

The Effect of Task Planning and Gender on Writing Fluency: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students at AMU

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Abstract

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has widely provided learners with some opportunities to learn spoken and written language through learning activities in the major of English Language Teaching (ELT). It offers the student an opportunity to be taught more naturally. In the recent years, there is a massive growth of interest in examining differential effects of task planning conditions on fluency, accuracy and complexity in English as a second language (ESL) context but, the present study explored the impacts of task planning and gender on ESL learners' written performance in terms of fluency. To this end, five-hundred undergraduate English Language Learners, both male and female (within the age range of 18-24) have been recruited from Aligarh Muslim University. Two tasks were chosen as instruments for data collection. One is a narrative task (as a pre-task for five-hundred) and the other is an argumentative essay (for two-hundred one) to measure the fluency of the participants' written production, under different planning conditions (pre-task planning, within-task planning, and no planning). One-way MANOVA was employed as the statistical means of analysis. The findings revealed a significant effect of task planning and gender under different planning conditions in words per minute (the number of words produced by the participants divided by the time they spent on each assignment) and syllables per minute (The number of syllables that the participants produced divided by the minutes they spent on production) regarding fluency.

Keywords- *Task-Based Language Teaching, Task planning, Gender, Fluency*

1. Introduction

As a logical development of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the 1980s witnessed the emergence of the Task-Based Approach (TBA) to language teaching, which was later also came to be known as Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) or Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL). Richards & Rodgers (2007) consider TBA as the core unit of instruction and planning in language teaching. TBA or TBLT curriculum involves “an integrated set of processes involving, among other things, the specification of both what and how” (Nunan, 1989, p. 1). Willis (1996) perceived it from learners’ point of view and supported the idea that TBLL is a learner-centered approach, in which the learners learn the target language through self-motivated, task-based, and project-based group investigations. In TBLL, language learning turns into “a process that involves opportunities for learners to contribute in communication, where making meaning is primary” (Skehan, 1996, p. 38). So, TBLL uses interactive tasks that need meaningful communication and interaction among learners (Nunan, 2004).

Teachers accepted this TBA for a variety of reasons. Some moved to the task-based syllabus in an attempt to make the language in the classroom truly communicative, rather than the pseudo-communication that outcomes from classroom activities with no direct connection to real-life situations. Others, like Prabhu in the Bangalore Project, thought that tasks were a way of tapping into learners' natural mechanisms for Second Language Acquisition (SLA), and were not concerned with real-life communication (Leaver & Willis, 2004).

These studies lend general support to the claim that providing adult language learners with the opportunity to plan before or during a task allows them to produce a discourse of higher quality in the Second Language (L2). These studies draw on (a) *information processing theory*, which claims that human mind possesses a limited processing capacity and, as a result, inhibits a person to attend to all aspects of a task fully (Anderson, 1998), (b) *Levelt's (1989) model of speech production*, which maintains that speech production is the result of conceptualization of a message, formulation of its language representation, and language articulation, (c), Skehan's (1998) *trade-off hypothesis*, according to which attending to some aspect of language will hinder attending to other aspects of it, and, finally, (d) Robinson's (2001, 2007) *Cognition Hypothesis* which maintains that greater complexity and accuracy in language could be caused by greater task complexity and that the joint increase in complexity and accuracy in language is not constrained by the processing and attentional limitations.

As for this latter distinction, one may suggest that on one hand, the findings of within-task planning studies support Trade-off Hypothesis in that they all point to the trade-off between form (complexity & accuracy) and meaning (fluency) but, on the other hand, they also confirm one of the

tenets of Cognition Hypothesis, namely the joint enhancement of complexity and accuracy. However, this interpretation does not seem to be entirely correct. For, as it was noted above, Trade-off Hypothesis posits that, normally, complexity and accuracy cannot increase hand in hand and that there is a tension between these two areas. Also, according to Cognition Hypothesis the increased complexity and accuracy are associated with a higher degree of task complexity, but providing within-task planning opportunity could not be thought of as contributing to the complexity of a task.

To date, some of the studies on pre-task and within-task planning have investigated the impact of planning on L2 learners' oral production and reported their positive effects on their task performance. Nevertheless, few studies have been conducted on writing, and there is no clear evidence demonstrating that pre-task and within-task planning promote L2 learners' written production in the ways that many researchers have reported for L2 speaking.

