. That is why several TBLT researchers proposed that even if FoM is primary, focus on form (FonF) is essential and required as well (Long, 1996). These researchers have mentioned that excessive engagement in meaning-centered communication might highlight fluency at the cost of accuracy and complexity (Skehan, 1998). Others like Willis (1996) have pointed out that if only FoM tasks are used learners might develop task completion strategies and complete the tasks using very limited language. Ellis (2016) remarked that TBLT does indeed provide a context for FonF, which will draw the learners’ attention to

linguistic elements as they appear incidentally in meaning-focused communication (Long, 1991).

Different researchers, Van Patten (1990) among them, argued that attention to form, responsible for accuracy/complexity in production, competes with attention to meaning, responsible for fluency. Learners have problems when attending to both meaning and form at the same time and they will go for meaning first. Therefore, teachers/practitioners should find ways to attract their attention to formal aspects of language. Along these lines, Skehan (1998) proposed the Trade-off Hypothesis, which captures Van Patten's idea that learners prioritize one aspect (meaning or form) over the other.

Some of the variables in task implementation can be manipulated to draw learners' attention to formal language features. One of those variables is the focus of this paper, namely, task repetition (TR). In TR language learners repeat the same or a slightly altered task at certain intervals of time, for example, one or two weeks (Bygate & Samuda, 2005). This paper aims to show how TR allows language learners in foreign language contexts to draw their attention to formal aspects of language within a communicative context, thus facilitating their language learning process. In what follows I will first briefly review the theoretical rationale for the use of TR and then I will summarize a selection of empirical studies carried out in foreign language contexts, both with adults and with child participants. I will also provide some information about new lines of research regarding TR and I will conclude the paper with some thoughts about this implementation variable.

2. Theoretical background

In the field of SLA, there is evidence pointing out that language learners acquire fluency and confidence as a result of meaning-focused instruction as it offers enough understandable input to develop their communication skills (Ellis, 2015). However, Lyster (2018) provides a wealth of examples of the need for FonF in French immersion programs where students, even after being exposed to hundreds of hours of quality input, based on meaning-focused instruction, failed to learn

marked verb forms and comprehend sociolinguistic distinctions. Long (1991) had already argued that even if language learners need to take part in meaning-focused tasks to use new linguistic forms communicatively, such linguistic forms will only be fully acquired if the learners also engage in FonF tasks. In other words, meaning-focused tasks are essential in the acquisition of a new language, but L2 language teaching should include systematic attention to the development of the learners' linguistic system.

TR as conceived by researchers in the field of SLA has a psycholinguistic rationale. When researchers design studies using TR they ask the participants to repeat the same task (exact TR) or a task with the same procedure but different content (procedural TR) (Patanasorn, 2010) at different time intervals. The initial performance is regarded as preparation for the following ones. After the initial performance, the learners are already familiar with the content of the task and, therefore, are more inclined to focus their attention on formal aspects of the language they are learning.

Levelt (1989) proposed a model for oral production, which claimed that speakers go through three different levels in their performance, namely, conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. In the first stage, *conceptualization*, the communicative intentions and the overall intended meaning of the speaker's message are generated. The speaker selects the encoded information, decides on the order and perspective of this information, and sends this preverbal message to the formulator. In the next stage, *formulation*, the preverbal message is converted into a phonetic plan by selecting and applying the appropriate grammatical - lexical and syntactical- and phonological rules. Finally, in the *articulation* stage, the articulator encodes and articulates the linguistic units to produce sound.

Based on Levelt's model, Bygate (2016) argued for the facilitative role of TR in language learning. He stated that in the first task performance learners are mostly focused on the conceptualization stage and on meaning rather than on form. However, in the second enactment, learners are already familiar with the content of the task, they retain in their memory store some information about the processing

stages of production executed in the first performance (Bygate & Samuda, 2005). This information can be reused in the second enactment and, as a result, learners have more attentional capacity to draw their attention from meaning to form (Bygate, 1999).

3. Review of empirical studies

In this section, I will present and analyze a number of studies carried out in the field of SLA, which show that TR facilitates the process of language acquisition. It is important to mention that research has shown that the context in which language is learned affects the learning process (Sato & Storch, 2020) and, thus, most studies are divided into analyzing the effects of TR in two main contexts: Foreign Language (FL) contexts and Second Language (SL) contexts. In this paper, I will focus on the FL setting and, more specifically on the English as a foreign language (EFL) setting, as that is the context where I will be working for the next few years. In general, learners in FL settings receive little amount of input, usually, from 1 to 4 hours a week, they have few opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom, and they generally focus on the target language as a formal system and a subject (Pinter, 2011).

