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Do Second Language Learners of Lower Linguistic Proficiency Levels Benefit From Collaborative In-Class Dialogical Activities? A Small-Scale Exploratory Study

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Abstract—**Previous studies that have investigated whether or not peer-to-peer collaborative dialogue is beneficial for second language learners of lower linguistic proficiency levels have produced inconclusive, differing, and even conflicting results. Whereas some researchers like Colina and Mayo (2007) and Bao (2020) argue that lower proficiency learners can benefit from collaborative dialogue, others such as Kim and McDonough (2008), Kuiken and Vedder (2002), Leeser (2004), and Shehadeh (2011) argue that these learners do not benefit from collaborative dialogue. A translation task was used as a technique to elicit data to examine the research questions. Detailed analyses of the peer interaction reveal that both learners benefited from engaging in the collaborative dialogue; they achieved together, as a group, what was beyond their individual linguistic ability. By sharing their points of view (assumptions, opinions, etc.), elaborating on each other's arguments, responding to each other's needs (providing scaffolded help), and using several regulatory tools (first language, repetition, private speech, etc.), the two learners together tackled the linguistic problems presented within the task and co-constructed knowledge about language.**

Index Terms—**second language learning, second language learners, sociocultural theory, collaborative dialogues, low linguistic proficiency level**

I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning, as a new field of inquiry, has been developing rapidly, influenced by significant developments in the fields of linguistics and psychology. During the past fifty years or so, several theories have emerged. One that has had an immense impact on the field of second language (L2) development and language teaching and assessment is sociocultural theory (SCT). This theory recognizes the crucial role of social and cultural factors (i.e., context and interaction) in the development of human cognitive functions. It emphasizes that no learning can take place without the support of the social setting and/or outside of its social context, which includes family life, peer groups, and schools (for more details, see Section II). This means that learning, such as that done by an L2 learner, occurs through social interaction (Aguilera-Jiménez & Prados, 2020; Resnick et al., 2018; Zubiri-Esnaola et al., 2020). Within the SCT-based L2 research, interaction is viewed as a social event where L2 second language learning (SLL) is nurtured collaboratively through dialogue exchange between learners (peers) or between learners and teachers. Collaborative dialogue, which is the focus of this article, is defined as dialogue in which learners work together to solve linguistic problems or co-construct knowledge about language with minimal help from the teacher (Swain, 2000). This study's main objective is to look at any possible connections between students' low proficiency levels and how well collaborative discourse works for second language acquisition. In the following sections, this paper will discuss the aforementioned points in detail.

This article is structured as follows: in Section I (this section), this paper will illustrate the general goal of this empirical study. In Section II, the researcher provides some crucial information concerning sociocultural theory and some of its central concepts that are relevant to the study. Section III reviews previous studies in which the benefit of collaborative dialogue in the classroom has been empirically investigated. Furthermore, the specific research questions are also presented in this section. The researcher presents and discusses the study design, including the participants, the elicitation technique, the test used to assess the participants' levels of proficiency, the data collection procedures, and the coding and data analysis procedures in Section IV. In Section V, the results are reported and discussed in detail. In the final section, the findings of the study are summarized.

II. THE SOCIOCULTURAL APPROACH TO SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

This sociocultural approach to SLL is grounded in the publications of Lev Vygotsky, a leading Russian psychologist. It started in the mid-1980s, when Lantolf and Frawley (1984, 1985) began to apply some of the concepts of the Vygotskian psychological theory of human consciousness on SLL and use (for a detailed historical review of the origin of the sociocultural theory approach to SLL (see Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2019; among many others). Moreover, the essence of SCT is aptly expressed in the following quotation: “Human mental functioning results from participation in, and appropriation of the forms of cultural mediation integrated into social activities” (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009, p. 459).

