THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENT PLANNING CONDITIONS VERSUS EXPLICIT GRAMMAR INSTRUCTION ON YOUNG EFL LEARNERS' ORAL PRODUCTION OF A PICTURE PROMPTED TASK AND GRAMMAR GAIN

Karim Sadeghi
Dhofar University, Oman

Azadeh Hamidi
Urmia University, Iran

Abstract: This study examined the effects of three task conditions on young EFL learners' oral performance of a picture prompted task and their grammatical knowledge gain. To this end, 34 EFL learners were randomly assigned into three experimental groups, namely online planning, pre-planning, and explicit instruction, and one control group. Pictures were employed as prompts to implement the tasks in all groups. A Grammatical Judgment Test was used to compare students' knowledge of simple present passive structure before and after the treatment. Learners' oral task performance was measured in terms of Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency (CAF). The findings demonstrated significant differences among groups as for CAF measures. However, no significant differences were spotted in GJT posttest scores. The paper calls for the incorporation of diverse prompt-based planning conditions in task-oriented teaching practices in order to target learners' higher levels of oral competence.

Key words: EFL learners, grammatical knowledge, oral production, planning condition, task design.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, researchers have been highlighting the importance of communicative language learning in second and foreign language learning. In the past few decades, the concept of learning a language by means of communication has experienced redesigning and redefinition in many ways. Many approaches have attempted to bring communication to the center of the classroom. Task-based language teaching and learning (TBLT), for instance, has been among the methods aiming to create an authentic atmosphere for language learners. TBLT is known to be a strong version of the communicative approach in which students acquire the language they need when they feel the need to use it. Employing different features of tasks has been shown to draw learners' attention to target forms during a meaning-based interaction; to motivate automatization and fluency in target structures; and to improve employment of more accurate, varied, and/or complex forms. TBLT challenges common understandings of language education assuming that "language learning will progress most successfully if teaching aims simply to create contexts in which the learner's natural language learning capacity can be nurtured rather than making a systematic attempt to teach the language bit by bit" (Ellis, 2009, p. 222). Research in TBLT continues to substantiate similar claims.

In contrast to the traditional methodologies, in which language was based on teaching units of language in decontextualized units, Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning (TBLT) is a process-based approach in which the task is considered to be the unit of focus, where the emphasis is placed on interaction, meaning, and what learners can do with language when they feel the need in themselves. Task-based learning is well aligned with the principles of learning-by-doing and student-centered teaching, ideas that have been advocated and widely adopted by scholars in the field of general education (e.g., Dewey, 1913, 1975). Different scholars have outlined several reasons to apply task-based language teaching in the classroom context. Tasks appear to be an ideal construct to link the fields of SLA and language pedagogy (Ellis, 2003; Slimani–Rolls, 2005). Ellis (2003) defined the task more rigorously as a pedagogical task, which is a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve a result that can be assessed in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been transferred.

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Effects of designing and implementing task variables on the fluency, complexity, and accuracy of language in oral performance have been a primary concern in task-based research. It is difficult for second language (L2) learners, particularly those with limited proficiency, to give simultaneous attention to form and meaning and thus they have to decide how to devote their attentional resources by giving priority to one aspect of language over the others (Anderson, 1995; Skehan, 1996; VanPatten 1990). However, with the opportunity to plan the linguistic and propositional content of a task, they can compensate for these limits in processing and, as a result, the quality of their linguistic output enhances (Skehan, 1996). For Skehan (1998), production has three aspects: fluency (i.e. the capacity of the learner to mobilize his/her system to communicate in real-time), accuracy (i.e. the ability of the learner to perform according to target language standards), and complexity (i.e. applying interlanguage structures that are cutting edge, elaborate and structured).

In the process of performing a task, there may be some factors, which may affect the outcome. Many Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers (e.g., Ellis, 2003, 2005; Ortega, 1999; Robinson, 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Skehan, 1998) acknowledge that various factors interfere with performing processes. These factors can be classified into four different categories. Structure of task (structured or unstructured), task modality (oral or written), planning condition (pre-planning, online-planning, or no-planning), and learner attributes (such as gender, age, etc.) (Ellis, 2003). Planning condition is among the factors which have received substantial attention in SLA research.

Grammar and how to teach it has been the other concern of L2 research in recent years. Implicit and explicit approaches have been considered as the two prominent ways of teaching L2 grammar. Pre teaching grammatical structure of a focused task is one of the task implementation variables. Some language teaching methods argue that grammar should be taught explicitly. According to Prabhu (1987) and Krashen (1982), meaning is more important than form, and language learners should accordingly give prominence to meaning rather than form. On the other hand, for Dickens and Woods (1988), grammatical competence is viewed as a component of communicative competence, and that explicit knowledge of grammar is essential for communication. Some theorists and practitioners such as Marsden (1999), Mitchell (2000), and Wright (1999) have had repeated calls for using more explicit grammar teaching in schools. The following is an account of what a task is, factors affecting task performance, and a synopsis of relevant research on task design features.

