



## The effect of task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, and pressured online planning on writing accuracy of Iranian intermediate EFL learners

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### Abstract

The present study set out to explore the effects of task rehearsal (TR), unguided strategic planning (USP), and pressured on-line planning (POP) on the accuracy of Iranian EFL intermediate learners' written production. First of all, 102 learners were selected after participating in the NELSON test from among 150 intermediate learners from Goldis language institute. Then, they were non-randomly assigned to three experimental groups and one control group. All participants in four groups performed a written narrative task, based on two topics as a pre-test, ten sessions of treatment, and at the end they were asked to write a narrative paragraph based on two different topics. Participants in the first experimental group (TR) were required to write a narrative based on the pictures they were shown and repeated the performance for ten sessions with different pictures. In the second experimental group (USP), participants were given 10-minute for planning before performing the narrative task. Finally, learners in the third experimental group (POP) were asked to perform the task within the time limitation of 17 minutes. All participants' performance was then analyzed and measured in terms of accuracy. According to the findings of the study, no statistically significant enhancement in accuracy was achieved.

**Keywords:** Task Rehearsal; unguided strategic planning; pressured online planning; wwriting accuracy

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Introduce the problem

One of the basic characteristics of human beings is language; language categorizes Homo sapiens uniquely from all other animals. According to Crystal (2010), language, more than anything else, makes us feel human. Language is consisted of four basic skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In another division, language skills are divided to receptive skills (reading and listening) and productive skills (writing and speaking). Willis and Willis (2007) categorized speaking as an interpersonal skill and writing as the transactional skill. Although, writing is not a language, but it is a tool used to make language be read within a language system. “A simplistic view of writing would assume that written language is simply the graphic representation of spoken language...” (Brown, 2001, p.335). Writing relies on many of the same structure as speech, such as vocabulary, grammar, and semantics, with the added dependency of a system of signs or symbols. Writing is one of the significant skills in language, in which students have problem. As Chastain (1988) has noted, writing is both a way of communication through which language learners can talk about what is going on in their minds, and also it can help language learning with its “unique features” (p. 224). However, because while writing, learners need to practice some different abilities spontaneously, it is considered as the most difficult language skill. (Harris, 1969)

EFL learners are facing some difficulties while writing; therefore, teachers and researchers are searching for ways in order to help the learners to write more easily and effectively. Some of the introduced methods have been useful, while some others have not been useful. As the need for writing skill is increasing these days, learners need some new methods for learning writing skill. The present study will have implications for EFL learners and teachers who try to find new ways which are more effective for improvement in learners’ writing accuracy. The more the learners’ writing skill is improved the less anxious they will get about writing. Because majority of the foreign language learners in Iran are anxious about their writing skill. And this anxiety keeps them far from reaching their goal, which is writing more accurately. As they go forward, EFL learners should be able to plan, organize, choose the best vocabulary, and choose the best format of writing. This research was done to see that whether the task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, and online pressured planning are useful for the learners’ writing accuracy or not. And also studied the effect of time limitation on learners when they wanted to plan and organize their writing.

### 1.2. Describe relevant scholarship

#### Task Planning

Planning for TBLT can happen in different levels, such as linguistic elements plan (e.g. choice of words or phrases), sentences plan, and structure plan (Wang, 2008). Ellis (2005) points out that all spoken and written language use, no matter how effortless and automatic it is, involves planning. Ellis's (2005) assertion categorizes task planning into two principal types which seem to have gained general acceptance. In line with his account, task planning falls into two categories: pre-task planning and within-task planning. Ellis goes on to say that the distinguishment of these is based on when the planning takes place in that in the latter, planning takes place while learners performing the task, and in the former, it takes place prior to the performance of the task. Ellis also takes another step forward by splitting the pre-task planning into rehearsal (repetition) and strategic planning. As he proposes, in case of rehearsal, learners are provided with an opportunity to perform the task before the actual performance. In case of strategic planning, the learners are given the opportunity to consider the content they will need to encode and how to express it prior to the main performance. Strategic planning as Foster and Skehan (1996, as cited in Ellis, 2003) propose can be divided into two detailed (guided) in which students are instructed to focus on form, meaning, or both during the planning time, and undetailed (unguided) in which students receive no instruction on how to approach the task during planning time. Ellis (2005) continues to argue that within-task planning is divided into pressured and unpressured (careful) planning. In pressured planning, students undergo a time limit to perform the task, whereas, in unpressured (careful) planning, students can have a careful plan with as much time as they want to perform the task.

### **Limited Working Memory Capacity**

One of the most frequently cited models of working memory in the literature of task planning is that of Baddeley (Ellis, 2005). This model identifies three components of working (or short-term) memory; the central executive or supervisory attentional system, phonological loop, and the visual spatial sketchpad. The central executive system governs the relationship between working memory and long-term memory, paying attention to specific long-term memory systems. This system is inherently limited in capacity; therefore, the extent to which learners are able to attend to specific system is dependent on the extent to which other systems are automatized. Ellis (2003) argues that if learners are provided with the opportunity for planning, it can reduce the burden on working memory as Ibrahim (2013) cites from Skehan (1998) that the process of SLA is controlled by one linguistic system acting in two different modes; a rule-based mode, and a ready-made exemplar mode. According to Skehan, activating the rule-based mode enables learners to develop linguistic forms. Conversely, utility of the exemplar-based mode promotes the speed of retrieving the already internalized linguistic models from memory. Skehan (1998) distinguishes three aspects of language production: fluency, accuracy, and complexity. He contends that planning in task performance reduces the learners' reliance

