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STUDY

The interaction between task repetition and oral task enjoyment: Effects on speech complexity, accuracy, and fluency

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Abstract

This study investigated the interaction between oral task enjoyment and task repetition and the effect of this interaction on second language learners' speech complexity, accuracy, and fluency. In the context of task-based language teaching, task enjoyment is a context-specific, situational emotion that arises during task performance and is hypothesised to enhance engagement, motivation, and overall task performance, whereas task repetition is a classroom procedure shown to improve fluency, and possibly also complexity and accuracy. Fifty-two Polish young adult learners of L2 English completed the Oral Task Enjoyment Scale before exact task repetition. Their oral task performances were analysed before and after immediate exact task repetition. Results from Generalized Linear Model analysis reveal that 1) task repetition enhances lexical diversity and marginally improves fluency, 2) higher levels of oral task enjoyment positively influence learners' lexical diversity, correct verb forms, and speech rate, yet 3) its interaction with task repetition is not significant, suggesting that task repetition benefits are consistent across different levels of enjoyment. These findings imply that task repetition is an effective strategy for improving language performance, regardless of learners' emotional engagement with the task.

Keywords: positive psychology; task-based language teaching; task emotion; task enjoyment; task repetition

1. Introduction

While foreign language enjoyment has been increasingly investigated in second language acquisition research in recent years (Elahi Shirvan et al., 2021; Gabryś-Barker & Gałajda, 2016; Li & Dewaele, 2024; Li, Wei et al., 2024), its role within task-based language teaching contexts remains relatively underexplored. The available studies collectively point to a positive influence of foreign language enjoyment on learners' proficiency and achievement, offering a promising avenue for further exploration and application in language teaching. This study, which investigates the interaction between oral task enjoyment (OTE) and task repetition (TR) in the context of task-based language teaching (TBLT), not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also suggests a potential new direction for language teaching practices. In the context of TBLT, positive emotions have thus far been neglected (Almukhaild & King, 2023; Li, Wei et al., 2024), and Li & Dewaele (2024) suggest narrowing the concept of foreign language enjoyment (relating to a general disposition) to a more specific enjoyment of performing a given task. This concept of task enjoyment moves from a 'highly cognitive-oriented and negative emotion-focused approach' (Li & Dewaele, 2024, p. 85) to more situation-dependent task performance as a unit of observation and analysis of emotions. Thus,

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task enjoyment refers to a positive emotional state that occurs when someone engages in a second language task that fulfils a specific goal, desire or need, and when there is a sense of balance between their perceived ability and the challenge posed by the task (Li & Dewaele, 2024, p. 89). It is connected with curiosity (Mahmoodzadeh & Khajavy, 2019), flow (Liu & Song, 2021), and passion (Chen et al., 2021).

If task enjoyment enhances task performance, it might possibly enhance the effects of task repetition, which is one of the forms of planning in TBLT. Task repetition encourages language learners to revisit the same or a slightly altered task after certain intervals (Bygate, 2018; Bygate & Samuda, 2005; Ellis et al., 2020). The past decade witnessed a substantial growth in the number of task repetition studies (see Hiver et al., 2024), and prior literature highlights that learners can enhance their language performance with every repetition (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Boers, 2014; Bygate, 1996, 2001, 2018; Fukuta, 2016; Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2013; Lambert et al., 2017; Sun & Révész, 2021). Research supports the benefits of task repetition mainly in the improvement of learner fluency, with results for complexity and accuracy being so far mixed (Bygate, 1996; Fukuta, 2016; Gass et al., 1999; Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2013; Sun & Révész, 2021; Thai & Boers, 2016).

Despite extensive research on task repetition and its documented benefits for complexity, accuracy, and fluency, the influence of affective factors, such as task enjoyment, remains underexplored. Positive psychology theories, such as Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), suggest that enjoyment can enhance cognitive engagement, creativity, and motivation, elements critical to language performance. When learners experience positive emotions such as enjoyment, their cognitive resources expand, fostering greater creativity, problem-solving, and persistence in learning tasks. This engagement can enhance the effectiveness of task repetition by allowing learners to approach repeated tasks with greater openness and motivation (Li & Dewaele, 2024). This is because effective task repetition requires the learners to commit to persistent effort and maintain a level of enthusiasm. My claim is that while task repetition provides a framework for learning, task enjoyment might determine how much the learners engage with this repetitive process. As it contributes to more focused effort and attention during repetition, it could lead to enhanced learning outcomes, making it a key factor in optimizing task-based language teaching.

However, no study has empirically investigated how the oral task enjoyment level influences the subsequent effectiveness of task repetition. This leaves a gap in understanding how affective factors might moderate the well-documented benefits of task repetition. If oral task enjoyment significantly influences the effectiveness of task repetition, tasks could be designed not only to focus on linguistic goals but also to enhance enjoyment, thereby maximising the benefits of task repetition.

2. Literature review

2.1. Task repetition

Task repetition (TR) has emerged as a pivotal concept in second language acquisition research, particularly within the framework of task-based language teaching. Defined as the repetition of the same or slightly modified tasks, task repetition involves learners revisiting tasks either precisely as they were first presented or with procedural, content, or genre variations (Bygate & Samuda, 2005, p. 43). The rationale behind task repetition is grounded in cognitive theories of language production, which suggest that repeated engagement with tasks can reduce cognitive load, thereby enhancing linguistic performance (Ellis et al., 2020).

The theoretical foundations of task repetition in second language acquisition are strongly influenced by Levelt's (1989) speech production model and its application to language learning contexts (Bygate, 1996, 2001, 2018). According to Levelt (1989), speech production involves four stages: conceptualisation, formulation, articulation, and monitoring. For L2 learners, who often struggle with the formulation and articulation stages due to limited linguistic resources, task repetition offers an opportunity to rehearse and refine their output. It is believed that by repeating tasks, learners can

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allocate more cognitive resources to the formulation and articulation stages as they become more familiar with the task content and structure (Bygate, 1996, 2018; Hidalgo & Garcia Mayo, 2021). This familiarity may lead to automatisation (Rogers, 2023; Suzuki, 2023) and thus to more fluent and more extensive production (Baba & Nitta, 2021; Kim et al., 2022; Hiver et al., 2024). Skehan's Limited Capacity (Skehan, 2009, 2015) model further supports this view, positing that task repetition can ease the cognitive demands associated with task performance by reducing the attentional load required for conceptualisation. This, in turn, allows learners to focus more on linguistic accuracy and complexity during subsequent task performances (see Sun & Révész, 2021, for discussion). When repeating a task, learners are already familiar with the content and/or procedure, which frees their attentional resources and allows them to focus more on producing richer, more complex, and more fluent output (see Sun & Révész, 2021, for a discussion of the theory behind task repetition).