1.1 Task-Based Language Teaching

Richards & Rodgers (2001) considered TBLT as an approach based on the utilisation of tasks as the essential units of planning in the class which has a significant part in language teaching. Many researchers have used the task in their courses and methodologies and they have long been part of English Language Teaching (ELT). Nevertheless, TBLT offers an entirely different rationale for the implementation of tasks in language teaching. TBLT also presents some important criteria for devising, selecting and sequencing tasks in the classroom instruction that are designed for the teachers. Here tasks are used as the main output units in education, practice and even in the evaluation. Moreover, task-based instruction has a very stronger foundation in theory and research such as the concept of psychological reality in psycholinguistic theories and cognitive approach to language teaching.

TBLT is a realisation of communicative language teaching. It is the strong version of CLT, as tasks provide the foundation for an entire language program (Ellis, 2004). Planning is one of the criteria of task condition factors that impacts L2 production and has been of both theoretical importance to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers and practical significance to language teachers (Ellis, 2005). Foster & Skehan (1999) believe that some pre-mid- and post-task activities can be used to help language learner pay equal attention to both forms and meaning simultaneously and improve the quality of learner language.

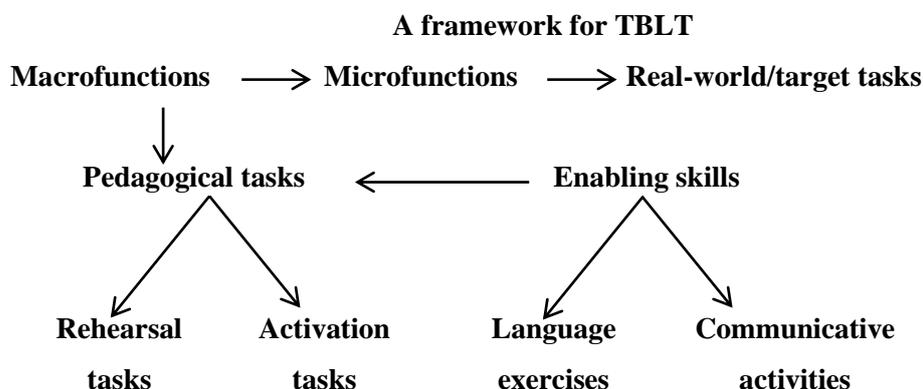


Figure 1: Nunan, D. (2004). TBLT. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1.2 Task Planning

A task is defined as a goal-oriented activity including a meaningful, real-world process of language use, and engages four language skills as well as cognitive processes. The main objective in researching language tasks has been to identify a set of task features based on the assumption that learner performance varies according to task characteristics (Ellis, 2003).

Ellis (2005b) distinct two principal types of task-based planning, these two kinds of the task are, pre-task, or off-line planning (i.e. the planning that occurs before learners perform a task) and, online planning or within-task planning (i.e. the planning that happens online while learners are performing a task). These are distinguished regarding when the planning takes place- either before the task is performed or during its performance.

Pre-task planning takes place before task performance. Ellis (2005) points out that pre-task activities are different from pre-task planning, such as brainstorming, regarding access to the task materials. During the pre-task activities, learners do not have access to the resources that they are going to use to do the task, while during pre-task planning, learners receive the actual materials for the task. He further divided Pre-task planning into strategic planning and rehearsal (i.e. planning what content to express and what language to use however without the opportunity to rehearse the complete task).

1.3 Gender

FAO defined gender as the relationships between women and men, both perceptual and material. It is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is made socially. It is an essential organizing principle of societies, and often runs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution (FAO, 1997). In spite of this definition, gender is often misinterpreted as being the promotion of women only. Though, as we see from the FAO definition, gender issues emphasis on women and on the connection between men and

women, their roles, interests and needs, access to and control over resources, division of labour. Gender relations affect family well-being, household security, planning, production and many other aspects of life (Bravo-Baumann, 2000).

The Gender approach is different from that it emphasizes on women and men and not on women in isolation. A gender approach highlights the:

- Differences between women's and men's interest even within the same household and how these interact are expressed.
- The conventions and hierarchies which determine women's and men's position in the family, community and society at large, whereby women are usually dominated by men
- Differences among women and among men, based on age, wealth, ethnic background and other factors
- The way gender roles and relations change, often quite rapidly, as a result of social, economic and technological trends (Wijk and Francis, 1999).

