The effect of task repetition on Colombian EFL students' accuracy and fluency

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ABSTRACT

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Jaime Andrés Galindo Ochoa

Identical task repetition has been claimed to foster more complex, fluent and accurate spoken performance given the fact that the cognitive work used to internalize, organize and verbalize information remains accessible for the learner when a task is repeated, and therefore, capacity for new cognitive processes or attentional resources is freed (Bygate, 1999b, 2001; Skehan 1996, 1998). Nevertheless, it has also been relevant to identify how certain repetition features, namely procedural and content, favor oral performance. This study delves into this matter through a quasi-experimental mixed design, which compares the effectiveness of both conditions on 44 Colombian EFL learners' global and simple past accuracy and fluency. Findings revealed no significant improvements in the global measures studied. As for the simple past, oral performance benefited overtime, however, the repetition groups did not significantly outperform the control one. The absence of significance might be due to the limited amount of repetition provided, which under skill acquisition postulates needed to be richer as to promote better oral performance than regular practice, especially at the A1 proficiency level from this sample.

Keywords: Task repetition, Content repetition, Procedural repetition, Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency, Oral performance.

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Chapter 1

Measuring Second Language Oral Performance

Within task research, the analysis of oral performance has been key to understand the effect of certain treatment types. However, since the emergence of Applied Linguistics, there have been different views on how to measure spoken production. CAF (complexity, accuracy and fluency), for example, stands out as one of the main approaches to determine oral improvement overtime, and even though it has been subject to constant discussion regarding the operationalization of its components, they have evolved accordingly. Recently, the concept of multi-dimensionality in the analysis of speech is gaining relevance. To fully understand the current need for multi-dimensional measures, it's important to review the evolution of CAF in task research.

Applied Linguistics emerged in the 1970s, ever since there has been persistent interest in how to measure oral language development (Larsen-Freeman, 2009). It has been fundamental for the field to understand, through performance outcomes, the impact of certain learning conditions and procedures on the acquisition of English. Therefore, one of the earliest attempts to operationalize oral performance was the mean length utterance (MLU), which Brown (1973) used to analyze the language produced by children learning their first language. However, this measure was less relevant for adult second and foreign language development due to the amount of formulaic language involved in the learning process and the cognitive difference between children and more mature learners (Brown, 1973). In the absence of an index for spoken language, the analysis of written development in terms of T-units (an independent clause along with any associated dependant clauses) developed by Hunt (1970) became a commonly used measure to differentiate developmental levels in spoken language, with accuracy defined as error-free T-units (Larsen-Freeman, 2009). Fluency was measured as the length of T-units, clauses and error-free units while

complexity was analyzed in terms of the number of clauses and dependent clauses per T-unit (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, and Kim, 1998).

However, it was not until the very end of the eighties that complexity, accuracy and fluency (hereinafter CAF) were introduced as the core dimensions of oral task performance and included the concept of the T-unit in their initial models (Larsen-Freeman, 2009). A series of monologues, for example, were coded in terms of error free T-unit length for accuracy while words, number of subordinate clauses and S-nodes per utterance were coded for complexity in order to analyze the effects of planning on oral development (Crookes, 1989) in a study that has been highlighted as one of the first papers that include CAF measures (Skehan, 2009). Nevertheless, the T-unit taken from written measures represents a reliability concern because written and spoken language cannot be measured via the same parameters, especially since unlike written text, oral data is not always produced in full sentences (Vercellotti, 2012). And therefore, oral and written data need to be segmented differently for analysis.

In response to such concerns, the C-unit emerged as a unit of analysis for spoken language. Unlike T-units, C-units include ellipted answers to questions as a clause (Foster, Tonkyn & Wigglesworth, 2000). Later on, the Analysis of Speech unit (AS-unit) was developed which consists of an utterance with an independent clause (clause with a finite verb) and all subordinate clauses (whether it has finite or not finite elements and at least one other clausal element) associated with the clause (Foster et al 2000). Interestingly the latter relies also on intonation and pauses which certainly improves coding. Due to its reliability, the implementation of the AS - unit has been strongly suggested (Foster et al 2000).

When the study of CAF began in the mid-nineties (Housen, Kuiken & Vedder, 2012), many empirical studies analyzed CAF performance outcomes based on some of the operationalizations aforementioned and targeting specific task features such as: task

repetition (Skehan, 1996; Bygate, 1996, 2001; Gass, Mackey, Alvarez-Torres & Fernández-García,1999; Patanasorn 2010; Ahmadian & Tavakoli 2011; Ahmadian 2011); task planning (Foster & Skehan, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003; Ellis, 2009; Piri, Barati, & Ketabi, 2012; Ahmadian, 2012; Javad, Tavakoli, & Vahid Dastjerdi, 2015); and pronunciation instruction (Derwin & Rossiter, 2003). Even though CAF research has not clearly arrived at a consensus in terms of construct definitions and operationalizations, which makes it difficult to compare results and construct knowledge, researchers agree that CAF needs to be treated multidimensionally in order to fully understand the role of task features on performance (Housen et al, 2012; Norris & Ortega, 2003).

Unfortunately, early pioneering research did not take into account AS units, and therefore, the comparison of findings with subsequent studies (monologic and dialogic) has been problematic. It is just recently that research has adopted multiple criteria that include intonational, syntactic or even turn taking moves (Vercellotti, 2012). It would have been useful if CAF research had followed standardized coding for written and spoken language so that the comparison of findings across previous and recent studies did not face reliability issues. It has been pointed out that most of the CAF research has to some extent neglected to establish adequate definitions and operationalizations that account for multidimensional, multifaceted and multilayered constructs (Housen et al, 2012), and therefore, even with the evolution of units, CAF still needs to pursue common delimitations so that findings can be compared and the cognitive claims derived from research can be validated with more certainty.

In the quest for clear delimitations, complexity has been operationalized, for example, using ratios, frequencies or formulas that analyze length of words (T-units, C-units or AS-units), amount of subordination, amount of coordination, variety, sophistication and acquisitional timing of grammatical forms, and frequency of sophisticated forms (Norris &

Ortega 2009), but it is often reduced in L2 research to one measure (Norris & Ortega 2009), the number of words per T-unit (Bygate, 2001), but it can be multi-dimensionally analyzed: syntactic complexity (amount of subordination), syntactic variety (variety of grammatical verbs) and overall complexity (mean number of words per AS-unit), (Ahmadian, 2011; Ahmadian & Tavakoli 2011).

Indeed, a multidimensional analysis of complexity represents one of the current needs of CAF so that it can align with the theoretical constructs behind task complexity. For example, the theoretical triad based on propositional complexity (the amount of information or idea units that someone can produce in a task), discourse-interactional complexity (the number and type of initiated turns, interactional moves and participation roles), and linguistic complexity at the global level or structural level (the variety and diversity of the L2 spoken repertoire or the variance in the meanings and functions in the use of a specific structure (Bulté & Hounsen, 2012). However, complexity is usually misunderstood and equated to difficulty or cognitive demand and is sometimes assumed to be advanced language which is acquired late (Pallotti, 2009). This misunderstanding is in part attributed to the non-differentiation between complexity as characteristics of a task and its properties as a language performance measure.

It is true that manipulating task features can increase and decrease complexity, such as altering the components in Skehan's framework: code complexity (syntactic and lexical complexity), cognitive complexity: (cognitive processing, cognitive familiarity) and communicative stress (time pressure, modality, scale, stakes, control), (Skehan, 1996) or Robinson's framework: cognitive (resource-directing, resource-depleting), task conditions: interactive (one-way, two-way, convergent, divergent,open, closed, familiarity, power, solidarity, gender) and task difficulty: learner factors (motivation, anxiety, confidence, aptitude, proficiency, intelligence). Both are task design frameworks that can have an impact

on the oral outcome of a task. Nevertheless, they are not performance measurements to be used in the analysis of speech complexity.

In terms of accuracy there has been less variance in both construct and operationalization, with it consistently defined as the amount of L2 performance deviation from the language norms (Housen et al, 2012). However, one might see accuracy as comprehensibility when errors are classified by gravity based on the premise that some could provoke more communication breakdowns than others or with developmental sequences if one analyzes advanced and basic errors (Pallotti, 2009). Certainly, a task must take into account the specific learners' proficiency to elicit the target forms but some researchers argue that errors cannot be classified using proficiency criterion (Vercellotti, 2012). Instead, a study can opt to code both global and specific linguistic accuracy to compare findings (Patanasorn, 2010).

Describing accuracy as 'speech with no errors' is a straightforward definition that should not lead to misunderstanding and explains what this construct entails (Housen & Kuiken, 2009). Having this as baseline has promoted two main operationalizations: number of errors per 100 words and count of errors per clauses, T-units or AS-units, the latter one being grounded psycholinguistically (Vercellotti, 2012). Accuracy is certainly the CAF measure which generates relatively more consensus in its operationalization but there is a clear variance in data analysis reflected across research: incidence of errors per T-unit (Bygate, 2001), errors per AS-unit (Patanasorn, 2010) and percentage of error-free clauses and percentage of correct verb forms (Ahmadian; 2011; Ahmadian & Travakoli, 2011).

As for fluency, there are some vague definitions such as: ease in the production of speech (Housen et al, 2012) and some more elaborated such as: speech production at normal rates without interruption or language produced in real time with no undue pause and hesitation (Pallotti, 2009). Prior operationalizations have reflected three types of fluency:

breakdown fluency, speed fluency and repair fluency (Housen et al, 2012). Breakdown fluency is indicated taking into account the number, length or placement of pauses. Speed is studied by speech rate which is measured using the total number of syllables divided by the total time or the articulation rate but excluding filled and unfilled pauses. And finally, repair fluency has been a controversial dimension due to the fact that correcting a statement seems more related to accuracy and can affect complexity in terms of utterance length (Vercellotti, 2012).

As with any of the CAF areas, fluency is in need of uniform measures across studies to validate findings since its analysis has taken many paths. Pioneering research, for example, started with single measurements such as the number of unfilled pauses per T-unit (Bygate, (2001). However, recent studies have examined it differently, sometimes in terms of speech rate and disfluency measures (Patanasorn, 2010) or number of syllables produced per minute and number of meaningful syllables produced per minute in other cases (Ahmadian, 2011; Ahmadian & Travakoli, 2011). A consensus would strongly benefit the different task-based treatments used to test CAF. Indeed, the studies aforementioned in all CAF areas, for example, were designed using task repetition features but their coding differs, which ultimately makes it difficult to compare results.

Indeed, one area within task research that has drawn heavily on CAF measures is task repetition, which explores how repeating key aspects of a task impacts learner performance and development. This research field has led to cognitive claims based on a variety of CAF performance results but the variation in measures across studies does not allow a conclusive understanding of how this task feature impacts the learners' cognitive resources or spoken performance. The call for consensus should be addressed with more rigor to understand with a greater certainty the cognitive processes that take place within a task repetition framework. In particular, in EFL environments where tasks represent most of

the opportunities, the learners have to interact in the target language. When tasks are of that relevance to a population's learning process, an understanding of how task repetition influences CAF and the cognitive processes may have a direct impact on the effectiveness of task design.

