Collaborative writing and patterns of interaction in young learners: The interplay between pair dynamics and pairing method in LRE production

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Abstract

A considerable body of research within the Socio-cultural theory (Lantolf & Appel, 1994) examines how learners express their linguistic gaps verbally, or question their own or others' language use when writing collaboratively, i.e., produce Language-related episodes (LREs; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Several studies have also explored the effect that different *patterns of interaction* (Storch, 2002) have on the production of LREs with adult learners (e.g., Mozaffari, 2017; Storch & Aldosari 2013), but little research has compared the effect of these patterns of interaction and pair formation method (i.e., student-selected and proficiency-matched) on young EFL learners' ability to attend to language, and much less on the *type* of grammatical features they focus on in LREs.

This study examines young EFL learners' (aged 10-12) production of LREs and pair dynamics in student-selected vs. proficiency-matched groups while completing a collaborative writing task. It was found that young EFL learners mainly exhibit a collaborative type of dynamics and resolved more LREs accurately, together with expert-novice groups. Matched proficiency was more beneficial, as these groups produced more target-like LREs. As per the type of form-focused LREs produced, these young learners focused primarily on spelling issues and less on grammatical knowledge-induced ones.

Keywords: Language-related episodes (LRE), patterns of interaction, pair formation method, collaborative writing, form-focused LREs.

Resumen

Un número considerable de estudios enmarcados en la Teoría Sociocultural (Lantolf y Appel, 1994) investiga el modo en el que los/as aprendices expresan verbalmente sus lagunas lingüísticas, o cuestionan el uso propio o ajeno del lenguaje durante la escritura colaborativa, es decir, producen Episodios Relacionados con el Lenguaje (ERLs; Swain y Lapkin, 1998).Varios estudios han examinado, además, el efecto que los *patrones de interacción* (Storch, 2002) ejercen en la producción de los ERLs con aprendices adultos (véase Mozaffari, 2017; Storch y Aldosari, 2013), aunque pocos estudios han comparado el efecto de dichos patrones de interacción y el método de emparejamiento (es decir, formación de parejas en base a las preferencias de los/as propios/as aprendices y en base a la proficiencia) en la capacidad de los/las aprendices jóvenes de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE) para atender a la lengua, y menos aún en el *tipo* de rasgos gramaticales en los que éstos/as se enfocan en la producción de ERLs.

Este estudio examina la producción de los ERLs y los patrones de interacción en parejas formadas en base a sus preferencias o su proficiencia en jóvenes aprendices de ILE (10-12 años) durante una tarea colaborativa escrita. Los resultados demostraron que los jóvenes aprendices de ILE mantuvieron generalmente un tipo de dinámica colaborativa, quienes también resolvieron una mayor cantidad de ERLs de forma correcta, junto con las parejas experto/a-novato/a. En cuanto al tipo de emparejamiento, las parejas establecidas en base a su proficiencia obtuvieron resultados más beneficiosos en tanto en cuanto produjeron un mayor número de ERLs con resolución correcta. En cuanto al tipo de LREs enfocados a la forma, los/las participantes se enfocaron mayormente en aspectos relacionados con la ortografía y en menor medida en aspectos derivados de un conocimiento gramatical.

Palabras clave: Episodios Relacionados con el Lenguaje (ERLs), patrones de interacción, método de emparejamiento, escritura colaborativa, ERLs enfocados en la forma.

1. Introduction

The field of Second Language pedagogy is witnessing an increasing interest in young learners' development in second language (Mackey, 1994; Mackey & Oliver, 2002; Mackey & Silver, 2005; Oliver, 1998; Oliver, Philp & Duchesne, 2017; Roehr-Brackin & Tellier, 2019) and, more scarcely, in foreign language (Azkarai & Kopinska, 2020; Coyle & Roca de Larios, 2014; García Mayo & Hidalgo, 2017; García Mayo & Imaz Aguirre, 2019; García Mayo & Lázaro-Ibarrola, 2015; Pinter, 2006, 2007; Pladevall-Ballester & Vraciu, 2020) contexts. Particularly, there has been a growing

interest in the potential contribution that collaborative writing makes in fostering learners' reflection on language form (López-Serrano, Roca de Larios & Manchón, 2019). When writing collaboratively, learners express their linguistic gaps verbally, question their own or others' language use and resort to their internal linguistic knowledge about form and meaning (Swain & Lapkin, 2001). These processes were originally labelled as Language-related episodes (LREs) by Swain & Lapkin, (1998: 70), who defined them as "[...] any part of the dialogue in which students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct."

According to the Socio-cultural framework (Lantolf & Appel, 1994), the relationship that learners build when working collaboratively and their *patterns of interaction* (Storch, 2002) have been signalled as one of the factors that affect the volume of languaging (i.e., the production of LREs) in collaborative writing (see overview by Storch, 2016) with adult learners (e.g., Mozaffari, 2017; Storch & Aldosari 2013), but little research has compared the effect of these patterns of interaction on young EFL learners' ability to attend to language. Thus, the present study sought to analyse young EFL learners' production of LREs and how the nature of pair dynamics in task-based interaction affects these in their (i) incidence (quantity), (ii) nature (form- or meaning-focused), and (iii) resolution (target-like or non-target-like or non-resolved). It also explores the extent to which LREs are influenced by how learner pairs are established (matched proficiency or self-selection). Additionally, the study further analyses the type of language aspects involved in form-focused LREs comparing each type of pattern of interaction and of pairing method, as merely giving account of the amount and resolution of LREs falls short in the analysis of the extent to which young EFL learners explicitly attend to specific language features.

