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# Dynamics of Fluency, Lexical Resources and Language Awareness: Investigating the Role of Pre-speaking Strategies Instruction

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***Abstract*—The purpose of the present study was to find out the effect of using pre-speaking strategies coupled with strategic planning on Iranian EFL learners' fluency, lexical resources and language awareness. The study involved 70 intermediate male and female learners divided into two groups-experimental and control. Prior to the main phase of the study, Nelson test was carried out to check the homogeneity of the participants. In the pre-test stage, a picture-cued narrative task was administered to the two groups. Next, during ten treatment sessions the experimental group received pre-speaking strategies instruction and strategic planning with ten minutes of planning time while the control group did not receive them. To answer the research questions, Independent-samples t-test and Mann-Whitney U test were used. Data analyses showed the experimental group outperformed the control group. Therefore, for effective speaking, strategic planning should be coupled with pre-speaking strategies.**

***Index Terms*—pre-speaking strategies, strategic planning, fluency, lexical resources, language awareness**

## I. Introduction

Speaking, among the four main skills, seems mostly favored as every English language learner desires to be effective in communication with others in oral mode. The importance of teaching speaking skill is that language is acquired through speaking and listening before one learns reading and writing. Brown and Yule (1983) believe that many language learners consider speaking skill as the basis for knowing a language and progress is assessed in terms of success in spoken communication. Therefore, it is important if teachers teach students how to speak strategically for effective communication. Strategy-based instruction is a process oriented approach to teaching which focuses on the learning process, and results in improvements both in the process and product of learning.

According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), speaking strategies are important as they help learners "in negotiating meaning where either linguistic structures or sociolinguistic rules are not shared between a second language learner and a speaker of the target language" (p. 43) (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015).

Therefore, classrooms should support the use of spoken language and provide a place where strategic speaking is valued. By assigning speaking tasks, language instructors can help learners use strategies for effective communication. These strategies may appear at two stages in task performance for (1) getting prepared for upcoming speaking tasks, (2) monitoring language input.

On the other hand, Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT) has become an important approach in the last years as it improves language learning as a result of communication and social interaction. Tasks provide the basis for an entire language curriculum and are an important feature of CLT (Ellis, 2003). In an attempt to study the effect of task-specific strategies, Cohen, Weaver, and Li (as cited in Nakatani & Goh, 2007) conducted an intervention study to investigate the effect of metacognitive strategy instruction on the development of speaking (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Thirty-two foreign students of English in the US were taught to use metacognitive strategies for preparing to speak and to self-monitor during speaking and for self-evaluation after having speaking (as cited in Lam, 2010). They were also assigned three tasks: self-description, story retelling, and city description and requested to make checklists of their use of task specific strategies before, during and after these tasks (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Analysis of data showed that the experimental group had an improvement in speaking performance on the city description task. However, Swain et al. (2009) found negative correlations between metacognitive strategies and speaking performance (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). One reason for this might be that speaking performance requires fast speech processing mechanisms (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). In fact, among low proficiency level students or in difficult tasks, attention to metacognitive strategies might detract attention from producing fluent, complex, and accurate speech (as cited in Talebi

& Moradi, 2015). Another reason might be that speaking strategies should be coupled with strategic planning to produce positive correlations with speaking performance (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015).

In task-based language teaching (TBLT), planning can happen in different phases and can be classified into two kinds: pre-task planning and within-task planning (Ellis, 2005). In pre-task planning, as the name speaks for itself, learners plan what they are going to say or write before they actually do the task. Pre-task planning is subdivided into rehearsal and strategic planning. In rehearsal planning students perform the task before their actual performance of the task. In fact, it is a preparation for the later performance.

Strategic planning is "student's preparation of what the content is and how the content is expressed for the task" (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). It can be divided into two types: guided planning and unguided planning (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). In guided planning, learners are guided in the planning phase about what and how to plan through some instructions and advice whereas in unguided planning learners receive no guidance or advice in the planning phase (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Empirical studies on the effects of both pre-task and within-task planning on written production have indicated that planning has a positive effect on fluency, complexity, and accuracy in general (Skehan & Foster, 1999; Sangarun, 2001) (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Skehan and Foster (1997) reported that planners had better fluency than non-planners (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Ortega (1999) showed that L2 Spanish students who planned strategically had higher speaking speed.