The review of the studies has been organized into two sections, studies with adult participants and studies with child participants. This latter population has been of particular interest recently because of the large number of children learning foreign languages worldwide, mainly English (García Mayo, 2017). For the reader's convenience, the studies have been organized chronologically.

3.1. Task repetition in empirical studies with adult participants

Ahmadian (2011) conducted a study with 30 intermediate EFL Iranian learners aged 18-21. It aimed to explore the benefits of TR on complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). The participants were asked to watch a silent film and narrate what happened. They were divided into two groups: the control group, who did the oral narrative task once, and the experimental group, who did the oral narrative task on

11 occasions, each two weeks apart. The results showed that mass TR over an extended period improved the complexity and fluency of the experimental group in the performance of a new task, while accuracy did not seem to be affected by this implementation variable. These findings confirmed the natural limitations of attentional capacity, backing up Skehan's (1998) Trade-off Hypothesis since the results suggested that when focusing on complexity and fluency participants had their capacity to process accurate language restricted. This study empirically supported what Ellis (2009) stated was one of the advantages of TBLT: even if the approach prioritizes meaning over form, implementation variables such as TR can help to draw attention to form, enhancing communicative fluency.

Similarly, Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011) studied the effects of simultaneously using careful online planning and TR on the CAF of 60 Iranian EFL learners' (ages 18-21) oral production. The experiment was similar to the one conducted by Ahmadian (2011), as students had to watch and narrate a silent film, in this case within a one-week interval. The participants were divided into the "careful online planning" group and the "pressured online planning" group, which were then divided into groups with TR and groups without TR.

The authors reported that the careful online planning group, which was allowed to take as much time as they deemed necessary to complete the task, experienced a greater improvement in CAF compared to the pressured online planning group, which only had 6 minutes to complete the task. These findings further supported the idea that our attentional capacity is limited and selective by nature. TR, as was previously confirmed and anticipated, positively enhanced learners' complexity and fluency, following Ellis' claim (2005) that TR is a kind of pre-task planning, which is connected to complexity in language production. Another conclusion on TR was that when learners repeat a task within an interval of time they become aware of the information they need to retrieve and utilize for task performance, while retaining some of the meaning-based information needed for Levelt's conceptualization stage, freeing learners' attentional resources. This assistance to the attentional capacity of the learner may explain the enhancement experienced in complexity and fluency.

Fukuta (2016) collected data from 28 Japanese EFL students (22-24 years old) who had an upper-intermediate proficiency level in English. Participants engaged in narrative tasks of six-frame cartoons and they were encouraged to provide a narration that accompanied these pictures in order. This experiment was conducted twice at a one-week interval and students were divided into a comparison group and an experimental group. One week after the first enactment, the experimental group was shown the same task, exact TR (ETR), and asked to narrate the pictures the same way. The comparison group was presented with the same type of task but with different pictures, procedural TR (PTR). The results showed that the PTR group was unable to reuse the information they had previously conceptualized and, as a consequence, they could not free up their attentional capacity away from content. Consider example (1) from a speaker in the ETR group into consideration:

(1)

The man running away with his car ... then ... in the end. [Retrospective comment]: I realized there was a man (points to a man in the picture), and I thought I had to mention him. I was wondering how to describe him. (Conceptualizing process)

(Fukuta, 2016; p. 326)

Here the speaker was wondering how to describe the picture. He was focused on realizing the communicative goals and conveying the information as intended, disregarding lexis, syntax, and phonetic representation. This is a clear example of how a language learner is not able to focus on all aspects of production simultaneously. After the first enactment of the task, the speaker was able to free up their attentional capacity away from content.

Other findings revealed that the ETR group's performance underwent few changes in complexity and fluency, but changes in accuracy and lexical variety were noteworthy. As a whole, both groups improved on CAF further supporting

previous claims (Bygate, 1996) stating that TR frees up the attentional capacity of the learner allowing them to focus on other aspects of language other than content.

Lambert, Kormos, and Minn (2016) examined the relationship between oral monologue TR and immediate gains in fluency. The participants of this study were 32 Japanese English learners (aged 18-23) sampled at three levels of proficiency: the high-level group (B2-C1 level), the mid-level group (B1 level), and the low-level group (A2 level). The participants had to complete three oral communication tasks based on instruction, narration, and opinion respectively, repeated six times. The instruction task presented a problem to the participants while providing them with a picture sequence that illustrated the solution, which they had to explain. The narration task consisted in narrating the story of a four-frame picture to the interlocutors. In the final task, the opinion task, participants were shown two photographs and were asked to give their opinion about them. The data showed that overall gains in fluency, even if they were most considerable during the first three performances, continued increasing until the fifth performance, indicating that it may be necessary to repeat a task up to five times to prepare, activate and optimize the linguistic encoding processes used by the learner.