A substantial body of empirical research has explored the effects of task repetition on the three key dimensions of linguistic performance: complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). This research has primarily addressed the exact repetition of a task (as opposed to, e.g. repetition of task content or procedure, see Boers, 2014; Bygate, 1996; Gass et al., 1999; Lambert et al., 2017; Thai & Boers, 2016; Wang, 2014). Early studies by Bygate (1996) and Gass et al. (1999) demonstrated that task repetition could lead to improvements in grammatical accuracy, lexical complexity, and fluency. However, the extent of these improvements often varies depending on the specific CAF dimension being measured and the nature of the task repetition (exact vs. procedural).

First, the effect of task repetition on complexity is somewhat mixed. Some studies found that TR can lead to improvements in syntactic complexity. For example, Bygate (2001), Róg & Krawiec (2024), and Sheppard & Ellis (2018) observed gains in syntactic complexity as a result of task repetition. Other studies, however, reported that task repetition did not always result in improvements in complexity. For instance, Fukuta (2016) found significant positive effects on accuracy but not on syntactic complexity or fluency. The research on child learners, as summarised by Sun & Révész (2021), also shows varied results. While Van den Branden (1997) and Kim et al. (2018) found positive effects on lexical complexity, they did not observe changes in syntactic complexity. Similarly, studies like Kim & Tracy-Ventura (2013) and Thai & Boers (2016) had mixed results, with some improvements in complexity but not consistently across all CAF dimensions.

Second, the relationship between task repetition and accuracy is also unclear. Some studies have found that task repetition can lead to improvements in accuracy. For instance, Bygate (1996) observed that the learner produced more grammatically accurate language after repeating the task. Similarly, Gass et al. (1999) found that L2 Spanish learners displayed more accurate production of the verb 'estar' after task repetition. Ahmadian & Tavakoli (2011) and Fukuta (2016) also reported positive effects of task repetition on accuracy. Despite these positive findings, other studies have reported limited effects on accuracy. For example, Bygate's (2001) experimental research found improvements in fluency and syntactic complexity but not in accuracy. Similarly, Thai & Boers (2016) observed that while TR led to gains in fluency, there were no significant changes in accuracy.

Third, studies have consistently found that task repetition, particularly exact repetition, has a positive impact on fluency. For example, Ahmadian & Tavakoli (2011), Bygate (2001), and Lambert et al. (2017) reported that task repetition increased learners' speech rate and smoother delivery, with effects on accuracy and complexity being less consistent. Some studies, such as Bygate (2001) and Sheppard & Ellis (2018), have found gains in fluency and syntactic complexity, while others, like Fukuta (2016), have reported improvements in fluency and accuracy, but not in complexity. Gains in writing fluency following task repetition have also been reported (e.g. Huh et al., 2018).

Task repetition can manifest in various forms, including exact repetition, procedural repetition, content repetition, and genre repetition, each of which can differentially impact CAF measures. For instance, Boers (2014) found that exact repetition led to improvements in fluency but did not significantly affect accuracy or complexity. Similarly, Thai & Boers (2016) observed that while fluency increased under time pressure, complexity and accuracy remained unchanged. The frequency and

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timing of task repetitions also play a critical role in determining their effectiveness. Studies that explore immediate repetition, such as those by Lynch & Maclean (2000) and Thai & Boers (2016), generally show more pronounced gains in fluency compared to studies that implement longer intervals between repetitions (e.g. Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2013).

Overall, research consistently supports the positive effect of task repetition on fluency, though outcomes for complexity and accuracy are mixed. It has been suggested that the benefits of task repetition may depend on learners' individual dispositions (Robinson, 2001) and what has thus far not been investigated is the impact of one such disposition, task enjoyment, on learners' performances during task repetition. For instance, it is unknown whether learners who experience greater task enjoyment are more likely to reap greater benefits of task repetition than those who enjoy the task less. As Róg & Krawiec (2024) point out, task repetition can be monotonous or frustrating, especially when progress is not immediately evident. Enjoyable tasks might help learners handle these challenges without losing motivation. The concept of oral task enjoyment is discussed in the next section.

2.2. Oral task enjoyment

The increased interest in foreign language enjoyment was sparked by the positive psychology movement within second language acquisition research (Dewaele & Li, 2020; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2017). Drawing initial inspiration mainly from Fredrickson's (2001) broaden-and-build theory of positive psychology, an increasing number of L2 researchers have acknowledged the presence of various emotions (both positive and negative) with unique roles for L2 learners and begun advocating for a more comprehensive approach to studying emotions, i.e. moving beyond a sole focus on negative emotions such as boredom or anxiety (Dewaele & Li, 2020; Li & Dewaele, 2024; P. D. MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Instead, researchers have begun to acknowledge the importance of positive emotions and related constructs, such as engagement, flow, and enjoyment, that play distinct yet interconnected roles in language learning. In particular, foreign language enjoyment is the emotion which received particular research attention over the past few decades (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, 2016; Elahi Shirvan et al., 2020, 2021; Li & Dewaele, 2024; Li, Wei et al., 2024; Łodej & Osmoła, 2024; Mierzwa, 2019; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2017). It offers 'a safe psychological base from which to explore an unfamiliar linguistic and cultural world' (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014, p. 261) and 'occurs when people not only meet their needs but exceed them to accomplish something new or even unexpected' (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016, p. 217). While enjoyment is a purely emotional construct, engagement and flow encompass both cognitive and emotional dimensions (Egbert, 2003; Fredrickson, 2001). For instance, engagement refers to the cognitive and affective involvement of learners in a task, while flow, as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), combines focused attention and intrinsic motivation, often resulting from positive emotions like enjoyment.

