

## THE IMPACT OF TASK REPETITION ON FLUENCY, ACCURACY, AND COMPLEXITY

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**ABSTRACT:** *A number of strategies, which can utilize various tasks to develop accuracy, fluency, and complexity in language have been proposed. With past studies indicating that repetition of tasks have a positive effect on these basic goals of speech while today's studies contradict the same, it was interesting carrying out a study on this topic. The study was to examine the kind of influence that task repetition has on the students' performance in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Two pairs of students were given a describing-picture task, which was repeated two times. Unexpectedly, the results were opposite to that indicated in the literature. The result revealed that repetition of tasks had no remarkable effect on the students' performance. This was a clear deviation from the findings of the past studies, which had shown a clear relationship between task repetition and the three basic goals of speech. This study will highlight on the methodologies, analysis, results, and the subsequent conclusions that were reached during the study.*

**KEYWORDS:** Task, Repetition, Fluency, Accuracy, Complexity.

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### INTRODUCTION

The learning process involving presentation, practice, and the production method where the learner is taught a task and then rehearses it still is a part of EFL and ESL classes. However, this can present an issue, as the learners are faced with the challenge to reproduce the intended form of task, which negatively influences the fluency and the meaning. The learner is faced with a setback because the trainer, jeopardizing the relevance of the whole practice, stipulates the task. According to Dubin & Olshtain (1977), in order to eliminate setbacks that EFL and ESL students face, it is recommended to implement a task-based learning process whose fundamental approach is centered on meaning. However, the process is challenging since too much emphasis is placed on meaning which is detrimental of truth (Patanasorn, 2011). Task based scheme of learning is often characterized by the tendency of developing skills at the expense of the target form of language. This creates the need for improving learner's performance based on repetition. This paper explores the impact of repetition on fluency, accuracy, and complexity.

Repetition has a remarkable impact on fluency, accuracy, and complexity. This gives learners the opportunity to repeat a task after a period, which affects the outcome in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity. In practice repetition has given positive results. *Fluency* is the competence in emphasizing meaning, while *complexity* is the ability to use advanced language. On the other hand, *accuracy* is the skill of control within the prescribed limit. These three aspects contribute to the proficiency of a learner and can be developed through task repetition (I. S. P. Nation, 2008). Task repetition gives an encoded establishment of the ideology making the leaning process more effective. Learners in this case are involved in a semantic strategy as opposed to a syntactic approach to acquire fluency. Ellis (2003) claims that accuracy and complexity can be achieved through a stipulated rule, which creates the need for a syntactic process. Although greater complexity leads to greater proneness to error,

familiarity is achievable through repetition. The initial step in task performance involves a scan of memory to give an ideological overview, and as the ideology presents itself severally, familiarity with the content of the task is developed. Ellis (2005) points out that the key ways through which ideology gets embodied in the mind include conceptualization, formulation of the arrangement, and then articulation of the model. The bigger is number of times the model is presented to the learner, the clearer it becomes.

The traces of fluency, accuracy, and complexity are, therefore, not dependent on the skill to immediately recall material, but on the long-term memory developed from performance and acquisition. Thus, Angordans, Piqué, & Viera (1997) conclude that though task repetition does not translate into recital of a new task, it is not evident whether rehearsals aid in acquisition. The success of acquisition lies in massive repetition.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Fluency refers to the number of connected words that an individual can write or say at a given time. According to Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim (2008), accuracy of language refers to the number of mistakes that an individual makes during writing or speaking a language. Complexity is the number of different words that one uses when speaking or writing a language. Robinson (2011) asserts that students who study English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) experience numerous problems in trying to achieve fluency, accuracy, and complexity of the English language. Most of these students face problems relating to pronunciation of English words. Abushihab (2010) observes that the Arabic language has fewer sounds compared to English language and most Arab learners find it difficult to distinguish between sounds such as (b) and (v). Another key problem faced by learners is the complexity of English grammar. Students find it hard to adapt to the strict sense of grammar such as the correct use of articles a, an, and the. Lastly, ESL and EFL learners experience problems relating to vocabulary. Ellis (2003) indicates that most Arab learners find it difficult to use various vocabularies found in English language because some of them have numerous meanings that lead to confusions. The strategies used with the tasks to develop accuracy, fluency, and complexity such as planning and providing pre-instructions are significant to the learners of ESL and EFL because they facilitate fast acquisition of language. They prepare students for the process of learning the language by creating a positive attitude, which promotes faster understanding of the different issues that students are supposed to know about English language. According to Guasti (2004) task repetition is vital for students of ESL and EFL because it emphasizes on certain aspects that are imperative in the development of fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Due to task repetition students will become more familiar with different aspects that are required for the development of accuracy, fluency, and complexity of the English language hence promoting quicker understanding.