2. Literature Review

An increasing number of investigations in the Socio-cultural theory of learning examine how collaborative writing contributes to language development and knowledge building (Swain, 2000). The distinguishing traits of collaborative writing identified pertain to (i) *process -* as a collaborative construction of the authors in the composition process -, (ii) *product -* as a final result of a unique text. Thirdly, (iii) the concept of *text ownership* refers to the decision-making process of text production (Ede & Lunsford, 1990, as cited in Storch, 2016). Writing most typically occurs under planned conditions, which allows learners to address both content and form (Williams, 2008). In this respect, the off-line nature of the writing process is believed to facilitate learners' explicit reflection on language and to provide peer feedback, both of which may contribute to advance in the form-meaning relationship of the target language (Manchón & Williams, 2016). As Williams (2012: 328) put it, "[..] learners have a richer opportunity to test their hypotheses when they write than when they speak".

LREs are identified as the unit of analysis to code those instances in the data where learners deliberate about morphosyntax, lexis or mechanics (Storch, 2016), both in the Socio-cultural framework and the Interaction framework (Long, 1996). From a socio-cultural perspective, production of language is seen as a communicative and a cognitive activity, and LREs are viewed as instances where learners verbalize their thinking or their deliberations, processes termed as *languaging* (Swain, 2006, 2010).

Numerous studies on LREs have focused on adults in English as a second language (ESL; Benson, Pavitt, J.,& Jenkins 2005), immersion (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 1998), content-based instruction (Leeser, 2004), or foreign language settings (Basterrechea & García Mayo, 2013; Basterrechea & Leeser, 2019; Kim & McDonough, 2008; García Mayo, 2002; García Mayo & Azkarai, 2016; Malmqvist, 2005; Storch & Aldosari, 2013). Studies examining LRE production by young learners have grown steadily in the past few decades, analysing negotiation strategies (Oliver, 1998), task effect on attention to form (Mackey, 1994; Plonsky & Kim, 2016), and, to a lesser extent, LREs on written production, focussing in particular on task repetition (Hidalgo & García Mayo 2021), and on feedback (Coyle & Roca de Larios, 2014).

These studies examine not only the (i) incidence (quantity), (ii) nature (form- or meaning-focused), and (iii) resolution (target-like, non-target-like or non-resolved) of the LREs produced by the learners, but also the impact that the patterns of interaction exhibited by adult learners in collaborative tasks (e.g., Donato, 1998; Kim & McDonough, 2008, Storch, 2002; Storch & Aldosari, 2013), and, more recently, by young learners in ESL (Azkarai, García Mayo & Oliver, 2020; Oliver & Azkarai, 2019) and EFL (Azkarai & Kopinska, 2020; Butler & Zeng, 2015; García Mayo & Imaz Aguirre, 2019; Martinez-Adrián & Gutiérrez-Mangado, 2022) settings have on the production of LREs. Overall, research on patterns of interaction point to a moderating effect of pair behaviour on the incidence of LRE production in collaborative interaction. In that regard, in Storch's (2002) pioneering research on the effect of pair behaviour on languaging in a collaborative writing task with adult ESL learners, 4 patterns of pair relations were identified, based on the learners' level of engagement with the other member of the dyad (i.e., mutuality) and the level of contribution to the task (i.e., equality), as follows:

a) Collaborative pattern: both members of the dyad contribute to the task actively, by pooling their resources and incorporating and/or repeating each other's utterances and extending on them. Thus, learners' level of contribution to both the task and with the other member of the pair is high.

b) Dominant/dominant pattern: both participants contribute to the task but do not engage with each other's contributions and hence there is not a

joint contribution of the text. Learners may use disputational talk and show disagreement. This pattern may also include a cooperative (Storch, 2001; Tan, Wigglesworth & Storch, 2010) or passive/parallel (Butler & Zeng, 2015) pattern when there is no engagement among peers but participants do not attempt to take control over the task - also described as division of labour (Storch, 2002).

c) Dominant/passive pattern: Learners do not engage with each other's contribution, and one of the members takes control over the task; little assistance is sought or offered.

d) Expert/novice pattern: The expert or capable peer takes control over the task, but s/he seeks to involve the novice member, by providing assistance. Hence, the novice contributes to the task to a lesser extent, but a high level of engagement exists among the participants.

Results in the study by Storch (2002) showed that collaborative and expert-novice were the patterns that contributed to language gains more effectively, as attested by the higher amount of LREs transferred to subsequent individual tasks by pairs that exhibited these types of patterns. Subsequent studies that have examined the interplay between the relative proficiency of the dyad members (i.e., homogenous vs heterogeneous proficiency) and the patterns of interaction in adult ESL (e.g., Kim & McDonough, 2008) and EFL learners (e.g., Storch & Aldosari, 2013) have shown that homogeneous groups sustain more optimal patterns of interaction (i.e., collaborative, and expert/novice pattern) and produce a larger amount of LREs compared to dominant/passive dyads, although the type of role relationships among mixed proficiency dyads is not so conclusive, with learners exhibiting a wider range of patterns in mixed proficiency dyads (see Storch & Aldosari, 2013), or adopting less beneficial roles in heterogeneous groupings (see Kim & McDonough, 2008). As for young learners, García Mayo and Imaz Aguirre (2019) was the first study that examined pair dynamics in young EFL learners (11-12 years old). All learners exhibited a collaborative type of relationship in task-based interaction. However, in the study by Azkarai and Kopinska (2020) with the same type of population, learners exhibited not only a collaborative pattern, but equally a cooperative one in that a considerable amount of learners did not engage in each other's contribution and did not attempt to control over the task. The authors explained this finding in the light of the task demands employed in the study – a dictogloss task (Wajnryb, 1990) -, where one of the students took the role of the scribe, which may have resulted in a more passive attitude. Pladevall-Ballester (2021) also examined LRE production and patterns of interaction among young EFL learners and whether these change over time (or as proficiency increases), analysing the pair dynamics by 4th and 6th graders (aged 10 and 12 respectively) in an oral task in this

case. As attested in previous studies with EFL schoolchildren, learners were mainly collaborative, at the two testing times. As per type of LREs, the majority had a lexical focus, which also corroborates findings in prior young learner literature (Basterrechea & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2020; Gallardo-del-Puerto & Basterrechea, 2021; García Mayo & Imaz Aguirre, 2019); similar results were obtained in studies that compared high and low proficiency adult learners in ESL (e.g., Leeser, 2004) and EFL (Basterrechea & Leeser, 2019; Kim & McDonough, 2008; Malmqvist, 2005; Storch & Aldosari, 2013) contexts, with low proficient learners producing mainly meaning-focused LREs. As for resolution, it was the expert-novice dyads who produced the largest amount of resolved LREs in Pladevall-Ballester's (2021), findings that corroborate the benefits of this type of pattern attested in earlier studies (e.g., Oliver & Azkarai, 2019; Storch, 2002).