Moreover, from a positive psychology perspective, positive emotions such as enjoyment are not only instrumental in enhancing learning outcomes but are also intrinsically valuable. As Seligman (2011) emphasises, positive emotions form one of the core elements of well-being in the PERMA model (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment). Enjoyment, in this context, supports psychological flourishing and contributes to a learner's overall sense of competence, autonomy, and vitality. Therefore, fostering positive emotions in TBLT is important not only for language development but also for promoting learners' mental health and long-term engagement with the learning process. This has been strongly advocated in recent research, with calls to bridge the cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning (Li & Dewaele, 2024). As learners engage in tasks, how they feel during those tasks, especially whether they find them enjoyable, matters not only for performance but for sustaining motivation and well-being over time.

While foreign language enjoyment is a general trait of L2 learners, the recent adoption of a shorter time scale to measure enjoyment, i.e. the length of a task, led researchers to suggest the concept of

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task enjoyment. Following Li & Dewaele (Li & Dewaele, 2024, p. 89), task enjoyment is 'a positive state arising when an individual engages in an L2 task that satisfies a certain goal, desire, or need and when there is a perceived balance between perceived ability and the challenge of the task'. It is, therefore, connected to positive affective experiences such as fun, playfulness, pleasure, meaning, interests, safety, security, and belonging, among others, and can be located between the (trait) foreign language enjoyment and the 'state emotion on a per-second/minute timescale measured with the idiodynamic method' (Li & Dewaele, 2024, p. 89).

Recent research has begun to explore task enjoyment as a critical component of language learning, particularly within the framework of positive psychology. Task enjoyment has often been examined as part of broader constructs such as task flow and task engagement. For instance, Egbert (2003) emphasised the importance of enjoyment in achieving flow in second language (L2) contexts, suggesting that appropriate task features, such as clear goals, adequate time, and immediate feedback, alongside learners' linguistic skills can foster flow experiences, which in turn enhance task performance. Dewaele et al. (2023) observed that flow is most likely to occur when high levels of enjoyment coincide with low levels of boredom and when learners face an optimal balance between challenge and skill. Baralt et al. (2016) compared L2 learners' affective, social, and cognitive engagement during simple and complex story retelling tasks in face-to-face and computer-mediated communication settings. They found that learners, especially in complex task conditions, perceived the tasks as purposeful, enjoyable, and intellectually challenging. Additionally, peer interactions played a significant role in task enjoyment, as learners valued working with supportive partners who contributed to the co-construction of the task.

Other studies suggest that increased cognitive engagement and the need to negotiate with peers can enhance the emotional intensity of the learning experience, both positively and negatively. Philp and Duchesne (2016) described task engagement as a multifaceted construct where emotional engagement, including enjoyment, is a central element that drives motivation and improves task performance. Nakamura et al. (2021) and Phung et al. (2020) explored how different constraints in task design affected learners' engagement and enjoyment. They found that learners who had more autonomy in generating options for a task (- constraints) reported higher enjoyment and anxiety levels than those who worked within predefined options (+ constraints). Additionally, Dao and Sato (2021) also noted that emotional engagement, as a combination of enjoyment and interest, plays a significant role in shaping learning outcomes.

Studies such as those by Egbert (2003) and Dewaele et al. (2023) highlight its significance in enhancing task performance, particularly when high levels of enjoyment coincide with low boredom and an optimal balance between challenge and skill. Further, Baralt et al. (2016) and Nakamura et al. (2021) underscore the role of task complexity and peer interactions in shaping task enjoyment, suggesting that these factors can significantly influence learners' emotional engagement. Li and Dewaele (Li & Dewaele, 2024, p. 90) point out that research specifically targeting task enjoyment as an independent construct in L2 learning is limited despite these insights. Most studies have treated task enjoyment as a subsidiary element within broader constructs like task engagement or flow rather than examining it in its own right. This gap has led to calls for the development of reliable and valid tools to measure task enjoyment independently. As research begins to examine enjoyment as a skill-specific construct, new instruments are being suggested. This gap has prompted calls for the development of reliable and valid tools to measure task enjoyment independently, leading to the creation of instruments such as the English Writing Enjoyment Scale (Jin, 2023), the L2 Writing Task Enjoyment Scale (Li et al., 2023) and the Oral Task Enjoyment Scale (Li & Dewaele, 2024). Li et al. (2023) developed the L2 Writing Task Enjoyment Scale, the first scale of its kind. However, its application is limited to written tasks, which differ from oral tasks, and these differences suggest that task enjoyment might vary across different modes of language production, necessitating a skill-specific approach to measuring and understanding task enjoyment. Jiang (2021) introduced a questionnaire on task enjoyment that captures learners' dynamically changing levels of enjoyment

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during task performance. This five-item Task Enjoyment Questionnaire, based on earlier research by Khajavy et al. (2018), Papi (2016), and Peixoto et al. (2015), highlights the temporal and contextual nature of task enjoyment and its variability across different task conditions. Li and Dewaele's (2024) Oral Task Enjoyment Scale is another recent development aimed at measuring enjoyment related to the performance of oral tasks.

While the study of task enjoyment is gaining traction, the research is still in its early stages, and several areas remain underexplored. For example, the idiodynamic method, which tracks fluctuations in learners' emotions in real time, has been suggested as a promising approach for studying task-specific FLE (Chen, 2023). This method has revealed the dynamic nature of enjoyment during L2 tasks, with factors like task difficulty and topic interest playing significant roles. However, most studies using this method have focused on individual learner experiences rather than interactions within peer-based tasks, which are common in classroom settings. Additionally, the impact of task design on learners' enjoyment remains underinvestigated, despite its importance for aligning tasks with learners' interests and affective states.