Over the years researchers have engaged in studies to describe the influence of task repetition on fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Most of these studies were aimed at establishing the link between task repetition and the time taken by a learner to achieve fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Studies indicate that task repetition is crucial for the development of these qualities by a learner.

Task repetition is vital because it provides an opportunity for learners to correct their mistakes, which is vital for the development of fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Studies indicate that task repetition enables students to repeat particular actions during a given period hence enhancing their mastery of the English language. According to Robinson (2001) language can be effectively learnt by emphasizing on its correct use and applications. Task repetition presents a crucial opportunity for learners to understand language use in different contexts.

The repetition of tasks enables students to share vital ideas relating to the use of English language in different contexts. Rahimi (2012) indicates that through repetition students get the opportunity to use language in their daily lives. Nunan (2004) observes that students share new vocabularies in the course of task repetition hence improving their complexity in the use of English language. In addition, task repetition enables learners understand how to pronounce particular English words. This is especially helpful to Arab students as it enables them differentiate between the sounds (b) and (v). Thus, task repetition boosts confidence of students in their use of English language as they continue to share vital ideas relating to their learning experience.

### **Research Questions**

- 1- What is the impact of task repetition on fluency?
- 2- What is the impact of task repetition on accuracy?
- 3- What is the impact of task repetition on complexity?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

Participants for the present study were four Saudi students in the intermediate level of an English Language Learning course in the Saudi Academic Institute for Languages. They were between 16 and 18 years old, at the time of data collection. Most of them had been learning English as a foreign language in Saudi schools for 6 years. All of them had been to an English-speaking country. They can be described as having a broadly similar level of proficiency in English.

### **Materials**

The principal aim of the study is to examine the effect of task repetition and familiarity on the development of fluency, accuracy, and complexity in the English language among learners. A task of describing pictures was given to two students with the objective of acquiring a number of descriptions from two pairs of students. It was enough to use one pair of students in the study, but two pairs were used in order to acquire more data (Norris, 1998). More students could help gather more information on the significance of task repetition, development of fluency, accuracy, and complexity.

### **Procedure**

Firstly, the first student of each pair was given three similar pictures with the objective of comparing the descriptions given by each of these students. The second student of each pair was advised to help the first student guess what the pictures were. This was done with the aim of getting numerous descriptions relating to the pictures presented to the pairs of students. Students were free to choose words that they felt were appropriate to describe the pictures presented to them. They had the freedom to think of the appropriate words that they could use to describe the pictures correctly. In addition, students were also free to choose the structure of words to use in describing the pictures. Mayo (2006) asserts that this was vital in the determination of whether students were achieving a high level of accuracy in the use of different words of the English language. In the next case, the second student of each pair was given other three similar pictures and the first student had to assist in the description. After ten days, the same task was repeated with the same pairs of students using the same procedure. Different pictures were used in order to determine whether there was an improvement in the students' description of the pictures.