The central concept of SCT is mediation. It suggests that human beings do not establish direct relationships with the world; instead, they rely on physical and symbolic tools or signs to mediate their relationships with others and the world. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) define mediation as “the process through which humans deploy culturally constructed artefacts, concepts, and activities to regulate – i.e., gain voluntary control over and transform – the material world or their own and each other’s social and mental activity” (p. 79). Mediation is referred to as the use of tools; these tools are adopted by us to control the world according to our needs, such as to solve a problem or reach a goal. Tools in this sense could refer to all physical and symbolic things, such as sticks, weapons, books, computers, numbers, music, and art. However, the most important of these tools is language because it enables humans to mediate and construct meaning with others and within themselves (Polly et al., 2018; after Vygotsky, 1978).

Within SCT, mediation is the principal construct that unifies all other constructs within the theory, such as regulation, zone of proximal development (ZPD), scaffolding, and internalization. In light of recent developments in SCT-based L2 research, these constructs will be discussed later to meet the purpose of the present study. Learning an L2 is seen as the ability to use an L2 to mediate both communicative and mental activity; it is a socially mediated process that “involves gradually appropriating the L2 to make it into our own tool for self-regulation and thinking, just as once we learned to do the same with our [first language] L1 as children” (Ortega, 2013, p. 220). Regulation is a form of mediation that enables learners to “develop the capacity to regulate their own activities through linguistic means” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 204), and self-regulation is one kind of regulation.

There are three stages of development on the way to self-regulation: object-regulation, other-regulation, and self-regulation. Object regulation refers to the stage in which a learner’s communicative and mental activities are controlled directly by objects in the environment such as sticks, weapons, books, computers, and so on. For example, when a learner consults a dictionary for unknown words, this is a case of the L2 learner being regulated by an object – the dictionary. However, if the learner is primarily controlled by an experienced or knowledgeable person, like parents, peers, or teachers, this is a case of the learner being regulated by others. At this developmental stage, a learner may have some linguistic knowledge, but they cannot accomplish a task alone; a learner needs guidance from an expert such as explicit and implicit instruction, feedback, or direction, for example. Such assistance provided by the expert to the novice is referred to as scaffolding.

Scaffolding refers to the “role of teachers and others in supporting the learner’s development and providing support structures to get to that next stage or level” (Raymond, 2000, p. 176), meaning that it is the kind of help or support (instruction and assistance) given to the novice to help them move to the next developmental stage under the guidance of an expert rather than of physical resources such as dictionaries. However, Vygotsky (1978) holds that such scaffolding must exist within a learner’s ZPD. He defines the ZPD as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential problem-solving abilities as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in cooperation with more capable peers” (p. 86). In other words, the ZPD refers to the distance between the learner’s actual present level of knowledge and their future potential knowledge reached with assistance from others. This means that it is the place where the transition from one type of regulation to the next happens, that is, from object-regulation to other-regulation to self-regulation. This construct, therefore, has been extensively used as a dynamic assessment tool to diagnose and understand learners’ abilities and identify precise sources of difficulty – what they can or cannot do with or without assistance – with the aim to promote development in learners’ performance through scaffolding. However, for scaffolding to facilitate learning, it must exist within a learner’s reach, not beyond their present level of knowledge. If so, it helps learners reach the state of self-regulation – a state when they become capable of carrying out an activity completely independently without external support (e.g., object-regulation or other-regulation).[1]

However, reaching the state of being self-regulated is only made possible through internalization, which is “the process of making what was once external assistance a resource that is internally available to the individual” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 200). In other words, it is the mechanism by which a learner manages to have control over their mental activities and/or processes; in other words, it is using L2 for thinking and communication with no external support. A key construct that plays an important role in facilitating the internalization of mental functions, such as aid internalization of the L2, is the private speech – spoken language uttered for dialogue with the self rather than for the purpose of interaction with others. Learners use private speech as a mediational tool to gain self-regulation when they encounter either cognitive or language problems; it aids in focusing attention and problem solving and to support memory-related tasks (Donato, 1994; Ellis, 2015; Lantolf & Beckett, 2009; McCafferty, 1994; Ohta, 2001). So as to overcome obstacles to task success and to facilitate problem solving, specifically when reasoning becomes more intense, L2 learners may also use, as additional mediational tools, their L1 as well as imitation and repetition, especially when they encounter new linguistic structures and/or forms (Lantolf & Yáñez-Prieto, 2003; Ohta, 2001; Tomasello, 2003).