on their ready-made exemplar system by allowing them to control their rule-based system. He goes on to assert that because of the limitations of attentional resources, learners find themselves forced to prioritize one aspect of production over the others. As a result, this 'trade-off' negatively affects the other aspects of language performance. Van Patten (1990, as cited in Salimi & Fatollahnejad, 2012) believes that it is difficult for the L2 learners to focus on meaning and form at the same time. The most influential and intrinsic theories in studies on oral and written task planning are Levelt's (1989) model of speech production and Kellogg's (1996) model of writing. Both models of production explicitly apply an information processing framework to an explanation of language production and the aspect in which these two models are germane to one another is that they provide a basis for taking the components of language production into account on which learners attend to while planning, and examine the effects planning strategies have on actual production (Salimi & Fatollahnejad, 2012). Drawing on Levelt's (1989) model of speech production, Ellis (2003) proposes that this model identifies three stages in speech production: "(1) conceptualization, when the purpose and semantic content of a message is determined; (2) formulation, when the speaker maps grammatical and phonological features onto the preverbal message; and (3) articulation, when the phonetic plan produced by (2) is converted into actual speech" (P. 25). Kellogg's (1996) model proposes that the process of producing written language employs three different systems: 'Formulation', 'Execution', and 'Monitoring'. Each of these systems is made up of two components. 'Formulation' consists of 'planning' and 'translating'. 'Planning' includes setting the objectives of writing, proposing related ideas, and thinking of how to present these ideas in writing. Whereas, the 'translating' is the process in which the writer transfers the planning phase from being just objectives and ideas into linguistic, phonological, and graphological items before 'execution'. 'Execution' involves 'programming' and 'executing'. In the 'programming' phase, the writer converts the 'translating' process into a plan for production to engage the motor system (e.g. handwriting or typing). The 'executing' phase refers to the real 'production of sentences'. 'Monitoring' comprises of 'reading' and 'editing'. 'Reading' occurs only after 'executing' a sentence when writers read the texts that they have produced. The 'editing' phase can take place prior and subsequent to the executing of a sentence.

### **Task Rehearsal (Repetition)**

Ellis (2005) defines rehearsal as task repetition; that is, learners perform "the same or slightly altered tasks-whether whole tasks, or parts of a task" (P. 43). He proposes that the repetition of a task will give the learners the opportunities to reorganize and consolidate information into a richer and more sophisticated performance. Nakakubo (2011) reports a study by Bygate (2001) involving a group of participants who watched a short cartoon video with no dialogue and told the story that the video described. Ten weeks later, Bygate asked the participants to perform exactly the same task. He concluded that repeating the task resulted in improvement in the participants'

performance. In another study, Bygate (1996,) asked a language learner to perform a task twice with a three-day interval between them. The participants of his study were required to watch a Tom & Jerry cartoon and then to retell it. Bygate found that this kind of repetition contributed to some clear enhancement in both fluency and accuracy. Lynch & McLean (2001, as cited in Gashan & Almohaison, 2014) conducted an investigation which was pertinent to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context. In their study there were fourteen English language learners performing a poster-carousal task that required them to respond repeatedly to the same or similar questions from fellow students about the poster they had prepared. They found that repetition had positive influences on both accuracy and fluency in language production. Nemeth and Kormos (2001) concluded that repeating an argumentation task enhanced the number of supports provided by the learners for their statements. Hung (2013) maintains task repetition studies have primarily focused on two issues: one centers on whether learners show better writing performance as they perform the same writing task a second time, and the other issue has to do with whether learners demonstrate better writing in a new task after participating in a repetition of task. Hung reports a study by Gass et al (1999) in which they compared these two issues together. Their study involved English speaking learners of Spanish who were required to watch video clips 3 times with 2 to 3 days interval in between and then watching a new video clip after 1 week. In the task repetition group, participants indicated improvement in overall proficiency; however, the improvement was not transferred to a new task when participants were given a new video clip for oral production. Larsen-freeman (2006, as cited in Jung, 2013) examined 5 L1 Chinese-speaking ESL learners' performance on a writing task, then oral narrative repetition tasks over a 6-month period. The findings of the study indicated that accuracy was decreased when participants repeated the task for the second time. In contrast, Ellis (1987, as cited in Jung, 2013) conducted a mixed oral-written repetition task. He concluded that task repetition gave rise to a positive effect on the accuracy. Sheppard (2006, as cited in Gashan & Almohaison, 2014) set out to investigate the influence of repeating the oral task accompanied by feedback on accuracy and fluency. The study showed that repeating the oral task supplied by suitable feedback significantly improved the fluency and accuracy. Indrarathne (2013) reports that Birjandi and Ahangari (2008) used three types of oral tasks: a personal narrative, a story narrative, and a decision-making task in a study involving participants required to repeat the tasks. They found that task repetition increased the fluency and complexity, but the accuracy was not statistically significant. Indrarathne (2013) reports another study by Matsumura, Kawamura, and Affricano (2008) in which they compared the language production in two types of task repetition: a narrative and a decision-making task. They reported no significant enhancement in fluency, whereas the improvement in accuracy and complexity was significant.

## **Strategic Planning**

Ellis (2005) maintains that a number of studies have explored how strategic planning impacts on task performance. Ellis (2003) explains that in case of giving students the task work plan and leaving them to decide for themselves what to plan, the results have shown that the priority was given to content over form. Ellis (2003) quotes from Foster and Skehan (1996) that when students have the opportunity to receive guidance they have the tendency to prioritize content which results in the improvement in complexity when performing the task. Following a number of studies on strategic planning, Ellis (2003) describes that findings have demonstrated that with very short period of planning, accuracy is positively benefited, whereas longer planning time is required for improving complexity. Abedifirouzjaie (2014) reports that Foster and Skehan (1999) compared the effects of focus of strategic planning on oral production. Their study revealed that the two different focuses of strategic planning (i.e. meaning-focused and form-focused) strategic planning did not contribute to different effects on the accuracy, complexity, and fluency of speech. Ellis (2003) reports a number of studies on strategic planning, for example, Crookes' (1989) study included the participants where they were guided to plan both the meaning and the form of their oral output. The results revealed that in both meaning and form-focused strategic planning higher complexity was reported comparing with the minimal strategic planning condition, however no accuracy increase was achieved. Later, Mehnert (1998) found the improvement in accuracy and fluency in meaning and form-focused strategic planning than the minimal strategic planning condition. Foster and Skehan (1996, as cited in Abedifirouzjaie, 2014) compared the effects of meaning/form-focused strategic planning, undetailed strategic planning, and minimal strategic planning on learners' oral performance on three different tasks: personal information exchange, oral narrative, and decision-making. They found that meaning/form-focused strategic planning resulted in higher complexity, fluency, and accuracy in the participants' oral output comparing with minimal strategic planning condition. Ortega (1999, as cited in Wang, 2008) found that L2 Spanish learners gained faster speaking speed when given time to plan strategically. Yuan and Ellis (2003) in their study concluded that strategic planning had a positive effect on fluency. Ellis (2003) continues to report more studies by mentioning an examination by Foster and Skehan (1996) where they explored the effects of more guided planning. In their study they compared the influence of detailed and undetailed planning. They concluded that in narrative task, fluency was significantly improved in guided planners than unguided planners, whereas no notable difference was reported for personal and decision-making tasks. Ellis goes on to report that Skehan and Foster (1997) found that undetailed (unguided) strategic planning resulted in greater accuracy on the personal and narrative tasks but not on the decision-making tasks. Similarly, Iwashita, Elder, and McNamara (2001) utilized a general measure of accuracy in their study. They found that in a testing situation,

providing students with a 3-minute strategic planning, time had no effect on accuracy. Salimi and Fatollahnejad (2012) report a study by Ellis and Yuan (2004) that in their study they found that strategic planning contributed to greater fluency, while unpressured online planning resulted in increased accuracy.