Now that we have highlighted the main findings from studies with adult participants, the next section will deal with TR studies conducted on child learners, which are especially noteworthy due to the large number of children learning EFL worldwide.

3.2. Task repetition studies with child participants

Before we begin analyzing studies with child participants, it is important to remind the reader that most TR studies have been conducted with adult participants and research with child learners is scarce (Pinter, 2007). However, that is not the only issue when collecting data from studies with child participants. Those few studies with children report mixed findings because they have been carried out in different learning contexts, English as a second language (ESL) and EFL (Azkarai & Oliver, 2019). Children constitute a very important group of learners in EFL contexts (Enever, 2018), and further research is needed to document their learning process.

Nonetheless, I will try to present the reader with a clear and coherent summary and analysis of the TR studies conducted on children.

Pinter (2007) aimed to study the benefits of TR on the interaction of children in an EFL setting. The participants were a pair of 10-year-old Hungarians who were asked to repeat varied versions of spot-the-difference (StD) tasks within a three-week period. These types of tasks are primarily meaning-focused. The results supported claims by previous studies regarding the benefits of TR. As the children's understanding of the task increased and they better understood its demands, both children were able to manage the tasks in more effective ways, completing them more fluently. Consider (2) and (3):

(2)

Line 14 Peter: Yes, in my living room there are, there is a ball and ball and *vagy egy meg egy Van neked?* (Or one and one, have you got one?)

Line 15 Adam: Yes in my living room *van egy vödör meg egy óra.* (There is a bucket and a clock.)

Line 16 Peter: Yes in my living room there are a TV *a szobában van egy akvárium amiben van egy halacska.* (In the room there is an fishtank and in it a fish.)

Line 17 Adam: *Igen* (yes) In my kitchen is . . . chicken. (inaudible)

Line 18 Peter: Yes. In my living room there are six books.

Line 19 Adam: Yes in my living room is two cactus.

(3)

Line 16 Peter: Yes. In my kitchen in my kitchen on the right there is a picture
and on the picture is 2 children.

Line 17 Adam: Hol? (Where?)

Line 18 Peter: Jobbra a konyában. On the right in the kitchen. [Adam gestures
differences].

Line 19 Adam: My kitchen is two apples.

Line 20 Peter: Yes. In my kitchen near the fridge there is one milk, one cheese
and one bread.

Line 21 Adam: Yes. In the kitchen two cactus.

Line 22 Peter: Yes. In my living room there is a table.

Line 23 Adam: Yes.

Line 24 Peter: And 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, eight books.

Line 25 Adam: No

(Pinter, 2007; pp. 198-199)

These comments were taken from performances 2 and 3 and we can see how both speakers learned to enjoy the task as a game, gained confidence, and, as a result, used more natural language and relied less on their L1. In (3) we can also see how their understanding of the task demands improved, realizing that focusing on describing one part of the picture is an effective strategy and completing the task more effectively. Pinter (2007) also reported that peer-peer interaction between children benefits their language acquisition by improving their confidence when using the target language, which leads to a lower use of their L1.

Shintani (2012) studied the interactions between a teacher and his learners. The participants were 30 Japanese 6-year-old EFL students with no prior English knowledge and no prior experience with English instruction. This study is particularly interesting when analyzing the effects of TR on child learners' learning process because, unlike most previous studies, instead of employing oral production tasks Shintani employed input-based tasks. These tasks require learners to listen to input and show their understanding in a non-verbal way, even if they were not prohibited from expressing themselves verbally. The task was repeated 9 times over 5 weeks and was designed to introduce new vocabulary.

The findings produced evidence to support the fact that input-based tasks can be beneficial in various ways. While the task did not require any production, learners' use of their L1 decreased over time and they voluntarily produced more L2. Their comprehension of the task also improved and, similar to what Pinter (2007) reported, the children were able to carry out the task more efficiently. This also helped to keep the students motivated, boosting their confidence. Tests also showed that despite not engaging in production practice, children developed productive knowledge of new words. Additionally, Shintani, based on her research, provided general principles that language teachers could consider when they are repeating a task with child beginner learners. One of the most important ones was that the teacher should gradually modify their input, using more complex language as a consequence of the learner's ability to process input.