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[1] It should be mentioned here that self-regulation is not a stable state; learners may reverse to be regulated by objects or others when facing difficulties. Frawley (1997) and Lantolf et al. (2015) argue that learners shift back and forth among the three developmental stages – object-regulation, other-regulation, and self-regulation – to reach independence from external support.

III. COLLABORATIVE DIALOGUES IN SLL RESEARCH: THE EFFECTS ON L2 LEARNERS' PROFICIENCY LEVELS

The discussion in the previous section about SCT and its concepts demonstrates the importance of social interaction in the learning process, especially that type of interaction where language is used as a mediational tool. When people talk, such dialogical talk provides them with the chance to question, explain, clarify, add, recognize, share their point of view, and so on, and hence, they can fill the gap in the understanding of the participants engaging in the talk, leading eventually to internalization of knowledge (Boyd & Markarian, 2011; Kaufmann, 2019; Resnick et al., 2018). Such dialogical talk is also believed to motivate learners to learn, enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence, and lead them to success (Hillyard et al., 2010).

Such knowledge-building dialogue has become popular in L2 classrooms. Over the past few decades, many well-known L2 researchers have acknowledged the learning benefits of in-class dialogical activities, especially the type of activities where peers work together collaboratively to solve problems related to language use. For example, Swain and others have shown that peer collaborative dialogue provides L2 learners with opportunities to notice linguistic gaps in the target language (TL) and seek solutions together to language-related problems – in other words, scaffold one another (e.g., Kowal & Swain, 1994; Storch, 2013; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007; Swain, 2006, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2001; Swain & Watanabe, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). Klingner and Vaughn (2000) argue that such an opportunity to talk and discuss language with each other "allowed … [learners] … to consolidate and reorganize knowledge of the second language … and to make this knowledge explicit for each other's benefit" (p. 65). Shehadeh (2011) states that, in collaborative dialogical activities, "learners first collaboratively construct knowledge as a joint activity, and then transform it into a mental one through the processes of approximation and internalization" (p. 297). This statement thus leads us to the conclusion that collaborative dialogue stimulates foreign language learning by enabling the construction, co-construction, and internalization of L2 linguistic knowledge.

However, one should remain skeptical about making such generalizations and drawing such firm conclusions from them about the L2 learning benefits of collaborative dialogue because it is not yet clear whether this reported finding would apply to all L2 learners, including those at lower proficiency levels. This is apart from the fact that most existing studies predominantly targeted L2 learners at intermediate to advanced proficiency (see the references cited previously in this section). Moreover, the findings of some studies on learners at low proficiency levels have yielded conflicting results. Whereas some researchers like Colina and Mayo (2007) and Bao (2020) argue that lower proficiency learners can benefit from collaborative dialogue, others such as Kim and McDonough (2008), Kuiken and Vedder (2002), Leeser (2004), and Shehadeh (2011) argue that they do not. Shehadeh, for example, argues that the low-intermediate level of learners has rendered them "unable to assist each other with the needed grammatical accuracy" (p. 295). Therefore, further research is required to investigate the potential relationship between learners' low proficiency level and the effectiveness of collaborative dialogue on second language learning. This study contributes to filling in this gap in the literature by presenting empirical data from low-proficiency learners. This paper addresses the following research questions from a sociocultural approach to SLL:

1. Is peer-to-peer collaborative dialogue beneficial for L2 learners of similar lower linguistic proficiency levels?
2. If yes, how do such low-proficiency learners scaffold each other during collaborative activity?

