Effects of Pre-Task Planning on Speaking Anxiety of Japanese EFL Learners

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Abstract

The present study examined the effects of pre-task planning on Japanese EFL learners’ speaking anxiety. Retelling was used in the present study as a speaking activity; 30 Japanese undergraduate students read texts and retold their contents in four different retelling conditions (L1, no planning; L2, no planning; L1, planning; L2, planning). In the no-planning conditions, participants retold soon after reading. In the planning conditions, participants had two minutes for pre-task planning before retelling. During the pre-task planning time, participants prepared their retelling by writing notes of keywords or figures on their worksheets, and then retold while looking at their worksheets. Participants completed a speaking anxiety questionnaire after each retelling. Results showed that pre-task planning reduced participants’ speaking anxiety in both L1 and L2, and that participants felt high anxiety when required to speak in L2. The results of the questionnaire showed that pre-task planning contributed to anticipating participants’ own retelling, before speaking. Reading proficiency of participants had no effect on speaking anxiety in the present study. The findings suggest that pre-task planning may have a positive effect in reducing speaking anxiety of Japanese EFL learners, based on which the present study offers suggestions for introducing speaking activities with pre-task planning.

1. Introduction

Speaking skills are a particular focus in English education, and speaking activities therefore play an important role in classrooms. Retelling is a speaking activity that has been used for a long time and which can also be used as a reading activity. Research on retelling as a reading activity has used learners’ native tongue (L1) so that their performance is not negatively impacted by speaking skills, while research on retelling as a speaking activity has used learners’ second language (L2); this research has shown that retelling in L2 improves learners’ speaking ability, and researchers and teachers can measure speaking ability using retelling in L2.

To promote learners’ communication skills, educators often focus on improving speaking ability, which some teachers try to do through retelling, using students’ L2. However, research has shown that speaking English in front of others can increase speaking anxiety in some classrooms.
(Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). The cognitive demands of learners are limited, which may lead to speaking anxiety, and so a critical problem is how to introduce and utilize speaking activities in an effective way.

Bygate and Samuda (2005) showed that pre-task planning may address the limited cognitive demands of learners. Several studies regarding speaking tasks have shown that pre-task planning has a positive effect on speaking performance, in terms of both quality and quantity (e.g., Li, Chen, & Sun, 2015); such studies suggest that pre-task planning that improves speaking performance may also reduce learners’ anxiety about speaking through this second performance-confidence channel.

The present study will therefore examine the effects of pre-task planning on the speaking anxiety of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL).

1.1 Oral production

Models of production of oral language in L1 and L2 have been proposed in previous studies. Levelt’s (1989) model of speech production categorized L1 oral production into a four-stage speaking process: (a) conceptualization, (b) lexical and grammatical encoding, (c) articulation, and (d) monitoring of utterances. In the first stage, conceptualization, speakers prepare ideas in the form of preverbal messages. In the second stage, lexical and grammatical encoding, speakers verbalize preverbal messages. The third stage is articulation, in which actual speech is uttered. The final stage is monitoring of utterance; this occurs after the speech, in which speakers monitor their speech and whether the contents and forms are appropriate.

Based on Levelt’s (1989) model, Kormos (2011) proposed a bilingual model of oral production. This model also has four stages: (a) conceptualization, (b) lexical and grammatical encoding, (c) articulation, and (d) self-monitoring. In the first stage, conceptualization, L2 learners activate concepts, meaning that they plan the messages they want to speak and decide how to express them. This is not planning in a linguistic form, but rather a preverbal plan. The second stage involves lexical, grammatical, and phonological verbalizing of the preverbal plan that was constructed at the conceptualization stage. Based on the contents of the preverbal plan, learners activate their vocabulary knowledge. The third stage, articulation, plays the same role as in Levelt’s model, in which speakers express their ideas in spoken language. The final stage is self-monitoring, in which speakers check the previous stages to determine whether or not their speech was correct, while also rephrasing their speech if appropriate. Kurmos (2011) showed that speakers can perform these processes automatically in their native language, and can engage in all four stages simultaneously with producing oral language. L2 speakers, however, need more time to encode messages because they do not have automatic language (Bygate & Samuda, 2005). The processes of oral production for L2 or EFL learners can therefore take a longer time.
1.2 Retelling

Retelling is a task in which readers are required to read a passage and reproduce it orally as fully as possible (Kai, 2008). Traditionally, in classrooms, teachers ask students questions while they are reading, but this may interfere with reading behavior; in contrast, retelling does not prevent students from reading (Morrow, 1989). This is one of the reasons why retelling has been used in classrooms since the 1980s.

