

Task Repetition as a Pedagogical Option for the Classroom Teacher.

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要旨

本稿では言語教育の現場において、教授法として「タスク活動の反復」を採用する利点を概観する。他のタイプのタスク活動の計画と同様、タスク活動の反復が証明していることは、学習者がタスク活動を繰り返すことによって、学習者が処理能力を自由に使えるようになるということである。学習者は発話を向上させるために、タスク活動のそれぞれの段階でより多く注意を向けることができる。本稿ではタスク活動の反復についての発展的な研究である Bygate (1996,2001)、および Bygate and Samuda (2006)を概観する。また、本学の教養教育の英語教育プログラムで現在行われている活動からそれらの研究を補助する調査結果を提示する。

Introduction

Task repetition as a concept is not easily amenable to a clear definition or description like other types of task planning. While the research on task repetition is minimal (Ellis 1987; Yule et al. 1992; Bygate 1996; Gass et al. 1999; Lynch and Maclean 2000, 2001; Bygate 2001; Nemeth and Kormos 2001; Bygate and Samuda 2005; Essig 2005; Pinter 2005), its variation in purpose from research-based to pedagogical, and such variables as task type and task conditions, make it extremely difficult to establish a clear definition. The research of Bygate (1996, 2001) and Bygate and Samuda (2005) are the first attempts to pedagogically conceptualise task repetition. This paper will review this research and provide a supporting case example from an ongoing study that is occurring at Osaka Shoin Women's University.

Levelt's Language-Processing Model

According to Levelt's (1989) language-processing model, there are three overlapping and simultaneous processes (conceptualisation, formulation, articulation) involved in language production, which create problems for learners who have not attained a level of proficiency that makes these processes automatic (see Moser 2007). In relation to conceptualisation, Bygate (2001) suggests that task repetition can be beneficial in two ways. First, a repeat performance allows for an easier retrieval to working memory of previous content. Second, elements of input that may have been lost in working memory during the initial task have the chance to be noticed and recalled, since a second or third repetition 'releases capacity' to attend to a wider amount of input. There are also a number of surmised benefits for formulation. Prior

connections between conceptual structure and linguistic structure are recalled faster, which again translates into increased capacity during the second task. This extra capacity allows for more qualitative monitoring and improved lexical-grammatical searches – all done at a faster rate than during the first task. Bygate and Samuda argue that task repetition influences formulation by facilitating an integration of knowledge and performance that results in better content, speedier lexical-grammatical accessing, more appropriate lexical-grammatical selection and, finally, better grammatical accuracy. In the case of articulation, Bygate and Samuda (2005) see minimal benefits, since previous phonetic plans are stored in the articulatory buffer and are heavily automated. In the classroom, task repetition proceeds sequentially, with the first task as the initial stage, when conceptualisation, formulation, and articulation undergo a ‘booting-up’, and are then stored in the working memory ready for easy access during the repeating of the task. In the second performance, the learner is able to rely on this integration of knowledge and performance to improve his/her immediate production, which in turn aids interlanguage development. It is for this reason that Bygate and Samuda (2005) refer to task repetition as *integrative planning*.

Task Repetition Research

Bygate (1996) was the first to look at task repetition from a cognitive-processing perspective for pedagogical implications. His initial questions centred on, first, what learners do during unguided tasks and, second, how learners might benefit from task repetition. To find this out, he used a narrative-retelling task. In Bygate (1996), one subject watched a short cartoon video and then immediately retold it. The same process was repeated three days later without the subject knowing he/she would be retelling the same narrative. The results showed improvements in accuracy and fluency measures. Lexical selection, lexical collocates, grammatical-item selection and self-correction all improved. For example, in the case of verb forms, three changes were improved upon in the second retelling. Overall, the use of the simple past tense increased, including an increase in the use of regular past forms. There was also a drop in the overused rote-learned *be* past in favour of more lexical verbs – from five in the first, to one in the second, retelling.

In the follow-up to the previous research, Bygate (2001) over a ten-week period had two different task-type experimental groups in five separate sessions repeat a previous task, and do a new task. In the final session, the tasks from the first week were repeated and accompanied by two new tasks from each task type. Bygate again sought to find out whether or not specific task repetition (repeating a prior task) would lead to improvements in fluency, accuracy and complexity. Despite a ten-week interval, both specific task-type repetitions showed significant effects on fluency and complexity, but no effect for accuracy. Bygate attributes the poor accuracy results on conservative error measurements. In concluding his study Bygate argues that despite occurring ten weeks earlier, a ‘highly contextualized cognitive rehearsal’ was sufficient to free up processing capacity for a second performance. The results of both studies have suggested that task repetition may be an effective way to facilitate learner interlanguage

growth.