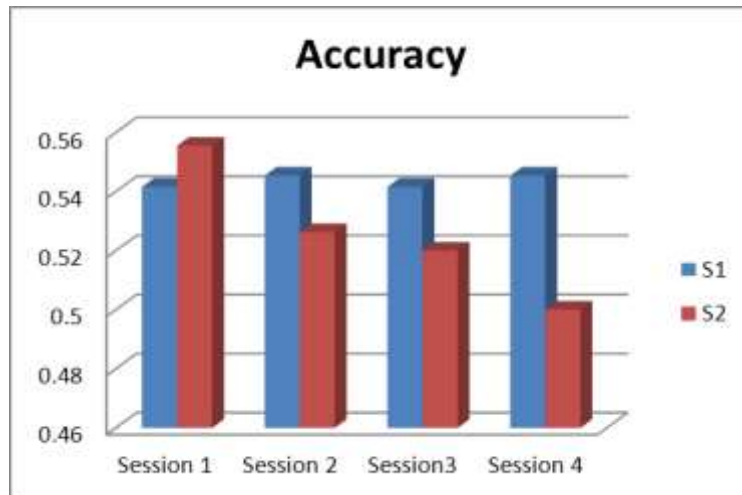
### **Data Analysis**

This part contains the statistical analysis of the data that is collected from a pair of students. The present study is designed to determine the effects of task repetition on accuracy, fluency and complexity in student's language and whether this task repetition increases these elements of speaking. The accuracy, fluency and complexity in the first and repeated task have been compared graphically. In order to examine the significance of the difference, the method which has been used is Paired Sample *t*-test. The values are analyzed on the basis of *p* value.

## **GRAPHICAL ANALYSIS**

### **For Accuracy**

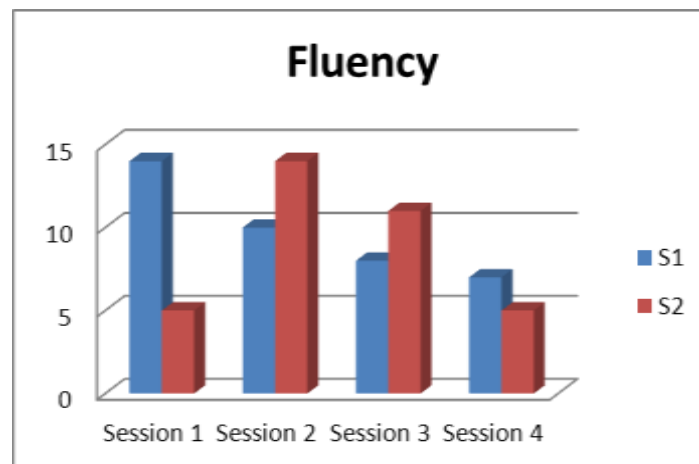
S1 and S2 are two participants who performed four tasks; the last two were repetition of the first two. Figure 1 indicates that accuracy in the speech of S1 in the first task was a bit lower than S2. However when S1 repeated the same task second time accuracy in speech was improved as compared to the speech of S2. However, it can be analyzed that repeated tasks brought a decline in the accuracy of the speech of S2. It's quite surprising that the accuracy of S2 was declined more than half of the speech of S1.



**Figure 1: Analysis of Accuracy**

### For Fluency

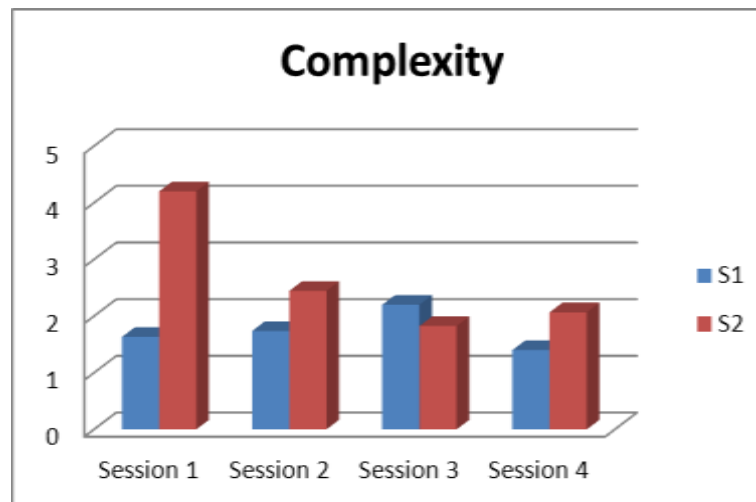
Fig 2 indicates that repeated tasks also negatively affect the fluency in speech as S1 was very fluent in the first task but face a subsequent decline in her fluency in the second task. However, fluency of S2 was increased in the second task. By contrast in the next repeated phase fluency of the both the participants were affected so it can be presumed that fluency is largely affected by the task repetition and it decreases, instead of increasing, if it is repeated.