For reading, retelling has often been conducted using L1 speech, because researchers and teachers need to distinguish readers’ text comprehension (mental representation) from their speaking skills. Retelling promotes inferences (Wilson, Gambrell, & Pfeiffer, 1985) and contributes to construction of global coherence (Kai, 2008) during reading. As a result, retelling improves L2 comprehension. After that, Kai (2011) revealed that retelling promotes comprehension of texts in a coherent form. Retelling is valuable task for teachers because it can reveal aspects of learners’ reading that are not revealed by answering questions (Marshall, 1983). It has also been shown that the effects of retelling are different in the reading proficiency of different readers (Kai, 2008). High-proficiency readers always benefit from retelling, but low-proficiency readers may not because they find it difficult to recognize words or analyze syntax in texts. Teachers therefore need to simplify some of the words or grammar used.

For speaking, retelling is conducted with L2 speech, which leads to improvement in learners’ speaking ability. L2 retelling is also used in speaking tests, such as the Story Retelling Speaking Test (Hirai & Koizumi, 2009; Koizumi & Hirai, 2012). Rachmawaty and Hermagustiana (2015) examined the effects of retelling on learners of different proficiencies. Their results showed that the effects of L2 retelling also differ based on learners’ proficiency, with the speaking fluency of low-proficiency learners improving through L2 retelling.

In summary, retelling is an effective and practical activity in classrooms. With the need to increase opportunities for students to speak English in class, retelling can be used as a speaking activity, but using learners’ L2 in some activities places increased demands upon them.

1.3 Pre-task Planning

The cognitive resources of language learners are limited when compared with native speakers. Oral production tasks, in particular, increase task demands on learners. Pre-task planning may therefore be effective for some speaking tasks (Bygate & Samuda, 2005).

Many studies have researched the effects of pre-task planning on speaking performance. These studies can be divided into two categories: the first about the length of planning and the second about the form of planning. One study about the length of planning is Li, Chen, and Sun (2015), in which five lengths of planning time were allowed: 30 seconds, 1 minute, 2 minutes, 3 minutes, and 5 minutes. The results showed that pre-task planning had a positive effect on oral performance quality and quantity in terms of complexity, accuracy, and flexibility of speaking. It also showed that pre-task planning affected accuracy most, and 1 minute was the ideal length for
pre-task planning to improve performance significantly. Pre-task planning for 30 seconds was too short and 5 minutes was too long for learners.

One study about the form of planning was Mochizuki and Ortega (2008), in which participants were divided into three groups: (a) no planning, (b) 5 minutes planning, and (c) 5 minutes planning with an explanation of grammar. The study compared participants’ use of relative clauses between three groups; the results showed that the planning-with-explanation group used relative clauses more accurately, but no difference in total complexity or fluency was seen. Yuan and Ellis (2003) also focused on the form of planning; this study also used three groups: (a) no planning, (b) 10 minutes planning, and (c) online planning. According to the results, 10 minutes planning improved complexity of speaking and fluency of vocabulary, and online planning improved complexity of speaking and accuracy.

Most previous studies have analyzed learners’ performance based on complexity, accuracy, and fluency of speaking. Surprisingly, questionnaire study of public school students has shown that learners do not feel any positive effects from pre-task planning, despite positive effects on speaking performance being observed (de Souza, Prebianca, Cardoso, & Mota, 2016). The use of pre-task planning should therefore be reconsidered.

1.4 Speaking Anxiety

In language learning, it has been recognized that learners’ anxiety has a huge effect on learning; many studies have explicitly investigated speaking anxiety, as speaking is considered to lead to particularly high anxiety in language learning (Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999). Speaking anxiety is a type of shyness that is caused by communicating with others (Gaibani & Elemenfi, 2016). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) showed that students with high anxiety were particularly worried about speaking in class; they also believed that only correct English should be spoken in the classroom. Such studies provide empirical evidence that speaking anxiety negatively affects speaking performance.

