# Collaborative Action Pursuits within EFL Task-Based Peer Interactions*

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to unveil collaborative actions in EFL task-based peer interactions. Collaboration in peer interaction has been mainly investigated by analysing language-related episodes (LREs). Assuming that an etic coding would limit the understanding of collaborative actions, a qualitative analysis of learner interactions, particularly sociocultural discourse analysis, was adopted for this study. The data include 11 hours of peer interactions collected from a speaking club designed as an extracurricular activity. The participants were 15 adult learners enrolled at a language school of a Turkish state university and they were informed to have B1+ proficiency level. The learners were grouped into three groups and assigned to complete two language tasks: divergent and convergent tasks in L2. The interactions were recorded, and by employing the constant comparative method, all the collaborative actions were identified in the data. Two broad categories of collaborative actions emerged; language-related and task-related, each of which has different subcategories. In this paper, the language-related collaborative actions, which are eight in total, are defined and exemplified with extracts from the data. The results present implications for the inclusion of peer interaction activities, especially in EFL contexts where learners have limited opportunities in participating in L2 interaction.

**Keywords:** Collaboration; peer interaction; L2 tasks; sociocultural theory; English as a foreign language (EFL)

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# Introduction

Peer interaction is described as "*any communicative activity carried out between learners, where there is minimal or no participation from the teacher*" (Philp et al., 2014, p.3). It allows for different types of language use and practice, and provides a context that facilitates learning in which learners experience greater comfort levels (Sato & Ballinger, 2016). Peer interaction activities create more opportunities to speak and participate in social interaction, especially in foreign language (L2) contexts where learners have limited opportunities to participate in meaningful interactions both inside and outside the classroom (Sato, 2013). Although there has been an increasing interest in investigating peer interaction since the early 1980s, it still gets less attention (Sato & Ballinger, 2016). Besides, few studies focus on peer interaction in foreign language classrooms than in second language classrooms (García Mayo & Azkarai, 2016).

Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004, p. 291) describe peer talk as having a "*collaborative, multiparty, symmetrical participation structure*". Participants work together towards a common goal; this is the aspect that makes it a collaborative process. It is also multiparty as there are at least two or more participants involved. Lastly, it is symmetrical since all learners are equal in interaction regarding participant contributions (Philp, 2016). Similarly, L2 learner-learner interactions have been viewed as a place for collaborative construction and engagement in activities between novice and expert by sociocultural theory (SCT) (Ohta, 1995). During peer interactions, learners can solve each other's problems and co-construct new language knowledge. Co-construction of knowledge (or scaffolding) emphasises collaboration (Sato & Viveros, 2016). Interaction has been analysed as an opportunity for learners to scaffold each other and collaborate to resolve their language-related problems from the sociocultural theory perspective. Through the use of language-related episodes (LREs) (Swain & Lapkin, 1998) or languaging (Swain, 2006), learners build new knowledge by using language to think and talk about language (Fernández Dobao, 2016).

Swain and Lapkin (1998) defined LREs as "*any part of a dialogue where language learners talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others*" (p. 89). LREs are the most common analysis unit used to understand collaboration (Sato & Viveros, 2016). LREs have also been used to investigate discourse in classroom studies, especially to investigate collaborative learning and task-based language teaching (Jackson, 2001). According to Jackson (2001), research into LREs can provide fine-grained analyses of learner productions. For example, LREs, as a research tool, can help understand the nature of L2 production and explore the contributions that output makes in learning an L2.

SCT, however, has favoured detailed 'micro genetic analyses of dialogic interactions, which is why the authors believe there is a need to conduct detailed analyses of how collaboration occurs (Ellis, 2003). van Compernolle (2015) also states that L2 interaction research, drawing on Vygotskian psychology, adopts a qualitative approach to data analysis. When 'external or etic' coding schemes are applied to interactional data, there

is the risk of understanding participants' orientations to the phenomena in a misleading way. It is important to have an emic look into learners' interactions to understand 'collaboration' rather than adopting etic classifications such as LREs or collaborative dialogue. This paper, therefore, aims to define collaborative discourse by conducting detailed analyses of peer interactions in EFL task-based environments rather than adopting LREs as a unit of measurement in analysing collaboration. For this aim, the following research question has been formulated: What collaboration types can be observed in L2 task-based peer interactions?

# Theoretical Background

## SCT, Zone of Proximal Development, and Scaffolding

According to SCT, language and communicative interaction have a primary role to mediate higher psychological functions and their development; such as the development of L2 communicative abilities, conceptual thinking, perceiving and representing things in the external world (Lantolf, 2011), development of concepts, conversational routines, cultural knowledge (van Compernolle, 2015), and the acquisition of language for communication. Two concepts, such as the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding, are key terms to illustrate the process of development. ZPD is defined as a metaphorical distance between the tasks that a child can accomplish alone and the ones they cannot do alone, but could do with the assistance of more capable peers or adults. For example, for interaction to be beneficial for acquisition, it needs to assist the learners in constructing ZPDs achieved with scaffolding (Ellis, 2008).

Scaffolding is an inter-psychological or dialogic process. Ellis (2008) states that learners internalise knowledge with the help of scaffolding. This means a speaker (expert or novice) helps another speaker (a novice) perform a task or a skill that they cannot perform independently. Donato (1994) coined the term 'collective scaffolding', which means there is no definite expert, but rather the expert's role is bilateral (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018). In this kind of scaffolding, learners can build up ZPDs for each other and be more successful than what they would have achieved independently.