1.4 Fluency

Fluency, according to Segalowitz (2007), could be conceived of as having two key aspects: one aspect is *access fluidity*, which deals with learners' ability to link words and expressions to their meaning, and the other aspect is *attention control*, which pertains to the process through which a language user focuses and refocuses attention in real time while the message is being communicated. Fluency is a complex construct and reflects the underlying cognitive mechanisms.

Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (2009) defines fluency as "the fluent speech or writing is smooth and confident, with no mistakes." Or "the state of being able to speak a language very well."

The definition of fluency is 'the capacity to produce speech at a normal rate and without interruption' (Skehan, this issue) or as 'the production of language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation' (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005, p. 139). These two definitions denote some normative reference, usually anticipated to correspond to native speakers' behavior. Fluency is a multidimensional construct, in which sub-dimensions can be recognized, such as repair fluency, breakdown fluency, speed fluency (Tavakoli & Skehan 2005).

According to Lennon (1990) fluency as language proficiency that is particularly characterized by perceptions of ease and smoothness of speech or writing. As cited by Craven (2017) It defined by Skehan (2009) as 'the capacity to produce speech at a normal rate and without interruption' (p.511). Moreover, as 'the production of language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation' by Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005, p. 139).

2. Research Hypothesis

Task planning does not have any significant effect on ESL learners' writing fluency.

Gender does not have any significant effect on ESL learners' writing fluency.

3. Research Question

Does task planning have any significant effect on ESL learners' writing fluency?

Does gender have any significant effect on ESL learners' writing fluency?

4. Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to survey the effect of different types of planning and gender on fluency of ESL learners' writing. The design of the study, the measurement instruments, and also procedures for data collection and data analysis will be described.

4.1 Participants

The three groups mentioned above constitute a cohort of undergraduate English ESL learners randomly recruited from AMU. They are both male and female, ranging in age from 18 to 22 (M=20). A special effort will be made to recognize students who are at the same level of ability in writing. The researcher will administer narrative task writing to 500 participants, as a pre-test, to ensure that all groups belong to the same level of proficiency. The results of the test indicated that only 201 students were homogeneous regarding writing proficiency. Therefore, the other participants will be excluded from the study. Also, an argumentative essay writing task will be performed on the selected participants. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) results indicate any statistically significant differences among the subjects in terms of fluency in their writing.

4.2 Instruments

In this study, two different tasks will be employed: the first task will be a narrative task and the second task will be argumentative writing task to measure fluency, accuracy, and complexity. These measures have all been used in previous studies (e.g., Foster & Skehan 1996; Wendel 1997; Yuan & Ellis 2003). Diverse studies have used different measures to assess accuracy, fluency, and complexity based on Writing Test Scoring Rubric. Ellis (2005, 2008) provides a comprehensive list of such measures. He also points out that using multiple measures to evaluate each aspect of language performance may result in a more valid assessment but that using different measures by various researchers may decrease the comparability of the obtained outcomes. However, he cautioned that in order to avoid redundancy in measurement, each measure must tap a specific facet or sub-construct of the principal construct.

4.3 Fluency Measures

In this study, two aspects of fluency were measured as follows:

a. Rate A: words per minute: The number of words produced by the participants divided by the time they spent on each assignment.

b. Rate B: syllables per minute: The number of syllables they produced divided by the minutes they spent on production.

4.4 Data Collection

For data collection, two different tasks have been employed: the first task was a narrative task (**Thirsty Crow – Story**), the task required participants to write a story based on a set of nine pictures. The second task was an argumentative essay in which the three groups were supposed to compose an argumentative essay under different planning conditions. The topic was: “Some people argue that the **Instagram** has caused a lot of harm to young people. Others argue that the **Instagram** has brought many benefits to young people. What is your opinion? Use specific reasons and examples to support your idea.”

All the participants of three groups were given 30 minutes to perform the tasks. In this phase, the pre-task planner group was asked to perform the task with 10 minutes for strategic planning. The participants of within task, planner group, were asked to perform the same task, but they were not given any time for planning. They had thirty minutes to compose their ideas. However, the no planning group did not have any opportunity to receive instruction.