According to Peters (2014), language resources contain a wide range of linguistic information according to their nature and function (as cited in Peter, 2014). They differ from simple lists to complex resources with many types of linguistic information associated with the entries or elements (as cited in Peter, 2014). In this document we focus on a particular kind of language resources, the lexical resources (as cited in Peter, 2014). In general they can be of various types (word list, machine readable dictionary, thesaurus, ontology, glossary, concordance, term bank, phonetic transcriptions, picture set, video shots, and sound bits) (as cited in Peter, 2014).

The impact of vocabulary knowledge, as one of the essential language components, on language fluency is undeniable (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). It serves as a means of expression and is “of critical importance to the typical language learner" (Coady & Huckin, 1997, p. 5) (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). As speaking is a skill most fundamental for oral communication it seems that in the Iranian EFL classrooms more focus is on the speaking product and less attention is paid to the strategies and processes of speaking. Therefore, task-based language teaching is most fruitful if it is guided, as students may not know how to do the tasks and need a guided plan for their performance (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Actually, with all benefits found in strategic planning, it seems that in order to improve the speaking ability of EFL learners, strategic planning must be guided and thoughtfully carried out so that students do not stray from their planning time (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015).

## II. Literature Review

### *A. Language Awareness, Fluency and Lexical Resources*

Language Awareness is an approach to language learning and teaching that has been increasingly discussed and applied both within the L1 and L2 context during the past few years (as cited in Barany, 2016). Language Awareness has been especially prominent in the United Kingdom, where it originated (see e.g., Hawkins, 1984) (as cited in Barany, 2016). At present, several conferences have been arranged, and a scientific journal called *Language Awareness* is regularly published (as cited in Barany, 2016). Language Awareness is neither a methodology nor a theory of learning (as cited in Barany, 2016). Rather, it may be understood as a cover term for a wide range of approaches towards language and language teaching, all of which emphasize the aspect of language being something personal and meaningful (as cited in Barany, 2016). Carter defined language awareness as "the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language" (as cited in Peters, 2014). Thus language awareness may be considered as "partly synonymous with reflectivity in matters of language/language learning, sensitivity to matters of language/language learning, and ability to explore language/language learning and appreciate it"(as cited in Dufva, 1994). Thus students in a foreign language classroom may be encouraged to think about the similarities and differences between languages (as cited in Dufva, 1994). They can be given means to reflect themselves as learners (as cited in Dufva, 1994). They may be given tasks that develop their ability to deal with language analytically (as cited in Dufva, 1994).

Fluency means using the language smoothly and easily (as cited in Gross, 2001). Hesitation is the opposite of fluency (as cited in Gross, 2001). Standard one of the Colorado Model Content Standards for Foreign Languages addresses that each of all four essential language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) has a fluency component (as cited in Gross, 2001). A fluent listener comprehends the language without repetition, reduced speed, or rewording (as cited in Gross, 2001). A fluent speaker expresses him or herself spontaneously, in an unrehearsed situation (as cited in Gross, 2001). A fluent reader comprehends text in the language smoothly and without assistance and hesitating (as cited in Gross, 2001). A fluent writer expresses him or herself at a rate of about 100 words per 5 minutes without recourse to a dictionary (as cited in Gross, 2001). Fluency can also be defined as a learner’s general language proficiency that is characterized by perceptions of ease, eloquence, and smoothness of speech or writing (Hilton, 2008; Koponen & Riggenbach, 2000). According to Tavakoli and Skehan (2005), speech fluency consists of multiple components in which different sub-dimensions can be identified, such as speed fluency (rate and density of delivery), breakdown

fluency (number, length, and distribution of pauses in speech), and repair fluency (number of false starts and repetitions) (as cited in Magnan et al., 2014). Moreover, most language teachers have an intuitive understanding of fluency. However, according to Fulcher (2003), fluency –or the lack of it –is usually described in metaphorical language by interlocutors, using terms such as 'slow and uneven', 'hesitant', 'jerky', or 'uneven' as opposed to 'smooth'. Non-fluent speech is also described as 'disconnected' or having incorrect 'rhythm'. It is, however, rare for perceptions of 'fluency' to be associated with particular observable speech behaviors (Fulcher, 2003, p. 30).