**Figure 2: Analysis for Fluency**

### For Complexity

Fig 3 indicates that S1 was able to speak 3 times less complex sentences than S2. However, there was a slight increase in the complexity of sentences said by S1 in the next tasks. By contrast, a sudden decline in the complexity of sentences of S2 was observed. Therefore, the impact of repeated task on complexity of sentences is unclear.



**Figure 3: Analysis of Complexity**

### Paired Sample *t*-test:

A paired sample *t*-test compared the mean values of three variables in the first and repeated tasks, which shows that average accuracy was decreased slightly when the task of repetition was done. In case of fluency, average of the first time was very high as compared with the average fluency when task was repeated again. Same is the case for complexity; when the task was repeated the average complexity was decreased considerably. Correlation of the paired samples for accuracy in the first task and when it was repeated turned out to be 0.505 ( $p=0.495$ ) which shows that there was insignificant correlation between the first and second time measures. Similarly, for fluency measures, correlation was -0.819 ( $p=0.181$ ) and for complexity it was -0.014 ( $p=0.986$ ) indicating that  $p$  value was not significant and there was no correlation. This lack of correlation indicates that there is no sequence in the accuracy, fluency, and complexity. This could be due to small sample size.

**Table 1: Comparison of Average Measures in the first and repeated task**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Accuracy	First time	.542245	4	.0121302	.0060651
	Repeated	.526780	4	.0210828	.0105414
Fluency	First time	10.750000	4	4.2720019	2.1360009
	Repeated	7.750000	4	2.5000000	1.2500000
Complexity	First time	2.503215	4	1.1873798	.5936899
	Repeated	1.872547	4	.3514772	.1757386



It was further found that the decline in the accuracy due to the repeated task was insignificant [ $t(3) = 1.694$ ,  $p = 0.189$ ]. Similarly, the decline in the fluency due to the repeated task was also found to be insignificant [ $t(3) = 0.926$ ,  $p = 0.423$ ]. The difference in the complexity of sentence in the first and repeated tasks was also insignificant [ $t(3) = 1.015$ ,  $p = 0.385$ ]. Thus no effect of task repetition on the fluency, accuracy and complexity of speech were found in this study.

## DISCUSSION

From the review of literature, it was found that if the learners will practice more, then it will bring constructive results in their speaking skills and its' success is based upon repetition. Scholars held that through repetition, learners can become familiar with the different aspects of the language and in this way repetition of a learning task promotes the understanding of language. It also gives a chance to the learners to alter their mistake which is quite necessary to improve their language skills. Previous studies have also proposed that repetition enhances learners' expertise in English language. It also helps in improving the pronunciation of different words.

Contrary to expectations, the results show that task repetition does not have any effect on accuracy, fluency and complexity. In fact it shows that repetition brings a decline in their speaking skills. Similarly, another factor which has been reflected from this study is that task repetition has different effects on participant S1 and S2; which depicts that there are some other important factors too which should be kept in consideration while examining the impact of task repetition on accuracy, fluency and complexity. Repeated tasks brought a decline in the accuracy of the speech of S2 as compared to S1. Similarly, Fluency decreases instead of increasing if tasks are repeated yet a previous study suggests repetition increases fluency. Same is the case with complexity but one possible explanation of the decline in the complexity of sentences was that in this study participants had to describe things related to one object but at the time of repeated tasks they already had some vocabularies and expressions in their mind so simple sentences were used.