However, in the context under study, complexity is seen as a feature acquired overtime as the learners advance through the course levels, and therefore, tasks aim to scaffold and provide practice for specific grammar and vocabulary presented in the textbook. Indeed, mastery of task-specific language components is more relevant than high-complexity language use which subsequently directs the expectations in terms of performance to be focused on accuracy and fluency. Consequently, this study did not take into account complexity as a performance outcome.

The ultimate goal of this research is, therefore, to examine how task repetition affects L2 learners' accuracy and fluency through multidimensional measures (global and grammar specific) taking into account the aforementioned parameters for an appropriate operationalization. Beforehand, however, Chapter 2 will provide a review of the evolutionary journey that task repetition has followed to measure CAF performance outcomes and build different cognitive claims upon those outcomes.

Chapter 2

The Effect of Task Repetition on Oral Performance

After being coined and developed in the eighties, task-based language teaching has been a key focus for curriculum design as well as SLA and EFL research, (Van den Braden, Bygate & Norris, 2009). Even though the concept of "task" itself has gone through many definitions, there are some key components across authors: it is meaning-oriented, there is a real-world relationship, completion of the task goal is prioritized and performance assessment is based on outcome (Skehan, 1996). Many curriculum designs have placed tasks as the unit of operation. Task-supported approaches, for example, have positioned tasks as their ultimate goal, (Van den Braden et al, 2009) especially in EFL contexts where tasks provide most of the exposure learners have to real interactive language use. Therefore, it has been a constant concern in the field to know how and to what extent learning is promoted via tasks. From a psychological perspective, for instance, it has been hypothesized that during tasks, learners prioritize meaning over form (Van Patten, 1990), or that if there is cognitive pressure, the communicative goal of a task is attended rather than form (Skehan & Foster, 1997). It has also been widely analyzed how certain tasks types lead learners to engage in cognitive processes that favor learning (Ellis, 2000). Task repetition, for example, stands out as one that brings cognitive benefits for language learning and performance. It has been claimed that repeating a task frees processing resources that can be used to strengthen form-meaning connections (Kim & Tracy Ventura, 2013), incorporate lexicon, and acquire pragmatic knowledge, among others.

Indeed, pioneering theories and studies have claimed that previous experience with a task allows more complex, fluent or accurate spoken performance in subsequent identical tasks since some of the cognitive work used to internalize, organize and verbalize information remains accessible for the learner when tasks are repeated, and therefore,

capacity for new cognitive processes or attentional resources is freed (Bygate, 1999b, 2001; Skehan 1996, 1998). Repetition is claimed to benefit, for example, L2 speech processing by facilitating the learner's memory retrieval of the mental representations that belong to previously heard or spoken utterances (Trofimovich & Gatbonton 2006). It also frees up attention to meaning allowing more control over linguistic performance, and therefore, brings improvements to proficiency, morphosyntax, lexical sophistication (Gass et al, 1999) and lexical variety (Fukuta, 2016). Additionally, it fosters grammar accuracy (Ho, 2017) and under certain task repetition types, the learner's attentional resources may also be directed towards language rather than the task itself in order to favor the acquisition of pragmatics (Takimoto, 2012; Garcia & McDonough, 2016).

The explanation for task repetition´s effectiveness is based on its impact on the learners' cognitive processes, particularly working memory (hereinafter WM) which is defined as a series of mechanisms involved in temporal information processing (Miyake, 1999). Even though it has been a controversial concept subject to several discussions, there is one characteristic that seems to be agreed upon across theories: its limited capacity. It has been argued that WM can only hold a small amount of information for a short duration of time (Wen, McNeill & Mota, 2014) and such a characteristic may have an implication for in L2 processing. When there are lexical difficulties, for example, lexical recognition could take a large part of processing demands, not leaving enough resources for syntactic processing (Hopp, 2014). This claim supports the fact that while learning an L2, cognitive resources are limited and mostly used to process new, unfamiliar information. However, the repetition of tasks leads learners to more familiarity with their components bringing cognitive benefits that help overcome the effects of such limited capacity.

Such beneficial assumptions have been tested through task repetition research. Indeed, pioneering studies within the field focused on analyzing if repeating the same or a

similar communication task affected the learners' processing and language development. One of the earliest studies, for example, analyzed whether repeating a narrative and an interview task after a 10-week period would help learners perform better in all CAF areas (Bygate, 1996). The study operationalized all measures based on T-units and concluded that complexity and fluency increased for the task repetition group. As for accuracy, the T-unit measure may have been overly conservative and failed to detect major improvements (Bygate, 1996).

Similarly, another early task repetition study implemented a poster presentation activity referred to as "poster carousel" in which the learners had the opportunity to present a poster several times (Lynch, 2000). Their performance was assessed using IELTS rubrics and revealed an increase in fluency and accuracy after successive presentations. Certainly, both pioneering researchers opened the door for future task repetition studies thanks to their revealing findings regarding the cognitive benefits derived from task familiarity, however, they implemented different data analyses and followed two task approaches (dialogue vs monologue) which may account for the divergent findings.

In spite of such divergence, the beneficial effects of identical repetition over time presented in early research was validated in subsequent studies that relied on less conservative measures. Massed repetitions over a prolonged period of time, for example, showed clear benefits in all CAF areas (Ahmadian, 2011). The combination between simultaneous online planning and identical task repetition also brought benefits for complexity, accuracy and fluency (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011). Indeed, it has been assumed that one of the key benefits of getting familiar with the structure of identical tasks is that it improves performance (Skehan, 2009). An identical oral task repeated once, for instance, was found to have a positive impact on the learners' fluency but after several repetitions it brought benefits for complexity and accuracy (Michel & Sample, 2014).

Repetition can also foster the accurate use of a specific grammar structure (Van de Guchte, Braaksma, Rijlaarsdam & Bimmel, 2016) or global accuracy (Ho, 2017).

Identical repetition, can reduce the trade-off effect over time as the attentional resources and cognitive processes are freed and become more sophisticated when attending task needs simultaneously (Bygate, 1999b, 2001; Skehan 1996, 1998). The trade-off hypothesis states that human attentional capacity and working memory are limited, and therefore, when learners direct their attention to one dimension, they have reduced attention to other ones (Skehan 1998, 2009), which has been noticed in some studies in which just one of the measures either improves or takes over the others over time, whether it is accuracy, lexical variety (Fukuta, 2016; Van de Guchte et al, 2016) or fluency (Thai & Boers, 2016).

Likewise, identical task repetition under monological conditions as proposed by Bygate, (2001), but through a silent-film retelling task and selecting less conservative measures of analysis, led to improvement in all CAF measures (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010). Identical task repetition has, therefore, been shown to improve all three oral performance areas. However, it has become vital in the field to understand in more detail what specific characteristics of a task need to be repeated. Therefore, researchers started to differentiate three types of repetition: procedural, content and identical task. Procedural repetition is defined as repeating tasks in which the communicative goal is achieved using the same procedure but each task has different content. In contrast, content repetition involves the repetition of content knowledge across tasks that require different procedures. As for identical task repetition, it is the use of the same task implemented repeatedly, as it was seen in early research (Patanasorn, 2010).

Indeed, the comparison of learners' performance under different repetition conditions is believed to shed light on the allocation of their attentional resources. Procedural repetition, for example, has shown to be beneficial for the acquisition of pragmatic

competence because when familiar with the procedure and task structure, the learners' attentional resources are directed to a better selection of disagreement expressions (Takimoto, 2012; Garcia & McDonough, 2016). Grammar accuracy of specific grammar tenses also appears to benefit from procedural repetition due to the fact that the attentional resources and phonological memory are available for attending to morphology instead of task procedures (Patanasorn, 2010). On the other hand, when content is repeated, the major gains and improvement are evidenced in global fluency as learners focus on completing the tasks and tests more efficiently regardless of how accurate they are, either because they lack training on monitoring or because in their effort to develop a more complete story than the one produced in their first trial, they strategically narrated faster and worried less about making grammar errors (Patanasorn, 2010; Van de Guchte et al, 2016).

Furthermore, a study in which the same content and procedural repetition was compared to only procedural repetition (through collaborative tasks, following early dialogic trends) concluded that the procedural one promoted better syntactic development but both groups of learners improved on the accuracy of the simple past morphology (Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2013). This not only portrays the variance between procedural and content repetition but also demonstrates that analyzing a specific target structure makes a difference in data analysis. Patanasorn (2010), for example, studied global accuracy in terms of error free AS-units but at the same time analyzing past simple accuracy by coding for target like tokens within different contexts and past simple fluency using a disfluency measure on the past simple structure. Not only did the study draw different conclusions but it also demonstrated that procedural repetition had positive effects for the improvement of the learners' past simple accuracy and that content repetition was beneficial for global accuracy. These results revealed that if you operationalize accuracy based on a specific grammar structure or globally, it can considerably affect the whole set of assumptions made from the

performance measures or task repetition subtypes, and therefore, both need to be taken into account to understand the impact of each repetition type on CAF outcomes, a variable not taken into account in most of early studies.

Indeed, in some of the latest dialogic studies (Patanasorn, 2010; Kim, 2013a; Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2013), a great variance between global and structure-specific results has been reported displaying more benefits at the grammar-specific level for accuracy under procedural repetition. When analyzing this phenomenon deeply, it has been evidenced that most of the Language Related Episodes among learners during task interactions were past simple morphology oriented, a clear indicator of where the learners' attention was being lead (Kim and Tracy-Ventura, 2013). Indeed, in the EFL context most of the teaching happens following a sequence of pre-established grammar topics and most of the tasks have the intention to induce learners to practice specific grammar structures or vocabulary aiming for accurate and fluent production. It is, therefore, necessary to include in the equation appropriate measures that unveil specific-grammar performance on CAF so that it can be compared with the global one. By doing this, more precise analyses on the effect of repetition can be achieved which is a need in the field since the effect of repetition on fluency and accuracy has been biased by the type of measure used.

It has been claimed, for example, that fluency is favored by content repetition in some cases but there still are not solid conclusions due to the fact that fluency measures that reflect a particular grammar structure are not present in some studies, and therefore, the comparison with global fluency does not even take place. Sometimes there can even be ceiling effects provoked by the kind of fluency operationalization used which makes it difficult to measure any kind of change in the learners' performance even at a global level (Patanasorn, 2010). As for accuracy, it seems to be favored mostly at the past simple level after procedural repetition, but it has been recognized that measures such as error free AS-

units per total number of AS may be conservative (Patanasorn, 2010). Undoubtedly, for both CAF areas, there is a call for less conservative and more multidimensional measures that lead to an understanding of the effects of each repetition subcategory on global and grammar-specific outcomes.

As a response to such call for research that leads to reliable comparisons and possible generalizations, this study continued building upon the body of research on dialogic tasks using multidimensional measures that distinguish between global and specific (past simple structure) spoken performance as it has been strongly suggested. Besides, since interactive tasks represent a daily scenario for most EFL contexts driven by task-based syllabi, understanding how content and procedural repetition affect performance could have a great impact on the selected population. In order to achieve such goals, this study was directed by the following research questions:

1. Do content and procedural repetition facilitate EFL learners' global accuracy and fluency?

2. Do content and procedural repetition facilitate EFL learners' simple past accuracy and fluency?

Method

Participants and instructional context

The participants were Colombian English learners ($N = 44$) enrolled in six EFL

classes at a language education center in Bogota, Colombia. There were 20 males and 24

females (all Spanish speakers) and their average age was 25.45 (SD = 2.36). They all

belonged to a Basic three level (A1 in terms of the Common European Framework) in an

English program that provides ten weekly hours of instruction (two hours per day) over a

four week-period for each basic course. The philosophy of the syllabus is based on three

clear cornerstones: task-based approach, learning strategies and formative assessment, and

therefore, all of them were part of the everyday lesson planning. Each group of learners was

randomly assigned to one of three repetition groups: procedural repetition ($n = 16$), content

repetition ($n = 16$), and no repetition ($n = 12$). Initially, there were a total of 22 learners per

group. However, those who did not participate in the treatment stages, or any of the tests,

were excluded from the data analysis.