While researchers generally agree with the multi-componential nature of vocabulary knowledge, various proposals have been put forward regarding what exactly constitutes vocabulary knowledge (Meara, 2005; Schmitt, 2010) (as cited in Koizumi & In'nami, 2013). One classification commonly used involves the size and depth of vocabulary (e.g., Qian, 2002) (as cited in Koizumi & In'nami, 2013). Size, or breadth, of vocabulary knowledge expresses a quantitative dimension involving a word form and a primary meaning which a learner has some knowledge of meaning, and also described as the form-meaning link. Depth of vocabulary knowledge, on the other hand, represents a qualitative dimension and is defined as "how well a learner knows individual words or how well words are organized in the learner's mental lexicon" (Stæhr, 2009, p. 579), and includes various levels of knowledge such as knowledge of partial to precise meaning, word frequency, affix knowledge, syntactic characteristics, and lexical network (as cited in Koizumi & In'nami, 2013). In addition to size and depth, another lexical aspect that has recently attracted attention and been incorporated into vocabulary frameworks is speed of processing, or how fast learners can recognize and retrieve knowledge stored in the mental lexicon (e.g., Meara, 2005) (as cited in Koizumi & In'nami, 2013). Processing speed (often referred to as automaticity, efficiency, or fluency) of lexical access and retrieval is considered to play a crucial role in the use of vocabulary in real-life situations, as well as in L2 proficiency (as cited in Koizumi & In'nami, 2013). This may be true especially of listening and speaking, which require on-line processing (Schmitt, 2010).

### *B. Strategic Planning*

Strategic planning is described as student's preparation of what the content is and how it is expressed for the task. It can be divided into two types: guided planning and unguided planning (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). In guided planning, learners are guided in the planning phase about what and how to plan through some instructions and advice whereas in unguided planning learners receive no guidance or advice in the planning phase (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Empirical studies on the effects of both pre-task and within-task planning on written production have indicated a positive effect of planning on fluency, complexity, and accuracy in general (Sangarun, 2001; Skehan & Foster, 1999) (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Skehan and Foster reported that planners had greater fluency than non-planners (Skehan & Foster, 1997) (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Ortega showed that L2 Spanish students who planned strategically had higher speaking speed (Ortega, 1999). Accuracy can be defined as "the mastery of language forms and structures and the accurate use of them" (Hamdan Salim Shahin, 2003) (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). The impact of vocabulary knowledge, as one of the essential language components, on language fluency is undeniable (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). It serves as a means of expression and is "of critical importance to the typical language learner" (Coady & Huckin, 1997, p. 5) (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). This research set out to explore the effect of pre-speaking strategies instruction in strategic planning phase of speaking task on Iranian EFL students' fluency, lexical resources and language awareness. More specifically, the following research questions guided the study:

1: Does teaching pre-speaking strategies in strategic planning phase have any effect on the improvement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' fluency in speaking?

2: Does teaching pre-speaking strategies in strategic planning phase have any effect on the improvement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' lexical resources in speaking?

3: Does teaching pre-speaking strategies in strategic planning phase have any effect on increasing the language awareness of Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

## III. Methodology

### *A. Participants*

Eighty students (45 females & 35 males) whose ages ranged from 18-20 consented to take part in this study. Then, through administering a NELSON test of proficiency, 70 learners (41 females & 29 males) with intermediate proficiency level were selected. The researcher selected the students who scored one standard deviation below and above the mean. These learners were randomly assigned to two groups of control and experimental (35 participants for each group).

### *B. Instrumentation*

Five instruments were used in this study, which are elaborated upon below.

*1. Nelson test of proficiency*

As mentioned above, Nelson test of proficiency (1976, series 250) was used to select a homogeneous group of participants. It contains 50 items assessing grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation of the students. The reliability of the test was calculated which showed an alpha coefficient of 0.72.

*2. Picture-cued narrative task*

In picture-cued narrative task a sequence of pictures was distributed between the students and the students were asked to make a story out of them. All the tasks were shown to two experts in the field to make sure they were appropriate for the purpose of this study.

*3. Rating scale*

An appropriate rating scale, namely *IELTS Assessment Criteria* in speaking, was employed for scoring the oral production of the students. Two TEFL experts were consulted to ensure the validity of the instrument.

In order to measure the fluency of speaking, the raters evaluated the oral performance of participants in terms of their speed in speaking. It means that the raters investigated how many times the participants paused during the task. For measuring lexical resources, raters used the number of lexis which the participants used in the pre-test and the post-test. In order to evaluate the language awareness among language learners, the researcher used the scores from the language awareness questionnaire.