Apart from proficiency, research with L2 learners has explored the impact of other variables on the patterns of interaction, such as age (Butler & Zeng, 2015) or task type (Ahmadian & Tajabadi, 2017), with collaborative patterns resulting in the most beneficial type of dynamics in promoting a more collaborative construction of knowledge overall. However, there is a dearth of studies exploring the extent to which patterns of interaction are influenced by how pairs are established, and if having learners choose their partners or matched proficiency would have a different impact on learners' ability to attend to language. Basterrechea and Gallardo-del-Puerto (2020) found a wider range of patterns of interaction in a study that examined the interplay between pair dynamics and pair formation method in young learners' LRE production, a variable that had previously been investigated in adult EFL contexts (e.g., Mozaffari, 2017) resulting in proficiency-matched pairs producing more LREs, whereas student-selected pairs talked about matters unrelated to the task more frequently, although Gallardo-del-Puerto and Basterrechea (2021) found that it was also the self-selected interactancts who produced more target-like meaning-focused LREs. In the study by Basterrechea and Gallardo-del-Puerto (2020), patterns of interaction of proficiency-matched versus self-selected pairs showed that the latter exhibited not only a wider range of patterns of interaction, but also the types of dynamics which are believed to have a detrimental effect on language development (i.e., dominant/dominant and dominant/passive). Proficiency-matched pairs, instead, were mainly of a collaborative and, to a lesser extent, an expert-novice pattern. This study, although preliminary, showed that patterns of interaction may be affected by factors other than proficiency level, as having learners choose their partners may play a role in the potential that peer collaboration has in task-based dynamics. Along these lines, it has been suggested that the "[...] learners' ability to profit from peer interaction is greatly affected by the social dynamics of their group or pair" (Sato & Ballinger, 2016, p. 19).

With the aim to fill this gap, the present study examines the potential interrelationship between pair dynamics and pairing method and how the different patterns of interaction

and pair formation procedures affect learners' ability to attend to language. Although some of the studies above have shown that collaborative is the most frequent pattern among young EFL learners, the results are not so clear-cut when adding pair formation method into the analysis. Additionally, in order to gain further insights into the language learning opportunities that arise in collaborative task performance, rather than focusing solely on the profits of producing and solving LREs collaboratively, a detailed analysis of the type of LREs -particularly form-focused - needs to be done. as "[..] merely counting LREs fail to capture the complexity of the interactions" (Storch, 2016: 397).

Previous research has attested that young learners produce LREs with a lexical focus to a larger extent than form-focused LREs. However, to our knowledge, no studies have reported on the *type* of grammatical features learners focus on in child EFL pair dynamics. A closer analysis of the nature of form-focused LREs will help to uncover the extent to which these learners are able to discuss language and/or have metalinguistic awareness, all of which may contribute to language development (Roehr-Brackin & Tellier, 2019). Hence, the present study incorporates the analysis of the specific language aspects involved in the form-focused LREs, in order to provide evidence of young EFL learners' ability to reflect on language use. Our study is a follow-up of Basterrechea and Gallardo-del-Puerto (2020), but now the focus is on the interface between pair dynamics and pair formation method. In order to rule out the task effect, in this study we have now centred on the data coming from a task only - a convergent map task (a writing task) -. Additionally, the present study incorporates the focus of the *type* of LREs (within meaning-focused or form-form focused), an issue which has only been explored in adult learners so far (Niu, 2009), and is yet to be looked into in young learners.

3. Research questions

On the basis of previous research, we entertain four different research questions:

1) Which patterns of interaction do young EFL learners exhibit when they engage in a collaborative writing task?

2) Does pairing method (matched proficiency vs self selection) per type of pattern have an effect on the incidence, type and resolution of LREs?

3) What type of form-focused LREs do these learners produce? What is the relationship between patterns of interaction and form-focused LRE types?

4) What is the relationship between pairing method per type of pattern and form-focused LRE types?

4. Materials and Methods

4.1. Participants

Fifty-seven (57) schoolchildren from 5 intact classrooms in their fifth and sixth year of Primary Education (aged 10 to 12) in the Basque Autonomous Community (northern Spain) participated in the study. The school is located in an area where Spanish is more frequently used than Basque, and the latter is generally learnt in the school context in a total immersion language model, with Spanish and English as school subjects. In order to increase the amount of exposure to the foreign language (English), the school programme incorporates Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) lessons into the curriculum from 3rd grade onwards (age 8-9), whereby *Arts and Crafts, Physical Education* and *Science* are taught in English. Hence, at the time of data gathering, the participants' English exposure amounted to 777 hours in Grade 5 and 962 hours in Grade 6. As for their English proficiency, they are all considered beginner learners according to the Key English Test (KET, Cambridge University Press, 2008) which they took at the outset of the project.

4.2. Instruments and procedure

A general background questionnaire and the English proficiency test enabled us to assess participants' biographical profiles and English proficiency. The results in the latter were used to establish proficiency-matched pairs of half of the participants in the experimental phase, whereas the second half of the participants were asked to choose a partner they would work with. The children were grouped into 24 dyads (2-member groups) and 3 triads (3-member groups) (due to the uneven number of participants in 3 out of the 5 intact classrooms).