Another area of interest is the relationship between task enjoyment and foreign language enjoyment. Task enjoyment can be seen as contributing to long-term foreign language enjoyment (see Li & Dewaele, 2024), which is beneficial for learners' attention, cognition, motivation, and engagement. Repeated positive experiences during specific tasks may gradually build into a more generalised sense of enjoyment in language learning. Li et al. (2018) demonstrated that learners' recurrent experiences of enjoyment during tasks, influenced by factors such as task novelty, perceived ability, and social interactions with peers and teachers, contribute to the development of overall foreign language enjoyment. However, task enjoyment is inherently situational and may not always align with long-term foreign language enjoyment, as specific tasks can still induce boredom or frustration depending on their difficulty and frequency of repetition.

3. Study

Research thus far has suggested that task enjoyment (often studied as a component of task flow or task engagement) might be a predictor of learner achievement (Dewaele et al., 2023; Egbert, 2003; Li et al., 2023; Pekrun, 2006; Philp & Duchesne, 2016) and that task repetition generally favours the development of learner fluency, and in many cases also their complexity and accuracy (Bygate, 1996; Fukuta, 2016; Gass et al., 1999; Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2013; Róg, 2021; Sun & Révész, 2021; Thai & Boers, 2016). However, no study has explored the relationship between the two phenomena in tandem. Consequently, this study investigates whether the level of oral task enjoyment influences the effects of task repetition in the context of foreign language learning. Specifically, it aims to understand how task repetition affects learners' complexity, accuracy, and fluency and whether this effect varies according to the level of oral task enjoyment associated with initial task performance. Yet, the rationale for the study stems not only from the research gap identified above but also from the theoretical links between OTE and TR that can be explained through both cognitive and affective perspectives.

From a cognitive standpoint, task repetition reduces cognitive load by allowing learners to familiarise themselves with task demands, thereby enabling them to allocate more attention to refining linguistic performance (Bygate, 1996, 2018; Ellis et al., 2020). This aligns with the control-value theory (Pekrun, 2006), which posits that enjoyment arises when learners perceive a task as both manageable and valuable. By reducing task complexity through repetition, learners may find the task more enjoyable as they gain a sense of competence and control over the task (Li, 2024; Xing et al., 2024). Moreover, task repetition allows learners to free up attentional resources as they become familiar with task content and structure, supporting improved fluency and enabling focus on accuracy and complexity (Levelt, 1989; Skehan, 2009). As learners repeat tasks, their confidence grows, fostering positive emotions like enjoyment. Li, Wei et al. (2024) note that enjoyment acts as a motivational factor, encouraging learners to persist and experiment with language, further enhancing task performance.

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Further, from an affective perspective, Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001) emphasises the role of positive emotions like enjoyment in expanding learners' cognitive resources. When learners enjoy a task, they are more likely to engage deeply, sustain effort, and approach the task with openness (Li & Dewaele, 2024; Li, Wei et al., 2024; Xing et al., 2024). Task repetition creates opportunities for learners to experience success and mastery, reinforcing positive emotions and increasing their willingness to participate in future tasks (Li & Dewaele, 2024).

There is also some empirical evidence supporting these theoretical claims. Li (2024) highlights that task enjoyment can enhance performance by increasing learners' motivation and creativity, which are critical during repeated task engagement. Similarly, Xing et al. (2024) found that learners who enjoyed tasks were more likely to approach them with curiosity and persistence, essential traits for benefiting from task repetition. However, research also suggests that repetitive tasks can become monotonous without adequate emotional engagement, reducing their effectiveness (Róg & Krawiec, 2024).

The present study predicts that higher levels of oral task enjoyment might positively influence the effectiveness of task repetition in terms of improved CAF measures. The theoretical links between task repetition and task enjoyment suggest the importance of designing tasks that are cognitively engaging and emotionally satisfying. This is because task enjoyment can mitigate the potential monotony of repetition by sustaining learners' interest and motivation, while task repetition provides a scaffold for cognitive development. Accordingly, the present study aims to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How does task repetition influence oral task performance in terms of CAF measures?

RQ2: Does the effect of task repetition on CAF measures vary according to the level of oral task enjoyment?

RQ3: To what extent is the effect of task repetition on oral task performance differential for learners with high and low levels of oral task enjoyment?

3.1. Research design

A quasi-experimental mixed-design approach was employed in the current study to investigate the relationship between task repetition and task enjoyment in second language oral performance. The study focused on three key aspects of linguistic performance: complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The independent variable influencing the study was task repetition (i.e. repeating the same oral task), while the dependent variable under observation was speaking performance (i.e. speech complexity, accuracy, and fluency). Another significant factor in the study was the oral task enjoyment level, which acted as a mediating variable. The participants were 52 first-year students enrolled in an English philology program at a university in Poland (see Section 3.2) who completed a debate-style oral task twice (see Section 3.3). The Oral Task Enjoyment Scale was administered to measure task enjoyment before task repetition. Participants' performance was recorded and analysed for the CAF measures (see Section 3.4). To account for potential interaction effects between OTE and TR, a Generalized Linear Model (GLM) was used to offer greater flexibility and robustness, particularly for handling non-normal data distributions and incorporating interaction effects (see Section 3.6).

3.2. Participants

The research site was a full-time B.A. program in English philology at a small university of applied sciences in north-western Poland. Fifty-two participants, first-year students of L2 English, took part in the study. The participants attended three 90-minute EFL sessions on a weekly basis, aside from other regular classes held in English. Their curriculum was mostly task-based with elements of implicit and explicit instruction but also included some rote learning and mechanical practice, with particular attention paid to listening, speaking, and reading skills. Their L2 English proficiency was equivalent

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to B2 on the CEFR scale and Advanced Mid based on the ACTFL rating as measured by the Oxford Placement Test. Their average age was 19.56 years.

3.3. Instruments

The Oral Task Enjoyment Scale (Li & Dewaele, 2024) was used to evaluate the level of oral task enjoyment. This scale was chosen since it is a validated, psychometrically sound tool designed to measure task-specific enjoyment in oral language tasks. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses confirmed that the items on the scale effectively represent the underlying construct of oral task enjoyment. This ten-item self-report scale gauges three facets of OTE: self, task characteristics, and social. Participants respond to a series of statements related to their enjoyment of the task on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The original English version of the scale was used, but statements were slightly modified since the original scale mentions 'presentation'. In the present study, this was reworded to 'task'. The internal consistency of the Oral Task Enjoyment Scale used in this study was very good (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$).