Kim and Tracy-Ventura (2013) analyzed data from 36 Korean EFL learners (13-14 years old). They divided the participants into two groups, a group that performed the same task 3 times over a four-week period, the ETR group, and a group that performed three tasks based on different content, the PTR. The results showed no significant differences between both TR treatments. Regarding CAF, both groups demonstrated to have improved in terms of complexity and accuracy, with little difference between both treatments, but there was no effect on fluency in any of the groups. This study suggests that being familiar with a specific task procedure but with different content is as beneficial as repeating the same exact task.

Sample and Michel (2014) noticed that few investigations about TR focused on the interaction among CAF dimensions. To fill this gap, they gathered data from six 9-year-old Chinese EFL learners, who had to repeat an oral StD task 3 times within three weeks. The findings mirrored earlier works, TR consistently and significantly increasing fluency, while the effects on accuracy and complexity provided mixed results. Supporting Skehan's (2009) Trade-Off hypothesis, during initial performances the benefits on one dimension (e.g. fluency) came at the expense of trading off another dimension (e.g. accuracy or complexity). Nonetheless, by the third performance these trade-off negotiations disappeared, suggesting the previously mentioned idea that since the students became more and more familiar with the task and its contents, they were able to free their attentional capacity from focusing on just one dimension and focused on all three CAF areas.

García Mayo and Imaz Aguirre (2016) explored the influence of ETR and PTR on the negotiation of meaning (NoM) strategies used by 120 EFL 8-9-year-old Spanish children. NoM is a type of negotiation process that partners go through to overcome communication breakdowns. Take the following exchange:

(4)

Child A: Where is it?

Child B: Next to the plant

Child A: Next to?

(García Mayo & Imaz Aguirre, 2016; p. 452)

Child A uses a confirmation check (*Next to?*) to make sure that he has understood correctly. Confirmation checks are a type of conversational adjustments in NoM, as well as clarification requests and comprehension checks. The participants were divided into pairs for interaction, and they were asked to complete an StD task twice (T1 and T2). The findings reported there were no differences in the use of NoM strategies from T1 to T2, suggesting that TR had no impact on

NoM. However, there was a significant change in collaborative patterns. The results suggested that collaboration between pairs increased by T2, especially those on procedural repetition. Younger participants displayed more collaborative patterns than older ones, which could be attributed to children in the 9-10 age range being especially sensitive to development, as pointed out by Pinter (2007). This may explain why young participants are more collaborative than older participants.

Azkarai and García Mayo (2017) explored the extent and the purpose for which children in an EFL setting use their L1, apart from considering the influence of ETR and PTR on their L1 use. The participants of the study were 42 Spanish EFL learners (9-10 years old) who had to work in pairs on an StD task. They were divided into the ETR and PTR groups and completed the task at two different times (T1 and T2). The findings revealed that the functions for which the children used their L1 (mainly for appeal for help and borrowings) remained the same in both testing periods. The results also showed that the use of L1 decreased at T2 in both TR types, supporting previous research suggesting that as the children's familiarity with the task increases, their need to fall back on the L1 decreases.

Lázaro Ibarrola and Hidalgo (2017) explored the effects of PTR on the oral interaction of young learners, focusing on their NoM strategies and general CAF performance. The participants were 10 pairs of 10-11-year-old EFL learners, with an A1 English proficiency level. They had to complete a picture placement task where the students had two identical posters and two identical sets of 6 photos. Both students had different photos placed on the poster and outside of it. The participants had to interact in English, without seeing each other's posters, to complete their own. This task was conducted three times (T1, T2, and T3), one per week.

Their findings show that the total number of NoM strategies decreased by T3, which mirrors the study by Mackey et al. (2007), who concluded that learners produce fewer conversational adjustments in procedurally familiar tasks than in unfamiliar tasks. This may happen because as learners become familiar with the task, the need for interaction to solve communication difficulties becomes less frequent, or as a result of increasing the learner's proficiency through previous negotiations. This finding on the decrease in NoM strategies is not in line with

García Mayo and Imaz Agirre (2016), who reported no differences when repeating a task. We could argue that the participants of that study only repeated the task twice, while this time the number of repetitions is three, suggesting that repeating the task two times may not be enough for the effects to appear. Regarding CAF performance, the results indicate a small improvement in accuracy by T3, reflected in learners completing the task with fewer errors.