Furthermore, this study did not find a significant difference between the accuracy, fluency and complexity. A possible reason for this unexpected outcome is due to the fact that the data was collected from a small sample. If the sample size would be larger than there were much chances of obtaining significant  $p$  values for the three elements. Therefore, results generated from this analysis conclude that further research on this topic is needed to be done to establish whether task repetition impacts accuracy, fluency and complexity.

## CONCLUSION

With the understanding that learners need to become more efficient speakers of English, varied strategies were used to develop the students' performance. The main goal of this paper was to study the impacts that task repetition has on fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Contrary to the results of previous studies on task repetition, the result of the current study showed that task repetition had no influence on the learners' performance. This is because even though there were some small gains in the students' complexity, it was accompanied with loss of the other two goals of speech, accuracy and fluency, with accuracy suffering the

major blow. However, it is good to note that these results could have been due to the small sample size. Finally, it was, therefore, recommended that the same study should be repeated with a bigger sample size in order to get to know the actual relationship between task repetition and these main goals of speech.

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### Appendix 1: Transcription

#### Transcription of Learners' performance of task ( Give a Clue ) .

In this task each student had three pictures. They worked in pairs. S1 tried to describe her pictures to help S2 find out what the was about. S2 also could ask or say anything which may help her in figuring out the answer.

Pair 1 : ( First Time )

S1 had 3 pictures: ( a bag , a fridge & a ship)

S2 had 3 pictures : ( an iPod, a mall, a nurse)

1\\ ( describing picture1 – a bag)

S1: mmm.. it made from leather ..aah..and you can carry it where ever you go and you can put your mobile phone. Did you get it?

S2: Aahh, no.

S1: listen to me. You can carry it everywhere, put your mobile on it...in it ...aaahh...

S2: mmm...bag

S1: Yaaah. It's a bag.

( describing picture2 – a Fridge)

S1: aah .. the second picture. ....aaaahh...aaaahh...It's a big , big box . A cold box . You can put a food .

S2: It's a fridge.

S1: Yaaaah.

( describing picture3 – a ship)

S1:It's a thing sailing in a sea.

S2 : Fish.

S1: No.

S2: Uh,uh.

S1: Thing.

S2: mmm ..a boat??

S1:Aaahh.. yaaah , yah ,It's a boat ..mmmm.... (trying to help her friend figure out the word ship) It's a big and they have many, many people and there kind of ..aaahh...this thing carry...mmm...the cars and are plains.

S2: [murmuring in Arabic] ...yakt...(trying to say yacht)..

S1: No, no bigger than this.

S2: aahhh..I don't know. ( Failed to find out the word ship)

(01:58)

2\ (describing picture 1 – a mall)

S2: mmmm... [ silent 7 seconds]. It's place..

S1: What?

S2: Place..It has.mmm...many floors and a lot of shops .

S1: Tower..

S2: No.

S1: Is it ..mm.. airport?

S2: No.

S1: Is there bedrooms?

S2: No.

S1: Is there doctors?

S2: No. Aahh... there is many restaurant .

S1: Mall. It is a mall.

S2: Yes.

(describing picture 2 – an iPod)

S2: Aaaahh..thing , a thing you can listening a music.

S1: Did I have to download it on it or it's already have a music.

S2: download.

S1: Is it a mobile?

S2: No.

S1: Aaahhh...Is it from Apple [the company]?

S2: Yes.

S1: Then it's an iPod.

S2: Yes, yes.

(describing picture 3 – a nurse)

S2:Aaahh... ( silent 3 seconds) Someone work in a hospital..mmm..

S1: Is it a doctor?

S2:No.

S1: Nurse.

S2: Yes.