2. FACTORS AFFECTING TASK PERFORMANCE

Tasks provide an optimal psycholinguistic environment for L2 processes to develop by offering plentiful opportunities for meaningful language use as well as timely focus on linguistic constructions as a specific need arises (Long, 1991). This way, the language is acquired through use by accomplishing the task that has been set (Freeman, 2012). Tasks are increasingly viewed as a principled foundation for classroom teaching, social interaction, and language development. Bygate and colleagues define a task as "an activity which requires learners to use language, with an emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective" (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001, p. 11). Ellis and Shintani (2014), in their seminal work called *Exploring Language Pedagogy Through Second Language Acquisition Research,* defined TBLT as an approach that "aims to develop learners' communicative competence by engaging them in meaning-focused communication through the performance of tasks" (p. 135). They added that "a key principle of TBLT is that even though learners are primarily concerned with constructing and comprehending messages, they also need to attend to form for learning to take place" (p. 135). Nunan (2004) distinguishes between real-world or target tasks and pedagogical tasks. Target tasks refer to uses of language in the world beyond the classroom while pedagogical tasks are those that arise in the classroom and students get ready to complete the task, report after the task, and then consider the language that emerges naturally out of the task cycle and its accompanying materials.

In the process of performing the task, there may be some factors that may affect the outcomes of the task such as task modality, structure, and planning condition together with learner characteristics (Ellis, 2003). Many SLA researchers (e.g., Ellis, 2003, 2005; Ortega, 1999; Robinson, 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Skehan, 1998; Skehan & Swain, 2001) acknowledge that various factors interfere with the learning processes. A huge line of research has focused on task planning conditions as one of the most important factors in task design. Ellis (2003) defines strategic planning or pre-task planning as "the process by which learners plan what they are going to say or write before commencing a task" (p. 226). Time to plan can be delivered to students before doing the task as pre-task planning time or while they are completing the task as online (within-task) planning time. These are distinguished simply in terms of when the planning takes place – either before the task is performed or during its performance (Ellis, 2005, 2008). The main issue regarding the effect of planning time deals with its effect on the overall oral/written production of learners. In testing the general effect of planning time, much research has been conducted on measuring the effect of planning time in different types of tasks on the oral/written production of learners. Most studies have attempted to measure the oral production of learners through measures such as complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) (Housen, Kuiken, & Vedder, 2012; Michel, Kuiken, & Vedder, 2012). There are a number of studies that have researched the effects of planning on L2 learners' performance of oral narratives (e.g.,

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Ellis, 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 1999; Robinson, 1995; Skehan & Foster, 1997, 1999; Wendel, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). These studies indicated that giving learners the opportunity to plan a narrative prior to the oral performance of the task (i.e., pre-task planning) leads to significant progress in both fluency and complexity. Below we present a more extensive of some seminal studies in this regard.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Planning is an indispensable element in completing a task and the efficacy of the oral production of learners (Ellis, 2003). Indeed, one implementation variable that has attracted considerable attention and that has been shown to produce relatively consistent effects on L2 production is task planning. Extensive literature has dealt with the effects of planning time on task performance from different perspectives with the general conclusion that when learners have the opportunity to plan for a task before they perform it, the language they produce is more fluent and more complex than when no planning is possible. Foster and Skehan (1996), for example, used a framework to make predictions related to the effects of three different tasks (Personal Information Exchange, Narrative, and Decision-Making) and three different implementation conditions for each task (unplanned, planned but without detail, and detailed planning) on the variables of fluency, complexity, and accuracy of oral performance. The study showed strong effects of planning on fluency and complexity, and there was a linear relationship between the degree of planning and the degree of complexity. Similarly, Yuan and Ellis (2003) investigated the effects of pre-task and careful online planning on learners' accuracy, complexity, and fluency in performing a narrative task. The learners were required to narrate a story orally based on a picture composition task. The researchers found that the pre-task planning group produced more fluent language than the online planning group.

In the same vein Khoram and Zhang (2019) conducted a study on the effects of task type and planning conditions on the accuracy of learners' oral performance during pre-task planning. In this study learners were assigned to four groups with these conditions: individual-planning personal task, individual-planning decision-making task, group-planning personal task, and group-planning decision-making task. The results of the investigation showed that pre-task planning conditions and the task type are effective in enhancing the accuracy of learners' oral production. Therefore these findings lend support to the view that selecting and implementing appropriate task-based conditions improves language learners' accuracy in oral performance. In 2017, Atai and Nasiri examined the effects of strategic planning, online planning, strategic planning and online planning combined (joint planning), and no planning on the CAF of oral production in two simple and complex narrative tasks. 20 advanced EFL learners in this study performed the tasks (simple and complex) with 20 minutes time limitation. The results illustrated that in both tasks, no planning was the least effective. Strategic planning enhanced the complexity and fluency of in simple task and just fluency was improved in complex task. Online planning aided the improvement of accuracy in both task types. And results showed an elevation in the effects of joint planning on accuracy and fluency in the simple task and complexity and accuracy in the complex task.

