

## The effects of planning time and proficiency level on accuracy of oral task performance

**Alireza Khorami**, Department of English Language, Sarab Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran.

**Reza Khorasani\***, Department of English Language, Sarab Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran.

### Suggested Citation:

Alireza, K. & Reza, K. (2017). The effects of planning time and proficiency level on accuracy of oral task performance. *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*. 7(4), 155-168.

Received date July 05, 2017; revised date August 22, 2017; accepted date October 22, 2017.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Rahimi, Bangkok University, Thailand.

© 2017 SciencePark Research, Organization & Counseling. All rights reserved.

---

### Abstract

This study examined the effect of pre-task planning (PTP) and proficiency level on the language proficiency of 60 English foreign language learners. The Oxford placement test was administered. Based on the scores, the participants were divided into groups of low and high proficiency. The high and low language level students were randomly assigned to either 0 minutes or 10 minutes PTP time. Then the participants in all the four groups were shown a set of pictures and were required to produce a story about it. They spoke based on the same topic, but in different conditions. The productions were transcribed for further analyses. The results of the analysis revealed that high proficiency learners (PTP) outperformed the NP group of the same level; however, there was no meaningful difference between the low groups. The results of two-way Anova also revealed an interaction between the planning and proficiency levels.

Keywords: Pre-task planning time, oral performance, accuracy, proficiency.

---

\* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Reza Khorasani**, Department of English Language, Sarab Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran. E-mail address: [ali.reza.khorami49@gmail.com](mailto:ali.reza.khorami49@gmail.com) / Tel.: +98 21 8897

## 1. Introduction

Both second language acquisition (SLA) researchers and language teachers seek to elicit samples of language use from learners. In the case of researchers, these samples are needed to investigate how second language (L2) learning takes place. In the case of teachers, these samples serve as evidence that successful learning is taking place. Increasingly, both researchers and teachers acknowledge the need to elicit samples of language use that is representative of how learners perform when they are not attending to accuracy. The question arises, then, as to how these samples of meaning-focused language use can be elicited.

Moreover, although applied linguists have come to recognise the importance of speaking in its own right as well as its complexity, speaking remains one of the least well-understood, if not misunderstood subjects in applied linguistics in general (Silva & Matsuda, 2002). In addition, somewhat surprisingly, there has been little research into what effects different language proficiency levels have on oral production. This study is set out to investigate the effect of planning time and proficiency levels on the accuracy of the oral task performance.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. What is planning?

In general, planning is considered as a goal-oriented mental activity that people engage in to achieve a particular objective. It involves the allocation of attentional resources and the regulation of cognitive processes.

### 2.2. Types of task planning

Ellis (2005) distinguishes between two principal types of task planning. The distinction is in terms of when planning takes place. The first type of planning is pre-task planning (PTP), which refers to planning that takes place before performing the task. It involves what Schmidt (2001) calls 'preparatory attention', which helps in performing actions with greater accuracy and speed. The second type is within-task planning, which refers to planning that takes place while performing the task. Each of these two types is divided into two other types.

PTP is divided into rehearsal and strategic planning. In rehearsal, learners are given the opportunity to 'perform the task before the main performance' (Ellis, 2005, p. 3). That is, the performance of the task for the first time is regarded as a preparation for the main and final performance. On the other hand, strategic planning, which is the focus of this study, entails learners' preparation of the content of the task they will perform. In this type of planning, they 'have access to the actual task materials' (Ellis, 2005, p. 3).

Within-task planning is also divided into pressured and unpressured planning. In pressured within-task planning, learners are usually not provided with enough time to plan online, while in unpressured within-task planning they are given enough time to plan online.

There are other sub-types of task planning that may occur with both principal types of task planning (i.e., pre-task and within-task planning). The first of these subtypes has to do with the amount of guidance that is provided to the learners (i.e., unguided vs. guided task planning). In unguided planning, learners are left to their own devices in planning; however, they are given specific advice about what to plan and how to plan in unguided planning (Ellis, 2005). The second sub-type is based on the source of planning. Different sources of planning are recognised and have been found to have an effect on the outcome of planning (Foster & Skehan, 1999). These sources included teacher-led, group-based, and solitary planning. The third sub-type is the foci of planning. It is based on the orientation of planning in terms of form and content. Thus, Planning could be form-focused, content-

focused or form and content-focused (Sangarun, 2001). This sub-type seems to relate in a way or another to the first sub-type (i.e., unguided vs. guided task planning) as guidance usually implies an orientation towards form, content, or both.