In the experimental phase, participants underwent a convergent map task (e.g., Gilabert, Barón & Llanes, 2009) in groups. This was a consensus task (Gass, Mackey & Ross-Feldman, 2005) with only one possible solution. Research has shown that convergent tasks lead to more negotiation of meaning and production of LREs than divergent tasks (e.g., Gilabert et al., 2009). Learners were asked to agree on an itinerary the main character of a story would have to follow and write a short text collaboratively (see Appendix). Participants were first provided with a town map and a picture showing a boy who has found a lost dog in a park. In a second phase, students had to agree on the itinerary the boy had to follow around various landmarks on the map. In a final stage, they had to write collaborately a short note for the boy explaining who the dog's owner is and giving directions from the park to the owner's workplace so that the boy would be able to take the dog back to its owner.

The learner groups were taken to a quiet room in their school premises in turns so that we could video-record their interaction while they accomplished the writing task. No time restrictions were imposed. The investigators stressed the importance of paying attention to language accuracy and encouraged learners to work on their own and to pool their own resources in the task.

4.3. Analysis

The participants' oral production was video-recorded and then transcribed using the CHAT conventions in CHILDES (Child Language Data Exchange System; MacWhinney, 2000). The patterns of interaction exhibited by each of the dyads (and triads) were analysed on the basis of the most representative pattern and classified according to the taxonomy proposed by Storch (2002) (collaborative, expert/novice, dominant/passive or dominant/dominant - see above). These analyses observed the learners' behaviour in requesting and/or providing feedback, explicit peer repairs, the degree of assistance sought or offered, repetition of requests, level of engagement in each other's contributions or disagreement (op. cit.). The following extracts illustrate the dyadic patterns found in our data. In example (1) participants engaged in the task collaboratively. In this excerpt, the students complete each other's utterances and pool their resources by providing suggestions about the preposition that should follow *go*. They recast each other's utterances until they come to an agreement – no preposition follows *go*. They exhibit a collaborative pattern, where they show high degree of participation, and the level of contribution to both the task and with the other member of the dyad is high.

Collaborative (high equality – high mutuality):

(1) *CHI2: ah go after to the park.
*CHI1: and the xxx go after the park. (she starts writing)
*CHI1: go?
*CHI2: out.
*CHI1: xxx. (CHI2 takes the pen and writes)
*CHI2: go out to the park.
*CHI1: go (.) to the park.
*CHI1: <*vale*>@s [OK]
*CHI2: <*vale*>@s [OK]

Extract (2) shows an example of an expert/novice pattern, where Child 1 takes the lead but also seeks to involve the novice by modeling the sentences that Child 2 incorporates into her interaction. Although Child 2 is not passive and asks for repetition, their degree of participation is unequal. However, a high level of engagement with each other's contribution exists among the participants.

Expert/novice (low equality – high mutuality):

(2) *CHI1: the boy have to pass for the main street. (..) the boy (.) have to pass (..) to the main street.

*CHI2: to the?

*CHI1: main street. (she points at the name of the street)

*CHI1: and then is the laboratory. (CHI2 writes)

Extract (3) features an example of a dominant/passive dyad. Child 1 is the dominant peer and Child 2 – the writer – a more passive one, as evinced by the unequal number of turns of Child 1, her long monologues (turns 1 to 3, 5 to 8, and 12) and her dominant attitude over the task (turns 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11), commanding her partner to write what she thinks is correct, or erasing what Child 2 has written, or ignoring Child 2's suggestions (turn 11).

Dominant/passive (low equality – high mutuality):

(3) (1) *CHI1: <*a ver, tú pon* >@s [let's see, write] going to the church. (CHI2 starts writing) (..) to the.

(2) *CHI1: <no, a ver >@s [no, let's see] (.) into the (.)
<*a ver, cómo, a ver, a ver* >@s [no, let's see, how, let's see, let's see]
(CHI2 erases what she has written and CHI1 takes the paper to continue writing)

(3) *CHI1: to the (.) <*espera, espera*>@s [hold on, hold on]

(4) *CHI2: ah <*junto*>@s [next to]. (CHI1 erases something more)

(5) *CHI1: <*es que voy a academia*>@s [I take private lessons, you know].

(6) *CHI1: (writing) go (.) to (.) the (.) church.

(7) *CHI1: to church and right no right?

(8) *CHI1: reat <*algo así era, no*?>@s [it was something like that, right?]

(9) *CHI2: <*algo así era, no*>@s [it was something like that]

(10) *CHI1: and going reat <*igual era recto*>@s [perhaps it was straight]

(11) *CHI2: and go (.) <*y si ponemos* >@s [and if we write]
and go to the <*es que ya hemos puesto, no?*>@s [we have already written that, right?]

(12) *CHI1: going to the church <*o sea ir hasta la (.) hasta la iglesia y luego.* >@s [I mean go to the (.) to the church and then]

Extract (4), the three members of a triad show a desire to dominate the task – described in the situations coded as %sit -, as evinced by the little engagement with each other's contribution. The three of them want to take the initiative to the point that they sound authoritarian, as evinced in turns 3, 6, 8, 9 and 15 by Child 2, or %sit, where Child 3 takes the paper; Child 1 wants to stand out (see turns 4 and 14) as well, but the other members do not seem to pay attention to him.

Dominant/dominant:

(4) %sit: CHI1 takes the paper.

(1) *CHI1: in the park. (he writes)

(2) *CHI2: in the park.

(3) *CHI2: <*escribe; quién es su dueño*. >@s [write; who his owner is]

(4) *CHI1: Jack Smith <*ya lo hemos puesto*>@s [we have already done it] is Jack Smith.

(5) *CHI2: <*y, a ver.* >@s [and, let's see]

(6) *CHI2: <*pon*>@s [write down] Jack Smith is vet. (CHI1 writes)

(7) *CHI1: Smith (.) Jack Smith?

(8) *CHI2: is vet.
%sit: CHI3 takes the paper.

(9) *CHI2: <*ahora pon aquí cómo llega del parque hasta xxx* >@s [now write down here how it gets from the park to the xxx]

(10) *CHI1: <*¿cómo se dice todo recto?* >@s [how do you say straight?]