Oya, Manalo, and Greenwood (2004) investigated the effects of personality and anxiety on retelling in Japanese EFL learners. They found that the more anxiety learners felt, the more errors occurred in their speech. Other studies have investigated the effects of proficiency on speaking anxiety; Liu and Jackson (2008) showed that Chinese EFL learners with low proficiency disliked speaking in class because of their anxiety. Overcoming this unwillingness to communicate is therefore essential for encouraging learners to participate positively in class. Ay (2010) investigated anxieties associated with the four language skills and showed that anxiety regarding language production ability, such as speaking anxiety, was particularly salient for beginning learners. The same study also showed that speaking anxiety increased significantly when learners were asked to speak without preparation.
1.5 Overview of the Present Study

Previous studies have shown that retelling is beneficial for both reading and speaking tasks (e.g., Kai, 2008; Rachmawaty & Hermagustiana, 2015). However, some research has focused specifically on retelling as a reading task, with retelling performed with L1 in those studies. Considering current Japanese education, there is a need to increase speaking opportunities for learners.

One problem is how to introduce L2 retelling into classrooms. In general, speaking activities place high demands on learners because their cognitive resources are limited. Pre-task planning can therefore play an important role in learners’ speech. Many studies have shown that pre-task planning may lead improvement in aspects of performance, such as speaking complexity, accuracy and fluency (e.g., Li, Chen, and Sun, 2015; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008); at the same time, speaking activities have been shown to not only have high task demands but also create speaking anxiety. As shown in previous research, speaking anxiety negatively affects learners’ speaking performance.

In summary, previous studies have shown that pre-task planning improves the speaking performance of learners; however, it has not been determined whether pre-task planning reduces learners’ anxiety toward speaking activity. If pre-task planning reduces learners’ anxiety toward speaking, this would be particularly useful in educational situations, allowing teachers to make use of pre-task planning and implement effective task conditions. The present study therefore aims to investigate the effects of pre-task planning on learners’ speaking anxiety. It also examines whether speaking anxiety differs between the speaking languages used in retelling (L1 vs. L2). The purpose of this study is to determine how pre-task planning time works to reduce learners’ speaking anxiety and to give some indications of the usage of pre-task planning. The following two research questions were posed:

RQ1: Does pre-task planning have an effect on speaking anxiety?
RQ2: Does language used in retelling have an effect on speaking anxiety?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants were 30 Japanese undergraduate students of various majors, including humanities, education, mathematics, nursing, and physics and so on. Participants were divided, for analysis, into low-, mid-, or high-proficiency groups based on L2 reading proficiency test scores ($M = 15.73, SD = 3.10, Min/Max = 8/20$); with 11 participants in the high group ($M = 18.82, SD = 0.83, Min/Max = 18/20$), 10 participants in the mid group ($M = 15.8, SD = 0.75, Min/Max = 15/17$), and 9 in the low group ($M = 11.89, SD = 2.08, Min/Max = 8/14$).
2.2 Materials

**L2 reading proficiency test.** To examine the reading comprehension skill of each participant, an L2 reading proficiency test was conducted. This test comprised 30 items from the reading section of the pre-second, second, and pre-first grades of the STEP test (Obunsha, 2013; 2015a; 2015b). The reliability of the test was $\alpha = .70$.

**Reading materials.** Participants engaged in four retelling tasks, with four different texts. These were extracted from Reader’s Ark Basic Setting Out on a Voyage (Ushiro, Nakagawa, & Le Pavoux, 2009), which is used as a textbook for college students. Because the topics of the texts needed to be familiar to all participants, the four texts were chosen based on a pilot study. In the pilot study, 6 participants were asked to review the texts and rate them according to familiarity. To equalize the readability of the texts, the researcher adjusted words and deleted or added sentences, after which the four texts were reviewed by a native speaker of English. The number of words, sentences, and the Flesh-Kincaid Grade Levels are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1</strong> The Readability of Reading Materials.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Words</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moth or Butterflies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Mouse that Changed His Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Talk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* FKGL: Flesch-Kincaid Grade Levels were calculated using Microsoft Word 2018.