4.5 Data Analysis:

All writing productions of the various groups under the conditions mentioned above will be segmented, coded, and scored based on the measure chosen for assessing fluency. To ensure that the segmentation and scoring of the transcripts are conducted reliably, the data are segmented, coded, and scored by two independent experts. Then intercoder/interrater reliability coefficient magnitudes will be estimated. SPSS version 22.0 will be used to check the normality of distribution via skewness and kurtosis indices. Finally, each aspect of dependent variable will be submitted to MANOVA followed by Post-Hoc Scheffe test to reveal the difference among the groups.

5. Results of Research Questions

With regards to the first research hypothesis, an argumentative task under different planning conditions (PTP, WTP, NP) was introduced to the participants. In this study, fluency was measured in two different ways: the number of words per minutes (Rate A), the number of syllables per minutes (Rate B). Table 1 summarizes the mean and standard deviation of the argumentative task of ESL learners in terms of fluency in all three groups.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Argumentative Task on Writing Fluency

Task planning condition	Argumentative Essay		
	Mean	Std Deviation	N
Pre-task planning			
Rate A	11.62	3.03	67
Rate B	15.84	4.28	
Within-task planning			
Rate A	8.44	2.23	67
Rate B	12.31	3.46	
No-planning			
Rate A	6.57	1.34	67
Rate B	8.89	1.74	

Descriptive statistics clearly indicates that PTP group in the argumentative task produced more words per minutes (M= 11.62; SD= 3.03) compared to WTP (M= 8.44; SD= 2.23) and NP (M= 6.57; SD= 1.34) groups. In the case of Rate B (syllable per minutes), pre-task planners (M= 15.84; SD= 4.28) outperformed both within- task planners (M= 12.31; SD= 3.46) and no planners (M= 8.89; SD= 1.74).

In addition to descriptive statistics of the data, MANOVA was performed on writing fluency production of participants in argumentative writing among the three groups. In so doing, the scores obtained under different planning conditions (PTP, WTP, NP) were submitted to MANOVA. Therefore, it can be concluded that task planning regarding word production under different planning conditions affected learners writing fluency. Table 2 summarizes results of MANOVA test on writing fluency, followed by *Wilks' Lambda test*:

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Table 2: Results of Multivariate Test of Wilks' Lambda on Writing Fluency

Effect		Value	F	Df1	Df2	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	0.938	1481.139	2.000	197.000	0.0001	0.938
	Wilks' Lambda	0.062	1481.139	2.000	197.000	0.0001	0.938
	Hotelling's Trace	15.037	1481.139	2.000	197.000	0.0001	0.938
	Roy's Largest Root	15.037	1481.139	2.000	197.000	0.0001	0.938
planning	Pillai's Trace	0.616	44.028	4.000	396.000	0.0001	0.308
	Wilks' Lambda	0.457	47.215	4.000	394.000	0.0001	0.324
	Hotelling's Trace	1.030	50.449	4.000	392.000	0.0001	0.340
	Roy's Largest Root	0.841	83.216	2.000	198.000	0.0001	0.457

The above Table shows, MONOVA results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in writing fluency based on task planning conditions , $F(4, 394) = 47.215, P < .0001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.457$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.324$ however, to have a better understanding of the differences among the groups under different task conditions, post-hoc Tukey tests were conducted (Table 3).

Table 3: A Summary of Post Hoc Tukey Tests on Writing Fluency

Dependent Variable	(I) planning	(J) planning	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Rate A	NO Planning	pre-task Planning	-5.04	.39	.0001	-5.83	-4.26
		Within task planning	-1.86	.39	.0001	-2.65	-1.07
	pre-task Planning	NO Planning	5.04	.39	.0001	4.26	5.83
		Within task planning	3.18	.39	.0001	2.39	3.96
	Within task planning	NO Planning	1.86	.39	.0001	1.07	2.65
		pre-task Planning	-3.18	.39	.0001	-3.96	-2.39
Rate B	No Planning	pre-task Planning	-6.94	.57	.0001	-8.08	-5.80