The last study I will be analyzing is Hidalgo Gordo and García Mayo (2021), one of the most recent papers on the topic. The goal of this study was to analyze the impact of TR on young learners' attention to form, operationalized as language-related episodes (LREs). According to Swain and Lapkin (1998), LREs are parts of a dialogue where learners of language talk about the produced language, question their use of language, or correct others or themselves. The participants were two groups of 20 young learners, 11-12 years old, whose proficiency level in English was A2, and were divided into two groups depending on the type of TR they were working with (ETR and PTR). The experiment consisted of a collaborative writing task, where the pair had to look at some pictures and collaborate to narrate a story in writing. This task was repeated three times on a weekly basis (T1, T2, and T3). The ETR group worked with the same story on the three task repetitions, while the PTR group worked with three different stories.

The results seemed to indicate that PTR is more effective than ETR when keeping up with the motivation of the learner and drawing their attention to formal aspects of language. This may be because PTR deals with different content tasks, contrary to ETR, which involves the same content, making it more difficult to maintain the learner's motivation. Nonetheless, ETR appears to be more helpful for the learner when lighting their cognitive load, as learners become familiar with the task, they can use this information in the next task performances, resulting in fewer LREs. The study also concluded that TR in general promotes attention to form, shown in how form-focused LREs were more frequent at the three enactments in both types of TR. Take the following as an example:

(5)

CHI2: maybe (.) no (.) we should put xxx no?

CHI1: I think that no (..) in the tables that we did it didn't put apostrophe (.)

I think that here we should put (. . .).

CHI2: put another thing?

CHI1: no (.) hers without s.

CHI2: her drawing (. . .).

CHI1: sí (yes).

(Hidalgo Gordo & García Mayo, 2021; p. 578)

In (5) we can see an instance of the speakers producing form-focused LREs. They are deliberating about expressing possession in English, explicitly referencing how they have worked on it in their language class, which did not include the form “hers” they used in their writing. In the end, they agree to use the correct form “her”, modifying their text.

However, although form-focused LREs were more frequent in both types of TR, since the ETR group produced fewer LREs at T3, if the goal of using this TR is to focus on formal aspects of language, one repetition of the task should be enough.

4. Current research lines

In the following section, I will comment on some of the current research lines on TR such as TR in the written modality, TR and online planning, and the learners' perceptions of TR.

4.1. TR in the written modality

As mentioned above, TR as a task implementation variable has attracted the attention of TBLT researchers over the past two decades (Bygate, 2006). Nonetheless, research on TR is characterized by focusing almost exclusively on oral communication (Byrnes & Manchón, 2014). Bygate, van den Branden and Norris (2014) noted that each language modality is distinct by nature, each one opening up distinct meaning-making processes. As such, it makes sense to pay attention to the different learning opportunities provided by different language modalities, instead of just focusing on oral communication.

Compared with the almost instantaneous processing of oral output, there is greater time availability in written output (Nitta & Baba, 2014), which allows L2 writers to focus more on task conceptualization, task planning, and task completion (Manchón, 2014; Williams, 2012). As a consequence, L2 writers are more in control of their attentional resources, which makes them able to attend to language matters, prioritizing linguistic concerns (Manchón, 2014). The second major distinctive characteristic of writing to take into account when considering TR in the writing domain is the opportunity to receive feedback. As pointed out by Ellis (2009), the combination of TR and feedback processing enhances language learning via TR. Discussions on this issue are mostly absent when analyzing TR, but they should be explored and expanded upon taking into account that teacher feedback on student writing is an integral part of writing instruction (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Revisiting a previously produced text is a form of TR, thanks to which the writer can focus their attention on the dimensions of the task in need of improvement. As a consequence, writing feedback offers the learner a unique opportunity to draw their attention to formal language concerns (Manchón, 2014).

One of the most interesting studies on the effects of WRT came from Nitta and Baba (2014). Research on TBLT has mostly focused on short-term results of using tasks, which means that long-term L2 development has been paid little attention (Ortega & Ibarra-Shea, 2005; Van den Branden, Bygate, & Norris, 2009). What makes this study noteworthy is the fact that it explores the long-term changes in learners' L2 acquisition, over a one-year period or one academic year. The study

was also framed within a Dynamic System Theory (DST) (Herdina & Jessner, 2002), which aims to analyze and understand the time evolution of L2 changes. DST assumes that L2 development is non-linear because different components (students and teachers in a classroom) are connected and interact with each other, influencing the context in which they operate. Most previous studies were based on a linear cause-and-effect relationship, solely focusing on the group-level changes and, unlike those, Dynamic System studies take into consideration individual variations over time, drawing conclusions at both levels.