## SCT, Peer Interaction, and Collaboration

Foster and Ohta (2005) argue that knowledge is not owned solely by the learner but rather a property of social settings. Similarly, cognition and knowledge are also social and dialogically constructed (Lantolf, 2012). Research on sociocultural perspectives investigates how learners assist each other through scaffolding and building knowledge together (Philp et al., 2014). This process helps learners perform at a level beyond their abilities by developing knowledge and its use. When learners from the same level collaborate, they pool their individual knowledge and resources with each other. As a result, they can solve each other's problems and co-construct new language knowledge

(Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2000, 2001; Swain, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 1998).

Sociocultural researchers suggest that co-construction of knowledge (or scaffolding) emphasises collaboration (Sato & Viveros, 2016), and the term 'scaffolding' has been used to explain peer interactions (Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 1998, 2001, 2002). Collaborative dialogue, defined as "*dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem-solving and knowledge building*" (Swain, 2000, p. 102), has also been used to refer to scaffolding as its nature makes it difficult to apply in peer-peer interactions (Ellis, 2008). When peers work together, they can act as both novices and experts. Therefore, they provide scaffolded assistance to each other (Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2001) because neither shares the same weaknesses and strengths with one another (Fernández Dobao, 2016). Peers can support each other by "questioning, proposing possible solutions, disagreeing, repeating, and managing activities and behaviours" within the ZPD (Swain et al., 2002, p. 173). Scaffolding is also associated with assistance, which is a feature of learner talk, claimed to promote L2 development (Foster & Ohta, 2005).

Collaboration in peer interactions has been investigated mainly by LREs or collaborative dialogue (Sato & Viveros, 2016). Several studies examined peer interactions using LREs to measure their effectiveness (Storch & Aldosari, 2013) and evidence varying degrees of collaboration by identifying and analysing LREs (Storch, 2011). Although LREs have already been categorised (Garcia Mayo & Azkarai, 2016; Ross-Feldman, 2007; Storch, 2008), identifying collaboration in line with pre-established categories would limit the possibility of collaborative behaviours since activities change when performed by different learners and by the same learners at different times (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Therefore, a static coding of utterances cannot grasp the dynamic nature of the talk, and it cannot show the ways meaning is constructed amongst speakers, over time, through and in interaction (Mercer, 2004).

To date, there is a scarce number of studies that focus on collaborative strategies or students' verbal behaviours during peer interactions (Beatty & Nunan, 2004; Erten & Altay, 2009; Gillies, 2006). There are also several studies in which discourse moves were identified during collaborative dialogue (Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009), LREs (Kos, 2013) or collaborative learning environments (Johnson & Johnson, 2001). The collaborative discourse moves, or strategies defined in these previous studies were specific to either computer-mediated communication (Beatty & Nunan, 2004; Johnson & Johnson, 2001; Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009) or writing tasks (Kos, 2013). Gillies (2006) did not focus on collaboration in her study. There is only one study to the researchers' knowledge (Erten & Altay, 2009) in which there was an attempt to define collaborative behaviours in a similar research context. This paper, therefore, has the potential to contribute to the understanding of collaborative discourse in EFL contexts.

# Method

## Participants and the Research Setting

This study is based on classroom descriptive research, which has adopted qualitative accounts of classroom processes (Ellis, 2012). The data, however, come from an extracurricular activity (i.e., speaking club) rather than participants' regular classrooms. The reason of collecting data from such a context was not to interfere with the teacher's agenda in the classrooms as they followed a predetermined curriculum and hardly allocated time for peer interactions during their regular lessons. This is yet an acceptable practise as Sato and Ballinger (2016) state that peer interaction can be assigned in any learning environment (e.g., in the classroom, outside the classroom, or in a virtual environment).

The participants were 15 adult EFL students who were enrolled in an intensive language programme at a Turkish university, and their ages ranged between 18 and 20. These learners had already enrolled in different undergraduate programmes; each required either a complete or partial foreign language medium of instruction, which was English in the current context. Therefore, all the participants had to attend a compulsory intensive English language programme before starting to take classes in their respective undergraduate programmes. At the time of the data collection, the students had already completed one semester of the intensive language program; they were all then placed in B1+ language proficiency classes by the school administration.

The participants were randomly assigned to three different groups, involving five participants in each. As they came from six different language programme classes, the randomisation method in assigning learners into the groups was favoured to spread any confounding variable's effects more evenly (Phakiti, 2014). At the end, there were three male and two female students in each group; but, due to the effect (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012), the number of the participants and groups decreased by the end of the study. However, there were at least three participants in groups, and they participated in all of the data collection meetings. There were at least two learner groups that completed each speaking task.

## Materials and Procedure

Two types of tasks, convergent and divergent tasks (Duff, 1986), were used to solicit meaningful interactions from the participants. Convergent tasks are coined from problem-solving tasks, and they are defined as tasks in which learners are required to converge on a single mutual correct answer (Tan Bee, 2003). On the other hand, divergent tasks resemble discussion tasks. These tasks encourage a range of possible responses, and there is not a single correct answer in contrast to convergent tasks. Tan Bee (2003) resembles divergent tasks to debates and opinion-exchange tasks. The tasks for this study were either chosen from previous studies or designed by the researchers (see Appendix A). Topic familiarity was ensured during the decision process because

familiar topics help generate more discourse (Li, Williams, & Volpe, 1995) and facilitate performance (Leeser, 2007).

