Pre-Task Planning Effect on Oral Performance of Russian B1 EFL Examinees

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• Language Testing Forum 2013, Nottingham, UK.
1. Research Background
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1. Research Background
Testing of second language speaking is a relatively new field

Reasons:

• ephemeral nature of speech,
• difficulty of devising objective assessment criteria
• relative lack of interest in the spoken language shown by pre-1970s linguists
“Speaking" is a difficult construct to define.

"the purpose of testing second language speaking is similar to that of a driving test. The purpose of a speaking test is to collect evidence in a systematic way (through elicitation techniques or tasks) that will support an inference about the construct as we define it from the summary of the evidence (the 'score'). We will also be interested in the learner's ability to perform in a range of situations much wider than those that can be sampled during the test”. To provide a valid speaking test, it is necessary to capture the relevant aspects of speaking on the one hand, and prevent interference in the score from irrelevant factors, on the other (Fulcher, 2003, 47).
Being an assessee within the **structured approach** (vs. observational)

the student is asked to perform one or more specific oral communication tasks.
You are going to give a talk about the Panama Canal. You will have to start in 15 minutes and speak for at least 2 minutes.

Remember to mention:
• the location
• the historical background
• construction costs
• capacity
• transit fees
• interesting facts
• economic and strategic value
• and say why this construction can be called a modern wonder of the world.

You have to talk continuously. After your partner has finished his/her speech, ask him or her 2 questions on their topic.
ITEM I: SPEAKING CARDS:
Students must talk for 3 minutes about the topics on the cards using the bullet points as prompts and including the three vocabulary items written on the card. They may make some notes, but should not read when they speak. The teacher does not interrupt them. In the end he/she must ask them some questions about the topic.

Preparation time: 1 minute
Speaking time: 3 minutes
Student-Teacher interaction: 2 minutes
Why planning time?
Views on Effects of Pre-Task Planning

*Learners can*

- focus on *what* to speak during planning time
- *prioritise meaning* while retaining focus *on form* on-task.

*Planning time helps*

- *control* the level of *cognitive demand* imposed by potentially unfamiliar topics
- *establish a fair environment* for test-takers
Inconsistent research results on pre-task planning effects
Faezeh Mehrang & Massoud Rahimpour report that “planning time had no effect on the accuracy and fluency of the learners’ performances” (The Impact Of Task Structure And Planning Conditions On Oral Performance Of EFL Learners, 2012).
• **Fangyuan Yuan** & **Rod Ellis** argue that “pre-task planning impacts positively language production, especially where fluency and complexity are concerned” *(The Effects of Pre-Task Planning and On-Line Planning on Fluency, Complexity and Accuracy in L2 Monologic Oral Production, 2003).*
Saeideh Ahangari & Morteza Abdi demonstrate that “…learners with the opportunity to plan before task performance may produce language which is more complex” (The effect of pre-task planning on the accuracy and complexity of Iranian EFL learners’ oral performance, 2011).
Effects of Pre-Task Planning

– *Some benefits* in Tavakoli & Skehan (2005); Wigglesworth (1997); Xi (2005).

– *Limited or no effects* in Elder & Iwashita (2005); Wigglesworth (2001); Wigglesworth & Elder (2010)."
2. Research Question
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How does pre-task planning affect the discourse produced?

Discourse parameters:

- structure,
- breakdown,
- repair,
- syntactic complexity,
- lexical diversity
- accuracy
3. Data Collection
3. Data Collection

- **115 native** Russian participants
- the English language competition *(Kazan, Jan. 2017)*
- aged 16 – 18
- Proficiency level B1
3. Data Collection

The contest participants were allowed to take notes. Performance was rated by the panel including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task response</th>
<th>Interaction with partner</th>
<th>Grammar range and accuracy</th>
<th>Lexical resource</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Total score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Research Methods
4. Research Methods

The discourse produced by each participant was:
- audio recorded,
- transcribed,
- assessed using discourse analytic measures (adapted from Nitta, R. and Nakatsuhaara, F. (2014)).
Discourse Analytic Measures