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	Within task planning	-3.41	.57	.0001	-4.55	-2.28
pre-task Planning	NO Planning	6.94	.57	.0001	5.80	8.08
	Within task planning	3.52	.57	.0001	2.38	4.66
Within task planning	task NO Planning	3.41	.57	.0001	2.28	4.55
	pre-task Planning	-3.52	.57	.0001	-4.66	-2.38

The above table indicates MONOVA results revealed a significant difference on how those three groups performed on the argumentative task under different task planning conditions. It shows that mean scores for different planning conditions were statistically significantly different between PTP, WTP and NP. Post hoc analyses also revealed that in the argumentative task; regarding Rate A, the difference between PTP and WTP were significant ($P = .0001$) [significant P-value less than 0.05 is significant and significant P-value greater than 0.05 is not significant]. The difference between PTP and NP group was also significant ($P = .0001$). Regarding Rate B, the difference between PTP, WTP and NP were significant ($P = .0001$) however, it can be concluded that based on argumentative task writing with the mean score (6.94), there were highly significant differences between PTP and NP.

The second research hypothesis focused on the effect of gender on writing fluency. It was hypothesized that there is no significant difference between males and female students with regards to their writing fluency.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Argumentative Task on Writing Fluency of Males and Females

Fluency	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Rate A: Words per minutes	Male	7.92	2.37	90
	Female	9.65	3.40	111
	Total	8.88	3.10	201
Rate B: Syllable per minutes	Male	10.69	3.22	90
	Female	13.69	4.71	111
	Total	12.35	4.36	201

Descriptive statistics clearly indicates that females in the argumentative task (Rate A) produced more words per minutes ($M = 9.65$; $SD = 3.40$) compared to males ($M = 7.92$; $SD = 2.37$). In the case of (Rate B) syllable per minutes, females ($M = 13.69$; $SD = 4.71$) outperformed than males ($M = 10.69$; $SD = 3.22$).

In addition to descriptive statistics of the data, there was a noticeable difference in the mean between males and females. In comparison with males' performance in these two rates, females wrote more fluent writings. According to the results of this study, there was a significant difference between the mean of fluency in argumentative essays written by these two groups. Table 5 summarizes results of MANOVA test on writing fluency between males and females, followed by *Wilks' Lambda test*:

Table 5: Results of the Multivariate Test of Wilks' Lambda on Writing Fluency of Males and Females

Effect		Value	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.898	874.22	2.00	198.00	.0001	.898
	Wilks' Lambda	.102	874.22	2.00	198.00	.0001	.898
	Hotelling's Trace	8.831	874.22	2.00	198.00	.0001	.898
	Roy's Largest Root	8.831	874.22	2.00	198.00	.0001	.898
Gender	Pillai's Trace	.175	21.03	2.00	198.00	.0001	.175
	Wilks' Lambda	.825	21.03	2.00	198.00	.0001	.175
	Hotelling's Trace	.212	21.03	2.00	198.00	.0001	.175
	Roy's Largest Root	.212	21.03	2.00	198.00	.0001	.175

As the above Table indicates, MONOVA results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between males and females on the combined dependent variables, in writing fluency, $F(2, 198) = 21.03, P < .0001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.825$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.175$ however, to have a better understanding of the differences between these two groups under different task conditions, post-hoc Tukey tests were conducted (Table 6).

Table 6. A Summary of Post Hoc Tukey Tests on Writing Fluency of Males and Females

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Rate A	149.018	1	149.018	16.67	.0001	.077
	Rate B	446.701	1	446.701	26.35	.0001	.117
Intercept	Rate A	15367.151	1	15367.151	1719.17	.0001	.896
	Rate B	29575.599	1	29575.599	1745.09	.0001	.898
gender	Rate A	149.018	1	149.018	16.67	.0001	.077
	Rate B	446.701	1	446.701	26.35	.0001	.117

Error	Rate A	1778.797	199	8.939
	Rate B	3372.626	199	16.948
Total	Rate A	17785.897	201	
	Rate B	34494.136	201	
Corrected	Rate A	1927.815	200	
	Rate B	3819.327	200	

The above table indicates that gender has a statistically significant effect on both Rate (A) ($F(1, 199) = 16.67$; $P < .0005$; partial $\eta^2 = .077$) and Rate (B) ($F(1, 199) = 26.35$; $P < .0005$; partial $\eta^2 = .117$). It shows that mean scores for gender were statistically significantly different between males and females. Post hoc analyses also revealed that in the argumentative task; regarding Rate A, the difference between males and females were significant ($P = .0001$). The difference between these two groups was also significant regarding Rate B ($P = .0001$).