**Speaking anxiety questionnaire.** To measure participants’ speaking anxiety during retelling, a speaking anxiety questionnaire was used. This questionnaire was adopted from Daly, Vangelisti, Neel, and Cavanaugh (1989). Using a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), participants rated 10 statements asking about their feelings while speaking.

**Worksheet for pre-task planning.** After each reading, participants received a worksheet for their planning. In previous studies (e.g., Nitta & Nakatsuhara, 2014; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), participants were asked to make notes during their planning time, receiving no instructions except being told not to use complete sentences. In the present study, therefore, participants received plain paper for planning and were told not to write in complete sentences, but that they could use keywords or figures. Participants were also allowed to make notes in either English or Japanese. Participants prepared for two minutes using this worksheet, a period that was chosen based on previous research (Li, Chen, & Sun, 2015) that showed that planning time that is too short or too long is not appropriate for speaking tasks. The pilot study also confirmed that two minutes was enough time for planning. During the planning time, participants could not re-read the text; participants were told to look at their own worksheets during retelling.
2.3 Procedure

An example of the procedure for the reading session in the experiment is shown in Figure 1. During the session, participants read texts and retold their contents. There were four retellings, all with a different condition (L1, no planning; L2, no planning; L1, planning; L2, planning), so all participants experienced both no-planning and planning conditions for both L1 and L2. The order of texts and speaking language was counterbalanced. First, the participants were given four minutes to read the text. In the no-planning conditions, they then retold soon after reading; in the planning conditions, they had two minutes for pre-task planning, using the planning worksheet, and then moved on to retelling using that worksheet. After the retelling, participants completed the speaking anxiety questionnaire. Finally, all participants completed the 30-minute reading proficiency test.

Before reading, participants were instructed on how to conduct the retellings, whether they would have pre-task planning time, and what speaking language to use. The possibility was considered that, after completing one pre-task planning, participants might feel the need to plan mentally in a later no-planning condition. All participants therefore completed the no-planning conditions before the pre-task planning conditions, to avoid this possibility.

![Figure 1. The procedure of reading session.](image)

2.4 Scoring and Data Analysis

The speaking anxiety of each participant in each retelling condition was measured by the rating scale values of the speaking anxiety questionnaire. To answer the research questions and identify the effects of planning and speaking language on speaking anxiety, the rating scale values of the speaking anxiety questionnaire were analyzed. The questionnaire used in the current study contained five inverse items, so the scale values of each inverse item were first converted. The means of the rating scale values of all 10 items were then determined for each participant, and a 2 (no planning vs. planning) × 2 (L1 vs. L2) × 3 (high vs. mid vs. low proficiency) ANOVA was conducted.
3. Results and Discussion

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics of speaking anxiety questionnaire.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L1 No-planning</th>
<th>L1 Planning</th>
<th>L2 No-planning</th>
<th>L2 Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>95% CI</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRP</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>[2.21, 3.10]</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRP</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>[2.14, 2.90]</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRP</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>[2.24, 3.45]</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>[2.42, 2.91]</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. HRP = high reading proficiency, MRP = middle reading proficiency, and LRP = low reading proficiency.

3.1 Research Question 1

Table 3 presents means and standard deviations of the rating scale values of the speaking anxiety questionnaire based on the pre-task planning condition. The results of the ANOVA revealed a main effect of planning, $F(2, 27) = 40.50, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .60$, indicating that participants felt more anxiety when they were required to retell without pre-task planning. The results show that learners felt less anxious when they had pre-task planning time than in a no-planning condition. The interaction between planning, language, and proficiency was not significant and, therefore, pre-task planning appeared to result in lower speaking anxiety regardless of speaking language or the proficiency of learners. In previous research, it has been shown that language anxiety increases particularly in speaking situations (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). The results of the present study suggest that pre-task planning time contributes to reducing speaking anxiety in such situations. When involved in speaking activities in classrooms, learners can therefore complete the activity with less anxiety by engaging in pre-task planning beforehand, which in turn would improve learners’ sense of fulfillment. Pre-task planning is therefore a positive activity for both teachers and students.