### 2.3. Measures of language production

Measures of language production have been problematic for researchers for there is a lack of an established unit that would make comparison across different studies possible (Ellis, 2003; 2005). Both global and specific measures were used in previous L2 research on strategic planning to measure complexity, accuracy and fluency (Sangarun, 2001). For example, Crookes (1989) employed a specific unit for measuring complexity (i.e., subordinate clauses) while Mehnert (1997) used a global measure (i.e., t-units) for the same purpose. As for accuracy, Wigglesworth (1997) employed specific measures (i.e., bound morphemes, verb morphology, and articles) while Foster and Skehan (1996) used a global measure (i.e., the proportion of error-free clauses). Different units have also been used to measure fluency. For example, Skehan and Foster (1997) measured speech fluency by counting the number of pauses. On the other hand, Mehnert (1997) employed four units to measure fluency: the number of pauses, the total pausing time, the mean length of run, and speech rate.

Another problematic area with regards to measures of language production is that most of the measures used have been developed for oral production, as this has been the focus of the bulk of studies on the effects of strategic planning on language production (Ellis, 2005). However, Ellis and Yuan (2004) developed measures of written production. These measures were the same as those used in earlier studies focusing on oral production (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996; Wendel, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003) with changes to the fluency measures to make them appropriate to written production. One of these changes is the temporal phenomenon, such as length of pauses, which cannot be measured in writing.

### 2.4. Task planning and proficiency level

Only three studies reported on the role played by different levels of proficiency in the effects of planning on language production. Wigglesworth (1997) found in comparing the language production of high and low proficiency-level ESL candidates in a testing context that strategic task planning had greater effects on the accuracy and complexity of the production of candidates with the high proficiency-level than the low proficiency-level candidates. The study did not permit definite conclusions regarding the effect of planning time on fluency. These claims are noteworthy, but needed to be confirmed as they were based on a study undertaken in a testing context which 'constrains the beneficial effects of planning' (Ellis, 2005, p. 26), unlike other studies which were conducted in a normal L2 classroom setting (Kawauchi, 2005).

Examining the retrospective reports of participants who were considered to be learners of advanced proficiency-level in oral language ability, Ortega (1999) claims that 'planning may be more likely to have an effect on the quality of the linguistic output with higher levels of proficiency' (p. 137), thus, supporting Wigglesworth's (1997) findings. However, Ortega's (1999) claim also needed to be confirmed as it was based on retrospective reports, and the focus of the study was not mainly on the role that proficiency level plays on the effects of planning on language production.

In a more comprehensive study investigating more proficiency-levels (i.e., low intermediate English Foreign Language (EFL) learners, high-intermediate EFL learners, and advanced EFL learners), Kawauchi (2005) found that planning promoted the complexity and fluency of the high-intermediate EFL group, and the accuracy of the low-intermediate EFL group.

The advanced EFL group benefited from planning opportunity much less than the two other groups. Consequently, it seems that the high-intermediate EFL group benefited most from planning opportunity. Kawauchi (2005) attributes this to the fact that, on the one hand, the advanced EFL

group had a 'ceiling effect' that enabled them to handle the task well without planning, and, thus, planning had only little effect on their production compared to the other groups. On the other hand, the high-intermediate EFL group benefited from planning more than the low-intermediate EFL group because it had adequate L2 knowledge to draw on compared to the limited L2 knowledge of the low-intermediate EFL group.

The findings of Wigglesworth (1997) and Ortega (1999), on the one hand, and Kawauchi (2005), on the other hand, are not in accordance with one another. This could be due to the fact that Wigglesworth's (1997) study was conducted in a testing context, and that Ortega's (1999) study was based on retrospective reports and did not mainly investigate the differences amongst learners of different levels of proficiency as it was only conducted on learners with advanced oral language proficiency-level. Thus, it seems that Kawauchi's (2005) study is the only one that took proficiency level into account in a second classroom context.

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1. Research question*

This study attempted to investigate the effect of proficiency levels and planning time on accuracy of EFLs oral task performance. The research questions include:

1. Does planning time (10 minutes and 0 minutes PTP) have any effect on accuracy of low proficiency level students' oral task performance?
2. Does planning time (10 minutes and 0 minutes PTP) have any effect on accuracy of high proficiency level students' oral task performance?
3. Is there any interaction between the effect of planning time (10 minutes and 0 minutes PTP) and Proficiency level (low & high) on accuracy of oral production?

#### *3.2. Hypothesis of the study*

1. Planning time (10 minutes and 0 minutes PTP) does not have any effect on accuracy of low proficiency level students' oral task performance.
2. Planning time (10 minutes and 0 minutes PTP) does not have any effect on accuracy of high proficiency level students' oral task performance.
3. There is no interaction between the effect of planning time (10 minutes and 0 minutes PTP) and proficiency level (low & high) on accuracy of oral task performance.