A good number of studies have also investigated the effects of explicit grammar instruction on grammar knowledge gain and oral production. Researching the effects of the type of instruction on production, Van de Guchte, Rijlaarsdam, Braaksma, and Bimmel (2017) conducted a study on the effects of pre-task modeling on oral task performance of 48 ninth grade German learners. Students were put in groups of focus on language (FoL) and focus on content (FoC) and were asked to watch two videos including the use of prepositions as the target grammar of the study. The results indicated that the FoL group was better at attempted and accurate use of target structure than the FoC group. Syntactic complexity was reported higher for the FoC group. However, the study showed a negative effect on global complexity as a result of pre-task instruction. Some researchers, such as DeKeyser (1998), have proposed that providing students with grammar instruction explicitly may be helpful.

Similarly, a number of studies have investigated the issue of introducing grammar explicitly and its effects on oral production. Ellis, Li, and Zhu (2018) aimed at researching the impact of explicit instruction at the pre-task stage on performing a focused task. The results showed that overall performance was affected. However, the findings did not indicate more accurate production but more attempts to use the target structure were reported for the group with explicit grammar instruction prior to task completion. As another example, Sadeghi and Ghaderi (2018) investigated the effect of pre-task planning and explicit instruction on complexity, accuracy, lexical complexity, and fluency and linguistic knowledge gain of learners. They found no significant effect of explicit grammar instruction on students' oral performance measures.

Another study conducted by Mochizuki and Ortega (2008) showed results similar to a previous study done by Van de Guchte et. al (2017) on the effects of pre-task instruction on the use of targeted structure but there were differences in the global nature of language use. Mochizuki and Ortega (2008), examined the effects of pre-task instruction on the accuracy, complexity, and fluency of learners' oral production. 112 Japanese EFL learners were asked to retell a story orally. Learners were in three groups, 1) without prior planning, 2) 5 minutes of unguided prior

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planning, and 3) after 5 minutes of planning with guided planning because they had grammar instructions written on a piece of paper. The accuracy was higher in the guided planning group but results of complexity and fluency were similar in all groups.

Akakura (2011) investigated the effects of explicit instruction on L2 learners' implicit and explicit knowledge of English. To measure acquisition, he used elicited imitation, oral production, GJTs, and metalinguistic knowledge tasks. After six weeks of treatment, a post-test was administered. The results of the study showed an increase over posttest with the experimental group outperforming the control on all components. Results of GJT revealed the experimental group marginally outperformed the control group on all components of the posttest. Results on the metalinguistic knowledge task showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group on all components of the posttest with mostly large effect sizes.

In another study, Macaro and Masterman (2006) investigated the effects of explicit grammar instruction on grammatical knowledge and writing proficiency with 12 first-year students of French. To measure any achievement, the researchers administered four tests, namely a GJT, an error correction, and rule explanation test, a translation test, and a narrative composition. The results demonstrated that explicit instruction was effective when learning was measured through GJTs and error correction tests. However, no significant gains were observed when learning was gauged through translation tests or free composition.

Although many studies have aptly investigated the efficacy of the planning time condition, still there are controversies in some areas which warrant more structured studies in order to complete the missing puzzles. The effect of planning time on grammar knowledge gain is among the intact areas in planning time research, which is the concern of the present study. Besides, little is known about the comparison between the qualities of the oral production of the learners as the result of performing a task with prior explicit instruction as compared to task performance under different planning conditions and without explicit instruction. To bridge these gaps, this study investigates the effects of picture prompted tasks under different planning time conditions (on-line vs. pre) as well as explicit grammar instruction on oral performance and grammar knowledge gain of EFL learners. The following research questions guided the present study:

1. Is there any difference between task planning (pre versus online) and explicit grammar instruction in their effect on picture-prompted task performance?

2. Is there any difference between task planning (pre versus online) and explicit grammar instruction in their effect on grammar gain?

4. METHOD

4.1. Participants

Thirty-four (16 male and 18 female) students from an English language institute in Urmia, Iran, ranging in age from 13 to 15 years, voluntarily participated in this study. The participants in this study had previous exposure to the English language in the institute setting for about 2 years and were considered as pre-intermediate level learners (A1-B2 in terms of CEFR, based on institute placement). They spoke different first languages (i.e., Turkish (Azeri), Persian, and Kurdish) and none had ever been to an English-speaking country. Additionally, they had virtually no opportunity to use the English language for communicative purposes outside the classroom context. They had 3 hours of English classes per week, 42 weeks per year. These students were randomly assigned into three experimental groups and one control group.