Design

This study adopted a quasi-experimental, mixed design to compare the effectiveness

of task repetition conditions on EFL students' accuracy and fluency. The between-groups

variable was task repetition, which had three levels: procedural repetition, content repetition,

and no repetition (control). All groups received explicit instruction in terms of past tense

grammar and pronunciation as part of their regular EFL class following the same book and

lessons; however, only the procedural and content groups carried out three practice tasks,

which were administered by the main researcher and a research assistant. The procedural

repetition group developed tasks in which the communicative goal was achieved using the

same procedure, but each task had different content. In contrast, the content repetition group

carried out three tasks that have the same content but required different procedures for

achieving the task goal. The within-groups factor was time, which had two levels: pretest and immediate post-test. The dependant variables were accuracy and fluency, operationalized both globally and specifically (past simple).

Materials

The materials consisted of testing materials (pre-test and post-test) and treatment tasks for the procedural and content repetition groups. Each test was an information exchange task in which two learners worked together to create a story based on a series of 16 pictures. Even though the pictures had a logical sequence, they did not require a specific interpretation for successful task completion. The learners were free to create the story they wanted based on the order in which they sequenced the pictures. When designing the tests, the pictures were intentionally selected so that they could trigger an even number of regular and irregular verbs, however, since a picture could have different interpretations, it was not totally certain that such a number was even in actual spoken performance. A sample test can be found in Appendix A.

The treatment tasks for the procedural repetition group were three information exchange activities in which the learners worked together to share information about applicants for a hotel job (hotel tennis coach, tour guide and lifeguard), after which they select the most appropriate candidate to hire. Although the procedure for carrying out each of the four tasks was identical, the content was manipulated by changing the type of position and the biographical details of the candidates. The tasks for the procedure repetition group were provided in Appendix B.

The practice tasks for the content repetition group were three information exchange activities that target the theme: vacations (based on sixteen visual prompts available in Appendix C along with the description of the tasks), but had different procedures for accomplishing the task goal. In task one, the learners' role played a police interrogation.

One learner was the policeman and the other was the person interviewed. The policeman was looking for a criminal who robbed a bank, so he had to ask a lot of questions and follow-up questions about Tim's activities during his vacation time. The other learner was Tim, who answered the questions using just information from the sixteen pictures to explain what he did during his vacation time. Tim was not the criminal, so he did not have to create an alibi he just had to mention what he did on his trip. The task is available in Appendix C.

In task 2 there was a role play about two friends who had to choose a travel agency for a trip. Each learner shared the experiences lived of a former trip with a specific agency. To narrate the events included in their trips, each learner was assigned 8 pictures from the bank and the name of an agency. The idea was not to convince each other but to narrate what their trips included from each agency and then choose one for their next trip justifying their reasons. The task is available in Appendix C. Finally, task 3 consisted of learners looking at the set of pictures and sharing what experiences from the picture they had done in the past trying to expand in terms of giving anecdotical details about how each experience felt. The task is available in Appendix C.

Procedure

The study took place over a five-week period, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Instructional Procedure

Weeks	Activities
1-2	Train the research assistant in the use of materials and data collection tools; expose learners to audio-recorders
3	Pretest
4	Treatment tasks in the procedural and content repetition classes; regular classroom activities in the control class

In week one and two the teachers were trained on the use of materials and the individual audio-recorders used to capture the interactions between learners. Additionally, the learners were encouraged to record some of their oral activities in order for them to get used to using and seeing the recorders while they interacted. In week three, the pretest was administered. The learners self-selected partners, and were given picture prompts. The learners received eight pictures and were told that they could not show the pictures to their partner. They had two minutes to review their pictures and eight minutes to work together to create the story. In order to reduce the possibility that one learner dominated the conversation, the instructions stated that they should take turns describing pictures. Their goal was to avoid letting the story end before the clock rang to signal the end of the eight minutes.

During week four, all learners were explicitly taught the use and pronunciation of the past simple and, apart from the activities proposed in the book Touchstone 1, (McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford, 2014), the content group and procedural group performed every other day the tasks designed for the respective treatment. In both repetition groups, each treatment task had a duration of ten minutes, which was controlled using a stopwatch set by the researcher so that both groups received the same amount of treatment. Additionally, since the study was meant to be done in a classroom-like setting under regular circumstances, the learners were free to select the partner they wanted to work with for both treatment tasks and tests. Indeed, it was evidenced that learners did not always work with the same classmate. As for the control group, it followed the regular activities proposed by the book and syllabus.

In week five, the immediate post-test was carried out following the same procedure for the pretest. The researcher was present during all classes in which a research task was present in order to take field notes, assist with the implementation of tasks, distribute audio-recorders, and supervise data collection.

Data Analysis

The audio-files were transcribed by the researcher and research assistants. Transcripts were analyzed in terms of global accuracy, past tense accuracy, global fluency, and past tense fluency. Global accuracy was measured as the number of error-free AS-units (i.e., independent clauses, or sub-clausal units, together with any subordinate clauses) divided by the number of AS-units multiplied by one hundred. Taking into account an error-free clause as a clause with no errors with syntax, morphology, and lexicon (Hereinafter Error-free AS units). Past simple accuracy was measured by counting the number of target-like past simple tokens supplied in some identified obligatory contexts which divided by the number of contexts plus the number of past simple tokens supplied in non-obligatory ones, and then, the result was multiplied by 100 (hereinafter past simple suppliance in obligatory context) Additionally, as a second rate, the number of correct verbs was divided by the total amount of verbs used in the tasks, and then, the result multiplied by 100 (hereinafter target like past simple usage).

In terms of fluency, the transcripts for each individual were analyzed for two global measures: syllables per minute and meaningful syllables per minute. To obtain the former, it was necessary to divide the total number of syllables produced in speech by the total amount of time each learner required to accomplish the task (including pause time) expressed in seconds, which on average was 8 minutes but varied depending on each participant. The result was multiplied by sixty to be able to express it in syllables per minute. As for the second rate (number of meaningful syllables per minute) the procedure of analysis was

repeated but all syllables, words and phrases that were repeated, reformulated, or replaced were excluded. Finally, past simple fluency was measured as the number of disfluency markers (false starts and reformulations) on the use of the past simple (by each participant) divided by the number of total use of the past simple multiplied by 100. This score was subtracted from 100 to give the past simple fluency score in which an improvement would be reflected in higher rates.

To address the research question, first of all, the data set was analyzed in regards to the normality and equal variance assumptions, which helped determined that it did meet them both. However, it was necessary to establish if there was a significant difference among group means, and therefore, a series of mixed ANOVAs with time as the within groups factor and task repetition type as the between-groups factor were carried out, with one test performed for each variable (accuracy and fluency rates). An adjusted alpha rate of .006 was used to account for the use of multiple statistical tests.

Results

Accuracy

The first research question asked whether procedural and content repetition facilitate global and past simple accuracy. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation scores) for the accuracy rates in the pre-test and post-test.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for global and past simple accuracy rates

	Content		Procedural		Control	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Error-free AS Units	22.80 (19,14)	26.87 (19.70)	55.54 (14.58)	54.85 (20.31)	50.40 (19.29)	53.97 (14.57)

Suppliance in Obligatory Contexts	21.50 (31.50)	59.93 (37.82)	32.73 (13.01)	67.05 (25.70)	21.02 (12.86)	69.15 (26.65)
Target like usage	58.00 (47.34)	92.26 (12.61)	86.06 (11.41)	83.13 (10.02)	76.42 (38.10)	86.08 (14.47)

As seen in Table 2, in terms of Error-free AS units, in which an improvement would be reflected in higher rates, there were minor improvements in the content and control groups. However, the procedural group got slightly worse. The results of the ANOVA showed no significant main effect for time [$F = .421$, $p = .520$, partial $\eta2 = .010$], a significant main effect for group [$F = 22.48$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta2 = .523$] and no significant interaction between time and group [$F = .192$, $p = .826$, partial $\eta2 = .009$]. Post hoc analysis for group evidenced the following results: content vs control $p = .001$ $d = 2.29$, content vs procedural $p = .001$ $d = 2.73$ and control vs procedural $p = 1.000$ $d = 0.002$, which basically reflects that overall, the content group did significantly worse than the others.

In the case of past simple suppliance in obligatory contexts (number of target like tokens compared to the number of opportunities that learners had to use the simple past) in which an improvement would be reflected in higher rates, all groups improved from pre-test to post-test (see Table 2). The ANOVA showed a significant main effect for time [$F = 39.61$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta2 = .491$]. However, there was no significant main effect for group [$F = 1.25$, $p = .297$, partial $\eta2 = .057$] or interaction between time and group [$F = .379$, $p = .687$, partial $\eta2 = .018$]. Post hoc analysis for time evidenced the following values [$p = .001$ $d = 9.92$], which summarizes the finding for this rate: the post-test scores for all groups combined were higher than the pretest scores.

As for past simple target-like usage, in which an improvement would be

reflected in higher rates, Table 2 shows an improvement over time for the content group. Indeed, the ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for time [$F = 4.33$, $p = .044$, partial $\eta2 = .096$], no significant main effect for group [$F = 1.09$, $p = .346$, partial $\eta2 = .050$]. As for interaction between time and group, there was a significant effect [$F = 4.02$, $p = .025$, partial $\eta2 = .164$]. In order to further explore improvement over time, pre-test to post-test was analyzed for each group and the Post hocs analyses revealed the following values: Content ($p = .001$ $d = 0.98$), Procedural ($p = .763$ $d = 0.27$), Control ($p = .634$ $d = 0.33$). In the Post hoc analysis the effects between groups at the pre-test and post-test stages were verified, which showed the following values for pre-test: Control versus procedural ($p = 1.000$ $d = 0.34$), control versus content ($p = 544$ $d = 0.42$) and content versus procedural ($p = .092$ $d = 0.81$). As for the post-test: Control versus procedural ($p = 1.000$ $d = 0.23$), control versus content ($p = .093$ $d = 0.45$) and content versus procedural ($p = .126$ $d = 0.80$). Overall, the results showed that the content group was the one that improved the most over time, However, there were no differences among the groups on the pretest or the posttest.

Summarizing the main findings for accuracy, it was revealed that the content group was lower in global accuracy than the other two groups. In terms of Suppliance in obligatory context, post-test scores for all three groups combined were higher than the combined pretest scores. For target language usage, only the content repetition group improved over time.