An ethics committee approval was first obtained from Hacettepe University to carry out the study (No: 35853172/438-2194, Date: 13.07.2015). As the study was planned to be an extracurricular activity (attended voluntarily), the first author met the learners after the language programme's regular schedule. For each meeting, all of the learner groups were distributed to different parts of the room to increase the recordings' quality. The participants of the same learner group formed a circle during their interactions to face each other. For each learner group, two video cameras and one audio recorder were used to record their conversations. A sketch of the setting can be seen in Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1.**

*The Setting of the Groups*



The first author carried out the whole procedure. Each meeting started with the setting's organisation, placing the group members and then providing task instructions. Apart from those moments, the researcher acted as a non-participatory observer and did not interfere in any group interactions. Task instructions were given orally in the foreign language (i.e., English), and then the students carried out the tasks themselves. No time limitation was set for the completion of the tasks. The duration of each session, therefore, differed for each group and each task. For instance, the divergent tasks lasted approximately 40 minutes, whereas the convergent tasks approximately lasted 30 minutes. A total of four divergent and four convergent tasks were completed by the participants. The order of the tasks and the time spent on each task can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

*The Order of the Tasks*

|  | First Group | Second Group | Third Group | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Divergent Task 1 | 00:29:11 | 00:29:00 | 00:29:07 | 01:27:18 |
| Divergent Task 2 | 00:18:40 | 00:28:45 | 00:28:13 | 01:15:38 |
| Convergent Task 1 | 00:41:27 | 00:41:18 | 00:41:24 | 02:04:09 |
| Convergent Task 2 | 00:35:17 | 00:32:24 | 00:34:00 | 01:51:41 |
| Divergent Task 3 | 00:37:52 | 00:39:49 | 0 | 01:17:01 |
| Divergent Task 4 | 00:32:12 | 00:25:04 | 0 | 00:57:16 |
| Convergent Task 3 | 00:36:54 | 00:35:44 | 0 | 01:12:38 |
| Convergent Task 4 | 00:35:46 | 00:29:51 | 0 | 01:05:37 |
| TOTAL |  |  |  | Approximately 11 hours |

For the first meeting, a divergent task was chosen to eliminate any possible effects of convergent tasks; for instance, the students would try to find a solution or converge on a single outcome during divergent tasks. After the second convergent task, the number of participants unpredictably decreased; therefore, it was not possible to form a third learner group. Only two peer groups completed the remaining last four tasks.

## Data Coding and Analysis

The first researcher transcribed all the data following a selected list of Jefferson (2004) transcription conventions (Appendix B) to guarantee that transcribed talk includes much information relevant to the analysis and to avoid any misinterpretations (Mercer, 2004). Non-word utterances such as 'err/erm', 'oh', and 'huh' were included in the transcription when possible communicative functions were observed in the interaction. The talk in learners' first language (i.e., Turkish) was transcribed in the first language, and their English translations were provided in italic under each word or phrase. The first three letters of each participant's name were used to maintain their anonymity.

A sociocultural discourse analysis (Mercer, 2010) was adopted to pursue collaborative moments during interactions. The first author read the transcribed talk multiple times to determine possible collaborative behaviour patterns in the learners' interactions. This process enabled creating an initial collection of episodes where collaborative moments were observed in each task and each learner group. The episodes were described and given possible labels by employing a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the coding was pursued, the new emergent codes were compared to the previous ones, and when a mismatch was recognised, a new label was given to the latest code. After several times of robust analysis, two broad categories of collaborative behaviours, language-related and task-related, were observed in the relevant context.

This paper will focus on language-related collaborative behaviours that consist of 8 different collaborative actions. The detailed explanations will be provided in the next section, where each category will also be exemplified with the extracts from relevant episodes.

When the analysis of all the transcripts was finalised, a second trained coder was invited to code part of the collection for a reliability check. The transcripts of the 4 tasks were randomly chosen out of 20 tasks, representing approximately 20% of the transcribed data. The coder and the first author coded a total of 105 collaborative behaviours out of 127 instances as identical, yielding an inter-rater agreement of 83%, which is considered an acceptable reliability rate.

# Results

The qualitative analysis yielded two broad categories; (1) language-related and (2) task-related collaborative actions. Language-related collaborative actions occurred around the language issues that emerged during the interactions, whereas task-related collaborative actions appeared related to task-related issues. The number of language-related collaboration types was 8, and they were related to the resolution of any language issues (e.g., when learners struggled to find a word or provided corrections to group members' utterances). This type of collaboration also occurred around resolving any comprehension problems among learners; this was especially observed when the learners sought clarification or an explanation from their peers. Each collaboration type will be described and exemplified with a sample extract from the group interactions below.

### Language-related Collaboration Types

*Provision of the word/phrase:* This collaboration action emerges in two different moments. The first one happens when the current speaker initiates a word search, displaying turn holding tokens (e.g., 'err'), cut-offs, and pauses, demonstrating the speaker is engaged in word search activity (Duran, Kurhila, & Sert, 2019). Lerner (1996) suggests that word search generally occurs near the end of the unit, inviting recipients to participate in the search and complete it collaboratively. The second one is observed when learners explicitly solicit L2 equivalents of the words they do not know or recall by consulting their native language (i.e., Turkish); this is also a typical feature of word search sequences where learners cannot produce the words in L2. The following two extracts describe this collaborative action.

## Extract 1.

*Communication with People (Divergent Task 1- Group 3)*

```
1     ZUL:  I don't think  yani  online dating (1.0) not bad sometimes
                           i mean
2           sometimes bad sometimes good it depends
3     SIM:  yes
4     OZN:  but in the real life err I said err online dating is more
5           relax- şey err easier than real life for example in the
                 err
6→          online dating they err peoples are err easily (1.0) some err

7→    SIM:  communication with people
8→    OZN:  communication yes (1.0) fa- fa- different different sentences
                           di- di-
9           (2.0) that's some reliable sentences but in real life and they
10          err meet in the park
```

In line 6, the frequent use of a hesitation marker (err) and silence (1.0) show that OZN is having a problem pursuing his turn. One of the group members, SIM, completes the turn (communication with people). OZN echoes the first part of SIM's turn (communication) and uses a confirmation response (yes). It seems that OZN can extend his turn for a further two more lines after SIM provides help to complete his utterance.