4.2. Materials

A narrative (descriptive) task was used in the study as the main apparatus of oral production elicitation, the task (in the form of picture prompts) required the participants to plan a narrative on making a pancake. The task required the participants to describe how pancakes are made, using seven picture prompts including the ingredients of pancakes provided to them in tandem. The task was a focused one and designed so as to provide the participants with situations to use the target structure (simple present passive form) in the production of their story. Instructional materials were adopted from the *Family and Friends* series (book 5) by Naomi Simmons, Tamzin Thompson, and Jenny Quintana (2014). A Grammatical Judgment Test (GJT) was used as a pre-test to homogenize participants and the same GJT was used as a post-test as well. A pilot study with 14 participants similar to the main participants in the study was carried out to try out the GJT and estimate the required time for completing it. The GJT asked the participants to distinguish between grammatical and ungrammatical items and provide the correct form of ungrammatical ones. The GJT was comprised of 25 items, from which 15 included simple present passive form as the target structure (6 grammatical, 9 ungrammatical) and 10 with irrelevant structures (6 grammatical, 4 ungrammatical). In addition, a narrative task with some picture prompts was used as the main apparatus in groups.

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4.3. Procedure

The study was set out to investigate the impact of using picture-prompted planning and explicit grammar instruction on oral task performance (complexity, accuracy, and fluency) and grammatical knowledge gain of young learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The participants were randomly assigned into four groups: 1) group with picture prompts and online planning 2) group with picture prompts and pre-task planning time 3) group with picture prompts and explicit grammatical instruction (without planning) and 4) control group which received the picture prompted task without any planning time and with no grammar instruction also learners in this group were left to their own devices and process while completing the task. In order to ensure that participants were homogenous in terms of their grammatical knowledge at the outset of the study, the GJT was used as a pre-test.

To complete the task the first group received the task and prompts with online planning time, the second group received the task with picture prompts and five minutes pre-task planning time, the third group which did not have any planning time (neither online nor pre-planning) received explicit grammar instruction before conducting the picture prompted task. This group received the instruction by the teacher explicitly by explaining the rules of targeted grammar (simple present passive). For this purpose the teacher explained the grammar by providing examples and changing active sentences to passive and describing the procedure step by step to the learners. The control group just received the task without any planning time, and with no explicit grammar instruction. Students in the online planning time group received the task/ pictures and started to describe the recipe for a pancake, while the students in the pre-task planning group had five minutes to plan their narration before they described the recipe. The explicit grammar instruction group described the recipe after being provided with the target grammatical structure although they did not have any time to plan to describe the task. The members of the control group described the recipe with no additional facility in terms of the target structure and planning time. The oral performance of all groups was recorded for later analysis. To measure the grammar knowledge gain, the GJT was given as post-test two weeks after task completion.

The participants' oral production in all groups was measured for accuracy, fluency, and complexity (CAF) following and Yuan and Ellis (2003). The framework of analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Measures of CAF used in the study.

Complexity measures	Accuracy measures	Fluency measures
Syntactic complexity (the ratio of clauses to T-units)	Error-free clauses	Syllables per minute
Lexical complexity	Correct verb forms	Meaningful syllables per minute

Besides, in order to measure the possible effects of the picture-prompted task under different planning time and explicit grammar instruction on oral task performance (in terms of CAF) and grammar learning (as measured by GJT), we used various statistics as descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, and Kruskal-Wallis H test as reported in the next section.

5. RESULTS

In this study, we delved into the effects of planning conditions (in performing picture prompted tasks) and explicit grammar teaching on the oral performance and grammatical knowledge gain of EFL learners. Below, we provide descriptive as well as inferential statistics on the performances of different groups, first for their oral production and then for their performance on the GJT. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of groups' performances on GJT at the pretest stage. There are minute differences between the groups, and to understand whether these are significant, a one way ANOVA was used.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of groups' performance on GJT at pretest.

Groups	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Explicit instruction group	8.3750	1.84681	6.00	11.00	8
Preplanning group	8.0000	2.62467	4.00	11.00	10
Online planning group	7.6000	2.63312	4.00	12.00	10
Control group	8.6667	2.44949	5.00	12.00	6

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The underlying assumptions of one-way ANOVA (normality, no outliers, and homogeneity of variances) were checked and found to be met. Table 3 presents the results of the one-way ANOVA test for the GJT pretests, which indicates that there are no significant differences between the four groups of students. In other words, the test corroborates the homogeneity of the groups before conducting the treatment sessions.

Table 3. ANOVA test for groups performance at GJT of pretest.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22.263	4	5.566	.846	.504
Within Groups	276.375	42	6.580		
Total	298.638	46			

In order to answer research question 1, an oral production task was administered to the learners to analyze the complexity, accuracy and fluency of their oral performance. Table 4 illustrates the descriptive statics of the learners' performance in the oral production task. The table delves into differences in fluency, complexity and accuracy based on their respective criteria that is used to analyze each of the so-called categories. It is evident that while there are certain differences in the mean of the categories, they should be undergone statistical procedures to ensure their significance.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of groups' oral production following the treatment session.