#### *3.3. Participants of the study*

The participants who took part in this study were 60 Iranian English students who study at Deniz Language institute in Ardebil, located in the north of Iran. They were between the ages of 18 and 24 years. The students were both male and female. They are studying New Interchange series, book 3, edition 3, Cambridge University Press (Richards, 2005). A proficiency test was conducted and based on the scores the participants were divided into low and high proficient groups. Further, they were divided into two homogeneous groups randomly. The randomisation was done in a balanced way. The number of participants in each group was 15 students.

#### *3.4. Instrument of the study*

##### *3.4.1. Measuring accuracy*

Accuracy was operationalised in terms of the number of errors per a hundred words (Mehnert, 1998; Fort kamp, 2000; Sangarum, 2005). It was obtained by dividing participants' total number of errors by the total number of words produced and multiplying the result by 100. All errors in syntax,

morphology or lexical choice were counted, including repetitions. Errors which were immediately self-corrected and errors in pronunciation were not counted.

#### *3.4.2. Oxford placement test*

In order to have homogenised participants according to their level of language proficiency, an Oxford Placement Test was administered. This test includes 60 multiple choice items and one paragraph of writing from Oxford Placement Test (2001).

#### *3.4.3. Language task*

In this study the participants in both pre-task and planning groups were required to tell a story based on a picture story. They were supposed to make interpretations about what would happen throughout the picture.

#### *3.4.4. PTP paper*

The students who had PTP time was given a blank paper to plan what they want to say in English during the task; they were able to draw or say their ideas during the 10 minutes. The students were able to keep the planning paper during the task and it was collected after the language task completed for further data analysis.

### *3.5. Procedure of the study*

Oxford placement test was administered. Based on the scores, the participants were divided into two groups of low and high proficiency (Appendix A). Then each group were divided into two groups based their scores in a balanced way. Two t-tests were run to ensure the homogeneity of the groups. Two groups of students were at high language proficiency and two groups were at low language proficiency as determined by scores on Oxford proficiency test. The high and low language level students were randomly assigned to either 0 minutes or ten minutes PTP time. Then the participants in all two groups were shown a set of pictures (Appendix B) and were required to produce a story about it. They spoke based on the same topic, but in different conditions. The control group were under the no-planning condition (NP) in which participants were not given time for planning, and in order to prevent them from online planning, a time limit were established. The first experimental group high proficiency (HP) was under PTP condition in which participants were given 10 minutes time to plan what they want to say prior to performing the oral ask. They were allowed to produce notes on a sheet of paper. These notes were taken away before they performed the task. A time limitation was assigned to this group too. The second experimental groups were low proficiencies. They were under similar conditions as the first experimental group. The productions were transcribed for further analyses.

## **4. Results**

### *4.1. Data analyses and results*

To analyse the results obtained from the learners' performance in terms of accuracy, the data were fed into SPSS. Table 4.1 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the groups, means and standard deviations for the groups of the study for accuracy of the low level groups.

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics of accuracy of low level groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
NP	15	8.52	22.78	12.5493	3.47764
PTP	15	6.71	15.38	12.7833	2.25137

As shown in Table 4.1 the mean for NP group is 12.5 and the standard deviation is 3.45 and the mean for PTP group is 12.7 and the standard deviation is 2.25. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted and the significance levels were more than the confidence level of 0.05, so it can be concluded that the scores are normally distributed. As a result, for analysing our obtained data parametric tests can be employed.

An independent samples t-test was run to find out whether the two groups are different in terms of the accuracy of the production. To seek further assurance about the equality of the variances of the groups of the study, Levene's Test of Equality of variance was run. Table 4.2 illustrates the results of the administration of the Levene's Test of Equality of Variances.

Table 4.2. Independent samples t-test of accuracy of low levels groups

	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means			
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Equal variances assumed	0.978	0.331	-0.219	28	0.828	-0.23400

Since the *p*-value is larger than 0.05, the equality of variances was proved to be  $0.331 > 0.05$ . On the other hand, the result of the *t*-test conducted demonstrates that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups regarding their accuracy level. The sig value is 0.828, which is greater than 0.05.

To analyse the results obtained from the learners' performance in terms of accuracy in high groups, the data were analysed. Table 4.3 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the groups.

Table 4.3. Descriptive statistics of accuracy of high levels groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
NP	15	10.84	24.48	15.6613	4.18006
PTP	15	10.46	26.93	20.3260	4.21187

As shown in Table 4.9, the mean for the NP group is 15.66 and the standard deviation is 4.18 while the mean for PTP group is 20.32 and the standard deviation is 4.21. Based on the scores obtained the mean for the PTP group is higher than that of the NP group; however, in order to make sure that the differences are meaningful a t-test is needed to be run.