- **Fluency:**
  - Speed: # of words/second
  - Breakdown: # of lexicalised / unlexicalised pauses / speaking time
  - Repair: # of repetitions, corrections
- **Complexity:**
  - Syntactic: # of Clauses / Analysis of Speech Unit
  - Lexical: Lexical diversity (Method for measuring diversity of text units)
- **Accuracy:** # of errors per 100 words
Dear friends, I’m VERY glad to welcome you to our monthly meeting of the English club. Well, as you know today’s topic is the modern wonders of the world. I put a lot of thought into it and I would like to share with my results of the research which I conducted on this topic. Let’s get started! My topic is the Suez Canal. I think that it is one of the wonders of the world. Nowadays, first of all, please take a look at the screen and you will see clearly that the Suez Canal is located in the north part of Africa and connects two oceans of the world. Well, talking about the history, I would like to point out that it the construction started in 1859 and took ten years for to be over. Well, talking about people and the workers who were in, mainly they were slaves and most of them died during the work and during the construction as a due to bad weather conditions and disease. Well, talking about the capacity, the numbers are tremendous. More than two hundred thousand tones of water. Well, also I would like to point out that the cost of construction was one hundred thousand US dollars which is an incredible number because the Egyptian currency has devaluated over the last hundred of years. Talking about the country of Egypt, the country gets from the transit in two thousand fifteen, in two thousand and five, it was over three billion United States dollars and nowadays this amount of money has almost doubled and now is roughly five billion dollars. Talking about the impact of this construction of the channel on the economy of the country, it should be mentioned that it is the largest canal in the world and the money that are the country gets from the transit of ships goes to country’s and is a huge amount of money every year. I was really ridiculous about it and I KNOW that the link of the canal is almost two hundred kilometers and I think all these facts really sum up that this one of the world’s wonders.
P: ok (-) I'm going to tell you about (-) the Suez Canal (-) which is the third largest canal in the world (.) it is located in the isthmus of Suez Africa Middle East (-) you know (-) in the first (-) firstly (-) the ideas about Suez Canal (.) were known from the third century (-) BC (-) this canal was called (.) a canal {1_2/00:00:39} and also in the eighteenth (-) century Napoleon had some ideas ( .) of constructing it (2) but the construction of the modern Suez Canal ( .) had started in the eighteen (-) fifty nine (-) and the Suez Canal was opened (-) in the eighteen sixty nine (-) the construction costs ( .) were (-) about (-) one hundred (-) billion dollars ( - ) its capacity is ( - ) nearly ( - ) one out of four (-) million tons (-) and it is said ( - ) that (1) fifty ships ( - ) are passing ( .) through it ( .) every day ( - ) also (-) what I want to say ( .) is that ( .) the Suez Canal ( .) is the third largest source of revenue ( - ) of Egypt's economy (-) cause (-) it's brings ( .) nearly (-) five billion dollars ( .) annually (-) and ( -) I want to tell you one interesting fact ( -) of course ( .) you know something about the Statue of Liberty ( -) and ( .) but ( .) you didn't know that ( .) in the beginning ( -) it ( .) had to be ( -) in the Mediterranean entrance of Suez Canal ( -) and it must be called ( -) Egypt ( .) brings the light ( -) to Asia ( -) also the Suez Canal ( .) has its economic ( .) and strategic value ( -) because in the twentieth century ( .) there were a war between ( -) there was a war ( .) between Egypt ( .) and ( -) British ( .) and its helpers ( .) like Israel and French ( .) and ( .) the Suez Canal ( .) had it strategic value ( .) too ( -) but now ( .) Suez Canal ( .) is claimed ( .) as a natural ( .) preserve ( -) so ( .) thanks for your attention ( -) fill free to ask questions ( -)
5. Results
# Results

## Time of speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>min</th>
<th>mean</th>
<th>max</th>
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<tr>
<td>40 sec</td>
<td>85 sec</td>
<td>2 min 30 sec</td>
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A three-part pattern of the responses:

a. a reproductive part (40 sec – 2 min)

b. a hesitant part (0 – 15 sec)

c. a productive part (10 - 30 sec)
P: **good afternoon**, today I would like to give a speech about the **Panama Canal**. It is a unique place on our Earth. It is located in the connection of **North America** and **South America**. It is unique because travelers who sail through the canal can avoid going through it and use the **Panama Canal**. However, it costs a special price for example, some ships pay a special transit fee for some cruise ships, it can be up to one hundred forty-four million dollars. For some single ships, it can be reach three hundred sixty thousand dollars. The history is also very interesting because in sixteen eighty-three, some English colonies wanted to own the canal to be a part of the United Kingdom. However, there were many which wanted the canal to be their and. However, I think that one building the canal and building its borders about twenty six thousand people died because of yellow fever and malaria. What about if you wonder what's the capacity of the ship which can transfer through the canal? It's about three hundred forty million tones. It's huge and modern. Modern travelers and historians say that it's one of the most interesting and unique places on Earth. The next interesting thing is that when English come and wanted to get the Panama canal to their country also wanted to get it to themselves. That's why I think that it now belongs to the US and the capital of the Panama is the Panama City. If you wonder what is the number of ships, if you wonder how many, if you wonder how many ships travel there every day and every year it's just a huge amount of them. About thousands ships every year. I think now it time to have some question and I am READY to answer them.

**Partner**

И: so yes i'd like to know more about the place of the Panama Canal. So you mentioned that a lot of chip ships passing it every year. So how many ships does do pass through the Panama Canal every day.

**Producer**

P: so every day about forty of them.

И: that's a great number. I'd like to know more about the Panama Canal itself. What is its length.

P: Its length is about seventy seven kilometers.

И: it's huge. Thank you for your presentation.

P: thank you.
6. Conclusion
## Main Findings

| Reproductive/Planned Part 40 sec. | Fluency and **Complexity** of the Planned Part is **higher** than those of the Hesitant and Unplanned.  
Number of pauses is **lower**  
Concentrate on delivering what they prepared |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hesitant Part 15 sec. | Number of stops, pauses, false starts and restarts **increase dramatically** (abt 37%)  
**Speed** reduces by 24%  
**Accuracy and Complexity drop** by 15% |
| Productive Part 30 sec. | The number of pauses reduces by 10%  
**Speed** increases by 17%  
**Accuracy and Complexity** raise by 11%  
Generate unprepared speech  
Focus on the task and coherence/cohesion |
7. Perspective
Multifaceted approach →
Complex relationship between pre-task planning and performance→
Multifaceted research to be taken to tackle various challenges.
Aknowledgements

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References

☑ Luoma S. Assessing Speaking, CUP, 2004
Thank you for your attention

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