The speaking task was designed to follow the criteria stipulated in Ellis and Shintani (2014): (1) a focus on meaning rather than on the language code, (2) some gap so that learners have to retrieve or share meanings, (3) the task does not stipulate explicitly what language structures to use while completing it, and (4) a clear outcome other than practising the language, i.e. something has to be achieved through the use of language.

The task used in the present study stimulated the participants to take part in a debate. The participants were divided into small groups of four students. Each group was assigned the same issues related to their university experience: 1) social media has no impact on language learning, 2) university education be free for everyone, and 3) student engagement in extracurricular activities is a waste of time. The task would involve participants choosing either of the options: for or against, preparing arguments related to the assigned issues, followed by a structured debate where each pair of participants presents their viewpoints. To do so, participants were given 15 minutes to prepare (e.g. brainstorm ideas, research their topic online, gather supporting evidence, and prepare their arguments). This stage encouraged collaboration so all group members were actively involved. Then, during a debate each pair had five minutes to present their arguments, followed by a five-minute rebuttal from the opposing pair, and another three minutes to respond to the interlocutors. The debate required participants to articulate their ideas clearly, respond to counter-arguments, and use persuasive language. After the debate, each group was asked to have a short reflection period to discuss their performance, the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments, and their overall experience of the task. A subsequent analysis of learners' recordings involved the debate only, not the discussions during preparation time or the post-task reflection. When the task was repeated, the learners worked with the same partner but talked to a different pair of students.

3.4. CAF measures

The CAF measures were partially adapted from the work of Muhammadpour et al. (2023), who employed task repetition results to examine their correlation with learners' working memory levels. The specific measures of complexity, accuracy, and fluency applied in the current research have been successfully employed in previous studies (e.g., Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bygate, 2018; Foster & Skehan, 2013; Gass et al., 1999; Hassanzadeh-Taleshi et al., 2021; Kim & Tracy-Ventura, 2013), demonstrating their empirical validity.

The study measured the amount of subordination (AS) and lexical diversity (LD) to assess learners' complexity. The amount of subordination was determined by counting the number of subordinate clauses relative to independent clauses within each analysis-of-speech unit, with a higher level of subordination indicating more complex language use. Lexical diversity, on the other hand, evaluates

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the variety of vocabulary used in a text by dividing the total number of unique words (types) by the total number of words (tokens).

The accuracy of language was evaluated using the percentage of error-free clauses (EF) and the correct use of verb forms (CVF). The EF was calculated by dividing the number of error-free clauses by the total number of clauses and multiplying by 100. Similarly, CVF was determined by dividing the number of correctly used verbs by the total number of verbs and multiplying by 100. The present author was a single coder, experienced in analysing linguistic performance using CAF measures, who manually coded the data following a protocol based on established frameworks in task-based language research (e.g. Foster & Skehan, 2013; Skehan, 2009). To ensure consistency, the coder conducted a pilot analysis on a subset of the data (10%) and revisited it after two weeks to compare the results. A consistency check revealed a 95% agreement between the two rounds of coding, demonstrating high intra-coder reliability.

Fluency was measured through speech rate (SR), defined as the total number of syllables produced by a learner divided by the total time taken to complete the task, multiplied by 60. The average SR for British English is approximately 265 syllables per minute (Wang, 2021).

3.5. Procedure

In the first step, participants performed an oral task, which was recorded on their mobile phones and later sent to their teacher's email. The participants were informed that their performances would be analysed for research purposes, but were not informed which aspects would specifically be targeted. They all gave their consent to be recorded. The recordings underwent transcription, coding, and analysis. Participants' results were analysed for complexity, accuracy, and fluency. Next, the participants completed the Oral Task Enjoyment Scale (Li & Dewaele, 2024) on paper. This took them about ten minutes as the scale is relatively short and straightforward. The participants were informed that the scale was not anonymous, as its results would need to be compared with those of the CAF analysis. The participants were informed that regardless of their initial thoughts on the task, whether they enjoyed it or not, this would not affect their future grades. They were asked to be honest in their responses. In the third step, once the scales were collected, the study employed exact task repetition, where participants repeated the same debate-style oral task without modifications to its content, structure, or requirements. The participants were paired with a different interlocutor during the repeated task to introduce a new dynamic in interaction. For instance, if participants initially presented arguments against a topic, they repeated the task by presenting their arguments to a different pair of learners who were for. Again, they were asked to record the performance of everyone in their group and later send it to their teacher.

3.6. Analysis

In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test were used to evaluate the effects of task repetition on the CAF measures for RQ1. A Generalised Linear Model was used for RQ2 to examine how variations in oral task enjoyment influenced the effect of task repetition. For RQ3, an interaction-focused Generalised Linear Model was employed to assess whether the effects of task repetition differed between learners with high and low levels of oral task enjoyment.

The study yielded 26 recordings of group performances, comprising 13 recordings each of initial task performance and task repetition. The transcription process began by uploading the audio files to the Microsoft 365 Transcribe pane, followed by a manual review to ensure the transcript accurately reflected the audio. Following Hsu (2019) and Muhammadpour et al. (2023), this study employed a clean, verbatim transcription style, which excludes filler words, false starts, and stutters. This approach is appropriate for research where the precise wording is prioritised over the manner of delivery. The transcriptions were then coded for the different CAF measures.

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The Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the data were not normally distributed ($p < .001$). Therefore, based on the need to include interaction effects between OTE and TR, the data underwent analysis using the GLM, which allows for the handling of non-normal distributions and included the interaction effects necessary to address the research questions comprehensively. Task repetition was set as a dummy variable representing pre-test (0) and post-test (1) and therefore treated as a factor. The separate CAF measures were dependent variables, and the OTE level was a covariate.

4. Results

RQ1: How does task repetition influence oral task performance in terms of CAF measures?

To address the first research question, the main effects of task repetition on CAF measures were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. The descriptive statistics for the overall dataset are presented in Table 1.