6. Discussion and Conclusions:

The first research question was concerned with the effects of task planning on fluency in an argumentative writing. The results of the study indicated that in argumentative essay writing task, the Pre-Task Planning (PTP) group outperformed the Within-Task Planning (WTP) and No Planning (NP) groups in the number of words per minute (Rate A) and the number of syllables per minute (Rate B). So we can conclude that if we provide an opportunity for the students to plan in advance on their writing, it is advantageous in terms of the quality of writing production.

According to Kellogg model of writing (1996), it can be concluded that PTP aids fluency in writing in two principal ways. First, it facilitates process and text planning for content and organization. A writer who has a clear idea of what the text type requires (narrative or argumentative), organizes the information which needs to be conveyed, establishes the setting and describes the characters, identifies the main events, and evaluates them. As a result, he/she will find the pressure on working memory lessened during WTP (Raab, 1992, cited by Zimmerman, 2000). Second, PTP may help to increase Second Language (L2) writers' confidence in their ability to write clearly and efficiently and, for this practical reason, may reduce their need to engage in extensive monitoring which leads to more dysfluencies. Zimmerman (2000) found that writers revise more when they write in their L2 than in their First Language (L1); thus, one of the effects of allowing time for PTP may be to reduce the number of revisions undertaken in L2 writing, resulting in high quality like that of L1 writing. Chenoweth and Hayes (2001) found that L2 writers who were more proficient wrote more fluently than less proficient writers; PTP, therefore, may compensate for the lack of L2 proficiency where fluency is concerned.

The results of this study are also in line with Yan and Ellis (2004) study, who found that PTP conditions improve learners' fluency (as measured by the number of words per minute and the number of syllables per minute), and a number of studies have confirmed that giving learners the opportunity to plan results in greater fluency (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Wigglesworth, 1997; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Wendel, 1997). However, the results of this study indicate a reverse direction to that of Ong and Zhang (2010). In their study, NP group outperformed WTP and PTP.

Ong and Zhang (2010) provided two possible explanations as to why free-writing allowed learners to produce greater fluency as compared to PTP. They reasoned that because pre-task planner must devote some part of their time to planning so they cannot produce more words. Also, they suspect that the writers in the complex task, free writing, may not have been engaged in deliberate and conscientious planning during the formulation process, given that they were encouraged to write without planning, write continuously, and write whatever comes to their minds. This lack of no "online" planning behavior during the transcription process may have promoted greater fluency in the NP condition.

Findings of this study did lend support to the predictions of Skehan and Foster's Limited Attentional Capacity regarding the effects of increasing task complexity concerning planning time factor on reducing fluency. Skehan and Foster (2001) rationalized that PTP assists the rhetorical organization of the text to be produced and the propositional content to be encoded. It reduces the pressure on the central executive in working memory and thus facilitates the process of translating what has been planned into the verbalscheme, even when this has to be undertaken under pressure of limited time. The opportunity for PTP may also add to the learners' confidence during task performance.

Concerning the second research question, the mean scores of females in the argumentative task (Rate A) words per minutes and (Rate B) syllable per minutes, were higher than males. MANOVA results indicated that gender has a statistically significant effect on the learners' writing fluency ($p = .0001$).

7. Findings

1. On the basis of above results, the following findings can be listed: Task planning regarding word production under different planning conditions affected learners writing fluency.
2. Results of the Multivariate test of Wilks' Lambda on writing fluency revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in writing fluency based on task planning conditions.
3. Post hoc analyses also showed that in the argumentative task; regarding fluency, the difference between PTP, WTP and NP were significant.

4. A significant difference can be found between the mean of fluency in argumentative essays written by these two groups (male and female). That means gender regarding word production under different planning conditions affected learners writing fluency.
5. Results of the Multivariate test of Wilks' Lambda on writing fluency of males and females revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between males and females on the combined dependent variables, in writing fluency. Post hoc analyses also showed that in the argumentative task; regarding Rate A and Rate B, the difference between males and females were significant.

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