Focusing more granularly, the rating scale values for Q5, Q6, and Q7 on the speaking anxiety questionnaire showed large differences between the planning and no-planning conditions. Q5 is “Giving a speech makes me anxious”; the descriptive statistic of the Q5 score was lower in the planning condition, meaning that pre-task planning reduced anxiety during retelling. Previous studies have shown that speaking anxiety increases when learners are required to speak without pre-task planning (Ay, 2010).
Q6 is “My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech”; the descriptive statistic of Q6 was higher in the no-planning condition, meaning that pre-task planning improved organized comprehension and helped in preparation for what would be said during retelling.

Q7 is “I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence”; the descriptive statistic of Q7 was higher in the planning condition, meaning that learners could feel more confident in their speaking and were allowed to anticipate their retelling. There was the possibility that participants relied on the planning worksheet that they made during pre-task planning; in the present study, participants could feel confident because they could look at the worksheet while retelling, after including words they wanted to speak in the worksheet.

From these results, the pre-task planning appeared to allow participants to speak with a more coherent construction and had a positive effect on retelling. Retelling is an activity that promotes comprehension of texts in a coherent form (Kai, 2011). From the results of the speaking questionnaire, and especially Q7, pre-task planning created a more coherent form of retelling. Participants could also regard their own retelling as more coherent, thereby further promoting confidence.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics of speaking anxiety questionnaire based on the existence of pre-task planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No-planning condition</th>
<th>Planning condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>M = 2.53, SD = 0.15</td>
<td>M = 3.20, SD = 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>M = 2.61, SD = 0.15</td>
<td>M = 2.76, SD = 0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>M = 2.81, SD = 0.16</td>
<td>M = 2.23, SD = 0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>M = 2.72, SD = 0.14</td>
<td>M = 3.39, SD = 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>M = 3.46, SD = 0.13</td>
<td>M = 2.62, SD = 0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>M = 3.29, SD = 0.16</td>
<td>M = 2.44, SD = 0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>M = 2.79, SD = 0.13</td>
<td>M = 3.63, SD = 0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>M = 2.62, SD = 0.20</td>
<td>M = 2.01, SD = 0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>M = 2.24, SD = 0.18</td>
<td>M = 2.14, SD = 0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>M = 3.01, SD = 0.16</td>
<td>M = 3.40, SD = 0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. High rating scale values mean high speaking anxiety.

3.2 Research Question 2

Table 4 presents means and standard deviations of rating scale values for the speaking anxiety questionnaire based on the language used in retelling. The results of the ANOVA revealed a main effect of language, $F(2, 27) = 81.97, p < .001, \eta^2 = .75$, indicating that participants felt more anxiety when they were required to retell in L2. Interaction between the pre-task planning condition, proficiency, and speaking language was not significant. Participants therefore experienced high anxiety when speaking in L2, regardless of pre-task planning or proficiency.
When participants retell in L1, the retelling works as a reading activity, but it functions as a speaking activity when participants retell in L2. Participants’ high anxiety during L2 retelling agreed with previous studies which showed learners felt high speaking anxiety when they were required to speak in L2 in front of others (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). In summary, when introducing retelling in L2 in classrooms where students with different ability ranges and different characteristics learn together, teachers should arrange some means of supporting their speaking.

Focusing more granularly, the rating scale values of Q1, Q5, and Q7 of the speaking anxiety questionnaire showed large differences between the L1 and L2 conditions. Q1 is “I have no fear of giving a speech”; the descriptive statistic of Q1 was lower for L1 than L2, meaning that learners felt strong anxiety when they were required to speak in L2. As noted above, learners feel anxiety most when they are required to speak in L2, and this result agrees with previous research (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

Q5 is “Giving a speech makes me anxious”; this item also saw a large effect from the pre-task planning condition. The descriptive statistic of Q5 was higher in L2 than in L1; speaking anxiety is shyness of speaking in front of others (Gaibani & Elemenfi, 2016), so retelling in L2 in front of the researcher may have prompted learners’ anxiety, thereby prompting the large difference between the rating scale values in the L1 and L2 conditions.