IV. METHOD AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) composition class for first-year undergraduates at Taibah University. Originally, a total of 27 students were recruited for this study (see Table 1). Their levels of English varied, ranging from elementary to lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate according to their scores on the Oxford Quick Placement Test (see Appendix B).

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANTS ORIGINALLY INVOLVED IN THE STUDY

Level of Proficiency	Arabic EFL Learners
Elementary	4
Lower-Intermediate	15
Upper-Intermediate	8
Total Number of Participants	27

A translation task was used as a technique to elicit data to examine the research questions. This is because, when implemented in pair work, such a task provides the participants with a natural context for peer collaboration and interaction; the participants are required to exchange information and thus understand each other to complete the task. Brooks and Donato (1994) argue that, because it demands the use of a certain range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, such a focused communication task tends to result in more language talk. McDonough and Mackey (2000) also argue that such dialogic tasks "provide learners with opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction and to direct their attention to form" (p. 83).

The participants were first asked to complete individually an Arabic to English translation exercise. The sentence they were asked to translate is "يأكل اخي البيتزا أحيانا," or "My brother sometimes eats pizza" in English. Nine out of fifteen lower-intermediate-level participants managed to translate the given simple Arabic sentence into the correct grammatically equivalent English sentence. The six participants who failed to correctly translate the sentence were then asked to work collaboratively in pairs to complete the translation task. Limited help (i.e., clues, hints, and correction) from the researcher, who functioned as the tutor, was provided where necessary.

The processes of collaboration in pairs undergone by these participants while performing the task were audio-recorded. The recorded data (30 minutes of learners' interaction) were transcribed for data analysis. However, for in-depth analysis and because of space limitations, only the data obtained from two of the six lower-intermediate learners, Yousef and Ayman, are presented in this paper.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this section, the researcher presents and discusses the results. To answer the research questions stated in Section III, it is important for the researcher to analytically investigate how the two participants make use of language as a mediational tool as they collaborate to complete the translation task (see Excerpts 1, 2, and 3). Such analysis will help the researcher gain more insights about the possible beneficial effects of collaborative dialogue for L2 learners of lower proficiency levels and at the same time will provide an insight into the ways such learners respond to each other's needs during dialogical collaboration, demonstrating the nature of peer assistance.

Excerpt 1 shows the participants' initial attempts to collaboratively translate the sentence from Arabic to English.

7. Yousef: My brother (.) liiiike ….
8. Ayman: my brother like
9. Yousef: (.) Oh لا لا (he was looking at his first attempt to translate the sentence) eat no like (.) eat
   (.) Oh *no no* eat no like (.) eat
10. Ayman: نفسه (.) OK, my brother eat bitza
   same meaning (he means both verbs have the same meaning) (.) OK, my brother eat pizza
11. Yousef: umm my brother eat pizza sometimes (.) yes, my brother eat pizza sometimes (looking at the teacher to check the translation)
12. Ayman: صح, my brother eat bitza sometime (repeating quietly while waiting)
   correct, my brother eat pizza

(See Appendix A for transcription conventions.)

As we can see from the beginning of the instance (Excerpt 1), the L2 learners are collaboratively tackling the translation into English of the Arabic sentence "يأكل اخي البيتزا أحيانا," or "My brother sometimes eats pizza" in English. As the interaction opens, Yousef (in Turn 7) begins by generating the correct noun phrase "my brother" but fails to provide the English equivalent of the Arabic verb, ياكل/*yaki* ("eat"). Instead, he uses the verb "like." The pause followed by the repetition of "my brother" along with the vowel stress on the verb "like" suggest that he is trying to organize his thinking process when struggling to produce the target vocabulary.