First, in order to make sure that this assumption wasn't violated, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to obtained significance levels that are more than the confidence level of 0.05 (0.200 for both groups), so it can be concluded that the scores are normally distributed. As a result, for analysing our obtained data parametric tests can be employed.

An independent samples t-test was run to ensure whether the two groups are different in terms of the accuracy of the production. To seek further assurance about the equality of the variances of the groups of the study, Levene's Test of Equality of variance was run. Table 4.4 illustrates the results of the administration of the Levene's Test of Equality of Variances.

Table 4.4. Independent samples *t*-test of accuracy high level groups

	Levene's test for equality of variances		<i>t</i> -test for equality of means			
	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Equal variances assumed	0.174	0.679	-3.045	28	0.005	-4.66467

Since the *p*-value is larger than 0.05, the equality of variances was proved to be  $0.679 > 0.05$ . On the other hand, the result of the *t*-test conducted demonstrates that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups regarding their accuracy level. The sig value is 0.005, which is less than 0.05; as a result, it can be concluded that PTP group has produced significantly more accurate oral production than the NP group in high levels.

To answer the third research question, a two-way Anova was conducted. Prior to that, Levene's test of equality of variance for accuracy scores was checked. The sig value is higher than 0.05 (0.128), as a result the equality of variance was confirmed.

A two-way between group analysis of variances was also conducted to find out if there is an interaction between planning and proficiency level on learner's accuracy of production. The interaction effect was found to be significant, that is to say  $0.021 < 0.05$ . As a result, based on Table 4.5, the planning time significantly affects learners' oral production if the learners' are high in their proficiency level.

Table 4.5. Tests of between-subjects effects of accuracy

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Group	89.989	1	89.989	6.873	0.011
Level	425.707	1	425.707	32.512	0.000
group * level	73.616	1	73.616	5.622	0.021
Error	733.256	56	13.094		
Total	15423.102	60			

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Three research questions were taken into consideration in this study. The first and second research question looked into the effect of planning for a task on language learners' oral performance.

Regarding these questions, the obtained results in Section 4 revealed the groups of participants who were treated with PTP in high level groups, unlike the low level outperformed other groups. First and foremost, it is noteworthy that as Mukhopadhyay (2014) puts it.

There is a multitude of research on the beneficial role of planning on task performance, as it helps ESL/EFL learners to attend to task details and improve on either form (Ellis & Yuan, 2005) or meaning (Bygate & Samuda, 2005) or both (Sangarun, 2005). The beneficial effects of planning are experienced because when learners get more time, they can attend to task details. In addition, planning reduces the processing load by breaking the task down into smaller manageable bits. Generally, planning is learner driven and most often it is the learners who come up with strategies to break a task into smaller bits to complete a task (p. 116).

Moreover, the findings accord with the current literature of research in the field which as Alipour and Birjandi (2010) put it, has proven the effectiveness of PTP on yielding more complex language production. In addition, the findings can be justified by the fact that PTP as a task performance situation is theoretically underpinned by information-processing models which have their roots in cognitive psychology and were utilised in language learning by Skehan (1996 & 1998). On the basis of these models, humans own a restricted attentional capacity to process information; therefore,

focusing on one area of performance may deflect the attention. Thus it goes without saying that pre-planning a task may alleviate the communicative and cognitive pressure on the learner's confined working memory and will lead to improved task performance (Park, 2010). Moreover, the findings of this study are confirmed by Foster and Skehan (1996), as cited in Foster & Skehan, 1997) who reported that providing 10 minutes of planning time for pre-task planners can culminate in much greater fluency, greater complexity and more accuracy. In addition, the findings are also corroborated by Wigglesworth's (1997) study in which the impact of planning on the performance of various task types at diverse proficiency levels in a language testing setting was explored. It was reported that planning culminated in greater accuracy and complexity only on high-proficiency learners and particularly on the most difficult tasks like the summary of a conversation.

Furthermore, the finding lends support to the findings of Yuan and Ellis (2004) who explored the impacts of PTP on fluency, complexity and accuracy in written narratives. The PTP group outperformed the NP group in the number of syllables per minute. Therefore, giving the learners a chance for PTP was not only beneficial in terms of the quantity of writing articulated but also in terms of the speed of production.