*4. Pre-speaking strategies questionnaire*

The instrument contains 16 Likert-scale items, each accompanied by a 5-point Likert scale ranging from ‘‘never” (1 point) to ‘‘always” (5 points). The total scale scores range from 16 to 80. The instrument was adopted from Cohen (1996). The original instrument has three sections of before you speak, while you are speaking, and after you speak (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). For the purpose of the study, only the *before you speak* section was employed. The questionnaire was used both in pre-test and post-test phases. The reliability of the questionnaire, assessed by Cronach Alpha, was 0.84.

*5. Language awareness questionnaire*

This questionnaire also includes ‘Likert-type’ questions and contains 25 items. These items include questions about participants' knowledge of English language which range from “I don’t know what this means” (1 point) to “I know this inside out: nothing new to learn” (5 points). The total scale scores range from 25 to 125. The questionnaire was used in the pre-test and post-test phases. The reliability of the questionnaire estimated through Cronbach alpha turned out to be 0.81.

### *C. Procedure*

First, Nelson English proficiency test was administered to 80 students and the intermediate learners were selected. Those whose scores were between -1 and +1 standard deviation from the mean were considered as intermediate and were selected as the main participants. The selected students were then put into control and experimental groups, each containing 35 students (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). To find out the speaking ability of these learners, the picture-cued narrative speaking tasks were given to the students (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Next, the researcher asked them to speak about tasks for ten minutes. Then, the pre-speaking strategies questionnaire as a measure of pre-speaking strategies was distributed among them. Then, the experimental group received 10 sessions of treatment with pre-speaking strategies in strategic planning stage.

Both control and experimental groups received ten minutes time to think about the picture and retell the story based on the picture-cued tasks (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). The only difference was that the control group was not guided how to use available time whereas the experimental group received guided pre-task planning in the form of pre-speaking strategies (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Strategies included, among others, predicting the *appropriate grammar* and *accurate structure* and *using a wide range of vocabularies* and *strategies for coping with new and unknown words* (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). It also focused on pause fillers in order to reduce the amount of silence and long hesitation, to decrease repair as well as repetition and to maintain coherence during narration (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). All these strategies were taught to enhance students’ speaking ability in terms of language awareness, fluency and lexical resources. It should be mentioned that in the process of teaching the above-mentioned strategies, five strategy instruction elements by Winograd and Hare (as cited in Carrell, 1998) were employed.

For the sake of instructing the participants, four other pre-speaking strategies whose original model was provided by Dornyei (1995), Dornyei and Thurrell (1991), and Willems (1987) were selected in this study (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). The four strategies are: A) *approximation*, which involves “using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target words as closely as possible” (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994; pp. 40-49); B) *circumlocution*, which consists of using synonyms, antonyms, explanation, or nonverbal communication for unknown vocabularies (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). It is viewed as the most important achievement strategy and a major component of strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980); C) *lexicalized fillers*: They are words or gambits used to fill pauses and to gain time to think in order to keep the communication channel open and maintain discourse when speakers face communication problems (Graham, 1997); and D) *Preparing general outlines* such as using notes and keywords which are necessary during planning time, and predicting the structure and grammar (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Next, every session we asked participants to speak about one picture in the *Streamline* book as practice. Finally, at the end of the treatment sessions, both control and experimental groups received the post-tests, in which, the participants talked about the picture cued tasks and narrated them in two minutes. Their voices were recorded and later transcribed. For rating purposes, two non-native speaking experienced teachers judged the participants' performance by listening to the tapes while having the transcription at hand.

## IV. Results

As mentioned above, in order to measure the participant's speaking fluency, lexical resources, and language awareness before the treatment a pre-test was administrated to the students. The normality of the distribution of the data was checked via the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The results indicated that the scores on speaking lexical resources and speaking awareness were normally distributed but the scores on speaking fluency were not normally distributed. So, two Independent Samples T-tests were run for performance of two groups on speaking lexical resources and speaking awareness and a Mann-Whitney U test on the students' speaking fluency. Table 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 shows the results.

TABLE 4.1
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR PERFORMANCE OF TWO GROUPS ON LEXICAL RESOURCES PRE-TEST

| | **Levene's Test for Equality of Variances** | | **t-test for Equality of Means** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Equal variances assumed | .508 | .478 | .527 | 68 | .600 | .42857 | .81304 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | .527 | 66.979 | .600 | .42857 | .81304 |

As it can be seen the p-value is .60, meaning that there was not a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups in terms of speaking lexical resources for the two groups.