Modest improvements in performance between the first task performance and TR were observed across all CAF measures, indicating that TR likely had a positive effect on learners' language performance. The standard deviations suggested that participants varied in both their task performances and enjoyment levels. Notably, fluency showed more variability than other measures, suggesting more variability in speech rate among the participants. The OTE scores had a relatively narrow range, with a mean of 3.68, which is close to the upper half of the 5-point Likert scale, indicating that participants generally enjoyed the tasks, although there was still some variability in enjoyment levels. The standard deviation suggested moderate variability in enjoyment levels across participants. The Shapiro-Wilk test p-values indicated that most variables deviated significantly from normality ($p < .05$), except for EF1 and SR1, which were closer to the threshold of normality. This warranted the use of a non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test to compare the initial task performance and task repetition for the CAF measures. The results of Wilcoxon's test are summarised in Table 2.

The results indicated significant improvements from the initial task performance to the task repetition across the measures of AS, LD, and SR ($p < .001$), suggesting that TR significantly enhanced learners' performance in terms of complexity and fluency. The effects on accuracy (EF and CVF) were not statistically significant, although CVF showed a marginally significant difference ($p = .072$).

RQ2: Does the effect of task repetition on CAF measures vary according to the level of oral task enjoyment?

In the next step, to determine whether the effect of TR on CAF measures varied according to the level of OTE, a Generalised Linear Model was used for further analysis. The model summary is presented in Table 3.

The significant *p*-values for AS, LD, CVF, and SR indicated that the model with predictors (H1) explained the data better than the null model (H0). However, for EF, the improvement was marginal, suggesting that TR, OTE, and their interaction may not have had as significant an impact on EF as on the other measures. To understand the direction and magnitude of these effects, the estimates for each predictor in the GLM were calculated along with their standard errors (SE), t-, and p – values (see Table 4).

The GLM analysis revealed a significant positive effect of OTE on LD ($\beta = .063$, $p < .001$), CVF ($\beta = 3.791$, $p = .038$), and SR ($\beta = 15.905$, $p < .001$), as well as marginally significant positive effect of OTE on EF ($\beta = .740$, $p = .054$). The effect on AS was positive but not statistically significant ($\beta = .059$, $p = .063$). The effect of TR on the CAF measures proved significant for LD ($\beta = .191$, $p = .049$) and marginally significant on SR ($\beta = 31.032$, $p = .068$).

RQ3: To what extent is the effect of task repetition on oral task performance differential for learners with high and low levels of oral task enjoyment?

To address RQ3, the interaction effects between task repetition and oral task enjoyment on complexity, accuracy, and fluency measures were further analysed based on the results of the Generalized Linear Model. The interaction effects (OTE*TR) were not significant for any of the CAF measures,

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Measure	Median	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Shapiro-Wilk *p*	Minimum	Maximum
AS1	1.190	1.235	.084	1.638	1.860	<.001	1.170	1.500
AS2	1.425	1.444	.140	.670	−.363	003	1.240	1.780
LD1	.400	.402	.073	.646	−.172	<.001	290	540
LD2	.500	.494	.065	−.561	−.654	<.001	350	600
EF1	51.770	51.578	1.220	−.249	−.220	.054	49.230	54.560
EF2	52.100	51.750	1.580	−.915	1.561	.022	46.450	54.450
CVF1	60.700	58.031	6.356	−.414	.123	<.001	43.900	70.400
CVF2	60.650	58.799	7.503	.132	.126	.055	44.000	75.100

Note: AS: amount of subordination; LD: lexical diversity; EF: percentage of error-free clauses; CVF: correct verb forms; SR: speech rate; 1 = first task performance, 2 = task repetition.

Table 2. Wilcoxon signed-rank test

	W	z	*p*
AS1 – AS2	.000	−6.275	< .001
LD1 – LD2	.000	−6.154	< .001
EF1 – EF2	463.500	−1.680	.094
CVF1 – CVF2	431.500	−1.800	.072
SR1 – SR2	.000	−6.275	< .001

Note: AS: amount of subordination; LD: lexical diversity; EF: percentage of error-free clauses; CVF: correct verb forms; SR: speech rate.

Table 3. Model summary

	Model	Deviance	AIC	BIC	df	X^2	*p*
AS	H_0	2.493	−88.880	−83.591	103		
	H_1	1.281	−152.117	−138.895	100	1.212	<.001
LD	H_0	.730	−216.659	−211.370	103		
	H_1	.434	−264.730	−251.508	100	.296	<.001
EF	H_0	203.980	369.197	374.485	103		
	H_1	188.960	367.242	380.464	100	15.020	.053
CVF	H_0	4879.168	699.366	704.655	103		
	H_1	4246.014	690.911	704.133	100	633.154	.003
SR	H_0	25,401.663	870.950	876.239	103		
	H_1	13,310.449	809.738	822.960	100	12,091.214	<.001

Note: AS: amount of subordination; LD: lexical diversity; EF: percentage of error-free clauses; CVF: correct verb forms; SR: speech rate.

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Table 4. Coefficients

		Estimate	SE	t	*p*
AS	(Intercept)	1.018	.117	8.727	<.001
	OTE	.059	.031	1.883	.063
	TR	.237	.165	1.436	.154
	OTE * TR	−.008	.044	−.172	.864
LD	(Intercept)	.167	.068	2.455	.016
	OTE	.063	.018	3.465	<.001
	TR	.191	.096	1.991	.049
	OTE * TR	−.026	.026	−1.028	.306
EF	(Intercept)	48.844	1.416	34.490	<.001
	OTE	.740	.380	1.948	.054
	TR	.191	2.003	.095	.924
	OTE * TR	−.005	.537	−.009	.993
CVF	(Intercept)	44.024	6.713	6.558	< .001
	OTE	3.791	1.800	2.106	.038
	TR	−6.219	9.494	−.655	.514
	OTE * TR	1.913	2.546	.751	.454
SR	(Intercept)	36.809	11.886	3.097	.003
	OTE	15.905	3.188	4.990	< .001
	TR	31.032	16.809	1.846	.068
	OTE * TR	−3.985	4.508	−.884	.379

indicating that the effect of TR on these measures did not vary significantly with different levels of OTE. Since the interaction effects were not significant, the effect of TR on oral task performance did not appear to be different for learners with high and low levels of OTE.