### **Within-Task-Planning**

Ellis (2003) reports an investigation by Hulstijn and Hulstijn (1984). The findings of their study showed that time pressure in its own right did not influence the accuracy of word order but when it was combined with a focus on form its effect was statistically significant. In another study, Ellis (1987) investigated the learners' performance on written and oral narrative tasks based on pictures. His study encompassed three tasks. He found that the learners' use of past tense forms was most accurate in task 1 and least accurate in task 3, and in task 2 the accuracy was intermediate. He concluded that accuracy was improved when there was no time pressure. In another study cited by Ellis (2003), Yuan and Ellis (2003) made an attempt to examine the effects of pre-task and on-line planning on learners' performance on a narrative task. The findings of their study demonstrated that requiring students to perform the task in on-line planning condition resulted in both accuracy and complexity, but no improvement in fluency was observed. From the studies reported above, it can be suggested that on-line planning contributes to the enhancement of accuracy in learners' production. Taking the literature of the past studies into consideration, it is possible to state that most empirical studies have identified significant effects of task repetition, strategic planning, and online planning on fluency, accuracy, and complexity of oral language production. Ellis (2005) postulates that there has been an increasing body of research on different aspects of L2 learners' task performance in recent years. However, it is not unwise to note that a host of this research has focused on oral performance and investigation into the effects of task repetition, strategic planning, and online planning on written production has not been paid much attention. Moreover, little research on written production in comparison with oral performance has been conducted in an international scale and there is almost little direct research on the effects of task repetition, unguided strategic planning, and pressured online planning on Iranian EFL learners' writing performance with regard to accuracy. Therefore, this study set out to bridge this gap.

#### *1.3. State hypotheses and their correspondence to research design*

H01. Task rehearsal does not have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

H02. Unguided strategic planning does not have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

H03. Pressured online planning does not have any significant effect on the writing

accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

H4. Task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, and pressured online planning have the same effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

Although lots of investigations and research are done recently based on writing and they have reached some fruitful results, but none of them have made a comparison among three principles of task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, and pressured online planning. In the current study the researcher made a comparison between these three principles and the best and the most useful principle was introduced. Teachers and researchers have been searching for new ways of teaching and learning and their ambition is to use the most useful one of them. Therefore, this research will pave the way for them and will show them new ways of teaching writing skill. In traditional teaching just the

## **2. Method**

In this study the researcher examined the effects of task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, and pressured online planning on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners. So, in order to achieve the goal of this research and to get the answers to the research questions, the researcher applied the methodological approach, research design, and type of participants which was the most suitable. This part shows a descriptive explanation about the participants, procedure, and design of the study that was used and participated in the present study.

### *2.1. Identify subsections*

At first 150 intermediate EFL learners were non-randomly selected from among 200 learners at Goldis language institute in Tabriz, Iran. Then NELSON (350A) test, was administered. After that 102 learners were selected according to their marks in the test, the learners whose scores fall within the range of one standard deviation above and below the mean, shape the main participants of the study; therefore, all the participants were homogeneous and they had the same level of language proficiency. Then the selected participants were non-randomly divided in to four groups of control and experimental. One of the them was a control group and three of them were experimental groups. There were 25 participants in the control group, 28 participants in the first experimental group which received treatments based on task rehearsal. The second experimental group which received treatments based on unguided strategic planning included 23 participants, and the last experimental group which was based on pressured online planning consisted of 26 participants. In order to start the treatment, the first step was administering as the pretest to see the participants' performance in narrative writing. Two different topics were given to all four 55 groups and they were asked to write

a 200-word (Ellis. & Yuan. 2004), paragraph in narrative form. The participants were allowed to choose one of the titles that they preferred. The first group which is called the control group, was taught the writing techniques in traditional way. Furthermore, in order to compare the results of this group with the experimental groups, the learners in control group participated in the posttest and pretest as well. Then six wordless pictures were chosen from “Sequences Picture Stories for ESL” by Julich and Chabot’s (2006) book and those pictures were given to the first experimental group, which received treatment based on task rehearsal, and they were asked to write a narrative paragraph about those pictures. The same procedure was done for 10 sessions but a different picture was used in each session in order to see the effect of repetition on the learners. In this

group teacher did not set any time limit. The second experimental group, which received treatments based on unguided strategic planning, received the same pictures and they were given 10 minutes’ time limitation for preparation and planning their performance (Nakakabu, 2011). Since the category of planning is unguided, the learners were free to choose any strategies and genres of writing they wanted; such as writing a narrative genre, conversation or story. After 10 minutes of preparation, the participants’ notes were collected by the teacher and they were asked to write a paragraph based on their own strategy and genre. They were also given as much time as they wanted to complete their task. In the third experimental group, which was based on pressured online planning, the participants were asked to perform the written narrative immediately after looking at the pictures without any preparation time. They were given 17 minutes (Ellis, 2005) to plan and write their narratives; therefore, they wrote their paragraph under time pressure. So this 17 minutes were devoted to both planning and preparing the paragraph. Finally, after one month of treatment two different topics were given to all the groups as he posttest and they were asked to write a narrative paragraph about one of them.

## *2.2. Participant (subject) characteristics*

The sample of the study consisted 150 EFL learners selected from 200 learners who are studying English at Goldis language institute at intermediate level, located in Tabriz, Iran. The participants ages range from 15 to 20 years old, studying American English File books. Furthermore, all the participants were female. All of them were Turkish speakers. Their classes were hold for 13 sessions, each session lasted for 105 minutes. At first, from among 200 learners, 150 learners were non-randomly selected by the researcher and they took the NELSON(350A) test as a placement test in order to make sure that all the participants were at intermediate level, from among them 102 learners were selected according to their scores. So all the selected participants were homogeneous. The selection of participants was done as follows:

### 2.3. Sampling procedures

At first 150 intermediate learners from Goldis language institute were selected non-randomly and a sample of NELSON test was administered to them. After the administration of the NELSON test, the learners whose scores fall within the range of one standard deviation 52above and below the mean, shaped the main participants of the study. The researcher selected 102 participants from among a total number of 150 learners studying at intermediate level. The students who did not meet the criterion were also allowed in the study but their scores were not included in the related analysis of the study.