Finally, Q7 is “I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence”; this item also saw a large effect in the pre-task planning condition. The descriptive statistic of Q7 was lower in the L2 condition than the L1 condition; this means that learners could anticipate their retelling better in L1 than L2. In Levelt’s (1989) language production model and Kormos’ (2011) L2 production model, the coding process – the stage of verbalizing – is automatized in L1 but is difficult in L2, because of which, it is difficult for learners to foresee their retelling in L2.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of speaking anxiety questionnaire based on the types of speaking language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>L1</th>
<th></th>
<th>L2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. High rating scale values mean high speaking anxiety.
4. Conclusion

The present study examined the effects of pre-task planning on speaking anxiety in retelling. The findings showed that pre-task planning reduced speaking anxiety in retelling (RQ1) and that retelling in L2 led to higher anxiety than retelling in L1 (RQ2). In contrast, interaction between pre-task planning, language, and learners’ reading proficiency was not significant. Therefore, regardless of language or learners’ reading proficiency, pre-task planning reduced speaking anxiety. Also regardless of pre-task planning and learners’ reading proficiency, L2 retelling led to higher speaking anxiety. The combined finding is that L2 retelling – retelling as a speaking activity – created high speaking anxiety which could be ameliorated by introducing pre-task planning.

We examined speaking anxiety using a questionnaire, in which some items were strongly affected by both the planning condition and the language spoken. In the questionnaire, the rating scale values of both Q5 and Q7 were particularly influenced by the retelling language condition. L2 retelling may intimidate learners and lead to difficulties in prepare how to speak during retelling. However, these items in the questionnaire were also affected by pre-task planning, meaning that pre-task planning could reduce anxiety for L2 retelling, and learners would be able to better forecast their retelling. In short, introducing L2 retelling in classrooms may produce speaking anxiety for EFL learners but, based on the results of the present study, arranging pre-task planning in L2 retelling could reduce anxiety and allow more meaningful speaking activities in classrooms.

The present study has two implications for classrooms. First, pre-task planning has positive effects on speaking activities, such as retelling. Teachers can introduce these activities effectively by including pre-task planning. Many teachers of English in Japan want to increase opportunities for students to speak English but also worry about speaking anxiety and students’ speaking motivation and therefore view speaking activities as difficult to conduct. From the results of the present study, teachers could decrease students’ speaking anxiety by arranging pre-task planning. In pre-task planning in the current study, learners received only a sheet of blank paper and then planned in their own way. The mere setting of pre-task planning allowed learners to feel more relaxed about retelling and surer about speaking. Giving such pre-task planning time is not difficult for teachers, and just a little time produces good conditions for speaking.

Second, when arranging pre-task planning, teachers need to pay attention to the form of the planning. The results of this study showed that pre-task planning was useful for learners to anticipate retelling. Pre-task planning should therefore be designed to contribute to preparing the overall reading text or contents of speaking.

In the case of retelling, readers need to construct a coherent textual comprehension. Pre-task planning helps readers to anticipate the contents of the text and retelling, and leads to relief of anxiety. Teachers may need to plan the style of pre-task planning based on the types of speaking
activities intended. Notably, participants in the present study were university students and were likely able to make effective use of pre-task planning on their own, using only a sheet of blank paper. However, this may be more difficult for students in junior high or high schools; in such cases, teachers could give their students worksheets for planning, such as graphic organizers, and have them speak based on those worksheets. It has been found that learners engage in more effective cognitive processing during learning by completing graphic organizers (Dunlosky, Rawson, Marsh, Nathan, & Willingham, 2013). Using such an organizer, students could better grasp the construction and themes of the text during their planning, and then improve the form and coherence of their speech by using the sheet while reading.

Using graphic organizers requires some training. Teachers can therefore introduce graphic organizer planning worksheets and teach in classrooms how to use them to understand text construction and how to speak in coherent forms. Teachers need to choose the type of pre-task planning and arrange it based on their students’ skill levels and characteristics. Teachers should confirm afterwards whether the pre-task planning they organized had a positive effect on students’ speaking and whether the type of pre-task planning was appropriate.