Contrary to much TBLT research, Nitta and Baba carried out this investigation in real language classrooms, arguing that it is a desirable environment for researching from a Dynamic System perspective (Herdina & Jessner, 2002). The data for the experiment was taken from two Japanese university EFL classrooms (Class A and B), as they wanted to facilitate generalization about the trajectories of a large group of learners' development. The participants had little experience writing in English, so they were considered to be beginner level and they had little opportunity to use English outside the classroom, so the progress in their writing is mostly attributable to classroom activities. Nonetheless, when it comes to the average proficiency scores, the proficiency level of Class A was remarkably superior.

Regarding the task, participants were asked to write on a familiar topic of their choosing for 10 minutes without stopping. The tasks were meaning-oriented and learners were directed to prioritize fluency and content of the writing. To avoid the possibility of reducing students' motivation, the authors decided to repeat the same task and topic only twice, although the task type was repeated over 30 weeks. Each of the authors took the role of an English teacher in one of the classrooms and gathered the compositions of 46 students, 23 from each class, having a database of 1300 writings. The instructors also checked and offered feedback on students' writings, only encouraging positive attitudes and not offering linguistic corrections. Corrective feedback was not provided to avoid inserting an unwanted intervening factor.

The data were analyzed using five indices of fluency, lexis, and grammar and showed that simply repeating the same type of task within a one-week interval had limited effects on the quality of the produced writings, even if their length and fluency improved. However, task-type repetition had a significant effect on the grammatical and lexical aspects of the compositions, as the analysis of long-term data showed development in syntactic complexity and variety. Regarding lexis, in the long term, students used more diverse vocabulary. It is also worth mentioning that a developmental trend in the effects of task-type repetition was observed. An original increase in fluency moved towards gradually improving lexical and syntactic complexity over the duration of the experiment, which is a finding worth exploring in the future. The study concluded that if the goal is to improve fluency one repetition of the task is enough. But, if the instructor aims to develop lexical and syntactic aspects of language, they should repeat the same task type over a lengthened period of time.

A recent study on the effects of WTR was conducted by Lázaro-Ibarrola and Hidalgo (2021). This study aimed to analyze the effects of PTR on young learners when compared to ETR. The results came from 59 Spanish learners of EFL (11 years old) who had an A2 proficiency level in the target language. The experiment was repeated in two sessions (T1 and T2) with a one-week interval between them and the participants were encouraged to write a story after looking at a comic strip for two minutes. The procedure was the same in both sessions but in T2, half of the participants wrote the same story (ETR) while the other half wrote a different story (PTR). The results were assessed using CAF measures and were also analyzed holistically, providing a rating scale.

The findings revealed that the ETR group demonstrated greater complexity at T1 but became non-evident at T2 and also in the PTR, so it is probably linked to an arbitrary factor. When it comes to fluency, the PTR displayed improvement that was not shared by the ETR group. This goes in hand with previous research on oral data which stated that PTR and gains in fluency are related (García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2016; Lázaro-Ibarrola & Hidalgo, 2017; Patanasorn, 2010). In terms of accuracy, although there were improvements, these were not statistically significant to be taken into account. Apart from CAF measures, writings in the PTR group

displayed greater lexical density at T2, which may have happened because, since they are writing a different story from T1, they require more lexical items. Finally, the holistic analysis hinted at an improvement in both task types, the upward trend in the ETR group being statistically the most significant. The study concluded by pointing out that TR does in fact help the students improve their writing and, as such, teachers should be encouraged to use it.

4.2. TR and online planning

Language production and the planning the language user undergoes before producing it are intrinsically related. Some kind of planning is inevitable in any form of language production (Ellis, 2005). Online planning refers to the planning time available for the language user when performing a task, where they regroup the information and plan around it (Skehan, 2007). Ellis (2005) differentiates two types of planning: careful online planning (COLP) and pressured online planning (POLP). In COLP the language user has sufficient time to complete the task and plan the production of language, carefully monitoring and attending to their language performance. While in POLP the language user has a limited amount of time to plan their language production and complete the task, working under time pressure. According to Yuan and Ellis (2003), in COLP, language users have the opportunity to deliberately attend the formulation stage as they are planning their speech and engaging in self-monitoring of their acts of speech. These two types of online planning can affect language production regarding CAF.