#### 2.3.1. Sample size, power, and precision

After testing their homogeneity, 102 learners were non-randomly assigned in to three experimental groups and one control group (control group = 25 participants, Task Rehearsal group = 28 participants, Unguided Strategic Planning = 23 participants, and Pressured Online Planning = 26 participants).

#### 2.3.2. Measures and covariates

To evaluate accuracy of L2 written production, the percentage of error-free clauses was employed. Nakakubo (2011) describes that the percentage of error-free clauses has been most commonly used in previous planning studies (Ellis & Yuan, 2005; Elder & Iwashita, 2005; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Sangarun, 2005; Skehan & Foster, 1997, 2005; Tajima, 2003; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Errors could be syntactic, morphological, or lexical, including inappropriate use and erroneous omission of words and grammatical elements and incorrect word order. For accuracy, all of the errors in the narratives were coded. Error-free clauses were those that contained no error. The percentage of error-free clauses for each narrative story was calculated by dividing the number of error-free clauses by the total number of clauses in the narrative. Number of error-free clauses divided by total number of clauses in the narratives and the received number was multiplied by 100.

#### 2.3.3. Research design

The design of this study is quasi-experimental. The prefix quasi means “resembling”. Thus quasi-experimental research is a research that resembles experimental research but is not true experimental research. Although the independent variable is manipulated, participants are not randomly assigned to conditions or orders of conditions (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Because the independent variable is manipulated before the dependent variable is measured, quasi-experimental research eliminates the directionality problem. But because participants are not randomly assigned- making it

likely that there are other differences between conditions- quasi-experimental research does not eliminate the problem of confounding variables. In terms of internal validity, therefore, quasi-experimental are generally somewhere between correlation studies and true experiments. It also includes three dependent variables; the effect of task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, and pressured online planning on writing accuracy. The required analyses are;

- 1: Pearson correlation to probe inter-rater reliability of the raters rating performance on pretest and posttest of writing accuracy.
- 2: One-way ANOVA to compare the four groups' means on the Nelson test in order to homogenize them in terms of their general language proficiency.
- 3: Descriptive statistics and KR-21 reliability for Nelson

#### *2.3.4. Instruments*

The NELSON proficiency test, a writing task as the pretest, some materials for narrative tasks, and a writing task as the posttest to measure the performance of the participants in writing ability were used in this study.

##### *2.3.4.1. NELSON Test as Homogenize Instrumentation*

At start of the research the NELSON (350A) test, was employed for the purpose of homogenizing the sample of the study and to make sure that the study participants were homogenous and identical participants with respect to the participants' English language proficiency. This test consisted of 50 multiple-choice items, including reading, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The participants had 40 minutes to complete it.

##### *2.3.4.2. Pre-test and Post-test of Writing*

Learners' writing performance concerning accuracy was measured by the pre-test. As pretest, learners were given 2 topics to write a 200-word (Ellis. & Yuan. 2004), narrative paragraph about one of them. They were allowed to choose one of the topics that they preferred and narrate it in a story structure. The topics were "The first day at a new school" and "The happiest day ever".

The participants were also invited to write another paragraph as the post-test on the last session. Two topics were given to the participants to choose one of them and write a 200-word (Ellis. & Yuan. 2004), narrative paragraph about it. The topics which were used in this part were; "The most successful day in your life" and "One day without an access to the Internet".

#### 2.3.4.3. *Materials for the Narrative Tasks*

Drawing on many of the previous task planning studies (Crookes, 1989; Elder & Iwashita, 2005; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Gilabert, 2007; Kawauchi, 2005; Mochizuki & Ortega, 1999; Park, 2006; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Yuan & Ellis, 2003, as cited in Nakakubo, 2011), this study used written narrative tasks with the sets of pictures to examine

#### 2.3.4.4. *L2 learners' written production*

As treatment materials, 6 related wordless picture stories (Appendix, E) were chosen from “Sequences Picture Stories for ESL” by Julich and Chabot’s (2006). These pictures are related pictures which are narrating a story but they are wordless. Pictures were used to elicit the participant’s written narrative production. Ellis (2003) believed that these wordless stories have been successfully used in linguistic research to elicit both ESL and EFL oral and written narratives.

### **3. Results**

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, pressured online planning and traditional method on the improvement of

the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners. More specifically; this study aims at exploring

the research questions and their respective null-hypotheses;

Q1: Does task rehearsal have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners?

Q2: Does unguided strategic planning have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners?

Q3: Does pressured online planning have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners?

Q4: If answer to the research questions 1, 2 and 3 is yes, which one is more effective?

The following hypotheses will be explored and reported in this chapter;

H01: Task rehearsal does not have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

H02: Unguided strategic planning does not have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

H03: Pressured online planning does not have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

H4: Task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning and pressured online planning have the same effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

### 3.1. Recruitment

The NELSON general language proficiency test was administered to 150 students in order to select four homogenous groups to participate in this study. These learners were selected based on the mean of 28.44 plus and minus one standard deviation of 9.58 (Table 3.1). It should be noted that the distribution of scores on the NELSON test met the normality assumption. As displayed in Table 3.1, the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors were lower than 1.96; hence normality of the scores on the NELSON test. It should also be noted that the NELSON test enjoyed a KR-21 reliability of 0.88.

Table 3.1. *Descriptive Statistics, KR-21 Reliability and Normality of NELSON Test (Participant Selection)*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness Statistic	Skewness Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Kurtosis Std. Error
NELSON	150	7	50	28.44	9.584	91.859	.038	.198	.078	.394
KR-21							Ratio	.191	Ratio	.197

### 3.2. Statistics and data analysis

#### Testing Normality of Data

The data collected through this study were analyzed using one-way analysis of variances (one-way ANOVA) which has two main assumptions; normality of data and homogeneity of variances of the groups. The normality of the NELSON test, and pretest and posttest of writing accuracy was checked using skewness and kurtosis ratios over their standard errors. As displayed in Table 3.2, the absolute values of the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their standard errors were lower than 1.96. Thus it can be concluded that the distribution of scores on the NELSON test, and pretest and posttest of writing accuracy met the normality assumption.