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test revealed significant effects of TR on AS, LD, and SR. The discrepancy between the results from the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test and the Generalized Linear Model arises because the Wilcoxon test is a pairwise comparison that directly assesses changes from initial task performance to task repetition without accounting for other factors. In contrast, GLM considers TR in the context of other variables, such as OTE and their interaction (OTE*TR), providing a more comprehensive analysis. If the effect of TR is relatively small compared to the variance explained by other factors or if substantial interaction effects are present, the GLM might not detect a significant main effect of TR. In the present analysis, the interaction effect proved to be non-significant, suggesting that OTE did not modify the effect of TR on the CAF measures. This means that the benefit (or lack thereof) of TR was generally consistent across different levels of OTE.

In summary, while the Wilcoxon test indicated noticeable difference between the initial task performance and TR for AS, LD, and SR, the GLM results suggested that when accounted for other variables like OTE and interactions between OTE and TR, the effect of TR was significant for LD and marginally significant for SR but not for AS. This could imply that the differences observed in the Wilcoxon test might have been influenced by other factors that the GLM was accounting for.

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5. Discussion

RQ1: Task repetition enhances oral task performance in terms of fluency and complexity, but its impact on accuracy is less pronounced.

The results of this study indicate that task repetition significantly affected participants' complexity (amount of subordination and lexical diversity) and fluency (speech rate). Fluency, often measured through speech rate and other temporal variables, has consistently been found to improve with task repetition (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Bygate, 2001; Huh et al., 2018; Lambert et al., 2017; Róg & Krawiec, 2024). In this study, task repetition had a marginally significant positive effect on SR, aligning with previous research that suggests task repetition reduces cognitive load and allows learners to produce language more fluently. This finding is supported by Levelt's (1989) speech production model, which posits that repeated engagement with the same task allows learners to allocate more cognitive resources to articulation and monitoring, thereby improving fluency. Studies by Ahmadian & Tavakoli (2011) and Boers (2014) also reported similar gains in fluency with task repetition, suggesting that familiarity with task content reduces the burden on working memory, facilitating smoother and faster speech production.

In terms of complexity, the study found that task repetition significantly influenced both lexical diversity (LD) and the amount of subordination (AS). This influence on complexity is partially consistent with the mixed findings found in the relevant literature. Some studies have shown that task repetition can lead to improvements in syntactic complexity (Bygate, 2001; Róg, 2021; Róg & Krawiec, 2024; Sheppard & Ellis, 2018), while others have reported limited or no such significant effects (Fukuta, 2016; Thai & Boers, 2016). The significant effect of task repetition on LD observed in this study suggests that learners may become more adept at using a wider range of vocabulary with repeated exposure to the same task. A significant effect on AS might indicate that while learners can diversify their lexical choices, they also produce more complex sentence structures. This could be due to the fact that increased familiarity with the task content might lead learners to experiment with more complex syntactic forms (Robinson, 2001; Sun & Révész, 2021).

The study found no significant impact of task repetition on accuracy measures (EF and CVF), which is somewhat surprising given that some previous research has reported positive effects of task repetition on accuracy (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Gass et al., 1999). However, the literature also contains findings that task repetition may have limited or no impact on accuracy, particularly when fluency and complexity are prioritized (Bygate, 2001; Thai & Boers, 2016). This suggests that the benefits of task repetition may vary depending on the specific linguistic dimensions being measured and the nature of the tasks. The cognitive resources freed up by task familiarity might be more likely allocated to fluency and lexical diversity rather than accuracy, which could explain the non-significant results in this study.

The results of this study are broadly consistent with those of other task repetition studies, which have documented improvements in fluency and lexical diversity, but have shown mixed effects on accuracy and syntactic complexity. For example, Bygate (2001) and Lambert et al. (2017) observed similar patterns, where task repetition led to enhanced fluency and some aspects of complexity but did not consistently improve accuracy. Previous task repetition studies also observed that it favours not only the production of more words but also the production of words that are less frequent and less familiar (Jackson & Suethanapornkul, 2013).

The findings of this study align with theoretical accounts of task repetition as a mechanism for enhancing fluency and complexity in second language performance. The significant improvements observed in speech rate, amount of subordination, and lexical diversity are consistent with the Cognition Hypothesis (Skehan, 2009), which posits that repeated exposure to task demands frees up attentional resources, enabling learners to focus on restructuring their linguistic output. Additionally,

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the lack of significant improvements in accuracy measures (EF and CVF) echoes Bygate's (1996) findings that task repetition primarily supports automaticity and structural refinement rather than precise error correction.

RQ2: The effect of task repetition on oral task performance does not vary according to the level of oral task enjoyment.

The second research question aimed to explore whether the effectiveness of task repetition in improving the CAF measures varies depending on the level of oral task enjoyment. The results from the GLM analysis revealed that while oral task enjoyment has a significant positive effect on several CAF measures, the interaction between task repetition and oral task enjoyment was not significant for any of the measures. This suggests that the benefits of task repetition on CAF measures do not significantly vary according to different levels of oral task enjoyment. These findings offer valuable insights into the relationship between affective factors, such as task enjoyment, and the cognitive processes involved in task repetition.

Oral task enjoyment is an affective factor that has been thus far shown to positively influence language performance (Li & Dewaele, 2024). In this study, oral task enjoyment was found to have a significant positive effect on lexical diversity, correct verb forms, and speech rate. These results are consistent with previous research that highlights the role of positive emotions in enhancing language performance by broadening learners' cognitive resources and encouraging more creative and complex language use (Fredrickson, 2001; Li & Dewaele, 2024). The findings support the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001), which posits that positive emotions expand cognitive resources. Learners with higher OTE may have experienced greater engagement and willingness to experiment linguistically, resulting in richer lexical output and improved fluency. These findings are also aligned with the Control-Value Theory (Pekrun, 2006), which highlights the role of enjoyment in sustaining motivation and effort, especially when learners perceive the task as both valuable and manageable. When learners enjoy a task, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and willing to experiment with language, resulting in improvements in various aspects of their performance. Yet, despite the positive effects of oral task enjoyment on several CAF measures, the study found no significant interaction between task repetition and oral task enjoyment. This suggests that the influence of task repetition on CAF measures does not differ significantly across varying levels of task enjoyment. In other words, whether a learner has high or low enjoyment of the task, the effects of repeating that task on their language performance remain consistent. This finding is intriguing, as it suggests that while enjoyment can enhance overall performance, it does not necessarily amplify the benefits of task repetition. It also contrasts with some studies which suggest that individual differences, such as motivation and anxiety, can moderate the effects of task repetition (Robinson, 2001). The current study suggests that at least for the measures investigated, oral task enjoyment does not significantly modulate the impact of task repetition on performance.