In Bygate's study (2001), complexity results showed the greatest significance. Bygate and Samuda (2005), using the same data from the previous study, investigated the amount of *framing* (a feature of complexity) that was actualised in task repetition. Specifically, they were interested in 'differences in the elaboration' between two narrative tasks, namely, absences of elaboration in one or the other. For both sets of data, Bygate's concept of *framing* (1999) was employed. According to Bygate and Samuda (2005: 47), framing originates with the speaker and refers to 'any language additional to the narrative content'. Framing can be personal asides, explanations, backgrounding, evaluations, predictions, criticisms, summaries and so forth.

The research design involved the data from a first narrative task being compared with that from the same narrative task ten weeks later. A quantitative analysis of 14 learners' production was accompanied by three individual learner case studies. Lexical-grammatical gains and change in information content were also measured to ensure that increases in framing were not the result of natural acquisition gains over a ten-week period. Three groups emerged. The first group, consisting of five learners, showed fewer instances of lexical-grammatical features in the second performance. However, two students in this group showed gains in either framing or information content, while the remaining three gained in both framing and information content. In the second group, students produced lexical-grammatical gains. Four students gained distinctive lexical-grammatical features, but they also made comparatively greater gains in framing and information content. In the same group, three students' gains in lexical-grammatical features were the same as the aggregate gains for framing and information content. The third group involved two students, who showed significant gains in lexical-grammatical features, but relatively low gains in framing and information content. These two students were the only cases where changes in their performance could not be partially attributed to framing. Overall, based on these results, Bygate and Samuda concluded that the gains in framing were the result of task repetition.

In the case studies three students' language was qualitatively analysed to verify further whether or not framing was the result of general language knowledge gains, or the result of freed-up processing capacity. In the first case study, distinct framing occurred twice in the first task, and eight times in the second. Furthermore, the first task consisted of 105 words (including repetitions), while the second task consisted of 89 words (also including repetitions). Bygate and Samuda concluded that the second task became 'more schematized' or, in the words of Essig (2005), witnessed a 'tightening up' of performance. According to Bygate and Samuda (2005: 56), this process occurs when 'discrete events which form the substance of the narrations are woven together into a rather more unified whole'. This improvement in coherence and conciseness was also demonstrated in the studies of Lynch and Maclean (2000, 2001).

Current Task Repetition Research at Osaka Shoin Gakuen

Ongoing research at Osaka Shoin Women’s University is also verifying some of the positive findings related to task repetition use in the classroom. In an exploratory study where learners were required to repeat the same task three times in one lesson it was found that many of the more proficient learners used the repetition to improve on performance. Below is an example of how one student during an open-ended pair work discussion task on the subject of crime took advantage of task repetition to improve her performance.

The first evidence of the learner utilizing task repetition appears in the first two performances. While she did not nominate the initial topic *Japan’s safety*, she did immediately for her first turn introduce the related topic of children’s safety in Japanese society. This topic sets the conversation agenda for most of the first performance for both speakers, and it comprises 15 of her 21 turns with the utterance below being her nominating utterance.

First repetition

Recently I’m not feel safe especially (for children) a children because (there there is) there are many crimes in school or on the street in many children will be the crimes so mmm (2.09) especially for children it is not safe.

In the second repetition she nominates the theme on Japan’s safety in her fourth turn, and when her partner chooses not to talk on it, she then repeats what she said in the first performance.

Second repetition

I think that it it (repeats to clarify it is Japan) Japan is not (2.44) safe especially for children recently because there are many crimes involving children childrens (are) (2.95) are often involved in the crime so um it is not safe.

A basic comparison of the two extracts reveals that overall the second performance took

Measure	First time	Second time
Seconds	38	32
Word total	40	33
Clauses	4	5
Dysfluencies	5	1

less time despite more pausing, was more concise, and contained fewer errors.

In the first performance, of the four clauses only one is error free, while in the second extract four of the five clauses are error free with the one clause having two errors. Qualitatively, the second performance contains a number of improvements that would relate to the idea of ‘tightening up’. In the first performance, the learner says that she does not feel safe, but by listening to what follows and the theme of the topic, what she really wanted to say is that Japan is not safe. In the second performance she states that Japan is not safe, and introduces *I think* as a main clause to produce a *that- clause combination* that improves the quality of her second utterance in relation to her first attempt.

Below is another example of the same learner improving from the first to the second performance. There are portions of the utterances below that are rehearsal-like and there are parts that are varied, but overall the basic theme or content is the same. Both utterances contained a narrative sequence of the learner: first, stating that she was involved in a groping incident; second, that she lives in Tokyo; third, the trains are crowded with many men.