Table 3.2. Testing Normality of Data; Skewness and Kurtosis Ratios

Group		N	Skewness			Kurtosis		
		Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Task Rehearsal	NELSON	28	.519	.441	1.18	-.037	.858	-0.04
	Pretest	28	-.729	.441	-1.65	-.094	.858	-0.11
	Posttest	28	-.437	.441	-0.99	-.697	.858	-0.81
Unguided	NELSON	23	.256	.481	0.53	-.805	.935	-0.86
	Pretest	23	.459	.481	0.95	-.235	.935	-0.25
	Posttest	23	-.468	.481	-0.97	-.275	.935	-0.29
Pressured	NELSON	26	.087	.456	0.19	-1.191	.887	-1.34
	Pretest	26	-.601	.456	-1.32	.174	.887	0.20
	Posttest	26	-.374	.456	-0.82	-.404	.887	-0.46
Control	NELSON	25	.687	.464	1.48	1.563	.902	1.73
	Pretest	25	.367	.464	0.46	-.587	.902	-0.32
	Posttest	25	-.746	.464	-1.60	-.199	.902	-0.22

### Inter-Rater Reliability of Pretest and Posttest of Writing Accuracy

Table 3.3 displays the results of the Pearson correlations computed to estimate the inter-rater reliability of the two raters who rated the participants' performance on the pretest and posttest of writing accuracy. Based on these results it can be concluded that there were significant agreements between the two raters on;

- Pretest of writing accuracy ( $r(100) = .846$ , representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ), and
- Posttest of writing accuracy ( $r(100) = .901$ , representing a large effect size,  $p = .000$ ).

Table 3.3

*Pearson Correlations; Inter-Rater Reliability of Pretest and Posttest of Writing Accuracy*

		Pre-Rater2	Post-Rater2
Pre-Rater1	Pearson Correlation	.846**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	102	
Post-Rater1	Pearson Correlation		.901**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N		102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Comparing Groups' Means on NELSON Test

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, pressured online planning and control groups' means on the NELSON test in order to prove that they were homogenous in terms of the general language proficiency prior to the administration of the treatments. Before discussing the results, it should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances of the groups was met. As displayed in Table 3.4, the results of the Levene's test ( $F(3, 98) = 1.69, p = .174$ ) indicated that there were not any significant differences between the four groups' variances on the NELSON test. Thus it can be claimed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was retained on the NELSON test.

Table 3.4

*Test of Homogeneity of Variances; NELSON Test by Groups*

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
NELSON	Based on Mean	1.809	3	98	.151
	Based on Median	1.690	3	98	.174
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.690	3	88.157	.175
	Based on trimmed mean	1.777	3	98	.157

Table 3.5 displays the descriptive statistics for the four groups on the NELSON test. The results showed that task rehearsal ( $M = 29.36, SD = 3.91$ ), unguided strategic planning ( $M = 27.78, SD = 3.05$ ), pressured online planning ( $M = 28.08, SD = 3.17$ ) and control ( $M = 27.68, SD = 2.57$ ) groups had fairly close means on the NELSON test.

Table 3.5

*Descriptive Statistics; NELSON Test by Groups*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Task Rehearsal	28	29.36	3.918	.740	27.84	30.88	23	39
Unguided	23	27.78	3.059	.638	26.46	29.11	23	34
Pressured	26	28.08	3.174	.622	26.79	29.36	23	33
Control	25	27.68	2.577	.515	26.62	28.74	23	35
Total	102	28.26	3.270	.324	27.62	28.91	23	39

Table 3.6 displays the results of one-way ANOVA. The results ( $F(3, 98) = 1.52, p = .212$ , partial eta squared = .045 representing a weak effect size) indicated that there were not any significant differences between the four groups' means on the NELSON test. That is to say, the groups were homogenous in terms of their general language proficiency prior to the main study.

Table 3.6  
*One-Way ANOVA; NELSON Test by Groups*

		Sum Squares	of df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
NELSON	Between Groups	48.225	3	16.075	1.527	.212
	Within Groups	1031.628	98	10.527		
	Total	1079.853	101			

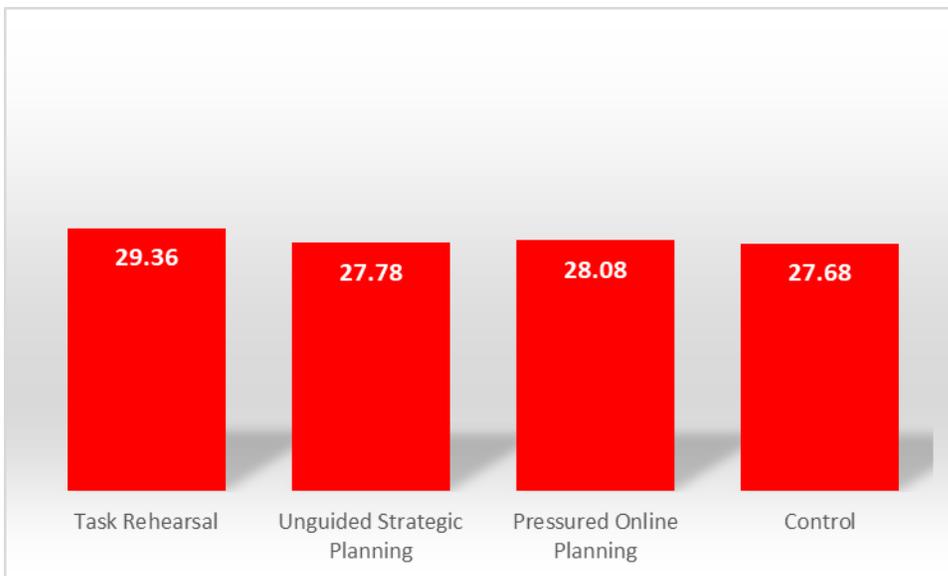


Figure 1, Means on NELSON test by group

### Comparing Groups' Means on Pretest of Writing Accuracy

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, pressure online planning and control groups' means on the pretest of writing accuracy in order to prove that they were homogenous in terms of the writing accuracy prior to the administration of the treatments. Before discussing the results, it should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances of the groups was met. As displayed in Table 3.7, the results of the Levene's test ( $F(3, 98) = 1.55, p = .205$ ) indicated that there were not any significant differences between the four groups' variances on the pretest. Thus it can be said that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was retained on the pretest of writing accuracy.

Table 3.7

*Test of Homogeneity of Variances; Pretest of Writing Accuracy by Groups*

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	1.816	3	98	.149
Based on Median	1.557	3	98	.205
Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.557	3	84.518	.206
Based on trimmed mean	1.729	3	98	.166

Table 3.8 displays the descriptive statistics for the four groups on the pretest of writing accuracy. The results showed that task rehearsal ( $M = 67.68$ ,  $SD = 8.79$ ), unguided strategic planning ( $M = 70.78$ ,  $SD = 6.31$ ), pressured online planning ( $M = 71.04$ ,  $SD = 8.06$ ) and control ( $M = 70.84$ ,  $SD = 5.08$ ) groups had fairly close means on the pretest.