Table 4.2 displays the results of Independent-samples t-test on speaking awareness pre-test.

TABLE 4.2
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR PERFORMANCE OF TWO GROUPS ON AWARENESS PRE-TEST

| | **Levene's Test for Equality of Variances** | | **t-test for Equality of Means** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | T | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Equal variances assumed | 1.993 | .163 | -.554 | 68 | .582 | -.37143 | .67078 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -.554 | 65.897 | .582 | -.37143 | .67078 |

By considering the fact that the p-value was .58, which was again greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the mean difference of awareness scores in two groups was not statistically significant.

Table 4.3 shows the result of Mann-Whitney U test to compare the students' scores on speaking fluency at pretest stage.

TABLE 4.3
MANN-WHITNEY U TEST FOR PERFORMANCE OF TWO GROUPS ON FLUENCY PRE-TEST

| | |
|---|---|
| Mann-Whitney U | 578.000 |
| Wilcoxon W | 1208.000 |
| Z | -.407 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .684 |

The results indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups' speaking fluency (sig= .68> .05).

To examine the hypotheses of the study, it was necessary to make a comparison between the control and experimental groups' performance to find out if the treatment had any effect on learners' speaking fluency, lexical resources, and language awareness.

Table 4.4 shows the descriptive statistics of speaking scores on post-test stage.

TABLE 4.4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR PERFORMANCE OF TWO GROUPS ON SPEAKING POSTTEST

| | Group | N | Mean | S.D |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fluency | Control | 35 | 14.6857 | 2.75223 |
| | Experimental | 35 | 16.2286 | 3.02038 |
| Lexical Resources | Control | 35 | 13.2571 | 3.37240 |
| | Experimental | 35 | 15.0857 | 2.73723 |
| Awareness | Control | 35 | 32.9714 | 2.89508 |
| | Experimental | 35 | 35.2571 | 2.53613 |

As Table 4.4 shows the mean of three components including fluency, lexical resources, and language awareness scores in the control group in the post test were 14.68, 13.25, and 32.97 respectively, while the mean of fluency, lexical resources, and language awareness scores in the experimental group in the post test were 16.22, 15.08, and 35.25, respectively.

In order to select the most appropriate statistical analysis to compare the performance of groups on post-test, the scores were submitted to One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Table 4.5 shows the results of normality check for the scores on speaking fluency post-test for two groups.

TABLE 4.5
NORMALITY CHECK FOR SCORES ON FLUENCY POSTTEST

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Df | Sig. |
| Control | .198 | 35 | .001 |
| Experimental | .178 | 35 | .006 |

As Table 4.5 shows the p-value was smaller than cut point .05 which indicated that the scores on speaking fluency post-test were not normally distributed. Table 4.6 displays the results of normality check for speaking lexical resources scores.

TABLE 4.6
NORMALITY CHECK FOR SCORES ON LEXICAL RESOURCES POSTTEST

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Df | Sig. |
| Control | .135 | 35 | .108 |
| Experimental | .140 | 35 | .081 |

As can be seen in Table 4.6, the non-significant results (*Sig*=.10, .08, p>.05) indicate that the scores were normally distributed. Table 4.7 shows the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test on speaking awareness.

TABLE 4.7
NORMALITY CHECK FOR SCORES ON AWARENESS POSTTEST

| | Kolmogorov-Smirnov | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Df | Sig. |
| Control | .125 | 35 | .187 |
| Experimental | .158 | 35 | .027 |

As table 4.7 shows, the speaking awareness scores in the experimental group were not normally distributed (sig= .02, p< .05), however in the control groups the non-significant results (sig=.18, p>.05) indicated that the scores were normally distributed.

The results of Tables 4.5 and 4.7 revealed that scores in speaking fluency and speaking awareness were not normally distributed (p-values < .05) but in speaking lexical resources the posttest scores were normally distributed. Thus to examine the first and third null hypotheses Mann-Whitney U was run whereas for the second null hypothesis the independent-samples t-test was most appropriate. Table 4.8, indicates the results of Mann-Whitney U test used to compare two groups' post-tests scores on speaking fluency.