The findings can also be justified by the idea put forward by Capretz, Ricker, and Sasak (2003) who claimed that the utilisation of graphic organisers enabled students to organise their thoughts, make their ideas clear and set up well-written essays. The teachers realised that the children demonstrated the ability to move and use this skill in other areas. Students had the knowledge required to take organisers in other activities through the utilisation of their comprehension and study skills. This tool provided visual thinkers with the chance to articulate written documents. A study by Foster and Skehan (1996), which investigated the effect of three conditions of individual planning (unplanned, detailed planning, and undetailed planning) on task performance, demonstrated that less detailed planning activity resulted in more accurate language production. Wendel (1997) also found that 'pre-planned discourse was not significantly more accurate than unplanned performance, explained that accuracy might depend on online/moment-by-moment processing while learners perform the task and not on the offline/PTP (p. 2).

With respect to the third research question, as the results obtained in Section 4 illustrated, the findings suggested that there is an interaction effect between the two independent variables. That is to say, PTP appeared to have significant effect in high proficiency students' accuracy of production. When planning time was analysed, both high and low language students with 10 minutes planning time produced higher means for accurate than those high and low language students with 0 minutes planning time.

The Philp, Oliver and Mackey (2006) study and this present study used similar methods and used EFLs as participants. The two studies compared the impact of planning time (0 and 10 minutes) on the language interactions of two groups of EFLs, ages 18–24. Both the studies used task-based activities to measure the effect of planning time on EFLs accuracy, Philp and colleagues compared the language performance of two different age groups (ages 5–7 and ages 11–12) while the present study compared different language levels (high and low) for similar ages (ages 18–24).

Philp and colleagues (2006) also reported that there were no significant gains in accuracy for those students with planning time. Accuracy was measured by the percentage of target-like c-units. Errors included articles, plurals and question forms and were generally similar to the present study. Errors in this study tended to occur in verb tense, incorrect or missing pronouns, articles, prepositions, incorrect construction of subordinate clauses and commands and non-target like language structure. In contrast to the Philp et al. (2006) study, high language students in this study produced significantly more accurate productions than low language students, regardless of planning time. However, unlike the results for high level students, planning time for low language students did not result in significantly higher means for accuracy. One explanation for this difference for low language students is provided by Philp and colleagues, who stated that planning did not focus learners' attention on form but rather on what they would say during the task (fluency).



The current study aimed to investigate the effects of proficiency levels and planning time on accuracy of EFLs oral task performance.

The findings can be considered as a partial support to Skehan (1998), who claimed that trade-off effects are likely to occur between different aspects of language production as a result of a human's limited attentional resources (i.e., learners are not able to pay a balanced attention to different aspects of language simultaneously). At the same time, these findings can be at odds with Robinson's (2001) Cognition Model, in which he claimed attentional resources are not limited and learners like native speakers have the capacity to attend to more than one aspect of language simultaneously. Planning for TBLT can happen at different levels, such as linguistic elements plan, sentences plan and structure plan. Ellis distinguishes between four different types of planning. Ellis and Yuan (2003) provided evidence that 'planning' has positive effects on the learners' performance in both written and oral production. A variety of planning research and how they influence the language produced by learners regarding accuracy have been the main focus of studies by many researchers to make the significance of planning in the field of SLA understood.

The findings of this study demonstrated that pre-task planning culminated in the best results by EFL learners' proficiency levels accuracy in speaking. Additionally, it was found out that the pre-task planning group outperformed the control group. Generally speaking, the findings of this study yield support for the idea that providing the learners with some time before the actual task performance in high proficiency learners in order to achieve better results is indisputable.

### Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I offer my gratitude to my dear supervisor, Dr. Khorasani, who has supported me with his patience, knowledge, cooperation, assistance, comments and suggestions, without which I would not be able to write my thesis and also continue my study. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Sadegh Oghli, my honourable professor, whose help, support and useful comments during the writing of this thesis enabled me to include several vital points.

### References

- Alipour, S. & Birjandi, P. (2010). Comparing the effect of individual and group pre-task planning on EFL learners' accuracy and complexity in speaking. *Journal of English Language Studies*, 1(4), 1–22.
- Bygate, M. & Samuda, V. (2005). Integrative planning through the use of task repetition. In R. Ellis, (Ed.), *Planning and task performance in a second language*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Capretz, K., Ricker, B. & Sasak, A. (2003). Improving organizational skills through the use of graphic organizers. US: Eric.
- Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language teaching and learning*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2005). Planning and task-based performance: Theory and research. In R. Ellis, (Ed.), *Planning and task performance in a second language*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Ellis, R. & Yuan, F. (2004). The effects of planning on fluency, complexity, and accuracy in second language narrative writing. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 26, 59–84.
- Foster, P. & Skehan, P. (1996). The influence of planning and task type on second language performance. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18, 299–323.
- Kawauchi, C. (2005). The effects of strategic planning on the oral narratives of learners with low and high intermediate L2 proficiency. In R. Ellis (Ed.), *Planning and task performance in a second language* (pp. 143–164). Kurume, Japan: Kurume University.