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
Fluency (syllables/min)	Online Planning Group	50.0980	7.07463	2.23720	45.00	63.00
	Preplanning group	49.8800	8.60335	2.72062	34.18	57.07
	Explicit Grammar group	39.6575	4.90362	1.73369	35.34	46.58
	Control group	40.7767	9.17267	3.74473	29.16	50.00
Fluency (meaningful syllables/min)	Online Planning group	50.0980	7.07463	2.23720	45.00	63.00
	Preplanning group	49.8800	8.60335	2.72062	34.18	57.07
	Explicit Grammar group	39.6575	4.90362	1.73369	35.34	46.58
	Control group	39.5567	9.47226	3.86703	27.50	48.00
Accuracy (error-free clauses)	Online Planning group	52.4980	39.15535	12.38201	11.11	100.00
	Preplanning group	75.8320	23.96093	7.57711	33.33	100.00
	Explicit Grammar group	97.2200	5.14756	1.81994	88.88	100.00
	Control group	41.0033	9.94663	4.06069	28.57	50.00
Accuracy (correct verb forms)	Online Planning group	51.7280	39.24348	12.40988	11.11	100.00
	Preplanning group	72.9400	28.55744	9.03065	27.20	100.00
	Explicit Grammar group	90.0000	10.69045	3.77964	80.00	100.00
	Control group	37.8500	14.16947	5.78466	25.00	55.55
Complexity (syntactic complexity)	Online Planning group	4.4380	0.69013	0.21824	3.40	5.14
	Preplanning group	4.4980	0.90692	0.28679	3.75	6.16
	Explicit Grammar group	4.7675	0.47252	0.16706	4.11	5.30
	Control group	4.3933	0.82007	0.33479	3.37	5.14
Complexity (lexical complexity)	Online Planning group	0.5576	0.06740	0.02131	0.44	0.61
	Preplanning group	0.6274	0.03381	0.01069	0.57	0.66
	Explicit Grammar group	0.5558	0.06273	0.02218	0.51	0.66
	Control group	0.3573	0.06364	0.02598	0.29	0.43

In order to check the significance of differences in the mean performances of a picture-prompted task following the treatment sessions under different planning conditions, a one-way ANOVA test was employed. However, it was necessary to check the underlying assumptions for running parametric tests. All the assumptions for running the ANOVA test were met except in the case of the accuracy component. Therefore, a one-way ANOVA test was

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run to test the significance of fluency and complexity aspects of students' oral production performance, while to check the effectiveness of the accuracy component, a non-parametric version of ANOVA (namely, Kruskal Wallis H test) was utilized.

Table 5 presents the results of a one-way ANOVA test on the learners' fluency and complexity performance. A one-way analysis of variance ($p<.05$) indicated that there was a significant difference in the fluency aspect of the performance of the groups (both in syllables/min and meaningful syllables/min). The results also demonstrated a significant difference in the lexical complexity of the oral production of the groups; however, the analyses failed to demonstrate a significant difference in the syntactic complexity of the groups' oral production.

Table 5. ANOVA test for groups' oral performance (fluency and complexity) after the treatments.

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Fluency (syllables/min)	Between Groups	803.842	3	267.947	4.713	0.008
	Within Groups	1705.620	30	56.854		
	Total	2509.462	33			
Fluency (meaningful syllables/min)	Between Groups	886.676	3	295.559	5.115	0.006
	Within Groups	1733.549	30	57.785		
	Total	2620.225	33			
Complexity (syntactic complexity)	Between Groups	0.657	3	0.219	0.396	0.757
	Within Groups	16.615	30	0.554		
	Total	17.272	33			
Complexity (lexical complexity)	Between Groups	0.281	3	0.094	28.442	0.000
	Within Groups	0.099	30	0.003		
	Total	0.380	33			

Since significant differences were found for both measures of fluency and lexical complexity, a post hoc test (Tuckey HSD) had to be utilized to indicate the location of the differences. According to the Tukey HSD test, the results of which appear in Table 6, there are no significant differences between the performance of the online planning group and the pre-planning group in terms of their fluency of oral production (neither in the case of syllables/min nor meaningful syllables/min fluency condition). However, these two groups (online planning and pre-planning) were significantly different in fluency from the other two groups (explicit instruction and control groups), which indicates that both the online planning and preplanning groups outperformed the explicit grammar instruction group as well as the control group in terms of fluency of their oral production. As for the lexical complexity, there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-planning group and the other groups. There was no significant difference between online planning, explicit instruction, and control groups, which indicates that the pre-planning group outperformed the other groups in terms of the lexical complexity of their oral production following a picture-prompted task.

Table 6. Results of Tukey HSD test for groups' oral performance (fluency and complexity).