(2:33)

Pair 1 : ( Second Time ) [One week Later]

S1 had 3 pictures: (a ring, a hotel, Stars)

S2 had 3 pictures : (Ka'abah, Clouds, a keyboard)

1\\ ( describing picture1 – a ring)

S1: Aaah.. It's a thing ..aah..the women wear it in his fingers ...uh..in their fingers.

S2: Ring.

S1: Yaah. It' a ring.

( describing picture2 – a hotel)

S1: mmm...It's a big building .They have a restaurants , and they have a suites.

S2: It's a hotel.

S1: Yaah.

( describing picture3 – stars)

S1: It's ..mm.. a golden thing ,shine in the sky at the evening. You cannot see it in the day.

S2: The moon.

S1: No.

S2:Sun.haa..

S1 : (Laughing) the thing if I crush your head whith my phone, you will see it.

S2: ..mmmmm..

S1: Something have five ..aah..aah..Fingers. In a sky.

S2:(murmuring in Arabic) .

S1: It's yellow. Just you see it in the evening, in the night. It's beside the moon

S2:Aaahh..st... mmm

S1: Yaaah.

S2: Star.

(02:07)

2\\ (describing picture 1 – a keyboard)

S2: mmmm...thing you can ..aah...you can chatting ..

S1: Internet .

S2:No . And write on it ..aah..

S1: computer.

S2: No...mmm... it has..mmm..

S1: letters?

S2: Yaah. Letters.

S1: Is it a keyboard?

S2: Yes.

(describing picture 2 – an Ka'abah)

S2: Aahh... mmm...place you should visit it one..(marrah=time)...in your life .

S1:Is it a beach.

S2: No.

S2: Aaaahh..there is a thing black, and many of people..aaahh..

S1: Al-Ka'abah.

S2: Yes.

(describing picture 3 –clouds)

S2: ..mmm..( 5 second silent) thing in sky..aahh...

S1: What colour is it?

S2: W...white, and sometimes it's ..aahh.. rain.

S1: Clouds.

S2: Yes.

**(2:21)**

Pair2 : ( First Time )

S1 had 3 pictures: ( a bag , a fridge & a ship)

S2 had 3 pictures : ( an iPod, a mall, a nurse)

1\\ ( describing picture1 – a Fridge)

S1:There is a box , every home have one, may be more. Aahh.. that box it's have many space that you can put things to protect from expirt [Expiration].Aaahh sometimes you put ..mmmm.. have many shape.

S2:The wardrobe .

S1: ...mmm..what?

S2: The closet?

S1:No, no.

S2: It's in the bed room?

S1: No ,It's not.

S2: Where is it in the home?

S1: It is an electrical machine.

S2: a television.

S1: No. Think.. also, you have one door in it, may be two door for it..in it. Sometime it is small or big.

S2: It's free. .freezer or fridge.

S1: Yaah.

( describing picture2 – a bag)

S1:That a small thing .All women carry it, sometimes men carry it. It's ..mmm. a protect our personal things.

S2: I think , it's a bag.

S1: Yes.

( describing picture3 – a ship)

S1:My third picture is something flow in the sea maybe, in the ocean, maybe in the river. It have many shapes..mmm..also..

S2 :I think , it is a ship.

(02:15)

2\\ (describing picture 1 – an iPod)

S2: mmmm... aahh..It's a small thing like mobile .All the teenager like it because it's using to listening to songs and..mm.. and it has many colours. It used to listen to the music...aah...

S1: It is iPod?

S2:Yes,it is it....yes, it is.

(describing picture 2 – a nurse)

S1: It's a person who work in hospital .It's help the doctor ..uh.. she is help the doctor and help the pa...( trying to say patient) aah..the sick people . Aahh..do you guess what it?

S2: It is a nurse.

(describing picture 2 – a mall)

S1: Is it a big , big stores. It have many stores. It's ..mmm.. mmm...It has many (3 seconds silent) shops for clothes and for everything and it's..mmm..

S2: Supermarket ,maybe.

S1: No it's bigger than a supermarket.