One possible explanation for this lack of interaction is that task repetition and oral task enjoyment may operate through different cognitive and affective mechanisms. Task repetition primarily enhances performance by reducing cognitive load through familiarity with the task, allowing learners to allocate more resources to language production (Bygate, 2001; Ellis et al., 2020). In contrast, task enjoyment may enhance performance by increasing engagement and motivation, leading to more sustained effort and a greater willingness to take risks (Li & Dewaele, 2024). These processes may work independently, which could explain why the interaction between task repetition and oral task enjoyment was not significant.

RQ3: The benefits of task repetition on oral task performance are consistent across different levels of oral task enjoyment.

Although oral task enjoyment was found to have a positive impact on certain CAF measures, its role as a moderator of task repetition effectiveness appears limited. The third research question aimed to explore whether the effects of task repetition on oral task performance differs between learners with high and low levels of oral task enjoyment. The GLM analysis indicated no significant interaction

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between task repetition and oral task enjoyment for any of the CAF measures. This indicates that learners with both high and low levels of task enjoyment benefited similarly from task repetition. This finding is consistent with previous research that has shown task repetition to be an effective strategy for enhancing specific aspects of language performance, particularly fluency, regardless of individual differences (Bygate, 2001; Ellis et al., 2020). The consistency of the effectiveness of task repetition across varying levels of enjoyment suggests that the cognitive mechanisms underlying task repetition are robust and operate independently of learners' emotional states. First, it suggests that task repetition can be a universally applicable strategy in TBLT, effective for a wide range of learners, perhaps even regardless of their emotional engagement with the task. This is particularly important in diverse classroom settings where learners may have varying levels of motivation and engagement. Teachers can implement task repetition to improve linguistic performance without needing to tailor the approach based on individual levels of task enjoyment. Second, the non-differential effects imply that while enhancing task enjoyment is beneficial for overall performance, it may not be necessary to specifically target enjoyment when implementing task repetition. Instead, teachers can focus on ensuring that tasks are well-designed and appropriately challenging, knowing that the benefits of repetition will likely manifest regardless of the learners' enjoyment levels.

The results underscore the importance of designing tasks that strike a balance between cognitive challenges and emotional engagement. Incorporating elements that promote enjoyment, such as collaborative activities or meaningful task outcomes, may enhance learners' motivation and performance, particularly for measures like complexity and fluency. Furthermore, the consistency of the effects of task repetition across varying levels of OTE suggests that task repetition can be a reliable strategy for improving certain aspects of performance, even in learners with lower enjoyment levels.

From a pedagogical perspective, these results emphasise two implications. First, task repetition is a beneficial practice for enhancing learners' fluency and complexity in oral tasks. However, teachers may need to supplement task repetition with other strategies if the goal is to improve accuracy. For instance, combining task repetition with focused feedback on specific language forms or incorporating more complex and varied task designs might help address these aspects more effectively. Secondly, since the benefits of task repetition appear to be consistent regardless of the level of task enjoyment, teachers can use task repetition as a strategy to improve specific aspects of language performance without needing to adjust the approach based on learners' enjoyment levels. However, to maximise learning outcomes, it may be beneficial to combine task repetition with other techniques that specifically aim to enhance enjoyment, such as varying task types or incorporating elements of play and creativity into the learning process.

From a research perspective, the findings suggest the need for further integration of positive psychology into TBLT research. Future studies could explore how various emotional factors, such as anxiety, enjoyment or grit, interact with task repetition and influence learning outcomes. Additionally, systematic frameworks for measuring emotional engagement in TBLT contexts would provide valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners (see Li, 2024; Li & Dewaele, 2024).

6. Conclusion

The present study is one of the first to investigate the relationship between oral task enjoyment, task repetition, and various CAF measures in second language learning. The results show that while task repetition significantly improves learners' lexical diversity, the benefits of task repetition are consistent across different levels of oral task enjoyment, indicating that task repetition is an effective strategy regardless of learners' enjoyment levels. These results suggest that the benefits of task repetition are not limited to learners who are more motivated or engaged but extend to all learners.

A few limitations are worth mentioning. First, the sample size of the participants might not be large enough to generalise the findings. A larger sample could provide more robust research findings.

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Second, the data were not normally distributed, necessitating the use of non-parametric testing methods, which are less efficient than their parametric equivalents. Thirdly, the study focused on a specific type of oral task (debate), which may not be representative of all types of oral tasks in language learning. The results might differ with other tasks that have different cognitive or communicative demands. Fourth, while this study ensured rigor, the use of a single coder must be acknowledged as a limitation. Future studies could address this by involving multiple coders to validate the results further through intercoder reliability. Finally, although the study accounted for oral task enjoyment, other variables such as individual differences in motivation, anxiety, or prior experience with similar tasks were not controlled for and could have influenced the results.

The lack of interaction between task repetition and oral task enjoyment in this study highlights the need for further research to explore the interplay between cognitive and affective factors in language learning. Future studies could investigate whether other forms of task repetition, such as procedural or content repetition, interact differently with task enjoyment. Additionally, it would be valuable to explore how other emotions, such as anxiety or boredom, might influence the effectiveness of task repetition. The dynamic and context-dependent nature of task enjoyment also warrants more detailed investigation, perhaps using real-time emotion tracking methods like the idiodynamic method (P. D. MacIntyre & Legatto, 2011). Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate whether the consistency of the effectiveness of task repetition across different levels of oral task enjoyment holds true for other types of tasks or in different learning contexts. The exploration of long-term effects of task repetition combined with varying levels of oral task enjoyment could also provide insights into how these factors influence language development over time.

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