Torabi (2018) analyzed the simultaneous use of online planning and TR with 50 19-27-year-old female Iranian advanced EFL learners. The participants were asked to write on a topic, which was repeated five times, giving the participants given enough time in each session to plan and complete the task (COLP). Supporting previous findings, the results indicated that combining TR and online planning improved the accuracy and complexity of the writings, encouraging teachers to employ them simultaneously to enhance the writing proficiency of students. Nonetheless, this study had some considerable drawbacks that need to be taken into consideration. The study only selected advanced EFL female students as

participants for the study, so the researcher suggests that other studies should select both male and female participants from different proficiency levels.

When it comes to the combined effects of COLP and TR, Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011), a study already referred to above, concluded that three important findings should be taken into account:

- There were no differences between the COLP and TR group and the COLP alone group in terms of accuracy, but both groups produced more accurate language than the POLP group.
- The dysfluency resulting from engaging in COLP was compensated by the simultaneous use of COLP and TR.
- The simultaneous use of COLP and TR exponentially increased the complexity of oral production.

The findings of this study have interesting implications when it comes to language pedagogy in EFL contexts. The most common condition implemented by teachers is COLP and no TR, as on rare occasions teachers ask learners to perform a task under the pressure of time. Nonetheless, the simultaneous use of COLP and TR improves learners' complexity and accuracy without suffering from dysfluency, making it more beneficial for language pedagogy, and enhancing all aspects of language production simultaneously.

I will conclude this section by saying that even if online planning as a variable has extensive research backing it up, there is not much research on the simultaneous implementation of this variable and TR. Those studies which have considered the effects of simultaneously using online planning and TR are scarce and their findings cannot be generalized in a reliable way due to their drawbacks. So, there is a need for further research in this regard.

4.3. Learners' perceptions of TR

The need to study learners' perception of TR has been pointed out by different researchers like Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011), who expressed the need for introspective interviews to better understand how learners approach tasks. Pinter (2007) interviewed the participants of the study after they performed the tasks, asking them in their L1 about their perception of the tasks and the benefits of TR. The participants watched their first and last performances and made observations regarding the differences. They both commented on their increased confidence in the third performance and how they were more relaxed when using English. They were able to complete the task more fluently and by the last performance, they were familiar with the necessary vocabulary to complete the task.

Another study regarding the perception of TR, Ahmadian, Mansouri, and Ghominejad (2017), might be one of the most interesting ones on this topic. The study in question discusses the perception of TR by both teachers and language learners. The participants were 8 language teachers (24-32 years old), who had been teaching for 5-8 years, and 21 EFL learners (ages 20-24), whose proficiency levels ranged from intermediate to upper-intermediate. The teachers included a picture description task in their usual speaking practice, pairing the language learners and asking them to complete the task within a one-week interval. It must be noted that the learners were not aware of the fact that they would repeat the task a week later. Right after the second performance of the task, teachers and learners were interviewed in one-to-one semi-structured interviews. The interview aimed to answer the following questions:

- How do learners and teachers perceive TR?
- Do teachers' and learners' interpretations, expectations, and perceptions of TR correspond to one another?
- Do language learners engage in TR cognitively and/or effectively?

The overall opinion of all participants on the pedagogical value of TR was positive, sharing the opinion on how TR supports the more efficient use of the L2. The increase in self-confidence upon repeating a task was also pointed out by a teacher. Different comments made by language learners are also interesting to consider, as they support Levelt's (1989) and Bygate's (2001) claims about the positive effects of TR. Consider (6):

(6)

TR could be a useful technique in that the first performance leaves some traces in learners' memory and therefore they may be able to do it more efficiently on the second occasion because they know more about the content.

although initially I did not know what the purpose of TR was, it helped me a lot in that I could state the sentences that I had produced last week in a more fluent, organized, and accurate fashion.

in the first performance, I struggled to figure out what I should say about pictures and how I should put ideas together, but this time I had something in my mind and could repeat the same content with a better structure.

(Ahmadian, Mansouri & Ghominejad, 2017; p. 6).

Regarding the improvement in production in terms of CAF, both teachers and learners pointed out the improvement in fluency, stating that they could speak faster and without pausing too much by the second performance. Most of the participants also supported the positive impact of TR on accuracy and complexity. These comments support previous findings on the beneficial effects of using TR in language production.

While teachers' and learners' perception of TR was similar in most aspects, their visions did not align in terms of boredom and fatigue. Practically all teachers (7 out of 8) agreed that TR was boring for learners, believing that repeating a task made them lose interest. Contrary to this, 18 out of 21 students did not consider TR boring and the remaining 3 suggested that using PTR could be interesting and

positive. Similar comments were made by the participants of Lambert, Kormos, and Minn's (2016) study, where students did not find repetition boring. Some of the learners also pointed out that it would be beneficial to make learners aware of the goals of TR.