Dependent Variable	(I) Experimental Participants	(J) Experimental Participants	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Fluency (meaningful syllables/min)	Online Planning Time	Pre-Planning Time	0.21800	1.000
		explicit grammar group	10.44050	0.032
		control group	9.32133	0.100
	Pre-Planning Time	Online Planning Time	-0.21800	1.000
		explicit grammar group	10.22250	0.036
		control group	9.10333	0.112
	explicit grammar group	Online Planning Time	-10.44050	0.032
		Pre-Planning Time	-10.22250	0.036
		control group	-1.11917	0.993
	control group	Online Planning Time	-9.32133	0.100
		Pre-Planning Time	-9.10333	0.112
		explicit grammar group	1.11917	0.993

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Table 6, continued from previous page.

Dependent Variable	(I) Experimental Participants	(J) Experimental Participants	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Fluency (meaningful syllables/min)	Online Planning Time	Pre-Planning Time	.21800	1.000
		explicit grammar group	10.44050	0.033
		control group	10.54133	0.054
	Pre-Planning Time	Online Planning Time	-0.21800	1.000
		explicit grammar group	10.22250	0.038
		control group	10.32333	0.061
	explicit grammar group	Online Planning Time	-10.44050	0.032
		Pre-Planning Time	-10.22250	0.036
		control group	0.10083	1.000
	control group	Online Planning Time	10.54133	0.054
		Pre-Planning Time	-10.3233	0.061
		explicit grammar group	-0.10083	1.000
Lexical complexity	Online Planning Time	Pre-Planning Time	-0.06980	0.050
		explicit grammar group	0.00185	1.000
		control group	0.20027	0.000
	Pre-Planning Time	Online Planning Time	0.06980	0.050
		explicit grammar group	0.07165	0.061
		control group	0.27007	0.000
	explicit grammar group	Online Planning Time	-0.00185	1.000
		Pre-Planning Time	-0.07165	0.061
		control group	0.19842	0.000
	control group	Online Planning Time	-0.20027	0.000
		Pre-Planning Time	-0.27007	0.000
		explicit grammar group	-0.19842	0.000

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Finally, the non-parametric version of one-way ANOVA was utilized to uncover the differences between the accuracy aspect of students' oral performance. The Kruskal Wallis H test, the results of which are presented in Table 7, indicated a significant difference between the groups in both error-free clauses and correct verb form criteria.

Table 7. Kruskal-Wallis H Test for groups' oral performance (accuracy).

	accuracy error-free clauses	accuracy correct verb forms
Kruskal-Wallis H	14.426	10.597
Df	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.002	0.014

In order to uncover the location of the differences, a non-parametric post-hoc test was also run (Table 8 and Table 9). According to the nonparametric post hoc test, there was a significant difference between the control group and the explicit instruction group, as well as between the online planning group and the explicit instruction group. The results indicated that the experimental groups outperformed the control group, and among the experimental groups, the explicit instruction group did better than both online planning and control groups.

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Table 8. Nonparametric post hoc Test for groups' oral performance (error-free clauses accuracy).

	Test Statistics	Std. Test Statistics	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Control group - Online planning group	4.73	0.934	0.350	1.000
Control group – Preplanning group	8.73	1.72	0.085	0.508
Control group – Explicit instruction group	18.58	3.507	0.000	0.003
Online planning group – Preplanning group	-4.00	-0.912	0.362	1.000
Online planning group –Explicit instruction group	-13.85	-2.976	0.003	0.018
Preplanning group – Explicit instruction group	-9.85	-2.11	0.034	0.206

According to the nonparametric post hoc test, there was also a significant difference between the control group and the explicit instruction group in terms of their correct verb forms accuracy. The results indicate that the explicit instruction group outperformed the control group in terms of the correct verb form but there were no significant differences between the other groups. The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Nonparametric post hoc Test for groups' oral performance (correct verb forms accuracy).

	Test Statistics	Std. Test Statistics	Sig.	Adj. Sig.
Control group- Online planning group	4.400	0.868	0.385	1.00
Control group- Preplanning group	10.40	2.05	0.040	0.241
Control group- Explicit instruction group	15.50	2.92	0.003	0.021
Online planning group - Preplanning group	-6.00	-1.36	1.72	1.00
Online planning group –Explicit instruction group	-11.10	-2.38	0.017	0.103
Preplanning group –Explicit instruction group	-5.10	-1.09	0.273	1.00

To answer the second research question, GJT was given to the learners as a posttest. Table 10 illustrates descriptive statistics associated with students' performance on the GJT post-test across four groups. While there are differences in the mean of the learners' performance, they had to be checked for significance through further inferential statistics.

Table 10. Descriptive statistics of groups' performance on GJT at post-test.