## Extract 2.

*Add Someone on Facebook (Divergent Task 1- Group 1)*

```
1     MEV:  it's maybe err good idea because
2     OKN:  why?
3     MEV:  because
4     OKN   why
5→    MEV:  I am a man and some- somebody facebooka eklemek ne acaba
                                    what is to'add person on
                                    facebook
6     BER:  add
7     SEY:  add
8→    MEV:  add
9     SEY:  add the friends
10→   MEV:  add the friends °to me°
11    ALL:  ((laugh))
12→   MEV:  it maybe want to- want to tanışmak neydi
                                    what was to'meet'(in English)
13    OKN:  meet
14→   MEV:  huh meet meet me and maybe he can be good person and I
15          improve myself with talking with everybody thinks
```

In this particular fragment, MEV initiates a word search in line 5 (***what is to'add person on facebook***) by consulting their native language. MEV accepts the same candid answer (add) offered by two learners (SEY and BER) in the subsequent turn. Following this, the same learner (MEV) initiates another word search in L1 (***what was to 'meet' (in English)***) again, and he is provided with a candid answer by his friend (OKN). He accepts his offer and expands his turn in lines 14 and 15.

### Extract 3.

*You Have Never Met (Divergent Task 1- Group 2)*

```
1       ARZ:   err and (2.0) er we- ((laugh)) we meet err we never meet
2              °hiç bir zaman görüşmedik°
                 we have never met
3       BUR:   you never met
4       TUG:   you err never- you have never-
5→      ARZ:   never meet
6→      TUG:   MET
7→      ARZ:   met
8       TUG:   yes this is ((laughs and turns to BUR))
9       BUR:   ((laughs))
```

*Reconstruction of others' turns*: Collaborative actions in the form of 'reconstructions' are also observed in two conditions. When a learner uses an incorrect word in L2, other group members correct the speaker. The following extract exemplifies this particular collaborative moment.

### Extract 4.

Hatay Is Near Suriye (*Convergent Task 2- Group 1*)

```
1       MEV:   hey guys what will we go
2       MER:   maybe
3       MEV:   where will we go together
4       MER:   err i think we can go to hatay
5       OKN:   hatay?
6       MER:   yeah
7       MEV:   hatay?
8       MER:   hatay is very natural and very beautiful place
9       OKN:   very dangerous
10→     MER:   ne- what dangerous?
                 what
11→     MEV:   syria
12→     OKN:   it between [$suriye$]
                       syria
13      MER:            [yeah]((laugh)) but err in dörtyol err
14             doesnt near the err syria it's err near the adana
15      MEV:   but hatay is the near the [suriye]
16      OKN:                        [suriye] i agree with you
```

Before this particular fragment, ARZ has told other learners that she has a boyfriend with whom she has met online. In lines 1 and 2, ARZ seems to have difficulty constructing a structurally correct sentence, and she solicits help in a softer voice by using L1 (°*we have never met*°). Followed by a candid answer by BUR (you never met), TUG participates in the conversation and also offers a candid answer (you err never- you have never-). ARZ still has a problem using the correct expression (never meet). In the next turn, TUG corrects the incorrect conjugation (MET), and ARZ echoes the correct form.

This collaboration action is also observed in the form of a reformulation of an incorrect utterance. When a learner produces an incomplete or structurally incorrect utterance, other learners reformulate this utterance in a well-structured form. As happens in the following exchange, the learners collaboratively produce a reformulation of each other's turn.

MER offers to go to Hatay, situated in the south of Turkey and near Syria's border, after MEV's question for a possible holiday destination (err i think we can go to hatay). Neither OKN nor MEV seem to accept MER's suggestion, and OKN produces a disagreement with MER's suggestion in line 9. Followed by this, MER requests a clarification (*what*-what dangerous?). Next, MEV self-selects himself and refers to the border country (syria) which is reformulated by OKN (it between [$*syria*$]) to clarify meaning. MER accepts this in line 13 with a confirmation token accompanied by a laugh, and she then produces counterarguments to others' ideas.

Consider the following extract exemplifying how reconstructions are observed in the case of a sentence as well.

### Extract 5.

*Do You Use Social Media? (Divergent Task 1- Group 2)*

```
1      BUR:  [are you] chatting
2      ARZ:  but
3→     BUR:  are you chatting someone not face to face?
4      ARD:  hı  yes
             huh
5→     TUG:  do you ha- do you use err social media?
6      ARD:  always i always chatting but err i yani   my friends
                                                      i mean
7      TUG:  yes
8      ARD:  with my friends
9            (2.0)
10     TUG:  not a err stranger one
11     ARD:  yes [i do]nt prefer
```

BUR solicits ARD's opinion on social media (are you chatting someone not face to face?) in a structurally incorrect form. ARD answers her question in line 4, but TUG reformulates BUR's incorrect question in line 5 (do you use err social media?) although there is no clarification request by any group members. ARD contributes more to the conversation

after this reformulation. These particular exchanges also exemplify collaborative actions because they help expand the learners' turns.

*Request for clarification*: This kind of collaborative action is observed when other learners elicit a clarification of what the current speaker has just said in the previous turn. The learners initiate this collaborative move either by repeating some part of the previous turn or employing wh-interrogative morphosyntax. Clarification requests allow speakers to reformulate the previously given information or bring new information to the interaction.