(11) *CHI2: the park.

(12) *CHI3: <*por aquí* >@s [over here]

(13) *CHI2: in the park eh left.

(14) *CHI1: <*a ver*>@s [look] left <*es izquierda eh.* >@s [is left, you know?]

(15) *CHI2: <*pues eso, si lo vemos así.* >@s [I know, if we see it this way]

Learner collaborative interaction was also analysed for LREs. Following earlier research on LREs (García Mayo & Azkarai, 2016, among others), interactions were coded on whether they had a lexical focus (*meaning-focused LREs*), namely when the interaction involved the meaning or use of a word, or a focus on form (*form-focused LREs*), which included morphosyntax, prepositions, spelling, but also pronunciation, on the grounds that research has shown that incidental focus-on-form episodes include those involving pronunciation and phonological (or phonetic) form (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2001). Based on the work of Leeser (2004), the resolution of LREs was coded as *unresolved* when the participants failed to provide a solution to the issue raised in the LRE and *resolved*, when participants reached a correct resolution. Resolved LREs were further classified as *target-like*, when the LRE was solved correctly, or as *non-target-like* when the solution reached was incorrect.

Interactions were first coded by one of the researchers and then independently coded by a different researcher. Only those LREs which both researchers agreed on were included for analysis. The following examples illustrate the different types of LREs encountered in our data. Example (5) features a meaning-focused LRE, where the participants struggle with the word *straight*. After many turns, including those asking the investigator (turn 5), Child 2 comes up with the word (not until turn 14), which is then incorporated in Child 1's turn (turn 15).

(5) Meaning-focused. Resolved: target-like.

(1) *CHI2: <*recto* y *a la derecha.* >@s [straight and to the right]

(2) *INV: you speak louder eh?

(3) *CHI1: <*pero cómo.* >@s [but how]

(4) *CHI2: <*a la derecha.* >@s [to the right]

(5) *CHI2: right (.) <*¿cómo se dice recto?* >@s [how do you say straight?] (to the investigator)

(6) *INV: you have to collaborate.

(7) *CHI1: xxx.

(8) *INV: and maybe you have other ways.

(9) *CHI2: <*no sabemos.* >@s [we don´t know]

(10) *INV: other ways to eh to communicate that particular word right?

(11) *CHI1: <*ah como en gimnasia.* >@s [ah like in P.E.]

(12) *CHI1: <*¿cómo era?* >@s [how was it?]

(13) *CHI1: right right.

(14) *CHI2: straight.

(15) *CHI1: <*eso*>@s [that's it] straight

In example (6), participants discuss a grammatical feature. Child 2 corrects Child 1 in her use of the possessive adjective, which is then incorporated in Child 1's turn. The LRE is resolved in a target-like manner.

(6) Form-focused. Resolved: target-like.

*CHI1: in her t-shirt.

*CHI2: in his.

*CHI1: <*ay es verdad*>@s [yeah, you're right] in his t-shirt <no? >@s [right?]

*CHI2: <*sí* >@s [yes]

In example (7), the grammatical feature involved is a preposition, with a non-target-like resolution. Child 2 suggests the incorrect preposition in *at the right* in turn 3 (instead of on) to complete his companion's utterance. Subsequently, Child 1 recasts it with *at right*, believing that no definite article is needed in that phrase. Both members move on to complete the sentence (turn 5 onwards). This LRE was thus classified as form-focused and non target-like.

(7) Form-focused. Resolved: non target-like.

(1) *CHI2: *to the church.*

(2) *CHI1: to the church and then eh.

(3) *CHI2: at the right.

(4) *CHI1: at right.

(5) *CHI2: is.

(6) *CHI1: eh.

(7) *CHI2: is the.

(8) *CHI1: is the.

(9) *CHI2: vet clinic.

(10) *CHI1: vet clinic.

5. Results

The results shown in this section will be organised according to the four research questions of the study. First, they will shed light on the first research question about the role of the independent variable of the study, that is, on how the patterns of interaction exhibited by young EFL learners may affect the number, the nature and the outcome of the LREs produced (see Table 1). Second, they will offer the information regarding the second research question on the influence that the moderator variable of the study (pairing method: proficiency-matched vs self-selected) might exert on the number, nature and outcome of the LREs produced by interactancts with different patterns of interaction (see Table 2). Then, we will display the data to answer the third research question addressing the various types of form-focused LREs produced by these learners as well as the potential relationship between those types and the patterns of interaction and/or pairing method (see Table 3). Finally, in Table 4 we will present the results pertaining to the relationship between pairing method per type of pattern of interaction and the types of form-focused LREs produced by the learners (research question 4).

Table 1 organises the LRE data according to the different patterns of interaction. Specifically, it displays the number of groups who exhibit those patterns as well as their

behaviour regarding the production of LREs, namely their incidence (operationalized as the total and the mean number of LREs produced), nature (total number of meaning and form-focused LREs) and resolution (total number of target-like LREs, target-like meaning-based LREs and target like form-focused LREs). Additionally, it offers percentages in an attempt to compare those figures better for the sake of readers' convenience. As can be seen, 20 out of 27 groups, that is, nearly three quarters of the learner groups (74.10%) exhibited a collaborative pattern of interaction, the rest of pairs minimally representing the other patterns of interaction. More precisely, the dominant-passive, the expert-novice and the dominant-dominant dynamics amounted to 14.80% (n=4), 7.40% (n=2) and 3.70% (n=1) of the groups, respectively. As for the incidence of LREs, it is by looking at the mean number of LREs per pattern, rather than at the total number of LREs, that we can establish a reliable comparison among different pair dynamics. Data indicated that the groups that obtained the highest number of LREs were of an expert-novice pattern (mean=8) whereas dominant-passive dynamics produced the lowest number (mean=6). Collaborative and dominant-dominant pairs yielded intermediate values (means= 7 and 6.8). As for the distribution of the LREs according to its nature, a comparison between the percentages of meaning- and form-focused LREs will better reveal which type of LRE is more frequent in the data. As shown in the table, meaning-focused LREs were produced more frequently than form-focused LREs in all pair dynamics, the gap between these two LRE categories being wider in the case of the dominant-dominant groups (71.5% vs. 28.5%). Finally, as regards the outcome of the LREs, the ratio of those LREs resolved in a target-like fashion was higher in the expert-novice (81.25%) and collaborative (69.11%) groups than in the dominant-passive (62.50%) and dominant-dominant (42.86%) groups. When target-likeness was analysed according to the nature of the LREs, a different pattern emerged for meaning- and form-focused LREs. While the former replicated the tendency abovementioned, expert-novice (77.70%) and collaborative (70.60%) dynamics being more accurate than dominant-passive (46.15%) and dominant-dominant (20%) groups in target-like meaning-focused LREs, the proportions of accurate resolutions in the form-focused LREs produced by dominant-dominant (100%), dominant-passive (81.81%) and expert-novice (85.70%) patterns were higher than in case of collaborative groups (67.21%).