Alireza, K. & Reza, K. (2017). The effects of planning time and proficiency level on accuracy of oral task performance. *Global Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 7(4), 155-168.

Mukhopadhyay, L. (2014). Using evaluation criteria to plan writing performance: A study of preservice teachers of English. In G. Pickering & P. Gunashekar (Eds.), *Innovation in English Language teacher education* (pp. 116–124). New Delhi, India: British Council.

Ortega, L. (1999). Planning and focus on form in L2 oral performance. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 21, 109–148.

Philp, J. Oliver, R. & Mackey, A. (2006). The impact of planning time on children's task-based interactions. *System*, 34, 547–565.

Richards, J. C. (2005). *New Interchange series* (3rd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University.

Robinson, P. (2001). Task complexity, task difficulty, and task production: Exploring interactions in a componential framework. *Applied Linguistics*, 22, 27–57.

Robinson, P. (Ed.). (2001). *Cognition and second language instruction*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University.

Sangarunm, J. (2001). The effects of pre-task planning on foreign language performance (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis). University of Toronto, Canada.

Sangarun, J. (2005). The effects of focusing on meaning and form in strategic planning. In R. Ellis (Ed.), *Planning and task performance in a second language*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Schmidt, R. (2001). Attention. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University.

Skehan, P. (1996a). A framework for implementation of task-based instruction. *Applied Linguistics*, 17, 38–62.

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Silva, T. & Matsuda, P. K. (2002). Writing. In N. Schmitt (Ed.), *An introduction to applied linguistics* (pp. 251–266). London, UK: Edward Arnold.

Wendel, J. N. (1997). *Planning and second-language narrative production* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis). Philadelphia, USA: Temple University.

## Appendix A

# Placement Test

## Grammar and Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with the correct answers.

- 1 My sister \_\_\_\_\_ very tired today.  
A be B am C is D are
- 2 His \_\_\_\_\_ is a famous actress.  
A aunt B uncle C grandfather D son
- 3 I'd like to be a \_\_\_\_\_ and work in a hospital.  
A lawyer B nurse C writer D pilot
- 4 We \_\_\_\_\_ like rap music.  
A doesn't B isn't C aren't D don't
- 5 There \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of water on the floor. What happened?  
A are B is C be D am
- 6 He \_\_\_\_\_ TV at the moment.  
A watches B is watching C watched D has watching
- 7 Helen is very \_\_\_\_\_. She doesn't go out a lot.  
A bored B confident C angry D shy
- 8 Did you \_\_\_\_\_ to the beach yesterday?  
A went B were C go D goed
- 9 Have you got \_\_\_\_\_ orange juice? I'm thirsty.  
A some B a C any D the
- 10 Let's go into \_\_\_\_\_ garden. It's sunny outside.  
A a B any C – D the
- 11 He's \_\_\_\_\_ for the next train.  
A looking B waiting C listening D paying
- 12 Mark \_\_\_\_\_ his car last week.  
A cleaned B did clean C has cleaned D is cleaning
- 13 I bought some lovely red \_\_\_\_\_ today.  
A cabbages B cucumbers C bananas D apples
- 14 Which bus \_\_\_\_\_ for when I saw you this morning?  
A did you wait B had you waited  
C were you waiting D have you waited
- 15 Where \_\_\_\_\_ you like to go tonight?  
A do B would C are D can
- 16 That's the \_\_\_\_\_ film I've ever seen!  
A worse B worst C baddest D most bad
- 17 My dad \_\_\_\_\_ his car yet.  
A hasn't sold B didn't sell C doesn't sell D wasn't sold
- 18 I've been a doctor \_\_\_\_\_ fifteen years.  
A since B for C until D by
- 19 Look at the sky. It \_\_\_\_\_ rain.  
A will B can C is going to D does
- 20 If I \_\_\_\_\_ this homework, the teacher will be angry!  
A am not finishing B won't finish  
C don't finish D didn't finished
- 21 This book is even \_\_\_\_\_ than the last one!  
A most boring B boringer C more boring D far boring
- 22 I'll meet you \_\_\_\_\_ I finish work.  
A if B when C as D so
- 23 We're getting married \_\_\_\_\_ March.  
A in B on C at D by
- 24 If you \_\_\_\_\_ steak for a long time, it goes hard.  
A cook B are cooking C have cooked D cooked
- 25 I \_\_\_\_\_ you outside the cinema, OK?  
A 'll see B am going to see C am seeing D see
- 26 I \_\_\_\_\_ not be home this evening. Phone me on my mobile.  
A can B could C may D should