### Extract 6.

*I Don't Understand (Convergent Task 2- Group 1)*

```
((9 lines omitted))
10→   OKN:  you dont like swim
11→   MEV:  yes beca- because i am a blonde blonde hair err and my body
12→         is very err
13    OKN: white [body
14    MEV:       [hassas    sensitive
                    sensitive
15    OKN: [white man]
16    MER: [you must] swim in err night maybe[evening or]
17    MEV:                                   [but if if] if i see the s- sea
18    MER: yeah
19    MEV: err i-i want to swim at in in the sea [i dont]
20    OKN:                                       [okay]
21→   MER: oh:: i dont understand what?
22    MEV: look
23    OKN: err
24    MEV: if i s- if i saw if i see
25    MER: yeap sea [see the sea
26    MEV:         [the sea::   [ye::s
27    MER:                     [ye:s: ((laughs))
28    MEV: i i want to swim in the sea
29    MER: yeah me too
30    MEV: but-
31    OKN: ((smiles))
32    MEV: but my body is very err sensitive
33    MER: you dont obliged to err under the err güneş neydi lan?((laughs))
                                           what was sun mate?
```

Before this particular moment, MEV says that he does not like swimming. OKN requests a clarification (you don't like swim) which is accepted with a confirmation token (yes) in line 11. MEV then expands his turn by presenting more information on the reason of why

he does not like swimming. In line 15, although MER provides a candidate response, MEV continues to hold the floor until MER explicitly announces her non-understanding (oh:: i dont understand) and requests a clarification by a wh- interrogative (what?). Starting from line 22, MEV initiates a clarification of his previous turns by taking subsequent turns with MER. The minimal tokens in lines 25, 27, and 29 indicate MER's understanding of MEV's clarification turns. Line 33 is another indicator of the clarification request's resolution, where MER has initiated a new turn constructional unit. Based on these patterns, the clarification requests create moments during which learners can collaboratively work on any comprehension breakdowns, and then they can pursue their conversation.

*Comprehension check:* The moments when current speakers checks whether the other learners have understood their previous utterances can create collaboration among learners. These particular moments are generally initiated by producing an explicit 'do you understand' comprehension check formulations by the current speaker. When other learners claim their non-understanding upon this request, the current speaker is observed to divide his previous sentence into smaller units and slow their speech.

### Extract 7.

*They Don't Know How to Use Social Network (Divergent Task 1- Group 1)*

```
1→    OKN:  some people use website or social network but they dont know
2→          how to use it i think its terrible ((smile)) i think
3     MEV:  okay
4→    OKN:  do you understand me?
5     MEV:  no
6     OKN:  i said some people
7     MEV:  yes
8     OKN:  use website or social network
9     MEV:  okay
10    OKN:  but they dont know how to use it they dont know how to use
11          social network or website
12    MEV:  okay
13    OKN:  i think it is terrible ((smiles))
14    MEV:  okay
            ((they move to another topic))
```

In this particular instance, OKN explains his opinion on online dating in lines 1 and 2. Although MEV confirms his turns in line 3, OKN uses an explicit comprehension check

(do you understand me). Although MEV previously has confirmed OKN's turn, in line 5, he hints that there is a communication problem. This allows OKN to divide this extended turn into smaller units, all of which receive a confirmation token by MEV. These moments are an instance of collaboration because both OKN and MEV jointly resolve the incomprehension, allowing them to initiate a new turn constructional unit on a different topic after line 14.

*Summary of the others' turn*: The learners are also observed when summarising each other's turns, which helps all group members comprehend what the previous speaker has already produced. This collaborative action is initiated when a member claims difficulty in hearing the speaker. A third member of the group volunteers to summarise the first speaker's previous turns. Consider the following extract in which TUG summarises the turns of ARZ in which she has talked about knowing her boyfriend's passwords.

### Extract 8.

*Passwords (Divergent Task 1- Group 2)*

```
1→    ARZ:  [but] he know err my facebook or instagram login and i know
2→          him the login °facebook and instagram login (yani)°
                                                   i mean
3     BUR:  i dont hear
4→    TUG:  şey his er her girl- her boyfriend
            err
5     ALL:  ((laugh))
6     ARZ:  $my girl$-
7→    TUG:  knows his err passwords [didnt he?
8     ARZ:                          [her passwords
9→    TUG:  senin err hers passwords so
            your
10    ARZ:  and i know too
11→   TUG:  huh
12    ARZ:  [his]
13→   TUG:  [and] ARZ knows
14    ARZ:  password
15→   TUG:  her boyfriend's passwords
16    BUR:  heh yes
            huh
```

ARZ has told the group that she and her boyfriend know each other's passwords. BUR claims that she does not hear her contribution (i dont hear). Upon this, TUG self-selects himself as the next speaker and summarises ARZ's constructions in lines 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15 by sequentially taking turns with ARZ. These collaborative exchanges between ARZ and TUG allow BUR to understand the beginning of this conversation, which can be

understood from BUR's use of a change of state token (***huh***) and a confirmation marker (yes).

*Request for explanation*: This collaborative action is initiated when a group member seeks an elaboration on the previous speaker's utterance by constructing a wh-interrogative morphosyntax, by asking the question 'why?'. The following extracts represent this collaborative action which results in BUR's extension of her previous utterance.