First Repetition

I was involved in maybe three times yes because (I I was I was lived) I lived in a (the the 3.52 nani) very crowded town near the Tokyo (bec) so (in a 2.79 in a) in the evening there're very very many (2.83) ah (man) men on the train and very crowded (on the train) in the train // And (I) I (every) every Friday (I have) I have to (ride the ride in that time) ride on the train in that time and I was involved in the chikan crime

Second Repetition

I was involved in a chikan three times maybe at my hometown my hometown (in) is in (2.13) (in) a city so (1.85) there are many people and many (people take train ah) people take train so (2.66) (in) especially in the early morning and (1.34) in the evening there are many many (man) men on the train and very crowded and 1.32 in the crowded train there are many chikan crime there so I was involved.

The basic data shows that there is no real difference in relation to total time, the total amount of words, and the number of clauses (first time: 102 seconds, 85 total words, 27 dysfluent words, 7 clauses; second time: 102 seconds, 70 total words, 8 dysfluent words, 8 clauses). The big difference is in the number of dysfluent words (false starts, repetitions, reformulations). In addition in the first performance none of the seven clauses were error free while in the second performance three of the eight were error free. In the first performance the bulk of dysfluent words involve clauses that are absent in the second performance. These absences appeared to cause trouble for the learner, but nonetheless their absence in the second is not the result of an avoidance strategy, but arguably better made processing decisions afforded by freed up processing capacity. In the first part of conversation the learner tried to articulate that while she is

currently living in Osaka her groping experiences occurred in home city of Tokyo. She resolves this problem successfully by opting for *at my hometown* and *my hometown (in) is in*. In the first performance the learner also has problems explaining that she rides the train at that the busiest times of the day; in the second performance she removes both. Neither pieces of information are central to her narrative, by eliminating them she improves the flow and of her performance while still adding to the overall quality of the content.

In addition to improving the lexico-grammatical features of her performance from one repetition to the next, the learner in this study, also expanded on the detail of her content. In the first and second conversation she talks in general terms about her train experience. In the third conversation with a different partner the learner in part to her partners interest and scaffolding provided a richer or more specific account of her groping experience on the train.

Learner: In a crowded train we can't move

Partner: Yeah

Learner: So I can't (laughs) runaway home we (leave leave) leave the place

Partner: We are standing

Learner: So (we) we have to tolerate it (laughs) to the next stop

Partner: Yeah so you couldn't say anything like help or . . . ?

Learner: Ah (I couldn't say) and I couldn't say ask him to stop I of course so (I) I was freeze

Partner: yeah and did you see him?

Learner: (I) I couldn't see him because he stand (back) back of my backside of me I can't (but) (but) I was very scared

While it is a comparatively short exchange what is encouraging about the third performance is that the learner continues to push her language performance. Specifically, she tries to provide a spatial and emotive account of a specific incident.

Learner Self-Structuring

Finally, what is also of interest is how the learner self-structured her performance over the three repetitions. The task was an opened-ended conversation task done each time with a different interlocutor. What this means is that in such task situations learners are free to pursue any topic they choose. Learners are not required to repeat what they discussed in the previous repetition, and could at each repetition pursue 'new' topics with their new partner. What was discovered, as is the case with the learner in this paper, is that more proficient learners rather than exploring a variety of different topics at each repetition chose to commit to one or two topics and consciously focused their attention on improving elements of their

production as discussed above. It was wrongly assumed that less proficient students would commit to a ‘conversation routine’ because of limited interlanguage, and that the more proficient learners would be more varied in their topics. In case of the learner in this paper her main topic was groping on the train and it spanned all three performances and comprised the largest single topic over all her three performances. Only in the first performance did it rank slightly behind another topic. At its peak in the second repetition it comprised 70% of her 6.9 minutes of talking time and 67% of her 426 total words.

Summary

The learner’s performance that was reported in this paper confirms some of the findings of Bygate’s and Bygate and Samuda’s studies into task repetition and performance. In particular this learner made better lexico-grammatical selections, improved basic accuracy, and made her production more fluent as evidenced in the decrease in dysfluencies from the first to the third performance. In the second performance, but specifically in the third repetition, the learner pushed her language output by increasing the quality of information content by ‘going into details’. This pushing of output, which translates into potentially greater language complexity, is considered a key catalyst in language development. All of these changes are arguably the result of freed up processing capacity that resulted from having the opportunity to engage in repeated performances of the same task. However, it needs to be acknowledged that this learner was chosen specifically because she is a clear example of a learner taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by task repetition. Her proficiency level and her willingness to self-structure her task performance were key determinants of her success. In the case of lesser-motivated and less proficient learners the data is less positive and the next step in task repetition research is to look for pedagogical options for teachers to maximize the benefits of task repetition for such learners.

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