The present study has three limitations. First, it showed the effects of pre-task planning on speaking anxiety, but did not indicate why the anxiety was reduced; indeed, how the pre-task planning worked during retelling and reduced anxiety is not shown. It was also not shown which stage of the speaking process (e.g., conceptualization or encoding) proposed in Levelt (1989) and Kormos (2011) was affected by the presence of pre-task planning. To examine these questions, not only analysis of speaking complexity, accuracy and fluency, but also a minute comparison of the contents of pre-task planning and actual speaking, should be conducted to reveal how planning affects speaking. We can understand more about the roles of pre-task planning in speaking activities.

Second, there is the possibility that pre-task planning affected learners’ reading. In the present study, retelling was used as a speaking activity; however, retelling requires learners to read texts and speak their contents. Learners need to acquire both reading and speaking skills; in this case, pre-task planning may have affected reading as well as speaking. Learners may organize the contents of texts during pre-task planning time, and reading anxiety may then be reduced by pre-task planning. In the present study, the effects of pre-task planning on reading were not considered; future research should aim to do so.

Third, the effects of pre-task planning on speaking anxiety may differ by learner proficiency. Pre-task planning had no effect on speaking anxiety of learners in the present study, but this may have been due to low reading proficiency. We therefore cannot conclude a relationship between pre-task planning and proficiency from the results of the present study. Learners with low proficiency may feel higher anxiety than learners with high proficiency, so the effects of pre-task planning may also be higher for low-proficiency learners. A proficiency test that has sufficient reliability should be prepared and used to examine the effects of pre-task planning on speaking.
anxiety based on learners’ proficiency. Moreover, because of experimental conditions, there was no speaking proficiency test in the present study. Future research should investigate whether reading proficiency or speaking proficiency affects speaking anxiety in retelling.

The current research offers further suggestions for future research. First, a range of timings could be allowed for planning. Pre-task planning in the present study occurred after reading, but without reviewing the text, to avoid learners simply transcribing expressions from the text to arrange their mental representations. However, with some of the restrictions used in the present study, such as not writing in complete sentences, or using keywords or figures, planning could be conducted even while learners are reading.

Yuan and Ellis (2003) compared a no-planning group, a 10-minute planning group, and an online planning group and showed that online planning improved the performance of learners most. Online planning may therefore lead to higher performance and lower speaking or reading anxiety, and it is therefore worth comparing the effects of planning while reading and planning after reading.

Pre-task planning can also come in various forms. Teachers and researchers could devise different types of planning; in the present study, we suggested that learners plan freely using keywords or figures and told them not to write in complete sentences. The results of the speaking anxiety questionnaire showed that learners could foresee their retelling and that pre-task planning reduced speaking anxiety. Pre-task planning that helps learners to foresee the contents of speaking is effective for them. Researchers and teachers need to arrange pre-task planning of various forms and compare them to determine which is most effective for learners’ speaking.

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References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire

以下の各項目について、当てはまるところに○をつけてください。
※スピーチというのは先ほど行っていただいた再話のことです。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>項目</th>
<th>全く当てはまらない</th>
<th>当てはまらない</th>
<th>当てはまらなくてもいい</th>
<th>当てはまる</th>
<th>非常に当てはまる</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. スピーチをすることに不安がない。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. スピーチをすることを楽しみにしている。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. スピーチをしている間、体のある部分が緊張してこわばったようになる。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. スピーチをしている間、リラックスしている。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. スピーチをすることは、私を緊張させる。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. スピーチをしている間、考えが混乱しきちゃごちゃになってしまっている。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 私は自信をもってスピーチの見通しを立てている。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. スピーチをしている間、とても緊張して実際に知っている事実を忘れてしまう。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. スピーチをするということは私の怖がらせる。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. スピーチをしている間、自分のテンションとストレスをコントロールできるということをわかっている。</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B: Worksheet for Pre-Task Planning

次に行う「再話 (読んだ話をその話を知らない相手に向かって話すつもりで語る活動)」に向けて、与えられた時間の中で準備をしてください。
下の欄にメモをとっても構いません (日本語・英語どちらでも可)。
※ただし、メモをとる場合はキーワードや図などとし、完全な文の形では書かないようにしてください。