### Extract 9.

*What Is the Best Age For Marriage? (Divergent Task 4- Group 1)*

```
1  BUR:  i think err:: (0.5) best age for married (0.5) twenty seven
2        (0.9)
3  MER:  wh-
4  MEV:  ((tsch))
               +surprised face
5→ MER:  why?
6→ BUR:  because usually (0.8) err (0.5) our (0.2) finish the err (0.6)
7        university (0.5) usually (0.4) and we err (0.5) start the (0.2)
8        work and (0.7) maybe one and (0.2) two years err we (0.7) work
9        (0.3)
10 MER:  y[es:]
11→BUR:   [and] after that (0.6) i think err twenty seven err or(0.8)
12        err (1.8) twenty seven and err thirty five (0.2) err[::]
13 MEV:                                              [be]tween
14 BUR:  [yeah]
15 MER:  [oh::] my god
16 MEV:  between this [age]
```

Upon explaining her idea about the ideal age for marriage, MER requests an explanation from BUR in line 4 (why?), allowing BUR to elaborate on her ideas in a more extended turn.

*Request for information:* The groups' members are sometimes observed when eliciting the meaning of an L2 word, seek for more information, or asking for the L2 translation of an utterance. In the case of a lexical item, it is either followed by translation to L1, providing an L2 synonym or explaining with body language. Learners are rarely observed when using L2 to explain the meaning of the word.

### Extract 10.

*The First Observatory in The World (Convergent Task 2- Group 1)*

```
((5 lines omitted))
6→    BER:  err in kirsehir cacabey mosque
7     MEV:  yes
8→    BER:  is the first
9     OKN:  mosque
10    ALL:  ((laugh))
11    MEV:  is the first
12→   BER:  err observatory
13→   MER:  what is mean?
14→   BER:  °gözlemevi°
            observatory
15→   MER:  gözlemevi
            observatory
16→   MEV:  gözlemevi he::
            observatory hu:h
17→   BER:  is the first observatory [in the world]
18    OKN:                           [gözleme house]
                                      wrap
19    MER:  yeah:: [I interes]ted
20    MEV:        [gözlemevi
            observatory
21    MER:  in astronomy
22    OKN:  gözlem
            observation
23    BER:  yes
24    MEV:  astronomy
25    OKN:  he::
            hu:h
```

Before this particular exchange, the learners have discussed that they can go to Kırşehir, a rural city in Turkey. Starting from line 6, BER informs his partners about an architectural design situated in Kırşehir, which he claims it is the first observatory in the world. MER does not know the word 'observatory', and she explicitly requests more information (what is mean?). In the next turn, BER provides the L1 equivalence of the word in a softer voice. This is repeated by MER and then by MEV with an elongated change of state token in line 16 (**observatory hu:h**). It is observed that the request for information is correctly resolved among learners since BER expands his turn in line 17. Other learners also comment on this turn in the subsequent exchanges.

The following extract is another example of this collaborative action where SEH requests information on the meaning of an unknown word 'abroad' in the second line with a rising intonation. Upon acknowledging this request (**huh**), TUG explains its meaning in English in line 3. The request for information is also correctly resolved because BUR uses a change-of-state token (**huh**), which signifies her understanding of the new word's meaning.

### Extract 11.

*Abroad (Convergent Task 2- Group 2)*

```
1      TUG:   okay let's write to abroad
2→     SEH:   abroad?
3→     TUG:   hı another country from your own country
               huh
4      BUR:   hı
               huh
```

This collaborative action was marked as a request for information rather than a clarification request because in the feedback/evaluation turn, the learners did not use a confirmation marker such as 'yes', which is an observed feature of a 'clarification request'. However, both of the collaborative actions may be initiated by echoing the previous word or part of the utterance to solicit other learners' help.

*Provision of the L1 translation of the word/utterance*: The last language-related collaborative action is frequently observed when the speaker uses a word or a phrase after checking the online dictionary. The speaker is observed when providing the L1 translation or the word's utterance in a softer voice just after finishing the utterance in L2. The speaker initiates this sequence without getting any request for information or clarification from the other learners.

### Extract 12.

*Fruitful (Divergent Task 4- Group 1)*

```
1      MER:   [i- i think] we:: err (0.3) marriage err (0.3) twenty:: (0.3)
2             especially (0.9) twenty or twenty one years because err
3             (0.6)
4      SEH:   twenty
               ((confused face))
5→     MER:   err (0.4) (tsch) we err (1.6) we are the (faintful) (1.0)
6             °verimli°
               fertile
7      ALL:   ((laughter))
8→     MER:   $most (0.5) (faintful)$ age
9→     SEH:   [he]
                uh
10→    MER:   [and] err if you want to err (esmort) children ((laugh))
11     BUR:   yeah
```

In this particular context, MER opens the discussion in line 1 and presents her opinions on the best age for marriage. In line 4, SEH's repetition of part of MER's previous utterance (twenty) accompanied by a confused face is not accepted by MER; so, she

pursues explaining her opinions in line 5. She uses a word (faintful) which is an incorrect use in this particular context. Following a one-second silence, MER also provides the L1 translation of the word (fertile) in a softer voice without receiving any request for clarification or information from her partners in line 5. MER then uses the same word in a new sentence in line 7 ($most (0.5) (faintful)$ age). MER's provision of the L1 translation results in a mutual understanding with the other members. In the subsequent turn, SEH uses a change of state token to show his understanding, and in line 10, BUR also shows her understanding of MER's turn with a confirmation marker (yeah). The provision of the L1 equivalent of the word helps clarify what the speaker has tried to explain. After this action, the current speaker either continues holding the floor or other members suggest other L2 forms. Consider the following extract during which a provision in L1 creates a collaborative search for a correct word.