Table 1: LRE distribution per pattern of interaction

		All		Meaning		Form	
Patterns	*Number of groups*	*Total/Mean*	*Target-like*	*Total*	*Target-like*	*Total*	*Target-like*
Coll.	20 (74.10%)	136 / 6.8	94 (69.11%)	75 (55.15%)	53 (70.60%)	61 (44.85%)	41 (67.21%)
Dom-Dom.	1 (3.70%)	7 / 7	3 (42.86%)	5 (71.50%)	1 (20%)	2 (28.50%)	2 (100%)
Dom-Pas.	4 (14.80%)	24 / 6	15 (62.50%)	13 (54.16%)	6 (46.15%)	11 (45.84%)	9 (81.81%)
Exp-Nov.	2 (7.40%)	16 / 8	13 (81.25%)	9 (56.25%)	7 (77.70%)	7 (43.75%)	6 (85.70%)

Research question 2 sought to explore the interplay between pairing method and patterns of interaction in the incidence, type and resolution of LREs. The data displayed in Table 2 is structured as in the previous table but according to the pairing method variable (proficiency-matched vs self-selected) in this case. The influence of this variable will only be explored in terms of the data obtained from collaborative groups, following Azkarai & Kopinska's (2020) study, who, due to the imbalanced number of dyads within each pattern, selected a subset of dyads for further analyses. In our study, in the rest of the patterns of interaction one of the two pairing methods is not represented in the data, as is the case of proficiency-matched students in dominant-dominant dynamics and of self-selected students in expert-novice patterns, or there is a lack of one of the two types of LREs in terms of nature, as is the case of form-focused LREs in the proficiency-matched groups with dominant-passive dynamics. Hence, following from the collaborative patterns solely, Table 2 data revealed that 70% of the groups (n=14) had been paired according to their English proficiency whereas 30% of them (n=6) had been chosen by the students themselves. With respect to the whole sample, the number of proficiency-matched collaborative groups represented 82.35% of the total number of proficiency-matched groups (n=~~20~~ 17). Self-selected collaborative groups represented 60% of all self-selected groups (n=10), though. As for the incidence of LREs in either pairing method, Table 2 indicates that the mean number of LREs in self-selected groups (7.33) was slightly higher than the mean number of LREs in proficiency-matched groups (6.57). Regarding the nature of the LREs produced by these groups, proficiency-matched learners' ratio of form-focused LREs (52.17%) was slightly higher than that of meaning-focused LREs (47.83%). On the contrary, self-selected students produced a far greater proportion of meaning-focused LREs (70.45%) than of

form-focused LREs (29.55%). With regard to the outcome of LREs, it was proficiency-matched students who produced a larger proportion of target-like resolutions than self-selected groups (72.82% vs. 61.36%). This very same tendency was observed for both meaning-focused (77.27% vs. 61.29%) and form-focused (68.75% vs. 61.53%) LREs.

Table 2: LRE distribution per pairing method in collaborative-pattern groups

		All		Meaning		Form	
Pairing	*Number of groups*	*Total/Mean*	*Target-like*	*Total*	*Target-like*	*Total*	*Target-like*
PM	14 (70%)	92 / 6.57	67 (72.82%)	44 (47.83%)	34 (77.27%)	48 (52.17%)	33 (68.75%)
SS	6 (30%)	44 / 7.33	27 (61.36%)	31 (70.45%)	19 (61.29%)	13 (29.55%)	8 (61.53%)

The third research question enquired about the interplay between form-focused LREs in particular and the variable patterns of interaction (see Table 3). Results indicate that the average number of this type of LREs per group is higher in expert-novice (3.50) and collaborative (3.05) patterns than in dominant-passive (2.75) and dominant-dominant (2) dynamics. With regard to the different types of form-focused LREs, the collaborative groups produced the highest proportions of focus on language form during their interaction on spelling (47.54%) and morphosyntax (29.51%), followed by prepositions (18.03%) and, minimally, pronunciation (4.92%). Expert-novice groups behaved quite alike, but they excelled in morphosyntax (57.14%) instead of spelling (28.57%), followed by prepositions (14.29%) and exhibiting an absolute lack of pronunciation LREs. Dominant-passive groups' distribution of the various form categories was more homogeneous. These students focused mainly on spelling (36.36%) and pronunciation (27.28%), and then on morphosyntax (18.18%) and prepositions (18.18%). Finally, the dominant-dominant pattern yielded LREs centred on spelling only.