Global and Past simple fluency

The second research question asked whether procedural and content repetition facilitate global and past simple fluency. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation scores) for the fluency rates in the pre-test and post-test.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for global and past simple fluency rates

	Content		Procedural		Control	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Syllables per minute	56.50 (42.37)	46.18 (20.56)	49.48 (22.43)	48.02 (17.55)	47.55 (16.75)	44.34 (10.24)
Meaningful Syllables	45.79 (32.1)	40.05 (18.3)	44.91 (21.19)	43.60 (16.42)	41.55 (13.98)	39.97 (8.89)
Past Simple fluency	94.90 (13.38)	79.55 (16.17)	75.66 (20.15)	87.87 (10.17)	82.92 (23.98)	84.68 (15.84)

In terms of syllables per minute, in which an improvement would be reflected in higher rates, as shown in Table 3 there were few changes over time. The results of the ANOVA showed no significant main effect for time [F = .869, p = .357, partial $\eta2$=.021] neither for group [F = 3.26, p = .723, partial $\eta2$=.016] nor for interaction between time and group [F = .278, p = .759, partial $\eta2$ = .014]. In the case of meaningful syllables per minute, in which an improvement would be reflected in higher rates, as portrayed in the descriptive statics there was no improvement from pre-test to post-test. The results of the ANOVA showed no significant main effect for time [F = .493, p = .478, partial $\eta2$ = .012] neither for group [F = .181, p = .835, partial $\eta2$ = .009] nor for interaction between time and group [F = .127, p = .881, partial $\eta2$ = .006]. As for the past simple fluency rate, in which an improvement in fluency would be reflected in higher rates, Table 3 shows improvement over time for the procedural and control group but not for the content one. The ANOVA revealed that there was no significant main effect for time [F =.892, p = .019, partial $\eta2$ = .001] and no significant main effect for group [F = .752, p = .478, partial $\eta2$ = .035]. However, there was a significant interaction between time and group [F = 6.25, p = .004, partial $\eta2$ = .234].

To further explore it, post-hoc tests were carried out. First, improvement from pre-test to post-test was analyzed for each group and the results portrayed the following values for the procedural group ($p = .763$ $d = 0.76$), Content group ($p = .001$ $d = 1.03$), and Control group ($p = .634$ $d = 0.08$). Additionally, the groups were compared at the pre-test and post-test, which showed the following values for pre-test: Control versus procedural ($p = .983$ $d = 0.32$), control versus content ($p = .330$ $d = 0.61$) and content versus procedural ($p = .021$ $d = 1.12$), the content group started significantly worse than the procedural one. As for the post-test: control versus procedural ($p = 1.000$ $d = 0.23$), control versus content ($p = 1.000$ $d = 0.32$) and content versus procedural ($p = .313$ $d = 0.61$). Therefore, there is no significant difference in the group´s performance at the post-test. All in all, the only significant fluency finding was the content repetition group's significant decline in past tense dysfluency.

Summarizing the results, in terms of syllables per minute none of the groups improved and there were no differences among groups, which is the same behavior displayed by meaningful syllables per minute. In the case of past simple fluency measure, the only finding was that the content group got worse over time.

Discussion

The current study aimed to analyze whether task repetition fosters better oral performance in terms of accuracy and fluency at two different levels: global and past simple production. As shown in the results section, the global accuracy measure did not show significant improvement over time for any of the groups. As for past simple accuracy, time was a significant factor, but there were no significant findings for group. Similarly, no improvements for fluency were revealed at the global level in any of the groups. As for the grammar specific fluency measures, once again repetition did not facilitate an improvement that would outperform the control group. In fact, the main significant finding for the specific fluency measure was the content group becoming more disfluent over time.

Global and Simple Past Accuracy

A deeper analysis on such results would, first of all, take into account global accuracy. It seems like neither task repetition nor practice given by the control group was enough as for any of the groups to outperform each other. Seen under the skill acquisition theory, the amount of repetition provided during the treatment might not have been enough to promote procedural knowledge that would lead to an automatization of speech, and therefore, trigger an improvement that could outperform significantly the control group (Carlson, 2003). Indeed, for this theory, speech is seen as a cognitive skill, which as any other skill develops through meaningful practice that enables declarative knowledge (syntactic rules) to become procedural (Specific forms ready for use, automatized). Declarative knowledge development, however, relies on a lot of attentional resources Kormos (2006), meaning a great amount of repetition would be needed so that students gain familiarity with structures and verbs before reaching procedural stages that trigger automatized error-free performance.

As for the procedural group, which did not improve its global accuracy but actually got worse, the fact that it was exposed to a wider range of content due to the nature of its treatment, might have translated in needing more practice to accurately incorporate it to its oral performance. While it is true that procedures kept being the same in this repetition group, students needed to face new vocabulary and verbs during every task being developed. Inaccuracy might have been the result of having a wide bulk of information to handle prior to testing stages, which at the current proficiency level makes a considerable impact. Indeed, their knowledge might not have even reached declarative access to some global rules and structures yet.

As for the simple past accuracy rate based on Suppliance in Obligatory Contexts, there was significant improvement over time in all groups, which might be explained by the

fact that when the pre-test took place, the learners had never been exposed to simple past. Nevertheless, by the time the post-test was administered, they had undergone either content, procedural or any other simple past practice, and therefore, all groups were expected to improve. What requires a deeper analysis is determining the reasons why the groups that received a repetition treatment, did not outperform the control group. One of the reasons might lie in the fact that repetition was not as massive as needed to lead better use of simple past verbs in the repetition groups. It has been demonstrated that massed repetitions over a prolonged period of time show clearer benefits in all CAF areas (Ahmadian, 2011). However, the treatment might have not been enough to promote, under the skill acquisition theory, the procedural knowledge regarding simple past conjugation rules.

Furthermore, seen from a cognitive standpoint through Levelt's model of speech production, in which a message is claimed to go through some stages, namely conceptualizer (message generator), formulator (grammatical encoding and phonological encoding) and articulator (production). Learners at this level might need massive repetition to automatize grammar and phonological encoding rules so that an accurate inflection rate for regular and irregular verbs is achieved outperforming the practice given by the control group. Indeed, the absence of background knowledge in terms of simple past inflections represent one of the possible limitations for learners to achieve, through some repetition, an encoding that leads to a higher error-free articulation rate than the one derived from regular grammar and pronunciation practice. Actually, accuracy at this proficiency level might not even be a concern or the cognitive focus of attention for learners since it has been claimed that past tense markers are usually ignored because learners naturally rely on lexical items (e.g. yesterday, last week) to gather and deliver semantic information (Sato, 1986; Van Patten, 1990). A learner is most likely to narrate a story saying *yesterday he eat* rather than *yesterday he ate* following the lexical preference principle (Van Patten, 1990). All in all,

massive repetition and focus on form, would be necessary for a treatment to outperform regular practice provided by control groups.

In the case of target like usage, the content group showed some improvement over time in spite of the fact that there were no significant differences among the groups on the pretest or the posttest. Such increase in simple past use for this group, may be attributed to the fact that during its pedagogical intervention, the tasks repeated simple past use based on a specific set of pictures, which focused learners' attention not only on certain verbs but also some conjugation patterns. Such multiple opportunities to focus on the same verbs can strengthen form-meaning connections that translate in better simple past performance. Indeed, under input frequency postulates, providing repeated exposure to prototypical exemplars facilitate its detection and acquisition. Even generalized constructions can emerge gradually from lexical inventories that learners develop based on their experiences with frequent tokens (Ellis, 2002; Ninio, 1999).

The fact that none of the treatment groups significantly outperformed the control one in terms of target like usage might lie, first of all, in the fact that the content group did not provide a sufficient amount of token frequency (verbs in simple past) and repetition to strengthen the aforementioned lexical inventory promoting strong form-meaning connections to an extent that it could outperform other types of practice, it might have been enough to help the content repetition group improve over time taking into account it started with the lowest pre-test target usage rate and ended up with a higher rate than the others, not enough to outperform the control and procedural groups significantly though. As for the procedural group, the fact that every task exposed learners to different verbs might not have contributed to a consistent amount of practice needed to outperform the other groups either. Especially because at this language proficiency level, simple past lexical inventories need a lot of scaffolding and repetition to produce the necessary procedural knowledge to excel in

terms of spoken performance. However, procedural repetition due to its nature had to vary the type and amount of verbs in every task, which became a constraint to revisit verb conjugations and strengthen a procedural lexical inventory. In the case of accuracy in the use of irregular verbs, there were no specific rules to be proceduralized since transformations are not part of defined patterns. In that case, however, massive repetition in both treatement groups could still help strengthen the form-meaning connections and lexical inventory required for a more accurate and fluent performance at this proficiency level.

Global and Simple Past Fluency

In terms of fluency, there were two rates to measure the learners' global performance, namely number of syllables produced and meaningful syllables produced. For those two rates, there were no significant improvements over time in any of the groups unlike previous studies (Bygate, 2001; Patanasorn, 2010; Ahmadian, 2011). However, something to highlight in former studies is the fact that the sample under research had previous exposure to simple past. The fact that there were no significant results in any of the fluency rates in this study, at some extent, may lie in the fact that these A1 learners might not have gained mastery of general vocabulary and the simple past as a new structure.

Indeed, learners' speech had a lot of pauses and false starts, which highly affected their spoken performance. While speaking, for example, learners had to stop and verify the conjugation of a verb in the dictionary or ask a third party about it. This phenomenon happened across groups and it was evident while transcribing the audios. Additionally, there were recurrent hesitations in other linguistic aspects such as possessive adjectives and use of prepositions. Even though there was a treatment based on repetition and the control group had its regular practice session, neither one seemed to provide learners with enough practice to conceptualize and formulate messages following a more than average fluency rate and improve over time.

Indeed, seen from a cognitive perspective, the extended amount of time taken by learners to conceptualize, formulate and articulate the information used to express their ideas could explain their fluency. The conceptualizer (involved in choosing the information to express meaning) seemed to be the one in which learners were taking some time selecting the appropriate words to formulate their message, and when misformulated, rephrasing it to correct it would mean devoting conceptualization time once again (Levelt, 1989). Some more familiarity with the information would reduce the amount of time learners would take to reach fluent formulation stages. Task repetition has proven to foster such process. However, the vast amount of verb conjugations in combination with the new grammar structure to grasp, explains at some extent the no significance over time neither for the treatment nor for the control group.

Even for the second global fluency rate in which just meaningful syllables were taken into account (after eliminating false starts, repetitions and reformulations), there was none or poor improvement over time across all groups. As aforementioned, the reasons may be due to low proficiency in terms of verb conjugations and grammar use. There is a link between vocabulary knowledge and spoken L2 fluency. It has been argued that when lexical selection and morphological formulation have not been automatized, fluent exchange of meaning becomes time consuming and laborious (Hilton, 2008), which is basically what the global fluency rates and transcriptions evidenced in the pre-test and post-test through extended pauses.

As for the simple past fluency rate, as evidenced in the results, the most significant finding was the content group getting worse over time. In terms of the other groups, there was a lack of significant improvement, which could be explained following the aforementioned reasoning. However, there is an interesting contrast between the results for the content group in terms of past simple fluency and those gathered for target like usage

(simple past accuracy) in which they considerably improved over time after having started with a lower rate than the other groups. This variance in results for the content group displaying a great recovery for accuracy but at the same time an evident decrease in terms of fluency could be explained through the trade-off effect, which is a highly mentioned and analyzed phenomenon in the field.