### Extract 13.

*Graduated From (Divergent Task 4- Group 2)*

```
1      ZUL:  older sister married now married err two years ago
2      ARD:  err how old are-
3      ZUL:  she
4      ARD:  she↓ is she
5      ZUL:  that is she err she was twenty four or twenty five
6      ARD:  hı:::↓
7      ZUL:  years old
8      ARD:  normal
9→     ZUL:  normal but err she studied ya da işte okudu
                                    or (she)studied
10→    SIM:  educated
11→    ARD:  hı yes
12→    ZUL:  she is educated medicine and then
13→    KAN:  graduated from
14→    ZUL:  graduated
15→    SIM:  hı graduated
16→    ZUL:   from twenty five
```

This extract starts with ZUL's initiation of providing an example along lines 1 and 8, by exchanging turns with ARD. In line 9, ZUL refers to her sister's degree (err she studied), and she provides the L1 translation of this formulation (*or (she)studied*). This provision allows other members to offer alternatives to ZUL's translation. In line 10, SIM provides a new word (educated), and ARD confirms this in the subsequent turn. Following this, ZUL reformulates her previous turn with what SIM has offered in line 10. KAN offers another formulation (graduated from), which both ZUL and SIM accept. Based on this particular exchange, it can be said that the provision of L1 translations create a collaborative moment during which participants co-construct meaning together.

# Conclusion and Discussion

This study investigated collaborative actions during L2 task-based face-to-face peer interactions as a group. To date, there is relatively little research on collaborative discourse in the framework of sociocultural theory by adopting an emic perspective to investigate the moments where learners collaborate and co-construct knowledge together. The researchers mainly employed an etic coding of collaborative instances by analysing LREs as a common analysis unit to understand collaboration (Sato & Viveros, 2016). An etic coding scheme such as LREs (Swain & Lapkin, 1998) would miss the particular collaborative actions observed in the current context. For this purpose, a qualitative analysis, particularly a constant comparative method, was employed. There are eight emergent language-related collaborative actions, labelled as 1) provision of the word/phrase, 2) reconstruction of others' turns, 3) request for clarification, 4) comprehension check, 5) summary of the others' turn, 6) request for explanation, 7) request for information, and 8) provision of the L1 translation of the word/utterance.

Similar discourse moves to the ones emerged in this study exist in previous studies. These are discussed for each collaborative action in the following part. However, it is important to discuss some possible explanations for observing these particular collaborative actions in the current data. The first reason for observing these collaborative actions might be related to the language proficiency of the learners. Although all of the participants were from the same proficiency level reported by the language school administration, some of the learners were observed to display more proficient use of L2. The learners might have acted as novices and experts (Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2001) during their interactions, as neither of them shared the same weaknesses and strengths (Fernández Dobao, 2016). The collaborative actions such as *'reconstruction of others' turns'* and *'summary of the others' turns'* might have been observed due to learners' perceived proficiency differences as well. Another reason for observing these actions may be due to the nature of the tasks. Convergent and divergent tasks (Duff, 1986) were used to solicit interactions from each group. Due to the tasks' inherent features, it would not have been possible for the learners to complete the tasks without resolving any communication breakdown or stating their own position in resolving the tasks. As a result, the learners may have employed different strategies to resolve language-related issues, resulting in collaborations. The other reason for observing the collaborative actions might be the topic choice of the tasks. Learners' familiarities with the topics were ensured because previous research suggested that more elaborate discourse is likely to be elicited by familiar topics (Li, Williams, & Volpe, 1995). Moreover, background knowledge such as topic familiarity facilitates performance on tasks (Leeser, 2007), resulting in more interaction opportunities during the group interaction. However, the participants might not have found opportunities to converse on these topics during an interaction before. Therefore, searching and providing new words as in *'provision of the word/utterance'* or assistance seeking/giving collaborative actions such as *'comprehension check'*, *'clarification check'*, and *'request for information or explanation'* might have been promoted by the topic choice.

After discussing some possible reasons for the observation of the collaborative action, the next part will discuss each collaborative action individually.

## Language-related Collaboration Types

The literature on peer interaction is missing the definition of the term 'collaboration'. It has been defined as *"the process that occurs when learners create opportunities for learning through their deliberation on language, provide each other with the help, which might be either solicited or unsolicited, to keep the flow of the activity emerged from the task"* by referring to the collaborative actions defined in the current context (Aksoy, 2018, p. 8). Language-related collaborative actions emerged to resolve any language issues, such as when learners struggled to find a word or provided corrections to group members' utterances. Two collaborative behaviours of this study can be grouped as representing this feature of language-related collaborations. In the literature, word search sequences have similar collaborative action patterns named *'provision of the word/utterance'* in the current research (Duran, Kurhila, & Sert, 2019). Other studies (Erten & Altay, 2009; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Kos, 2013; Sato & Viveros, 2016) defined a collaborative move initiated when a learner struggles to finish his/her utterance and another person (collaboratively) completes the rest of the sentence. The researchers did not mention learners' resorting to their L1 to initiate the collaborative move in those studies. However, the learners frequently resorted to their L1 as a word search activity in the current study.

Foster and Ohta (2005) and Kos (2013) defined a strategy as a form of assistance, named 'other-correction'. Although there is a similarity between their category and the collaborative action named *'reconstruction of others' turns'*, the collaborative action defined in this study involves a much broader context. One member of the learner group reformulates the previous speaker's turn without any solicitation from the group members and corrects the partner's incorrect utterance. In the current context, reconstructions are used to correct the incorrect use of morphology or syntax. Learners also reconstructed their partners' semantically unclear utterances.