Table 3: Form-focused LRE distribution per pattern of interaction

	All Form	Morphosyntax	Prepositions	Spelling	Pronunciation
Patterns	*Total/Mean*	*Total/Mean*	*Total/Mean*	*Total/Mean*	*Total/Mean*
Coll. (n=20)	61 / 3.05	18 / 0.90 (29.51%)	11 / 0.55 (18.03%)	29 / 1.35 (47.54%)	3 / 0.15 (4.92%)
Dom-Dom. (n=1)	2 / 2	0 / 0 (0%)	0 / 0 (0%)	2 / 2 (100%)	0 / 0 (0%)
Dom-Pas. (n=4)	11 / 2.75	2 / 0.50 (18.18%)	2 / 0.50 (18.18%)	4 / 1 (36.36%)	3 / 0.75 (27.28%)
Exp-Nov. (n=2)	7 / 3.50	4 / 2 (57.14%)	1/0.5 (14.29%)	2 / 1 (28.57%)	0 / 0 (0%)

As for the last research question on the differential behaviour of proficiency-matched and self-selected groups regarding the production of form-focused LRE types, Table 4 offers the data on form-focused LREs for these two different types of pairings in collaborative groups. As can be seen, the proficiency-matched learners produced a higher average number of form-focused LREs than self-selected students (3.43 vs. 2.17). Regarding the occurrence of the different types of form-focused LREs, both pairing groups behaved quite alike, spelling LREs representing nearly half of the LREs produced, and morphosyntax one third. The rest of the LREs centred on prepositions and, to an even lesser extent, on pronunciation.

Table 4: Form-focused LRE distribution per pairing method in collaborative-pattern groups

Form LREs	All	Morphosyntax	Prepositions	Spelling	Pronunciation
Pairing	*Total/Mean*	*Total/Mean*	*Total/Mean*	*Total/Mean*	*Total/Mean*
PM (n=14)	*48 / 3.43*	14 / 1.00 (29.17%)	9 / 0.64 (18.75%)	23 / 1.64 (47.91%)	2 / 0.14 (4.17%)
SS (n=6)	*13 / 2.17*	4 / 0.67 (30.77%)	2 / 0.34 (15.38%)	6 / 1.00 (46.16%)	1 / 0.17 (7.69%)

6. Discussion

Our first research question examined the types of pair dynamics used by young EFL learners in a collaborative writing task. The results showed that, although the

number of the participants in the study is low, these learners exhibited all four types of pair dynamics defined by Storch (2002), of which a high proportion exhibited a collaborative type of dynamics, which is in line with previous research on child pair dynamics in ESL (Oliver & Azkarai, 2019) and EFL (Azkarai & Kopinska, 2020; Basterrechea & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2020; García Mayo & Imaz Aguirre, 2019) settings. A closer look at the data revealed that proportionately it was the interactancts with an expert-novice pattern the ones that, although marginally, produced the highest number of LREs, groups who also exhibited a higher rate of resolution, together with collaborative groups. The findings in the study are in line with Azkarai and Kopinksa's (2020) study in that task features seem to interplay with the patterns of interaction. In their study, the task chosen was a dictogloss task (Wajnryb, 1990), and the role that prevailed was that of the passive-parallel, with one member acting as the scribe (the passive member) and the other acting as a facilitator. Our findings seem to indicate that the map task, a convergent writing task, enhanced collaboration from the first phase (here learners had to decide who the owner of the dog is), which is observed by Azkarai and Kopinska (2020) as key in fostering optimal types of dynamics (including expert-novice).

As regards resolution, the percentage of meaning-focused LREs which were resolved accurately was much higher in groups who exhibited dynamics which are more conducive to language learning (collaborative or expert/novice), particularly in the case of the expert-novice pattern. The higher number of resolved LREs by expert-novice interactancts, in spite of the limited number of groups, supports previous work with young EFL learners (Pladevall-Ballester, 2021), findings that seem to support the benefits of this type of pattern. However, as for form-focused LREs, it is the dominant/dominant type of dynamics who reached more target-like resolutions. One could speculate that the low mutuality and high competitiveness among the group members and the desire to control over the task typical of this type of dynamics seem to favour target-like resolutions and hence increase learning opportunities, contradicting previous research finding as regards this type of deleterious type of dynamics. Nevertheless, we must be extremely cautious with this assertion, as it is based on the data coming from the interaction of just a single triad. Patterns of interaction other than the collaborative one are particularly scarce in the young learner interaction literature (as attested in e.g., García Mayo & Imaz Aguirre, 2019, or Oliver & Azkarai, 2019). The present study is no exception in that regard, dominant-dominant, dominant-passive and expert-novice dynamics being underrepresented. Thus, we make a call for future research with larger samples of participants, as it will be the only way to increase the chance of observing young learners' behaviour when they engage in these three types of interactional dynamics.

The second research question purported to examine whether the pairing method variable exerted any influence in how learner groups differing in their patterns of interactions attended to language during collaborative writing. As indicated in the previous section, the study only managed to examine the pairing method effect on the production of LREs (in terms of type and accuracy) in the collaborative groups subsample. The pair formation effect was observed not only in the nature, but also in the accuracy of LREs (target-likeness) in favour of proficiency-matched groups. As already attested in previous studies with adult (Mozaffari, 2017; Storch & Aldosari, 2013) and young (Basterrechea & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2020) EFL learners as well as Spanish-as-a-FL learners (Leeser, 2004), matched proficiency has proven to favour target-like resolutions to a larger extent than self-selection. Mozaffari (2017) interpreted this finding as student-selected pairs being less task-oriented due to their pre-existing friendship, which hindered a greater language focus and acted as a distractor. A closer look at our data revealed that these young learners did not engage in talk unrelated to the task extensively (4 groups out of 17), although the few instances of off-task talk encountered concentrated mostly in self-selected groups (3 groups). Additionally, the comparison of the time needed for task completion showed that on average, self-selected groups needed more time (an average of 13'50'') than proficiency-matched groups (an average of 9'22''). This qualitative inspection of our data confirms Mozaffari's (2017) observation that self-selected pairs are less task-oriented than proficiency-matched ones. However, the participants in our study were not surveyed on the reasons to select a partner and, hence we cannot attribute these findings to pre-existing friendship as the reason behind this off-task behaviour. Future studies that triangulate a questionnaire about the learners' motives, the pair formation variable and the production of LREs (including incidence, type and resolution) would help us reinforce those arguments on the effects of differing grouping procedures. This would also allow us to determine the extent to which the relationship between peers, the attitudes of the learners and focus on language work in interdependent ways in peer interaction (Philp, Walter & Basturkmen, 2010).