	Post-test Participants		Statistic
Post-test scores	Online planning group	Mean	12.3000
		Median	10.0000
		Std. Deviation	5.01221
	Preplanning Group	Mean	16.3000
		Median	16.0000
		Std. Deviation	4.27005
	Explicit grammar group	Mean	13.5000
		Median	12.0000
		Std. Deviation	4.86973
	Control Group	Mean	11.3333
		Median	11.5000
		Std. Deviation	1.21106

Since the underlying assumptions of one-way ANOVA were not met, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was used in order to test the possible effects of different task conditions (planning versus grammar instruction) on grammatical gain rate. The results of the K-W test are presented in Table 11, which reveals that the differences among the groups are not statistically significant in terms of learners' grammatical knowledge gain.

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Table 11. Kruskal-Wallis H test for groups' performance at GJT of post-test.

	Post-test scores
Kruskal-Wallis H	5.678
Df	3
Asymp. Sig.	0.128

6. DISCUSSION

Task-based language learning and teaching have been a hot topic among researchers and practitioners in recent years. Various aspects of the phenomenon have been thoroughly investigated in the last two decades to understand how the pieces of the work together and their efficacy in pedagogical contexts. This study investigated task performance with regard to the delivery of picture-prompted tasks under different planning conditions (online planning, pre-planning) versus explicit grammar instruction through 1) investigating measures of complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) as aspects of language production, and 2) examining grammatical knowledge gain.

Concerning the first research question, we found that the fluency of the learners' oral production demonstrated a significant increase as a result of planning conditions compared to explicit instruction. To be more specific, groups who received a picture-prompted task under different planning conditions outperformed the group that received the same task together with explicit grammar instruction in terms of fluency (both syllables per minute, as well as meaningful syllables per minute) of their oral language production. The post hoc test revealed that both online and strategic planning contributed to the fluency of oral production of pertinent groups. This means that planning time aids the learner to be more fluent in their language production, which can be due to a smaller need for online linguistic monitoring of the produced language. As for the complexity of oral production, there was no significant difference among the groups in terms of their syntactic complexity, which means neither planning condition nor explicit grammar instruction affects the complexity of the learners' oral production differently. However, in terms of lexical complexity, the experimental groups all outperformed the control group. Among experimental groups, the pre-planning group outperformed the online planning group and explicit instruction group. This indicates that strategic planning aids the learners to increase the variety of the vocabulary they use in their language production and contributes to the expansion of formulaic language as well as non-formulaic vocabulary in their oral language production. The results indicated that the accuracy of oral production of the groups was significantly different in terms of both accuracies of correct verb forms and the accuracy of error-free clauses. The post-hoc analysis revealed that the explicit instruction group outperformed both online and pre-planning groups as well as the control group. This indicates that picture-prompted tasks that are accompanied by explicit instruction of grammar lead to better accuracy of oral language production.

The second research question investigated the difference between planning conditions (pre-planning versus online planning) and explicit grammar instruction in their effect on grammar knowledge gain. No evidence was detected showing differences among the groups' improvements in explicit knowledge of grammar. In other words, neither planning (both pre-planning and online planning) nor explicit grammar instruction led to differences in grammatical knowledge gain.

The results of the present study are in line with most of the studies on CAF with the general finding that planning improves CAF. To be more specific, especially in terms of fluency, the findings of the current study are in full agreement with many of the research studies in the literature (e.g., Foster, 1996; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 2005; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005). A similar pattern of results was obtained regarding the effect of pre-planning of picture-prompted task on oral performance (Crookes, 1989; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega 1995, 1999; Wigglesworth, 1997). In Foster (1996), for example, providing strategic planning time to plan content indicated a significant effect on the learners' fluency of oral production, and in Kawauchi (2005), strategic planning led to greater fluency in the learners' narrative performance, and superior fluency in the performance of the planned group was apparent in both the greater number of produced words and in the reduced number of repetitions. Foster and Skehan (1996) also investigated different conditions functioning during strategic planning time, and their results were in total agreement with those of the current study in terms of fluency of oral production. Also, the results of this study are in line with those by Ortega (1999), showing that strategically planned groups had faster-speaking speed, which means that pre-planning can lead to a better fluency of oral production following a task. More closely, Wendel's study (1997), which used a closer equivalent of the measure of fluency to the current study, showed the same results, indicating that the pre-planning group produced more syllables than no planning group in the oral production of narrative tasks.

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Although some research studies are suggesting that pre-planning can lead to greater fluency (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 1999), the current study suggests that there is no significant difference between online planning and pre-planning conditions, which means that both conditions lead the learners to higher fluency levels to the same extent. The findings of the study are in contrast with Yuan and Ellis (2003), in which they set out to investigate the effect of online planning and pre-task planning on learners' performance of a narrative task. Their study revealed that the opportunity for online planning inhibited fluency. Similarly, the results of the study by Hulstijn and Hulstijn (1984) on the efficacy of oral narratives under two kinds of time conditions suggested that the time pressure could lead to better accuracy. Ellis (2008) justifies this as the result of monitoring utilizing explicit knowledge of well-learned rules.