Another feature of language-related collaborative actions is that they revolve around resolving any comprehension problems among learners. Four collaborative actions defined in the study can exemplify this feature of collaboration. Firstly, similar collaborative discourse movements were defined in the literature (Beatty & Nunan, 2004; Erten & Altay, 2009; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Gillies, 2006) that might correspond to *'request for clarification'*. However, the collaborative action defined here is a combination of two collaborative discourse strategies; *'explain text/task/ideas'* and *'solicit clarification'*. This collaborative action allows speakers to reformulate the information previously given or bring new information to the current study's interaction.

The category of *'comprehension check'* has some similar features to how Foster and Ohta (2005) defined it as "*any expression designed whether that speaker's previous utterance had been understood by the interlocutor*" (p. 410). Similarly, when the speaker

attempts to understand whether the other group members have understood the previous utterance, these moments were defined as collaborative acts.

The collaborative action named *'request for explanation'* is similar to what is defined as an 'assistance seeking strategy' in another study (Kos, 2013). Similarly, the collaborative action in the current study is initiated when an interlocutor seeks a solicited explanation of the speaker's utterance. Therefore, it has similar features as in *'elaborations'* (Gillies, 2006), which help provide solicited explanations and open-ended questions. *'Request for information'* is also addressed by Kos (2013) as another assistance seeking strategy which helps elicit lexis, morphosyntax, or spelling. However, 'request for explanation' is observed when learners initiated an elicitation of an L2 word meaning, extra information, or L2 translation of an utterance. This collaborative action is followed by translation to L1, provision of L2 synonyms, or explanation with body language in a lexical item. The learners rarely use L2 to explain the meaning of the word. Although the beginning of both clarification and information request is initiated by the repetition of a previous word or part of the utterance to solicit help, there is not a confirmation such as 'yes' in the response turn in a *request for information*, differentiating it from a *request for clarification*.

The collaborative action labelled as *'summary of the others' turns'* contributes to the comprehension of the conversations during each task, and there is not a similar category in the literature. During the collaborative moment, one interlocutor volunteers as the next speaker and summarises what has been uttered in the previous turns without any solicitation from the group members. This action is initiated with incorrect formulations or unclear messages. The final language-related collaborative action *'provision of the L1 translation of the word/utterance'* is usually observed when the current speaker uses a word with incorrect pronunciation. The speaker initiates this move without receiving any request for information or clarification from the interlocutors. Immediately after using incorrect pronunciation, the speaker provides the L1 equivalent in a softer voice. The learners are also observed to use this strategy when they are not sure about the use of a particular word. As a result, other learners take turns and provide help with the reformulation of the utterance.

## Suggestions and Pedagogical Implications

The collaborative behaviours defined in this study have been marked as collaborative moments where one type of collaborative actions was employed in learner interactions. It could be a better idea to conduct a turn-by-turn analysis to mark the discursive strategies that learners use to initiate such instances and resolve them. This would also help identify how many learners actively participated in collaborative moments. Non-verbal interactions such as gestures or body language can also be included in the analysis. It was clear in the recordings that the learners used and oriented to non-verbal communication for mutuality. A follow-up interview can also support the findings as they have the potential to have an in-depth analysis into collaborative moments.

This study did not aim to focus on learning or teaching any specific language items due to using collaborative behaviours. It is not yet known whether the learners learned any L2 items. However, the findings can still support the benefit of using peer interactions in L2 classrooms. Firstly, the peer interaction activities provide a context for practising language use (Philp et al., 2014). As the learners try to explain their opinions by forming L2 sentences, this will increase their L2 fluency and accuracy over time. Although there was no presence of an authority figure, i.e., a teacher during the interactions, the learners successfully managed to complete the tasks assigned in L2. The learners sometimes resorted to their shared L1, which can be stated as one reason teachers' reluctance to use peer interactions activities in the classrooms. The literature suggest that L1 use can be used as a mediational tool to organise thoughts, and it is also beneficial for L2 learning from a sociocultural perspective (van Compernolle, 2015). Moreover, the peer interaction activities provide more opportunities for symmetrical interactions since participants will be language learners (Philp, 2016). They will therefore experience greater levels of comfort (Sato & Ballinger, 2016).

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## Appendices

## Appendix A. Examples for divergent and convergent tasks from the study

| | |
|---|---|
| Divergent Task 1 | What do you think about online dating?<br>- Have you ever met someone from online websites?<br>- Do you think it is a good idea to meet someone from online websites?<br>- Do you think you may fall in love with someone that you have never met in person?<br>- Are there any disadvantages? What may be disadvantages?<br>- Will you continue your relationship? Will you marry in the end? |
| Convergent Task 1 | Drawing a dream café?<br>- You and your friends are bored of the café you frequently go. Here is the chance to design and furnish your dream café with decisions on the layout, types of services, furniture. What do you want to put in your café? You need to make a unanimous decision with your friends. |

## Appendix B. Transcription symbols used in the extracts (Jefferson, 2004)

| Symbol | Use |
|---|---|
| (0.2) | A number inside brackets denotes a timed pause. A number in parentheses indicates the time, in seconds, of a pause in speech. |
| [ text ] | Indicates the start and end points of overlapping speech. |
| ( text ) | Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript. |
| (( )) | Annotation of non-verbal activity. |
| :::: | Colons appear to represent elongated speech, a stretched sound |
| - | Indicates an abrupt halt or interruption in utterance. |
| ° ° | Indicates whisper or reduced volume speech. |
| ? or ↑ | Indicates rising pitch. |
| . or ↓ | Indicates falling pitch. |
| $word$ | Dollar sign indicates that the speaker utters the word with a smile |
| ALL CAPS | Indicates shouted or increased volume speech. |