The Effect of Topic Familiarity on the Linguistic Complexity of the FL Oral Output of Advanced Iraqi Learners

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Abstract

Abstract : This study investigates the effect of topic familiarity on the FL (foreign language) oral output of a group of advanced Iraqi EFL learners in a task-based language teachinglearning framework. Its aim is to investigate the linguistic complexity of the FL oral performance of these learners with the increasing of task complexity by employing two oral monologic tasks in the form of picture descriptions. One of the tasks is familiar (coronavirus pandemic) and the other is unfamiliar (the Kremlin) in topic. A number of measures of linguistic complexity are used for this purpose. The data collection is done electronically due to quarantine following the spread of corona pandemic. The study follows a quantitative research method. Statistically, paired-samples t-tests are conducted to detect any significant differences in the participants' output between the two tasks. The findings show that task complexity has positively affected four (out of five) measures of syntactic complexity (the number of clauses, the number of AS-units, the number of morphemes, and the ratio of morphemes to AS-units) but negatively affected lexical complexity. This finding is useful in exploring that tasks should be sequenced according to their cognitive complexity to enhance FL performance and development .