The study also sought to explore how pair dynamics would interact with the type of form-focused LREs, an underresearched area with young EFL learners. In an attempt to answer the third research question, it was discovered that all types of patterns focused mainly on spelling, except expert-novice groups, who focused more on morphosyntactic features, a potential indication of expert-novice interactancts' greater explicit grammatical knowledge. These results, again, should be taken with caution due to the low number of groups under this label. Previous studies that look into LREs involving spelling have attested a high amount of these in writing tasks. For instance, Niu (2009) examined the production of LREs by adult EFL learners in oral vs. written tasks. It was found that learners focused heavily on spelling issues in the written task.

Calzada & García Mayo (2021) also reported a high amount of spelling-related LREs in child EFL learners in a written task as well, results that authors attribute to the intrinsic characteristics of the written mode, as has already been observed in studies on writing-to-learn (Manchón, 2011). Muñoz (2014) particularly notes that spelling is a concern at early ages, whereas the focus of morphosyntactic features develops in later maturational stages.

The fourth research question further intended to explore whether pairing method interacted with pair dynamics in these schoolchildren's attention to language form. The data obtained enabled us to examine the variety of form-focused LREs produced by the collaborative cohort only, with proficiency-matched interactancts comparatively producing a larger amount of form-focused LREs than self-selected groups which, again, supports prior research (Basterrechea & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2020; Leeser, 2004; Mozaffari, 2017; Storch & Aldosari, 2013). As for type, no effect of pair formation method was found in these, as both proficiency-matched and self-selected interactancts focused largely on spelling, followed by morphosyntax. It must be noted that all participants were both young and low-proficient learners of English, facts which could account for their greater awareness of surface-level spelling alterations than of grammatical knowledge-induced morphological or syntactic deviations. A further analysis of the level of elaboration or the various LREs found could be enlightening in that respect (see Pladevall & Vraciu, 2020).

7. Conclusion

Our study attemped to contribute to the field on young EFL learners' task-based attention to form by exploring how patterns of interaction and pairing method affect LRE production in collaborative writing. Particularly, it has also analysed which language features these young learners draw their attention to while completing a convergent map task, in order to provide evidence of young EFL learners' ability to reflect on language use and discuss language, all of which may contribute to further gains in language development. Our data has provided further evidence that young EFL learners exhibit a collaborative type of dynamics to a larger extent, as evinced in previous studies on young learner literature (Basterrechea & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2020; García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2019). The learners with this type of dynamics resolved more LREs accurately, together with expert-novice groups (Pladevall-Ballester, 2021). It was also found that whereas collaborative or expert/novice interactancts excelled in resolving meaning-focused LREs, the limited number of groups exhibiting a dominant/dominant pattern reached more target-like resolutions in form-focused LREs.These preliminary finding corroborates the observation that pair dynamics in young learners involve a complex array of factors (Oliver & Azkarai, 2019), and calls

for future studies with a larger amount of participants that may allow to interpret results more rigurously.

The study also supported previous research findings on the benefits of matched proficiency (e.g., Basterrechea & Gallardo-del-Puerto, 2020), as a pair formation effect was observed in the nature and the accuracy (target-likeness) of LREs in favour of proficiency-matched groups, who, contrary to self-selected interactancts, exhibited less off-task talk and concentrated on task completion more efficently, suggesting that teachers should consider exploring different pairings in order to maximise young EFL learners' learning opportunities. Finally, a closer look at the type of form-focused LREs produced suggested that these young learners focused primarily on spelling issues and less on grammatical knowledge-induced ones, supporting previous findings that language learning depends on the learners' developmental readiness (Leeser, 2004; Pladevall-Ballester, 2021). It is also worth noting that the participants of the study were 10-12-year-old children. At the age of 10, children begin to think in an organised and logical fashion and can reflect about their own thinking and their own language use (Pinter, 2006). Nonetheless, whether these learners receive any kind of explicit attention to grammatical form in their regular classes was not controlled for in the study, an issue worth investigating in future research.

Another aspect of further enquiry would derive from a limitation of our study concerning the size of the groups, a factor that has preliminarily shown some influence on the production of LRE and their focus (meaning or form) in adults (Fernández Dobao, 2012), but its incidence in young leraners is yet to be explored.

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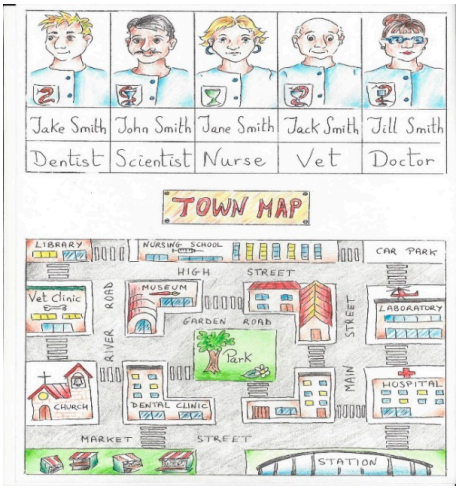
Appendix

WHOSE DOG IS IT?



Alberto San Emeterio Bolado©

Look at the pictures on the two pages provided by the researcher. In the first one you can see a young boy and a dog in a park. The boy has found a dog in the park. There is something written in the collar and a picture where you can see the dog in the hands of its owner. But you cannot see the owners face. On the second page you can also see some possible owners and where each of them works: you have a dentist, a scientist, a nurse, a vet and a doctor. You can also see a map where you can see all the most important places in the town, including all the places where the possible owners work.

Your task is to work together to do two things:

1) Examine the pictures and decide who the owner of the dog is and discuss why you think so.

2) Write down a short note for the boy explaining the following:

   a. who the owner is

   b. why you think so

   c. how to take the dog to its owner.