Table 3.8

*Descriptive Statistics; Pretest of Writing Accuracy by Groups*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Task Rehearsal	28	67.688	8.790	1.661	64.27	71.09	48	80
Unguided	23	70.786	6.317	1.317	68.05	73.51	60	85
Pressured	26	71.048	8.067	1.582	67.78	74.30	51	85
Control	25	70.845	5.080	1.016	68.74	72.94	63	82
Total	102	70.017	7.326	.725	68.57	71.45	48	85

Table 3.9 displays the results of one-way ANOVA. The results ( $F(3, 98) = 1.32$ ,  $p = .272$ , partial eta squared = .039 representing a weak effect size) indicated that there were not any significant differences between the four groups' means on pretest. That is to say, the groups were homogenous in terms of their writing accuracy prior to the main study.

Table 3.9

*One-Way ANOVA; Pretest of Writing Accuracy by Groups*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pretest	Between Groups	210.648	3	70.216	1.321	.272
	Within Groups	5210.342	98	53.167		
	Total	5420.990	101			

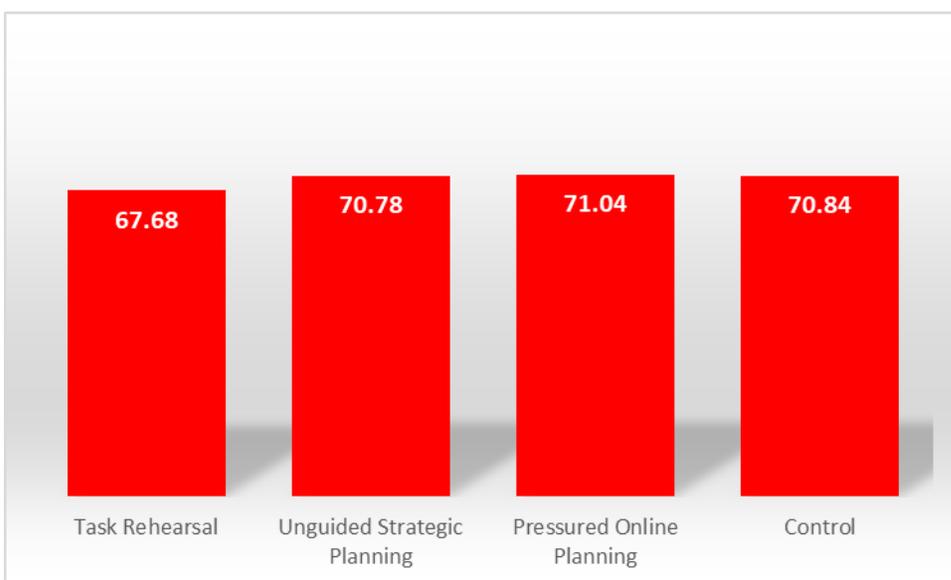


Figure 2, Means on pretest of writing accuracy by groups

### Comparing Groups' Means on Posttest of Writing Accuracy

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, pressure online planning and control groups' means on the posttest of writing accuracy in order to prove that they were homogenous in terms of the writing accuracy prior to the administration of the treatments. Before discussing the results, it should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances of the groups was not met. As displayed in Table 3.10, the results of the Levene's test ( $F(3, 98) = 4.94, p = .003$ ) indicated that there were significant differences between the four groups' variances on the posttest. That is why the results of the Brown-Forsythe and Welch tests (Table 3.12) are discussed.

Table 3.10

#### *Test of Homogeneity of Variances; Posttest of Writing Accuracy by Groups*

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.	
Posttest	Based on Mean	5.349	3	98	.002
	Based on Median	4.948	3	98	.003
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	4.948	3	81.160	.003
	Based on trimmed mean	5.358	3	98	.002

Table 3.11 displays the descriptive statistics for the four groups on the posttest of writing accuracy. The results showed that task rehearsal group ( $M = 86.18, SD = 4.50$ ) had the highest mean on the posttest. This was followed by the unguided strategic planning ( $M = 78.72, SD = 10.31$ ), pressured online planning ( $M = 78.88, SD = 6.28$ ) and control ( $M = 79.20, SD = 8.65$ ) groups.

Table 3.11. Descriptive Statistics; Posttest of Writing Accuracy by Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Task Rehearsal	28	86.184	.506	.851	84.43	87.93	78	94
Unguided	23	78.831	0.312	2.150	74.37	83.29	55	94
Pressured	26	78.886	.282	1.232	76.35	81.42	65	90
Control	25	79.208	.651	1.730	75.63	82.77	60	91
Total	102	80.958	.161	.808	79.35	82.55	55	94

Table 3.12 displays the results of robust one-way ANOVA tests of Welch and Brown-Forsythe. The results of the Welch ( $F(3, 49.95) = 10.90, p = .000$ ) and Brown-Forsythe ( $F(3, 69.19) = 5.77, p = .001$ ) both indicated that there were significant differences between the four groups' means on posttest.

Table 3.12. Robust Tests of Equality of Means; Posttest of Writing Accuracy by Groups

	Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	10.905	3	49.954	.000
Brown-Forsythe	5.775	3	69.194	.001

The results of post-hoc comparison tests (Table 3.13) indicated that;

A: The task-rehearsal group ( $M = 86.18$ ) significantly outperformed the control group ( $M = 79.20$ ) on posttest of writing accuracy (Mean Difference = 6.97,  $p = .014$ ). Based on these results it can be concluded that the **first null-hypothesis** as “task rehearsal did not have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners” **was rejected**.

Table 3.13 Post-Hoc Comparisons Tests; Posttest of Writing Accuracy by Groups

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Task Rehearsal	Unguided	7.352*	2.141	.011	1.26	13.44
	Pressured	7.294*	2.072	.008	1.40	13.19
	Control	6.979*	2.093	.014	1.02	12.93
Unguided	Task Rehearsal	-7.352*	2.141	.011	-13.44	-1.26
	Pressured	-.059	2.177	1.000	-6.25	6.14
	Control	-.374	2.198	.999	-6.63	5.88
Pressured	Task Rehearsal	-7.294*	2.072	.008	-13.19	-1.40
	Unguided	.059	2.177	.999	-6.14	6.25
	Control	-.315	2.131	.999	-6.38	5.75
Control	Task Rehearsal	-6.979*	2.093	.014	-12.93	-1.02
	Unguided	.374	2.198	.999	-5.88	6.63
	Pressured	.315	2.131	.999	-5.75	6.38

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

B: There was not any significant difference between unguided strategic planning ( $M = 78.83$ ) and control ( $M = 79.20$ ) groups' means on posttest of writing accuracy (Mean Difference = .374,  $p = .999$ ). Based on these results it can be concluded that **the second null-hypothesis** as “unguided strategic planning did not have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners” **was supported**.