Zuniga and Payant (2021) tried to examine the relationship between TR and learners' subjective experience. The participants were 24 university-level learners of English with varying proficiency levels who had to complete an oral and a writing decision-making task, based on one of the two given scenarios. This task was repeated two times within a one-week interval. They divided their participants into the ETR group and the PTR group. The data showed that participants in the ETR group became disinterested in the task, some of them stating that it was boring and that it gets "less fun" on the second repetition. The perception of the PTR group was different, however. They made no comments on the task becoming boring and two of the participants even expressed the desire to engage in similar tasks more often. Contrary to the findings of Ahmadian, Mansouri, and Ghominejad (2017), the participants of this study did find the procedure of repeating a task with the same content boring, unlike those who just repeated the type of task.

Learners also commented on the improved comprehension and understanding of the task upon repetition. They expressed that repeating a task helps them better understand the goals and procedures necessary to complete it, avoiding confusion and facilitating its completion. Nonetheless, opinions like these were not common in the PTR group, whose participants stated that they did not have a better understanding of the task and its goals. There were some isolated comments on learners getting familiar with the contents of the tasks and improving their performance, but these were scarce compared to the ETR group. Participants also made few comments regarding the beneficial effects of TR on their language production, with two students commenting on the vocabulary learning opportunities presented by TR and just one student commenting on the benefits of writing, stating that by the second task repetition she was able to transfer her writing strategies employed the first time.

All in all, the body of research on learners' perception of TR is not extensive, and those who have analyzed it have reached mixed conclusions. Further research is needed regarding this topic, considering that it may be crucial when analyzing how learners face different tasks, which could be useful when adapting the employed procedures to reach an optimal understanding of how tasks work.

5. Conclusion

The present paper aimed to show that TR facilitates the language learning process of language learners in foreign language contexts, drawing their attention to the meaning and also focusing on the formal aspects of language within a communicative context. The studies have reported mixed findings. In terms of overall improvement in CAF, a single consensus has not been reached. Most researchers agree that TR enhances the complexity and accuracy of learners' production, but not all studies have reached the same conclusion. The gains in fluency are perhaps the most discussed aspect of the CAF triad since findings point out to different outcomes. The majority of the studies agree on the fact that, as learners' understanding of the task increases upon repetition, their performance also increases, finding more efficient ways to complete the task. Some studies have also analyzed the differences between engaging in ETR and PTR. When it comes to overall proficiency gains, few differences have been found between both types of TR. PTR does seem to be more effective at keeping the learners motivated, as it is easier for them to become disinterested when dealing with repeating tasks with the same content and same procedure.

I have also commented on some of the current research lines on TR. The results of implementing TR in writing have shown that WRT does improve the learners' writing production but, once again, the specific aspects of these gains are not clear, as findings from those studies conducted on this topic are difficult to generalize and have led to mixed findings. This section analyzed the effects of TR duration, concluding that one repetition of the task improves fluency, but that implementing TR over an extended period might be necessary to enhance other aspects of language. I also found analyzing the effects of TR and online planning

interesting. There seems to be evidence pointing out that simultaneously using COLP and TR does compensate for the dysfluency between enhanced complexity and accuracy at the cost of fluency. In my opinion, perhaps the most interesting research line is the one on learners' perception of TR. Most studies agree that the confidence of the learner increases upon repeating a task and they are more relaxed when using the L2. Learners' comments on how understanding the demands and procedures of the task may help them perform better are also noteworthy. One of the most debated matters comes from the disparity between learners' and teachers' perceptions of the boredom of the task: teachers believe that TR is boring for learners while learners consider repeating tasks engaging and feel motivated when witnessing their improvement. Although it must be said that there are disparities between studies in this regard too.

Further research on TR is required to better understand how to properly implement them in language classrooms, considering that the body of studies is scarce and that those studies that have been carried out have led to mixed findings. As far as I am concerned, all language teachers would welcome any opportunity to improve the methodologies used to enhance their students' language proficiency. On a more personal level, I hope to be a language teacher myself in the future, so studying and expanding my knowledge on this topic has been very interesting and helpful at the same time. I had not considered the idea of using TR as a language teaching method but, after extensively reading about it, I do believe that it is an optimal way of implementing new teaching variables into language learning. I look forward to applying TR in my language classes in the near future and witnessing firsthand its beneficial effects on language learners. I hope that research on this topic keeps expanding and adding more layers to it.

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