The trade-off hypothesis states that human attentional capacity and working memory are limited, and therefore, when learners direct their attention to one dimension, they have reduced attention to other ones (Skehan 1998, 2009), which has been noticed in some studies in which just one of the measures either improves or takes over the others over time, whether it is accuracy, lexical variety (Fukuta, 2016; Van de Guchte et al, 2016) or fluency (Thai & Boers, 2016). Learners' attention in the content group was directed towards the same types of verbs, which can explain, at some extent, how they could improve their accuracy over time for target like usage (even if it wasn't as significant enough to outperform the other groups) while at the same time their fluency was decreasing significantly if compared with the other groups.

Notwithstanding, it has been demonstrated that massed repetitions over a prolonged period of time show clearer benefits in all CAF areas (Ahmadian, 2011). Actually, according to the overall results for accuracy and fluency, it seems like in the case of EFL low proficiency learners, such massed repetitions are necessary to achieve more significant improvement over time so that repetition can outperform regular classroom practice and reduce the trade-off effect over time when repetition directs their attention to either accuracy or fluency.

Moreover, task design (in regards to the content group) might have also played an important role in the outcome for the past fluency rate. Indeed, since content repetition required a variance in procedure, new challenges for the development of each task were

posed, namely different instructions and information exchange dynamics, conditions that increased the complexity of the tasks (Skehan, 1996). Therefore, attentional resources to understand and follow such procedures might have been depleted leaving just limited resources to conceptualize, formulate and articulate ideas in a consistent fluent rate. Certainly, in the comparison between procedural and content repetition, an increase in complexity might have a direct incidence in spoken performance at this proficiency level in which the learners' working memory needs to process different sorts of information at the same time.

Limitations of the Study

In spite of the efforts to control as many variables as possible, there were certain limitations that arouse at different stages during the study. These factors might have had an effect in the results and findings, and therefore, it is important to mention them so that researchers make an effort to reduce their impact in future studies.

First of all, English proficiency had an incidence on global results for this study since the learners had received no more than 3 months of formal English instruction. All learners had been placed in basic one three months before treatment and data collection stages, and therefore, not only was it the first time they had been exposed to simple past, but they also lacked a wide range of vocabulary and grammar mastery to communicate their ideas error-free and through an average fluency rate. Patanasorn (2010) argues that the fact that mistakes can be of so many natures (prepositions, adjective use, among others) makes error-free measures too conservative since a mistake of any kind would unable a unit to be error-free. Indeed, in the case of an EFL context like the one in the current study this measure captured a lot of minor mistakes that considerably affected the global accuracy rate. Additionally, the number of hesitations, false starts and pauses to look for words in the

dictionary to express ideas, affected the learners' global fluency rate considerably. In further studies, less conservative accuracy and fluency rates that give a better account of improvement over time in basic EFL learners would be advisable.

Second of all, another factor that might have become a determining factor for the success of the repetition types, would be the short amount of pedagogical intervention provided by the treatment groups. This is actually a constraint reported in other dialogic studies in which no significant findings arouse for global and simple past accuracy measures (Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2013). Indeed, the population targeted in this study (A1) had been exposed to English just for two months, and therefore, the amount of repetition provided might not have been repeated enough as to outperform the control group neither in past simple use not it global English use.

Indeed, not only was this the first time learners had been exposed to the simple past but they were also still in the process of consolidating the use of simple present and other basic structures, which is a relevant limitation for the production of fluent and error-free speech, even after receiving practice during the pedagogical intervention. While transcribing the recordings, for example, low proficiency phenomena were evidenced, such as long pauses due to learners looking for words in the dictionary or the incorrect use of possessive adjectives. Certainly, this sample had still a limited capacity to convey messages, which had an impact on the results for global and grammar specific measures.

Additionally, despite of the efforts to make sure that all learners were at the same proficiency during the pre-test stage, the content repetition group displayed rates that were considerably low if compared to the procedural and control groups. The reason behind the inequivalence in performance might be explained based on the fact that the participants selected for the content group were part of a schedule in which the average age is considerably higher than the one from the other groups. While it is true that all of them had a

low proficiency (A1), the control and procedural participants were younger and had recently graduated from high school, which might have given them an advantage in terms of initial performance since they had been lately exposed to basic English knowledge as part of their studies.

Third of all, research based on the use of the simple past or other structures in which pronunciation play an important role for meaning should include a phonological accuracy rate explicitly described and independent from the error-free one used for accuracy. None of the studies reviewed, neither this one, explained the pronunciation criteria used to discriminate accurate or inaccurate used of words (simple past verbs or global pronunciation). It would be interesting to study pronunciation accuracy deeply at a global and grammar specific level by creating rates that can be used and replicated across studies.

Finally, the sample size in this study is too small. Indeed, quasi-experimental designs benefit from bigger samples. Therefore, while it is true that institutions count with a limited amount of learners who belong to certain courses, in future studies the sample size should be bigger, and drop outs or not eligible data anticipated. This study, for example, started out with eighty-four learners, however, some of them dropped out during the treatment stage, and while transcribing, some audios were discarded for not being intelligible, which at the end reduced the sample to forty-four.

Despite of its limitations, this study continued shedding light on the possible allocation of leaners' attention under a task repetition framework as well as a reflection on the type of measurements used within the repetition field to assess spoken performance. In terms of the EFL context where this research took place, for example, it was evidenced that if language proficiency is limited, a large amount of learners' cognitive resources might be devoted to revisiting global or simple past vocabulary and grammar structures prior to message conveyance, which has a direct incidence in accuracy and fluency. Indeed, the fact

that accuracy rates are based on error-free sentences seems to be a conservative measure since it captures a lot of minor mistakes that are recurrent in this type of sample. Besides, the fluency measure registered a large amount of time taken by learners to formulate their messages when unsure about grammar and vocabulary. In spite of the outcomes from the current study, previous studies have concluded that task repetition might lead learners to a more accurate and fluent performance. However, massive repetition may be necessary to achieve significant improvement over time for this kind of proficiency learners. All in all, task repetition and CAF as consistently evolving fields, might benefit from the findings evidenced in the current study so that future studies consider the appropriateness of certain CAF measures in EFL contexts with similar samples, which is a discussion that is worth a deeper analysis, and therefore, it will be treated thoroughly in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

The task repetition field has devoted some of this research to study the effects of content and procedural repetition on complexity, accuracy and fluency. The results from this study, as well as previous ones similarly oriented, raise a concern regarding the type of measures used to analyze speech and how they have an impact on study results. Indeed, a recurrent conclusion is that complexity, accuracy and fluency need to be treated multidimensionally so that it is possible to fully understand the role of task features on oral performance; this includes studying global and grammar specific measures (Housen et al, 2012; Norris & Ortega, 2003). In the current study, for example, no improvement was revealed at the global level. However, the grammar specific rates depicted development over time (not significantly better than the control group), which supports the need of both types of measures to understand the role of repetition and other types of treatment on spoken performance.

First of all, the reason behind the lack of improvement in global accuracy measures might be seen in light of previous research. The global accuracy rate used in this study (error-free AS-units per total number of AS-units), for instance, had already been used in pioneering studies (Bygate, 2001) and more recent ones (Patanasorn, 2010; Ahmadian, 2011) reporting no significant results and calling the attention towards its conservative features. Indeed, Patanasorn (2010) argues that the fact that mistakes can be of so many natures (prepositions, adjective use, among others) makes this measure conservative since a mistake of any kind would unable a unit to be error-free. Indeed, in the case of an EFL context like the one used in the current study in which basic learners were asked to create a story, this measure captured a lot of minor mistakes, which might explain the inexistence of significant improvement over time for all groups at the global accuracy level.

Indeed, error-free measurements in EFL beginner learners might benefit from a rate in which a full AS-Unit not be fully penalized when there are minor mistakes that seem unavoidable at this learning stage. A scale that determines the severity of a mistake would, at some extent, mitigate the effect of labelling a full sentence as inaccurate, and consequently, discarding it without deep analysis, which is what happens across CAF studies based on error-free measures. Certainly, if we give a look at a prepositional mistake versus inaccuracy in the use of a simple past verb inflection, both have a different impact on the utterance being conveyed: while the former might not affect meaning, the latter could be more relevant in the sentence as to lead to a communication breakdown or misleading message A grading scale that assigns a representative value to each mistake based on severity might give a better account on accuracy. Accuracy cannot be reduced to "perfect" "not perfect for this proficiency sample, which is one of the macro-findings derived from the current study that is not aligned to some claims that point out that classifying errors using proficiency seems like a confusion between comprehensibility and accuracy (Pallotti, 2009; Vercellotti, 2012). An argument easy to support when proficiency has gone beyond early learning stages and minor mistakes do not affect AS-Units as often as it is evidenced in A1 EFL learners.

As for the use of AS-Units (an independent clause and all its subordinate clauses) in error-free measures, it is worth mentioning that it helped the transcription and coding stages. Indeed, this type of unit has been strongly suggested due to the fact that it relies on intonation and pauses to facilitate such processes (differently from T-Units) (Foster et al 2000). From this research sample (low proficiency) and type of task (dialogic), for instance, it was evidenced a tendency from learners to elicit incomplete statements or provide monosyllabic replies. Thanks to intonation contours, however, it was possible to discriminate whether a learner had finished a statement to start a new one or was

reformulating it. Furthermore, short replies could be classified as an AS-Unit as well (Ellipted answer). Certainly, at this proficiency level, reformulations, repetitions and short replies occur repeatedly. Nevertheless, the nature of this kind of Unit allows a differentiation of statements, which ultimately play an important role when determining the number of meaningful syllables, and therefore, its suggested usage in research is seconded by this study, especially when similar samples are under analysis.

In terms of accuracy at the grammar specific level, measures based on Suppliance in Obligatory Contexts and Target like Usage seem to capture appropriately the use of simple past by learners. Additionally, their implementation adheres to the call for multidimensionality in the understanding of spoken performance (Global, Grammar Specific and varied measures). As evidenced in the current study, both rates behaved differently, namely Suppliance in Obligatory Contexts showing better improvement over time (not significant) if compared to Target Like Usage, which helps understand oral proficiency from different angles. The former not only registers how accurate learners were but also gives account of the contexts when learners failed to use the target structure, while the latter just portrays how accurate they were when simple past was used.

In regards to fluency measures, namely breakdown fluency, speed fluency and repair fluency (Housen et al, 2012), this research studied speed fluency at the global level through measurements based on regular syllables and meaningful syllables uttered per minute. However, similarly to the global accuracy measure, this one might be too conservative for EFL learners at this specific proficiency level. It was evidenced that learners often interrupted their speech to double check grammar rules and vocabulary items in the dictionary or notebook. Literature is not clear about these sorts of pauses and how to treat them, but a discussion needs to be opened in this regard. Currently, that kind of pause is fully penalized counting the seconds spent. However, it would be interesting to analyze

whether looking for a word in the dictionary, for example, should be discarded from the speech sample after being labelled as "non-meaningful stream of speech", similarly to what it is done with syllables when they are classified as "non-meaningful syllables" if they are the product of hesitations, reformulations and false starts. A "meaningful stream of speech" measure could, at some extent, give account of the impact of task repetition on this proficiency level.

As for the grammar specific measure (simple past), fluency through the analysis of disfluency markers (false starts, reformulations, hesitations and repetitions) was used in the coding stage, which helped identify a decrease of fluency in one of the treatment groups. It has been argued that such measure may also be seen as a rather accuracy rate (Vercellotti, 2012). Nevertheless, it is evident at the grammar specific level that all those disfluency markers represent a delay in the message. While it is true that the repetition of a verb could be a correction of inaccuracy or a confirmation of a verb, it also gives account of the time taken for message conveyance. Therefore, this grammar specific fluency rate help understand the effect of repetition on fluency, and even though proficiency plays an important role in the results, the measurement served its purpose and it might be used in further studies with similar samples.