C: There was not any significant difference between pressured online planning ( $M = 78.88$ ) and control ( $M = 79.20$ ) groups' means on posttest of writing accuracy (Mean Difference = .315,  $p = .999$ ). Based on these results it can be concluded that **the third null-hypothesis** as “pressured online planning did not have any significant effect on the writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners” **was supported**.

The three experimental groups of task rehearsal, pressured online planning and unguided strategic planning groups' means on the posttest of writing accuracy were compared in order to answer the fourth research question descriptively. Based on the results displayed in Table 3.13 it can be said that;

D: The task-rehearsal group ( $M = 86.18$ ) significantly outperformed the unguided strategic planning group ( $M = 78.83$ ) on posttest of writing accuracy (Mean Difference = 7.35,  $p = .011$ ).

E: The task-rehearsal group ( $M = 86.18$ ) significantly outperformed the pressured online planning group ( $M = 78.88$ ) on posttest of writing accuracy (Mean Difference = 7.29,  $p = .008$ ).

F: There was not any significant difference between pressured online planning ( $M = 78.88$ ) and unguided strategic planning ( $M = 78.83$ ) groups' means on posttest of writing accuracy (Mean Difference = .059,  $p = .999$ ).

Therefore, the fourth hypothesis **was rejected**, because task rehearsal, unguided strategic planning, and pressured online planning do not have the same effect.

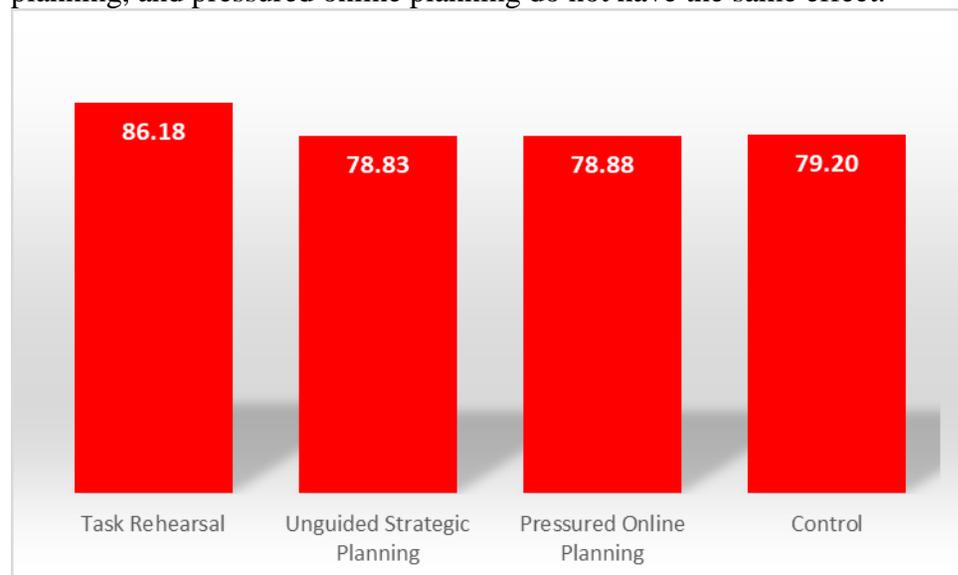


Figure 3, Means on posttest of writing accuracy by groups

### 3.3. Participant flow

The researcher selected 102 participants from among a total number of 150 learners studying at intermediate level. The students who did not meet the criterion were also allowed in the study but their scores were not included in the related analysis of the study. After testing their homogeneity, 102 learners were non-randomly assigned in to three experimental groups and one control group (control group = 25 participants, Task Rehearsal group = 28 participants, Unguided Strategic Planning = 23 participants, and Pressured Online Planning = 26 participants).

## 4. Discussion

This study was primarily aimed at examining the effects of task repetition, unguided strategic planning, and pressured online planning conditions on accuracy of EFL learners' written production. In this section, the researcher summarizes the findings of the study and discusses the findings in relation to other studies. Using a range of measures, the researcher found some evidence that repeating the task, and online planning resulted in improvement in learners' written performance. With respect to the first research question posed, examining the effects of task repetition on accuracy, it was found that the participants in task repetition group, in comparison with the results of their pre-test, in their post-test outperformed in the number of error-free clauses produced. In this regard, this finding is consistent with the findings that Kawamura and Affricano (2008), Hawkes (2011), Lynch and Mclean (2000), Larsen-freeman (2006), Ellis (1987), Bygate (1996), Sheppard (2006), Birjandi and Ahangori (2008), Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011), Zohrabi and Abbasvand (2014), obtained. In these studies, it is concluded that giving learners the opportunity to repeat the task contributes to the enhancement of the accuracy of their production. The findings are supported by information processing theory that human beings possess limited capacity in working memory which does not allow the learner to attend to all aspects of the language at the time of task performance. However, the findings of the present study are in contrast with the studies that Bygate (2001), Gass et al (1999), Crookes (1989), Tavakoli and Skehan (2005), and Taguchi (2008) conducted in which they reported no significant positive effect of repetition on accuracy.

In terms of the second research question the results of the present study indicate that pre-task planning which is operationalized into unguided strategic planning condition has no statistically significant effect on accuracy of the participants' written production. The results of the study are also supported by Skehan's (1998, as cited in Ahangari and Abdi, 2011) cognitive approach which states that language performers vary in the extent to which they prioritize accuracy, complexity, and fluency with some tasks predisposing them to attend to complexity, and others on accuracy. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of Menhert (1998), Foster and Skehan (1996), Wendel (1997),

Crookes (1989), Foster and Skehan (1999). All the studies that are mentioned have demonstrated that providing learners with the opportunity to plan before commencing the main performance would not result in any significant improvement in the accuracy of their output. In this study it was found that providing learners with the opportunity to plan the written narrative task performance, they give priority to being less accurate. However, the results of this study do not lend support to the findings of Foster and Skehan (1996), Sanguran (2005), Wigglesworth (1997), and Kawauchi (2005) in which they claimed that positive influence was observed in the learners' accuracy after being given the strategic planning time.