## Placement Test

- 27 The criminal \_\_\_\_\_ outside the hotel last night.  
A was caught B has been caught  
C is caught D caught
- 28 He asked me if I \_\_\_\_\_ a lift home.  
A wanted B want C was wanting  
D had wanted
- 29 If I \_\_\_\_\_ older, I'd be able to vote in elections.  
A had B am C were D have
- 30 You \_\_\_\_\_ go to the supermarket this afternoon. I've already been.  
A mustn't B can't C needn't D won't
- 31 Kathy drives \_\_\_\_\_ than her sister.  
A more carefully B more careful C carefully  
D most carefully
- 32 The \_\_\_\_\_ near our village is beautiful.  
A country B woods C view D countryside
- 33 I'm \_\_\_\_\_ I can't help you with that.  
A apologise B afraid C regret D sad
- 34 It was really \_\_\_\_\_ this morning. I couldn't see anything on the roads.  
A cloudy B sunny C icy D foggy
- 35 Can you look \_\_\_\_\_ my dog while I'm away?  
A for B at C to D after
- 36 If I'd started the work earlier I \_\_\_\_\_ it by now.  
A would finish B had finished C will finish  
D would have finished
- 37 This time next year I \_\_\_\_\_ in Madrid.  
A am working B will work C will be working  
D work
- 38 I wish he \_\_\_\_\_ in front of our gate. It's very annoying.  
A won't park B wouldn't park  
C doesn't park D can't park
- 39 He said he'd seen her the \_\_\_\_\_ night.  
A last B before C previous D earlier
- 40 I \_\_\_\_\_ agreed to go out. I haven't got any money!  
A mustn't have B shouldn't have  
C couldn't have D wouldn't have
- 41 It was good \_\_\_\_\_ about her recovery, wasn't it?  
A information B words C news D reports
- 42 I \_\_\_\_\_ the report by 5.00 p.m. You can have it then.  
A have finished B will have finished  
C finish D am finishing
- 43 Because of the snow the teachers \_\_\_\_\_ all the students to go home early.  
A said B made C told D demanded
- 44 Thanks for the meal! It was \_\_\_\_\_.  
A delighted B delicious C disgusting  
D distasteful
- 45 Look! Our head teacher \_\_\_\_\_ on TV right now!  
A is being interviewed B is been interviewed  
C is interviewing D is interviewed
- 46 It's \_\_\_\_\_ to drive a car over 115 km/h in the UK.  
A unlegal B illegal C dislegal D legless
- 47 There's a lot of rubbish in the garden I need to get \_\_\_\_\_ of.  
A lost B rid C cleared D taken
- 48 I'm afraid it's time we \_\_\_\_\_.  
A leave B must leave C are leaving D left
- 49 He wondered what \_\_\_\_\_.  
A is the time? B the time was  
C was the time D is the time?
- 50 They \_\_\_\_\_ our salaries by 5%.  
A rose B made up C raised D lifted

Mark  /50

# Placement Test

## Reading

Read the text.

### Saucy dragons

Levi Roots, a reggae singer from Jamaica, has a big smile on his face these days. In case you missed it, Levi recently appeared on the famous reality show for people with business ideas, *Dragon's Den*. The participants have to persuade the team of business experts that their ideas are excellent and hope that two or more of the team will decide to invest money in their business idea.

Levi did just that!

The singer, who has been a successful music artist for several years, also sells something he calls 'Reggae, reggae sauce'. It is made using special secret ingredients from his grandmother and is a hot Jamaican sauce that is eaten with meat. Until now it has only been possible to buy the sauce from Levi's website or once a year at the famous Notting Hill carnival. But now, thanks to the TV programme, that is all going to change!

Levi presented his business idea to the team and started with a catchy reggae song about the sauce to make them sit up and listen. He certainly got their attention! He then described his plans for the sauce. This part of his presentation didn't go so well. He made mistakes with his figures, saying that he already had an order for the sauce of 2 and a half million when in fact he meant 2 and a half thousand! But, the team were still interested and amazingly, two of the team offered to give £50,000 to the plan in exchange for 40% of the company. Mr Roots was ecstatic!

Levi is even happier today. It seems that two of the biggest supermarket chains in the UK are interested in having the sauce on their shelves. In addition to this, Levi is recording the 'Reggae, reggae sauce' song and we will soon be able to buy or download this. 'It's all about putting music into food,' says Levi with a big, big smile on his face! And music and food will probably make him a very rich man indeed!