A phenomenon worth mentioning at this proficiency level, which at some extent affected fluency, is the use of Spanish. While it is true that using the mother tongue is the equivalent to a pause due to the fact that there is no second language production, the amount of Spanish production and its analysis might reveal where the learners' cognitive resources are directed. When learners rely on their native language, they might have conversations that include vocabulary clarification, instructions explanation or even turn taking decisions. That does not mean the current measures are inaccurate to determine fluent performance. However, for speakers who share the same language, fluency measures could take into

account the amount (in seconds) spent while using the mother tongue indicating what is being discussed through specific labels e.g. (10 – instructions clarification). In the task repetition field, a deep analysis of disfluency due to native language usage is key to understand where learners place their attention.

As described in Chapter 2, for example, procedural repetition has shown to be beneficial for the acquisition of pragmatic competence because when being familiar with the procedure and task structure, the learners' attentional resources are directed to a better selection of disagreement expressions (Garcia & McDonough, 2016). Grammar accuracy of specific grammar tenses also appears to benefit from procedural repetition due to the fact that the attentional resources and phonological memory are available for attending to morphology instead of task procedures (Patanasorn, 2010). Claims that are supported in the learners' production. However, their native language discussions might help reinforce those claims if conversations during their pauses can contribute to such arguments.

Finally, at the macro level, certainly CAF and task repetition are fields that would benefit a lot from a standardization of rates so that results can be compared across studies. Notwithstanding, there are variables such as low proficiency level that call for a better selection or reengineering of certain measures, which is one of the conclusions from the current study. Additionally, global and varied grammar specific measures are essential to determine the impact of task repetition and other treatment types on learners' accuracy and fluency over time pursuing common delimitations so that findings can be compared, and the cognitive claims validated with more certainty. It has been pointed out that most of CAF research has at some extent neglected to establish adequate definitions and operationalizations that account for multidimensional, multifaceted and multilayered constructs (Housen et al, 2012).

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APPENDIX A

PRETEST

1. Using the past tense, you and your classmate will create a story based on 2 sets of pictures. The set assigned to you is different to the one assigned to your partner, note that the pictures are numbered for two reasons: 1) to specify the order of the images and 2) to indicate your speaking turn when narrating the story.

   Important:
   - You cannot see the pictures assigned to your friend.
   - Before you start, pay attention to the example modeled by the teacher.

Set 1
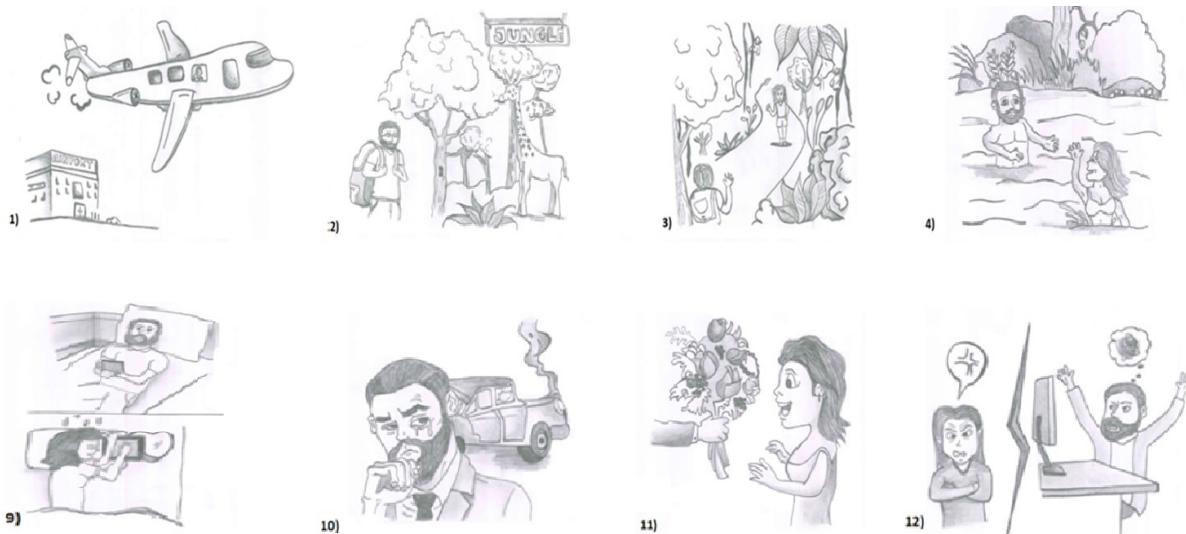
Set 2
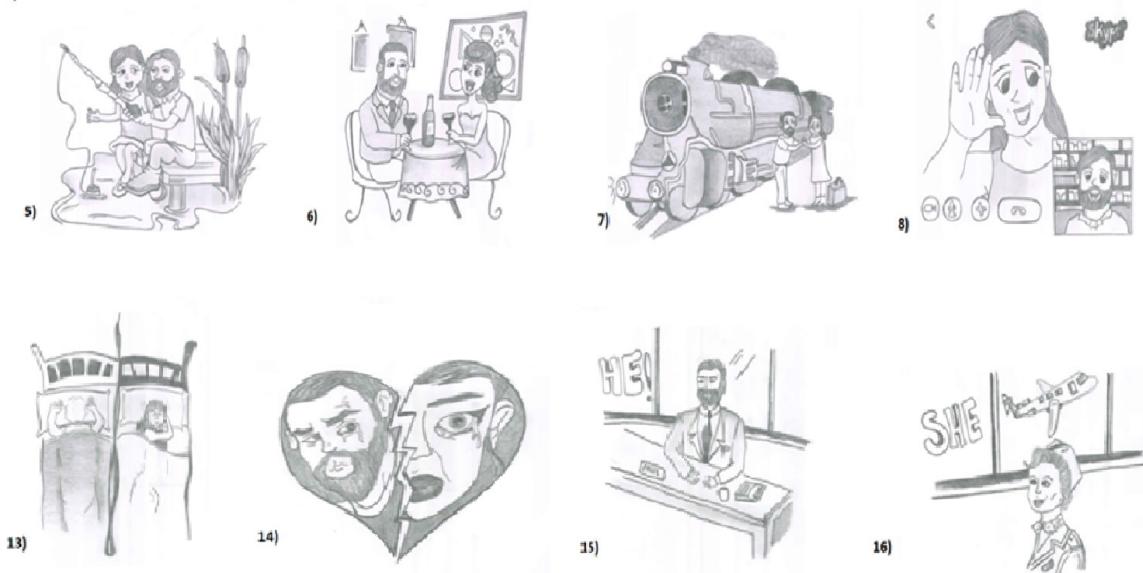
POSTTEST

1. Using the past tense, you and your classmate will create a story based on 2 sets of pictures. The set assigned to you is different to the one assigned to your partner, note that the pictures are numbered for two reasons: 1) to specify the order of the images and 2) to indicate your speaking turn when narrating the story. You have 8 minutes to finish this activity but if you do not have more pictures and you still have time, please continue the story until the time is over.

Important:
- You cannot see the pictures assigned to your friend.
- Before you start, pay attention to the example modeled by the teacher.

Set 1
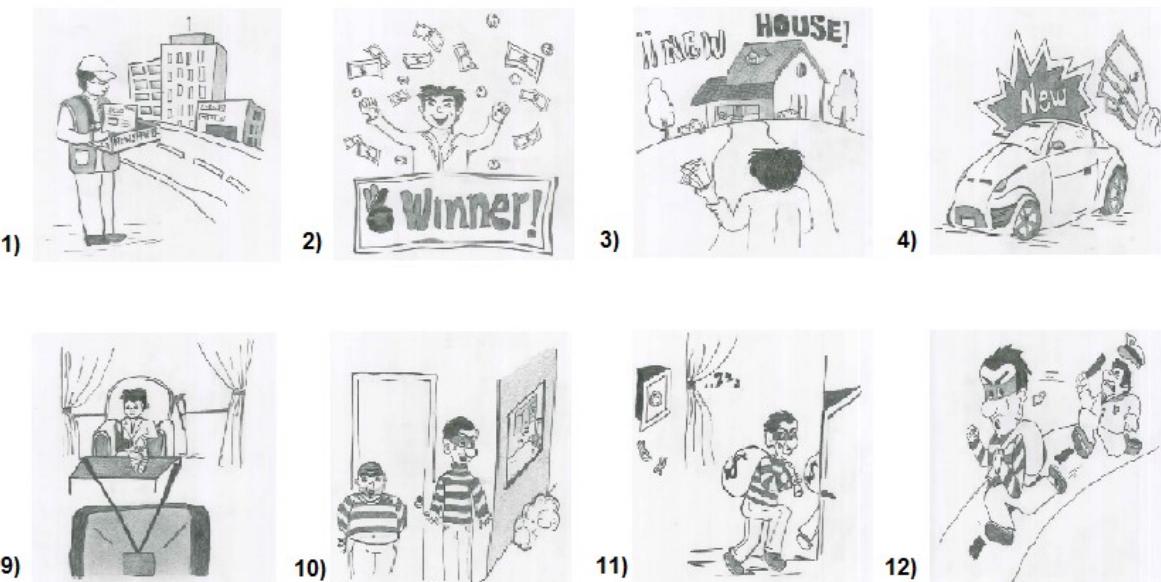
Set 2
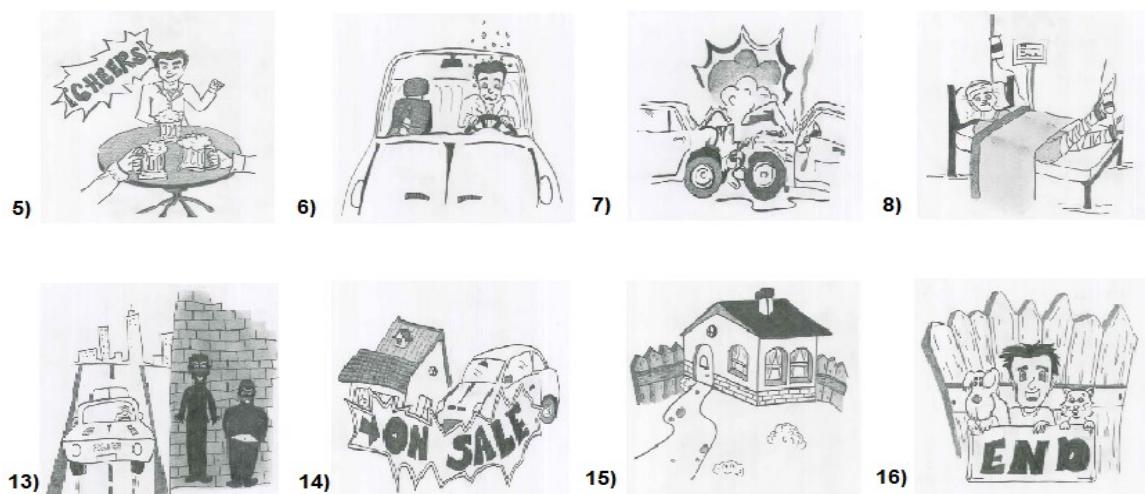
APPENDIX B

PROCEDURAL REPETITION - Task 1

Student A

Scenario: A 5-star hotel in Bogota wants to hire a tennis coach for his VIP clients. In order to do that, the following message was posted on a website:

Tennis Coach Needed!