With regard to the third research question, it was revealed that pressured online planning condition positively influenced the accuracy of the learners' production. The results are in agreement with those of Hulstjin and Hulstjin (1984), Ellis (1987), and Wigglesworth (1997), and Yuan and Ellis (2003). These studies suggest that the time learners are given for online planning improves the accuracy of their production. However, the present study's findings may run against Skehan's (1998) dual-mode system proposal. Skehan (1999) states that rule-based system is likely to be parsimoniously organized, in that, rules are compactly structured (Ghavamnia, Tavakoli, and Steki, 2012). Therefore, when learners are given as much time as needed and are not pressured for time they are likely to draw on their rule-based system, which in turn, results in the improvement in the level of accuracy. The results of this study demonstrated that creating a test-like situation for learners to perform the task by being required to complete the task under the time pressure would give rise to the positive influence in the accuracy of their written production as the same as it was concluded in afore-mentioned studies.

With regard to the forth research question, it was revealed that task rehearsal completely out performed unguided strategic planning and pressured online planning. As Larsen-freeman (2006), Ellis (1987), Bygate (1996) believe giving the learners the opportunity to repeat one task; therefore, task planning had positive effect on writing accuracy. On the other hand, by comparing the results for unguided strategic planning and pressured online planning, it is understood that there are not any significant differences between these two groups. So the forth research hypothesis was rejected because the three experimental groups do not have the same effect on writing accuracy of Iranian EFL learners.

## **5. Conclusions**

Task is the most important term in TBLT. It is important to make a clear understanding of it before examining into specific areas in TBLT. Although there are many various perceptions of task, some accords and agreements are achieved. Apparently, in TBLT, planning plays a very crucial and important role, and students' language performances are measured from the aspects

of complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The influence of planning on students' language performances is thoroughly examined in the literature. Task repetition has positive influence on students' language production. However, unguided strategic planning and pressured online planning do not have a significant effect on writing accuracy of the learners. This has important implications for writing pedagogy. Depending on the purpose of writing tasks that teachers assign EFL learners, different aspects of the writing performance can be emphasized by altering the type of planning conditions.

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### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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18. A. didn't meet                      B. haven't met  
C. didn't know                      D. haven't know

19. A. what he is like                      B. what is he like  
C. how he is                      D. how is he

20. A. through                      B. by                      C. on                      D. in

21. A. proper                      B. own                      C. same                      D. self

22. A. there was                      B. that was                      C. It was                      D. was

23. A. what a terrible                      B. what terrible  
C. how terrible                      D. So terrible a

24. A. A had known                      B. have known  
C. known                      D. would have known

25. A. A so the mine be                      B. the mine will be, too  
C. so will mine                      D. mine will be, too

**Choose the correct answer. Only one answer is correct.**

A telephone Call

Hello, Mary . .26. . you before now but I . . 27 . . so hard at the office that I didn't have time .  
My boss . . 28 . . on holiday tomorrow and he . . 29 . . arrange everything before he. . 30 . . If  
he had given me sensible instructions, I could have done the work next week. But you. . 31 . .  
the same problems with your boss. Anyway, . . 32 . . two tickets for the new play at the Grand  
on Saturday . . 33 . . and see it together?

26. A. should have rung                      B. must have rung  
C. had to ring                      D. ought to ring

27. A. must work                      B. must have worked  
C. have had to work                      D. ought to ring

28. A. will go                      B. is going                      C. shall go                      D. shall be going

29. A. wants that I                      B. would that I  
C. would like that I                      D. wants me to

30. A. leaves                      B. shall leave  
C. will leave                      D. is leaving

31. A. have to have                      B. can have  
C. ought to have                      D. must have

32. A. they have been given to me                      B. I have been given  
C. I am given                      D. they are given to me

33. A. May we go                      B. do you like to go  
C. shall we go                      D. will we go

**Choose the correct answer. Only one answer is correct.**

34. The lift is out of . . . . . so we'll have to walk  
A. function    B. order                      C. running                      D. work

35. Dinner will be ready . . . . . but we have time for a drink before then.  
A. currently    B. lately                      C. presently                      D. suddenly

36. what do you . . . . . to do about the problem now that this solution has failed?

- A. attempt    B. think    C. pretend    D. intend
37. We have ..... for a new secretary but we haven't had any replies yet.  
A. advertised    B. advised    C. announced    D. noticed
38. I've ..... for the job and I hope I get it.  
A. appointed    B. applied    C. presented    D. succeeded
39. He threw the box out of the window and it fell to the ..... outside.  
A. flat    B. floor    C. plain    D. ground
40. 100 competitors had ..... the race.  
A. put their names for    B. entered for  
C. put themselves for    D. taken part
41. I'm very ..... to you for your help.  
A. grateful    B. agreeable    C. pleased    D. thanks
42. He's so mean that he wouldn't give a beggar a ..... Of bread.  
A. peel    B. shell    C. crust    D. skin
43. Will you be able to come to the party? I .....  
A. believe yes    B. am afraid not  
C. don't hope so    D. don't expect
44. I never expected you to turn ..... at the meeting. I thought you were abroad.  
A. around    B. on    C. in    D. up
45. The plane is just going to take .....  
A. away    B. out    C. off    D. up
- In this series of questions, three words have the same sound but one does not. Choose the one that does not.
46. A. knees    B. peace    C. freeze    D. keys
47. A. home    B. sum    C. crumb    D. come
48. A. straighter    B. greater    C. water    D. later
49. A. ache    B. shake    C. steak    D. weak
50. A. another    B. bother    C. brother    D. mother

**Appendix B (answers to Nelson test)**

1.C	6.C	11.A	16.D	21.B	26.A	31.D	36.D	41.A	46.B
2. A	7.C	12.D	17.A	22.C	27.C	32.B	37.A	42.C	47.A
3. B	8.A	13.B	18.B	23.A	28.B	33.C	38.B	43.B	48.C
4.B	9.B	14.C	19.A	24.A	29.D	34.B	39.D	44.D	49.D
5.A	10.D	15.B	20.C	25.D	30.A	35.C	40.A	45.C	50.B

**Appendix C (pre-test writing sheet)**

<b>In the name of God</b>
<b>Name:</b>
<b>Last name:</b>
<b>Level:</b>
<b>Time: 30 minutes</b>
<b>Choose one of the topics and write paragraph about one of them.</b>
<b>1.The happiest day ever</b>
<b>2.The first day at a new school</b>

**Appendix D (posttest writing sheet)**

<b>In the name of God</b>
<b>Name:</b>
<b>Last name:</b>
<b>Level:</b>
<b>Time: 30 minutes</b>
<b>Choose one of the topics and write paragraph about one of them.</b>
<b>1.The most successful day in your life</b>
<b>2.One day without an access to the internet</b>

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