## 1 Are the sentences true or false?

- 1 At the moment Levi isn't very happy. \_\_\_\_
- 2 Levi sells something we can eat. \_\_\_\_
- 3 His song is a big success. \_\_\_\_
- 4 He sang his song on TV. \_\_\_\_
- 5 Some supermarkets want to sell his product. \_\_\_\_

## 2 Choose the best answers.

- 1 *Dragon's Den* is a show about  
A cooking.  
B new business ideas.  
C famous people.
- 2 To make the sauce  
A you have to go to Notting Hill.  
B you have to ask a member of Levi's family.  
C you need a good recipe book.
- 3 When Levi presented his idea  
A he finished with a song.  
B two and a half million people were watching.  
C he talked about the wrong figures.
- 4 Some people on the team  
A own supermarkets.  
B didn't like the taste.  
C bought part of Levi's company.
- 5 Today Levi  
A is a millionaire.  
B has two things he can profit from.  
C prefers music to food.

Mark  /10

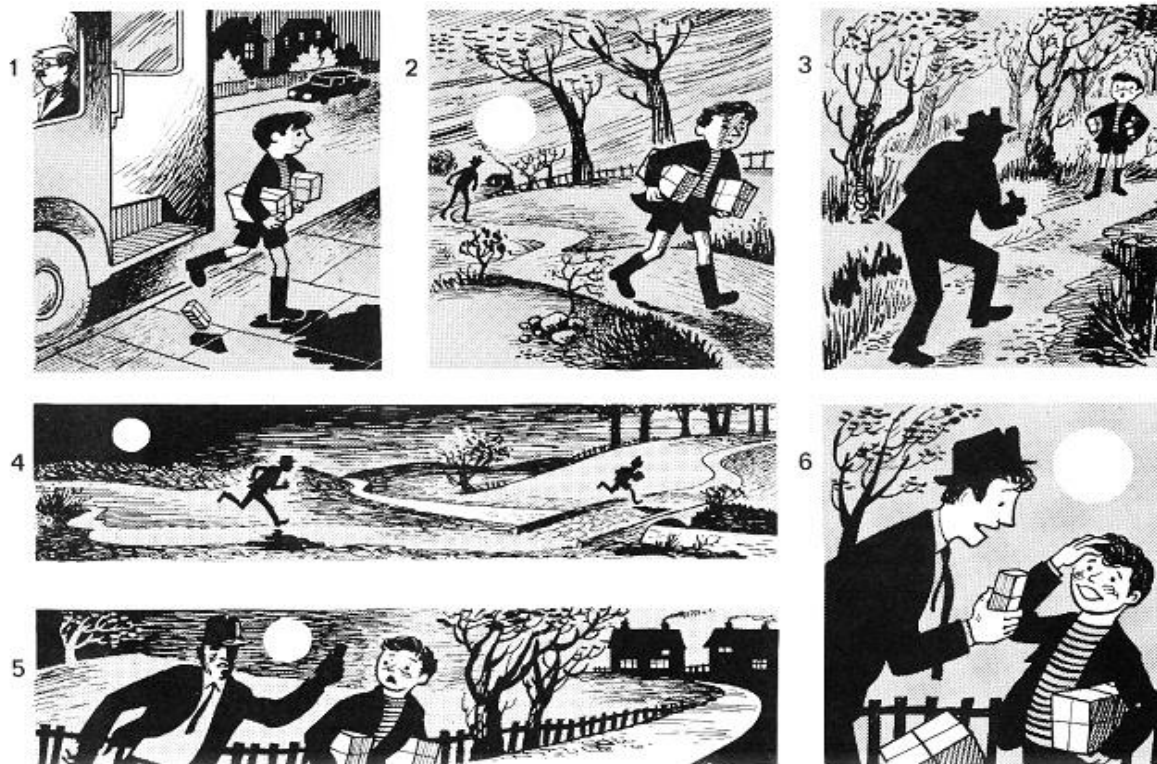
## Writing

Imagine you have just returned from a two-week holiday. Write an e-mail to your friend telling him/her about the holiday. Include information about the journey, where you stayed, what you did and the people you met.

Mark  /10

TOTAL  /70

### Appendix B: Picture adopted from Heaton (1975)



#### No-planning

The set of six pictures you have seen tell us a story. Please produce a story in English based on the pictures for people who have never seen the pictures and are interested in knowing as much details as possible. You have 2 minute to look through the pictures.

#### Pre-task Planning

The set of six pictures you have seen tell us a story. Please produce a story in English based on the pictures for people who have never seen the pictures and are interested in knowing as much details as possible. Before you begin producing, you will be given 10 minutes to prepare for your story. You are given a sheet of paper and pencil to help you planning. Use it to produce notes, but please do not say a complete sentence in Persian or English. When you begin saying the story, the sheet of paper will be taken away. During the 10 minute time, try to think of the vocabulary and grammar you may use and the sequence of the events in the story and then. You will be given 10 minutes to complete saying the story. In addition, you are required to say at least 200 words during this period of time. Please begin your story with a sentence like *"This evening, John or A Boy*