TABLE 4.8
MANN-WHITNEY U TEST ON SPEAKING POST FLUENCY

| | |
|---|---|
| Mann-Whitney U | 406.000 |
| Wilcoxon W | 1036.000 |
| Z | -2.441 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .015 |

The results of Mann-Whitney U test in Table 4.8 indicates that there was a statistically significant difference at .05 probability level between the two groups' speaking fluency (P=.01 < .05). Moreover, the effect size of the result was calculated by the researcher which was .29. According to guidelines (proposed by Cohen, 1988) we can conclude that there was a large effect. Table 4.9 shows the results of independent-samples t-test on speaking lexical resources.

TABLE 4.9
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR PERFORMANCE OF TWO GROUPS ON LEXICAL RESOURCES POSTTEST

| | **Levene's Test for Equality of Variances** | | **t-test for Equality of Means** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | t | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Equal variances assumed | 2.413 | .125 | -2.491 | 68 | .015 | -1.82857 | .73418 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | -2.491 | 65.240 | .015 | -1.82857 | .73418 |

As Table 4.9 shows, the p-value was .01, which was smaller than 0.05 (p-value=.01< 0.05), it can be concluded that the mean difference of speaking lexical resources in the two groups was statistically significant.

Furthermore, the effect size of the result was calculated, which was .08. According to Cohen's classification it can be at the threshold of a moderate effect size.

Table 4.10 indicates the results of Mann-Whitney U test used to compare two groups' post-tests on speaking awareness.

TABLE 4.10
MANN-WHITNEY U TEST ON SPEAKING POST AWARENESS

| | |
|---|---|
| Mann-Whitney U | 331.000 |
| Wilcoxon W | 961.000 |
| Z | -3.326 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 |

The results of Mann-Whitney U test in Table 4.10 revealed that there was a statistically significant difference at .05 probability level between the two groups' speaking awareness (P=.001 < .05).

In addition, the effect size of the result was calculated which was .39, which according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines could be considered as large.

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study, as mentioned above, was coupling strategic planning with pre-speaking strategies instruction, as it was felt that just giving students time to plan for their speaking performance is not enough and they need to be taught how to make best use of the allotted time (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). In guided strategic planning the teacher gives the students the necessary help for a more fluent and lexically rich and appropriate speaking ability (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). Along this line of thought, this study investigated the overall effect of using speaking strategies in planning stage on fluency, language awareness and lexical resources in performing speaking tasks. Analyses of the data on the basis of the students' performance on the picture-cued task in oral narration showed that the students' overall scores in fluency, lexical resources and language awareness were improved (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015). The findings indicated that if students develop using pre-speaking strategies, their speaking ability will show significant improvement.

Although, the present study combined pre-speaking strategies as a guide along with strategic task planning, the analysis of data revealed that lexical resources, as shown by the effect size, was the less affected compared to other components namely, language awareness and fluency.

The findings revealed that the experimental group members which used pre-speaking strategies coupled with strategic planning had more lexical resources and high fluency than the control group participates. Also, experimental group participants had good awareness.

The result of the fluency test also revealed that the experimental group members had faster speaking speed and produced more syllables within a given time period and less pauses in speaking tasks.

Regarding the effect of the instruction of pre-speaking strategies in guided strategic planning on increasing the awareness, analysis of the data collected through pre-speaking strategies questionnaire showed learners used significantly more pre-speaking strategies such as trying to make error free sentences, using wide vocabulary resources in order to convey meaning, using paraphrase effectively, speaking with rare repetition or self-correction or hesitation, and speaking coherently. In the post test, students performed better in using pre-speaking strategies.

The findings of this study conformed to the previous studies, such as Foster and Skehan (1996), and Skehan and Foster (1997), who reported that planners had better fluency than non-planners (as cited in Talebi & Moradi, 2015).

Also, the findings of this study corroborated the findings of the majority of studies which have shown clear effects of planning on complexity and fluency of language learners (e.g., Foster & Skehan 1996; Ortega, 1999; Skehan & Foster, 1997) (as cited in Rahimpour, 2011). Ortega (1999) showed that L2 Spanish students had faster speaking speed if they had planned strategically.

On the other hand, the results obtained in this study are in contrast with the results of other studies which found negative effects of metacognitive strategies on speaking performance. For example Swain et al. (2009) found negative correlations between metacognitive strategies and speaking performance (as cited in Talebi, Hassan, 2015, p. 43). One reason for this might be that speaking strategies should be coupled with strategic planning to produce positive correlations with speaking performance. As previous studies have shown, speaking strategies are crucial because they help foreign language learners "in negotiating meaning where either linguistic structures or sociolinguistic rules are not shared between a second language learner and a speaker of the target language" (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

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