The results of the current study suggest that in terms of fluency of oral production, both planning conditions (pre-planning vs. online planning) surpassed both the control group and the explicit grammar instruction group. This can be due to the nature of the task. The picture prompted tasks can act as a guided planning situation due to their nature, providing the online planning group a scheme to be followed and produce a language with a small number of pauses. Another reason could be due to the context of the study. As Ellis (2008) elaborated, most of the previous studies related to planning conditions were conducted in laboratory-like contexts in which the participants were asked to perform the task in a context outside their normal learning environment, or they sought the effects of planning condition in testing contexts (e.g., Elder & Iwashita, 2005; Iwashita, Elder, & McNamara, 2001; Wigglesworth, 1997, 2001). These studies failed to provide a consistent explanation of the efficacy of the planning conditions. It is plausible then that the context itself was acting as a modifier or intervening variable in these situations. However, the current study was conducted in an authentic classroom situation, where learners are constantly being exposed to various pedagogical tasks. This indeed may minimize the effect of the context on the performance of the learners.

The findings of the first research question are in line with Skehan's Trade-off Hypothesis. According to Skehan (1998), it is difficult to pay attention to all areas of performance because attentional resources are limited, so three aspects of production namely fluency, accuracy, and complexity start a competition for where they allocate attention. As a result, "tasks which are cognitively demanding in their content are likely to draw attentional resources away from language forms" (Skehan & Foster, 2001, p. 189). According to this hypothesis when a task is cognitively complex, trade-off effects are shown between complexity and accuracy, and when output is linguistically complex, the result shows inhibition in accuracy. Interestingly in the current study improvement for accuracy is seen following explicit grammar instruction without limitations of attentional resources. However, more research is needed to substantiate this claim.

This study also shed light on the extent to which planning time (pre-planning vs. online planning) and explicit instruction affect grammar knowledge gain. The results indicated that there is no significant difference among the groups in terms of their grammar knowledge gain. This means neither planning nor grammar instruction leads to improvements in explicit knowledge of the grammar of the learners. The results are in line with Reinders (2008) who found that explicit instruction through noticing prior to the performance of a task devastatingly inhibits the learning in the case of more complex grammatical structures. Similarly, Sadeghi and Ghaderi (2018) found that neither planning nor explicit instruction led to significant changes in linguistic knowledge. These findings can be because of a series of factors, summarized by Sadeghi and Ghaderi (2018) as follows:

> A justification is that the E [experimental] group was unable to benefit from explicit instruction (in English) for their lower language proficiency, as they may have been unable to follow instructions or explanations in English. Indeed, it is also possible that since the instruction was provided in a different form from their normal grammar lessons (following the rubric especially developed for this purpose), it may have confused the learners rather than helping them to learn a new structure better. (p. 374)

However, contrary to our results, Martoccio's (2012) study came up with different findings. They revealed that explicit instruction led to better grammatical knowledge gain. However, this may be because of the processibility (Pienemann, 1998) of the target grammar structure. According to Pienemann (1998), that human beings intend to learn the languages hierarchically like their mother tongue. In other words, based on this theory, EFL learners' language generation is based on a hierarchical order. So the findings of the second research are in line with this theory as the acuity of the passive voice is inhibited by processing procedures. Besides, it should be taken into account that the age range may also play a role in the results of the study, as a great number of studies investigated grammatical knowledge gain of the learners on adult learners with an age range between 19 and 50. In the case of our study, the participants were all teenagers with the age range of 13-15. Their age and the maturity of their mind may play an intervening role in the process. However, this cannot be asserted with confidence and further research is needed to test this claim.

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7. CONCLUSION

In the present study, we found significant differences in the oral performance of the four groups, indicating that picture-prompted tasks under different planning conditions can lead to higher levels of fluency and lexical complexity; and explicit instruction may lead to better accuracy of the oral production.

These findings have far-reaching pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, teacher trainers, material developers and language designers, and language researchers. Teachers and curriculum developers must bear in mind that overall planning conditions can be helpful in the process of implementation of the task. However, before providing some habitual pre-task planning chances, they should consider the nature, complexity, type of the task as well as the complexity of the target structure. These factors are very crucial in opting between providing on-line or pre-task planning time to learners. However, the study also finds value in integrative planning proposed by Bygate and Samuda (2005), advocating the use of simultaneous online and pre-planning conditions and exploiting the advantages of the mixed planning situation. The study reported here needs to be extended before the findings can be generalizable due to shortcomings inherent in all research of this category.

One of the limitations of this study was the limited sample size within each group. Further research can replicate the study with a bigger sample size to ensure generalizability. Additional research should be conducted on other proficiency levels, age groups, and gender as moderator variables before a more accurate picture of the effect of planning versus grammar instruction on picture-promoted task performance and grammar learning can be captured.

One interesting avenue for further investigation is the difference in the learners' oral production behavior if the same task is performed again by the same learners. Considering the importance of task repetition as a main rehearsal implementation factor involving in the process of task-based language learning and teaching, conducting research combining planning with task repetition is another fruitful road to take up.

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APPENDIX