S2: It has many floor?

S1: Yes.

S2: It's a mall.

S1: Yes , it is

S2: Yes.

(1:50)



Pair 2 : ( Second Time ) [One week Later]

S1 had 3 pictures: (a ring, a hotel, Stars)

S2 had 3 pictures : (Ka'abah, Clouds, a keyboard)

1\\ ( describing picture1 – a ring)

S1: Aaah.. There is a small thing , sometimes expensive, sometimes it's cheap. Aaahh...all women like it. All the engage people wear it. Some have di..diamond. Some are from gold, some of are made from other m..mi.. minerals. What is it?

S2: It is a...a ring.

S1: Yes, it is.

( describing picture2 – a hotel)

S1: Aahh...It's a place .Big place. Have many rooms. Have many big rooms that you can make there a party. Also , have many people work in it. Sometimes you can find a restaurant a famous restaurant..aahh..

S2: A hotel.

S1: Yes.

( describing picture3 – stars)

S1: There is shiny thing that seen in sky at night. Some people know there rode by it. Sometimes there of it are called by names. And it always shine in the night.

S2: Star.

S1: Ok.

**(01:42)**

2\\ (describing picture 1 – clouds)

S2: mmmm...there is a thing in the sky .It's always white ,and it's walk.  
And the rain comes from it . And the people say it's cry but it isn't have eyes.

S1: mmmmmm.... .

S2:It's in the sky.

S1: I know it is but I didn't know the word . I think it is [clos..]

S2: Clouds

(describing picture 2 – a keyboard)

S2: mmm...a thing of things of the computer. Aaahh.. we enter the alphabet by it and the numbers and when we play we can use it with the computer.

S1: Do you mean it's a part from the personal computer?

S2: Yes.

S1: It's a keyboard.

S2: Yes.

(describing picture 3 –Ka'abah)

S2: ..mmm...the last one .It is the place where the people ..aahh. Muslims people go there and do the Hajj an Uomrah.

S1: Holy Mosque.

S2: No. The box where the people round..

S1: Holy Ka'abah.

S2: Yes, it is.

(1:45)

**Appendix 2: Tasks**

**Student 1**

# Give a Clue

Goal: Describing some pictures.

Time: 10 minutes.

Instructions: You have three pictures; help your friend to figure out what your pictures are.



Nurse



iPod



Mall

# Give a Clue

Student 2

Goal: Describing some pictures

Time: 10 minutes.

.Instructions: You have three pictures; help your friend to figure out what your pictures are



Bag



Fridge



Ship

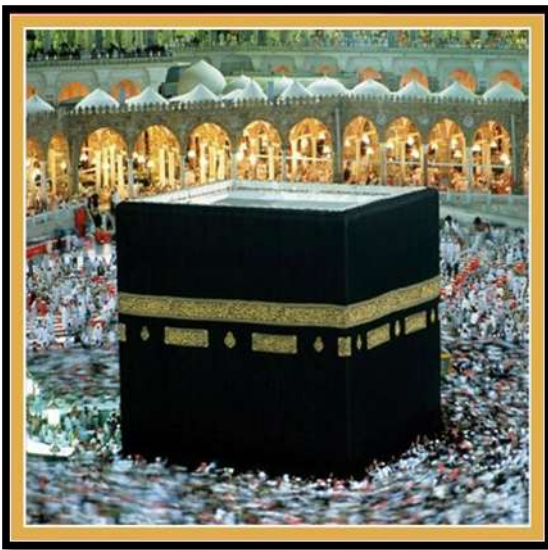
# Give a Clue

Student 1

Goal: Describing some pictures.

Time: 10 minutes.

Instructions: You have three pictures; help your friend to figure out what your pictures are.



Mall



Clouds



Keyboard

# Give a Clue

Student 2

Goal: Describing some pictures.

Time: 10 minutes.

Instructions: You have three pictures; help your friend to figure out what your pictures are.



Ring



Hotel



Stars