We are looking for a tennis coach for our 5-star hotel in Colombia

Requirements: - Experience in the sport
- Free time available
- Experience in championships

Alicia applied for this position and you are in charge of narrating her life to your classmate in past tense. Then your partner will narrate the life of the second candidate and both of you will decide who you consider the best candidate for the position. The time allotted for this activity is 6 minutes.

Step 1: Narrate Alicia's life according to the 8 pictures below. Remember that you have to narrate her life in **past tense** and all the events in the pictures must be described.
Step 2: Listen to your partner narrate the life of the other candidate.
Step 3: When your partner is done narrating, start discussing who you consider the best candidate is and select only one for the position.

25 years old

27 years old

29 years old

32 years old - First Job

10 Years old – High school champion

19 Years old - Medicine

21 Years old – University Championships

23 Years old – Bronze medal in the Olympics (Rio de Janeiro)

Student B

Scenario: A 5-star hotel in Bogota wants to hire a tennis coach for his VIP clients. In order to do that the following message was posted on a website:

Tennis Coach Needed!

We are looking for a tennis coach for our 5-star hotel in Colombia

Requirements: - Experience in the sport
- Free time available
- Experience in championships

You are in charge of listening to your classmate narrate Alicia's life, she is the first candidate. Then, you have to narrate Tom's life in **past tense**. When you are done, both of you will decide who you consider the best candidate for the position. The time allotted for this activity is 6 minutes.

Step 1: Listen to your classmate talk about Alicia.

Step 2: Narrate Tom's life according to the 8 pictures below. Remember that you have to narrate her life in **past tense** and all the events in the pictures must be described.

Step 3: When you finish narrating, start discussing who you consider the best candidate is and select only one for the position.


5 years old – Lessons from his mother

18 years old
Physical Education

20 years old – University Championships

22 years old – Best seller – Book: How to play tennis?
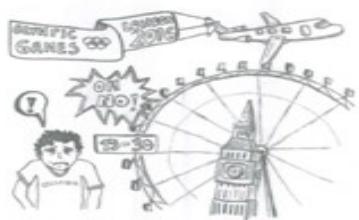
24 years old – No medal at the Olympics (London)

25 years old

26 years old – First Job

27 years old

PROCEDURAL REPETITION - Task 2

Student A

Scenario: A 5-star hotel in Bogota wants to hire a tour guide for his clients. In order to do that, the following message was posted on a website:

Keith applied for this position and you are in charge of narrating his life to your classmate in past tense. Then your partner will narrate the life of the second candidate and both of you will decide who you consider the best candidate for the position. The time allotted for this activity is 6 minutes.

Step 1: Narrate Keith's life according to the 8 pictures below. Remember that you have to narrate his life in **past tense** and all the events in the pictures must be described.
Step 2: Listen to your partner narrate the life of the other candidate.
Step 3: When your partner is done narrating, start discussing who you consider the best candidate is and select only one for the position.

5 years old - boy scout

18 years old - Tourist

25 years old - Museum guide

30 years old - Tour guide

32 years old - Taxi driver

33 years old - school bus driver

35 years old - Librarian

38 years old audiobooks designer

Student B

Scenario: A 5-star hotel in Bogota wants to hire a tour guide for his clients. In order to do that the following message was posted on a website:

Tour Guide Needed!

We are looking for a tour guide for our 5-star hotel in Colombia

Requirements: - Experience in the field

- Free time available

- Driving experience

You are in charge of listening to your classmate narrate Keith's life, he is the first candidate. Then, you have to narrate Tina's life in **past tense**. When you are done, both of you will decide who you consider the best candidate for the position. The time allotted for this activity is 6 minutes.

Step 1: Listen to your classmate talk about Keith.
Step 2: Narrate Tina's life according to the 8 pictures below. Remember that you have to narrate her life in **past tense** and all the events in the pictures must be described.
Step 3: When you finish narrating, start discussing who you consider the best candidate is and select only one for the position.

5 years old - Student

20 years old - Journalist

28 years old - News presenter
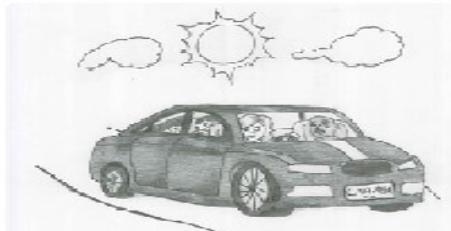
33 years old - Tour guide

35 years old - Librarian

38 years old - Motorcyclist
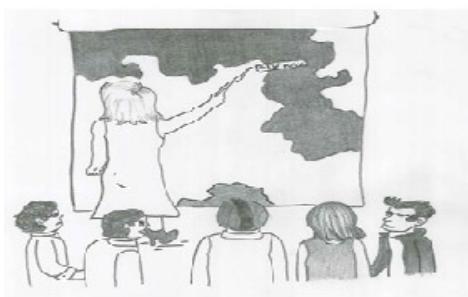
40 years old - Teacher

41 years old - Host

PROCEDURAL REPETITION - Task 3

Student A

Scenario: A 5-star hotel in Bogota wants to hire a lifeguard for its pools. In order to do that, the following message was posted on a website:

John applied for this position and you are in charge of narrating his life to your classmate in past tense. Then your partner will narrate the life of the second candidate and both of you will decide who you consider the best candidate for the position. The time allotted for this activity is 6 minutes.

Step 1: Narrate John's life according to the 8 pictures below. Remember that you have to narrate his life in **past tense** and all the events in the pictures must be described.
Step 2: Listen to your partner narrate the life of the other candidate.
Step 3: When your partner is done narrating, start discussing who you consider the best candidate is and select only one for the position.

4 years - Amazon River
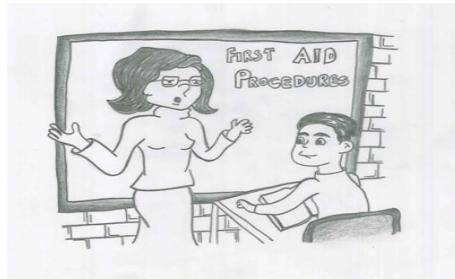
High School - First Aid Courses

22 years old - Hotel — First Job

25 years old

30 years old – Trainer of dogs for a "Rescue Team"

32 Years old – Lifeguard at a beach

33 Years old – Red Cross Volunteer

34 Years old - Swimming teacher

Student B

Scenario: A 5-star hotel in Bogota wants to hire a lifeguard for its pools. In order to do that the following message was posted on a website:

Lifeguard Needed!
We are looking for a lifeguard for our 5-star hotel in Colombia

Requirements: - Experience in the field
- Free time available
- First aid training

You are in charge of listening to your classmate narrate John's life, he is the first candidate. Then, you have to narrate Brenda's life in **past tense**. When you are done, both of you will decide who you consider the best candidate for the position. The time allotted for this activity is 6 minutes.

Step 1: Listen to your classmate talk about John.
Step 2: Narrate Brenda's life according to the 8 pictures below. Remember that you have to narrate her life in **past tense** and all the events in the pictures must be described.
Step 3: When you finish narrating, start discussing who you consider the best candidate is and select only one for the position.

15 Years old — Swimming classes

20 Years old — First job
Water park lifeguard

22 Years old — Police Officer
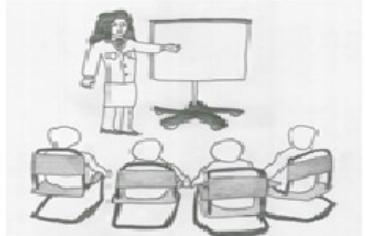
27 Years old — Swimming teacher
Army

28 years old volunteer
Tsunami in Japan

29 years old — Best swimmer
of the year award

32 years old — First Aid Instructor

33 years old — Diving Teacher

APPENDIX C

CONTENT REPETITION - Task 1

Student A
Scenario: Somebody robbed a bank last week and then run to a hotel. According to the cameras, the thief was a guest so the police is interviewing all those who stayed there last week. You are the police officer and your partner will be Tim (one of the guests).
Procedure: Ask the following question:
- What did you do on Monday?   Wait for the answers, write them in the report.
                                                            Then, ask some follow-up questions.
- What did you do on Tuesday?   Wait for the answers, write them in the report.
                                                            Then, ask some follow-up questions.
- What did you do on Wednesday?   Wait for the answers, write them in the report.
                                                            Then, ask some follow-up questions.
- What did you do on the Weekend? Wait for the answers, write them in the report.
                                                            Then, ask some follow-up questions.

 Note: You need to register the answers from your partner in the following report:

Interview Report

Name of the suspect: _____
Name of the police officer: _____

What did you do on Monday?	What did you do on Tuesday?	What did you do on Wednesday?	What did you do on the weekend?
Activity 1:	Activity 1:	Activity 1:	Activity 1:
Activity 2:	Activity 2:	Activity 2:	Activity 2:
Activity 3:	Activity 3:	Activity 3:	Activity 3:
Activity 4:	Activity 4:	Activity 4:	Activity 4:

Student B

Scenario: Somebody robbed a bank last week and then run to a hotel. According to the cameras, the thief was a guest so the police is interviewing all those who stayed there last week.
Procedure: You are Tim (one of the guests who stayed in that hotel last week) and your partner (the police officer) will ask you the following questions:

-   What did you do on Monday?
-   What did you do on Tuesday?
-   What did you do on Wednesday?
-   What did you do on the weekend?

To answer the questions from the officer you have to use the following pictures to provide your answers:

MONDAY

11:00 am

2:00 pm

4:00 pm

6:00 pm

TUESDAY

8:00 am

11:00 am

5:00 pm

11:00 pm

WEDNESDAY

9:00 am
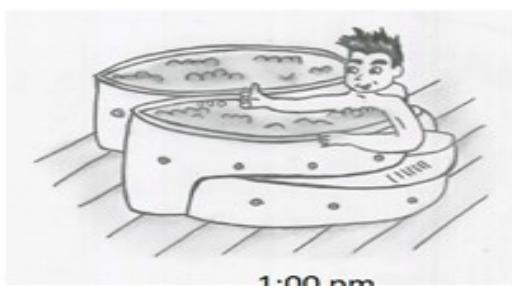
1:00 pm

3:00 pm

10:00 pm

WEEKEND

Saturday

Saturday
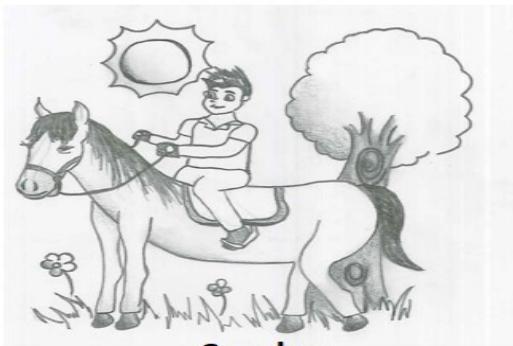
Sunday

Sunday

CONTENT REPETITION - Task 2

Student A

Scenario: You and your friend want to go on vacation. However, you need to select a good travel agency. In order to select the agency, you and your friend will narrate a previous experience you had with a specific one. Once both experiences have been narrated, you will discuss which one you consider the best option.

Step 1: You will start; you will talk about an agency called "**Travelex**". You need to narrate the activities that this agency offered you in your last vacation. The activities must be narrated in **past simple** and they are based on the pictures below:

Example:
- In my last vacation **Travelex** offered me a lot of activities, for example, Day 1 I went to a big party in the basement. It was very fun, I loved it. I met a lot of nice people, they played my favorite music. Day 2 _____ Day 3 _____ etc.

Step 2: Listen to the activities that your partner did with the other agency.
Step 3: Discuss what agency is the best.
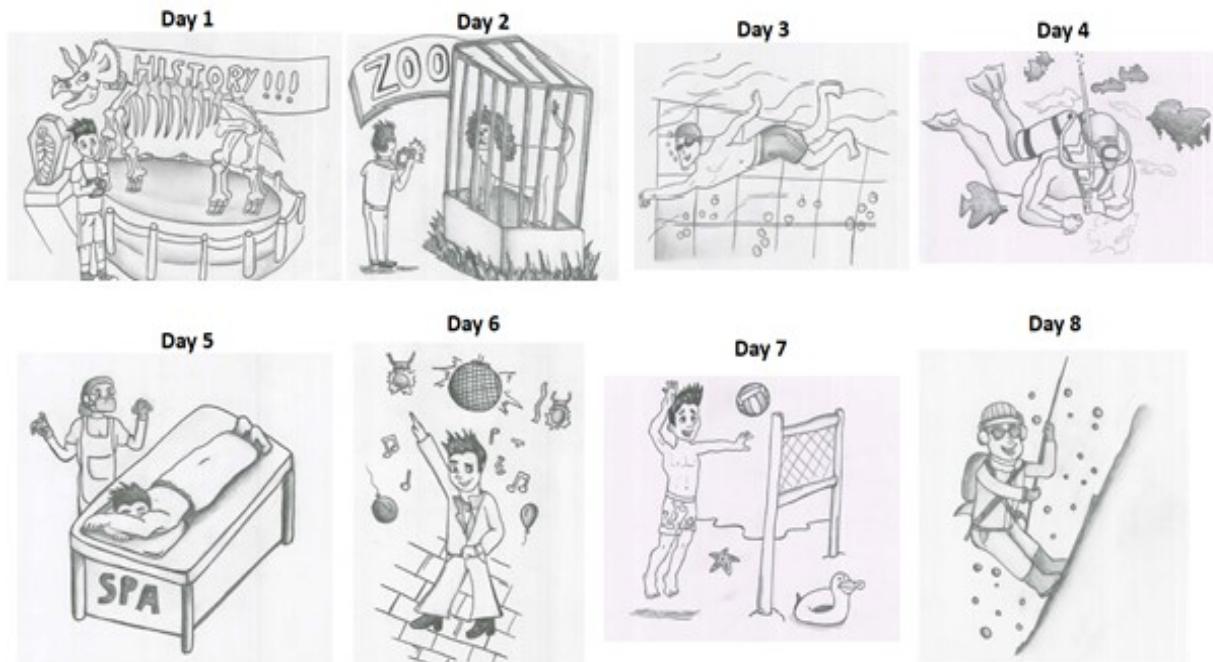
Student B

Scenario: You and your friend want to go on vacation. However, you need to select a good travel agency. In order to select the agency, you and your friend will narrate a previous experience you had with a specific one. Once both experiences have been narrated, you will discuss which one you consider the best option.

Step 1: Your partner will start talking about an agency, when your partner finishes, you will talk about an agency called **"Super Trip"**. You need to narrate the activities that this agency offered you in your last vacation. The activities must be narrated in **past simple** and they are based on the pictures below:

Example:
-   In my last vacation **Super Trip** offered me a lot of activities, for example, Day 1 I went to a big party in the basement. It was very fun, I loved it. I met a lot of nice people, they played my favorite music. Day 2 _____ Day 3 _____ etc.

Step 2: When you finish, discuss what agency is the best.
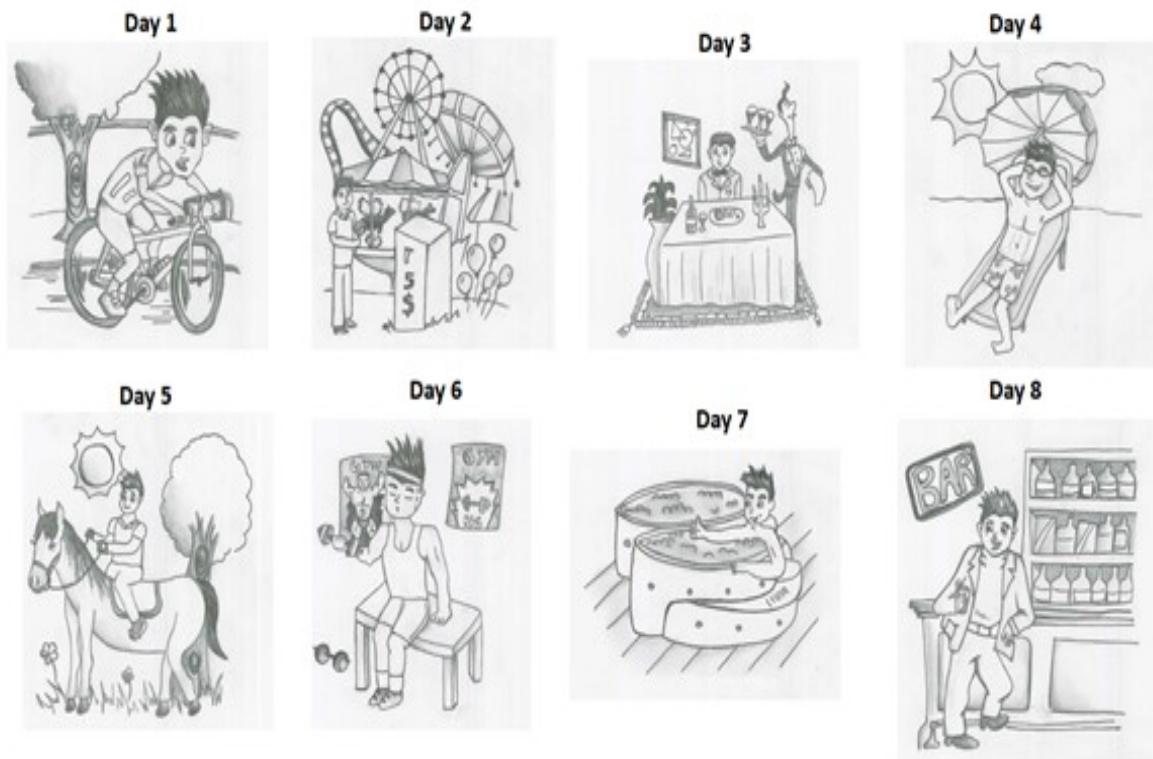
CONTENT REPETITION - Task 3

Student A

Step 1: Look at the set of pictures and think about what experiences you had done in the past, as you identify the experiences, please mark them with an X.

Step 2: Share your experiences using **simple past** and always try to expand what you say by giving details about how each experience felt.

Step 3: When you finish, pay attention to your partner experiences.
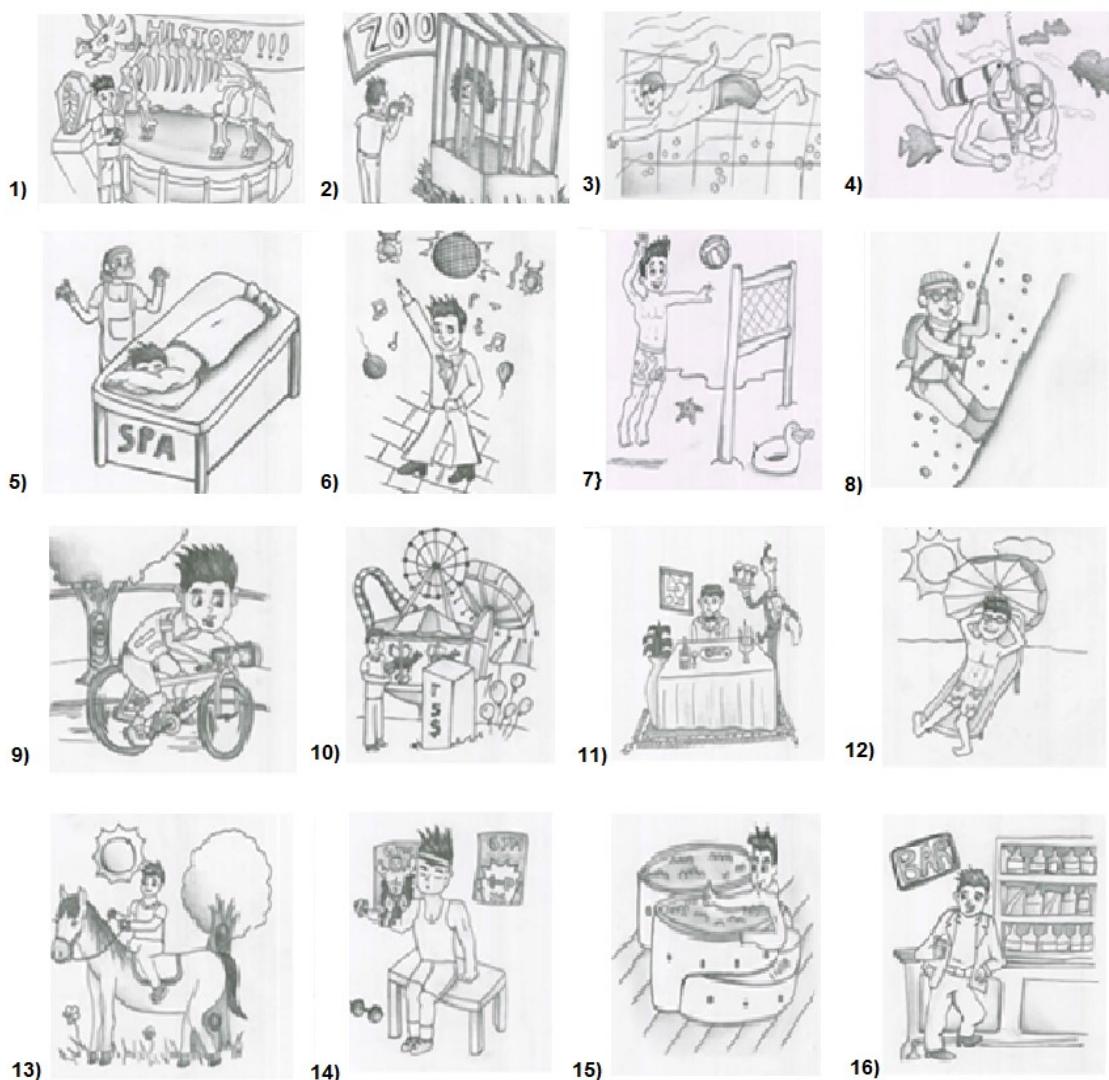
Student B

Step 1: Pay attention to your partner experiences.

Step 2: Look at the set of pictures and think about what experiences you had done in the past, as you identify the experiences, please mark them with an X.

Step 3: Share your experiences using **simple past** and always try to expand what you say by giving details about how each experience felt.