However, after a brief pause followed by the loudly uttered discourse marker (DM) "oh" and the unconscious switch to the L1 in Turn 9, Yousef comes up with the correct verb; still, its form is not appropriate. He fails to inflect the verb for agreement in person and number with the subject. The presence of this DM marks the moment of insight where Yousef notices the error and changes the verb with no help. DMs, such as "oh," "ah," and "yeah," are "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 31). They help researchers understand and assess at the same time the different stages of regulation (see Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; McLaughlin, 1987). In addition to the use of a DM, Yousef makes use of L1 and repetition as further regulatory tools to assess the target language (TL) word, to gain control over the task, and to become focused enough to proceed with the task of translating the sentence. For more detailed discussion about the functions of these two cognitive mediators in L2A, see Bao and Du (2015), Lantolf and Yáñez-Prieto (2003), Li (2023), Ohta (2001), and Tomasello (2003).

In Turn 8, Ayman repeats his partner's utterance to contextualize the words his partner provided. In turn 10, however, he resorts to his L1 private speech to question the meanings of the two English verbs his peer provided and map them against his own knowledge. In other words, when struggling with two confusing TL vocabularies, the learner here uses L1 private speech as a medium to control and organize his thinking process. For detailed discussion about the use of L1 as a cognitive mediator in SLL, see Lantolf and Throne (2006). After a brief pause followed by the quietly uttered acknowledgement marker "okay," Ayman accepts Yousef's second suggestion – the verb *eat* as a translation for ياكل/*yaki*, which is the correct form in English – and then tries to regulate again through repetition of his partner's whole utterance. The pause and the DM may suggest that Ayman was wondering during the thinking process whether to accept Yousef's suggestion or not. However, in this turn, there is a change in Ayman's performance. Building on the noun phrase and verb his peer has just provided, Ayman is able to develop the structure further by providing another word, "pizza," the object of the transitive verb "eat".

Yousef starts Turn 11 with the DM "umm." The use of this DM suggests that the learner is not sure about the utterance they collaboratively produced; he is questioning it. Therefore, he repeats it quietly, thinking about whether or not it is the correct translation and building on it to develop the structure by adding the adverb *sometimes*. Then, after a brief pause followed by the discourse acknowledgment marker "yes," he decides to accept it as the correct parallel English translation to the target Arabic sentence. This decision seems to be confirmed through the repetition of the whole utterance. Ayman, in turn 12, accepts his peer's decision about the translation as indicated by the first part of this turn – the use of the L1

Arabic word صح meaning “correct”. The repetition is used here in Turns 11 and 12 as a regulatory tool so that the learners would not lose that focus when waiting for the instructor.

The analysis so far has shown that both participants have no control over constructing subject–verb agreement morphology in speech – inflecting the verb for agreement in person and number with the subject. To call their attention to this problem without indicating its precise nature, the tutor, in Turn 19 of Excerpt 2, asks if there is something wrong with the translation. Yousef responds in Turn 20 with the cognitive statement “not sure,” which provides information about his lack of knowledge and his need for scaffolding from the tutor to direct his attention to the problem with the translation. In Turn 21, the tutor then deliberately provides a parallel translation to his previous question in Turn 19, replacing it with its Arabic equivalent to ensure that Ayman, the novice, understands its meaning because he provided no response, and after that the tutor points directly to the verb to indicate specifically the location of the problem. Here the use of L1 by the tutor not only serves as a linguistic scaffold but also creates a supportive atmosphere to relieve the participants’ L2 anxiety so that they feel less stressed over using TL. For a more detailed discussion about using L1 as a classroom-level affective mediator, see Tavares (2015) and Wu (2018).

In turn 22, Ayman then engages in the dialogue again by posing a rhetorical question, quietly repeating the verb “eat” with rising intonation. The student here is questioning the verb form. This becomes apparent in Turn 24 when he manages, after a long pause, to inflect the verb but with the wrong inflection of “-ing”.

Then, in turn 25, the tutor implicitly directs the learners’ attention to their error; he asks them to pay attention to the verb “eat,” which must agree with its subject “my brother” in person and number, and asks the question, “What is the correct form of the verb “eat” to use here with ‘my brother’?” After Yousef’s acceptance of Ayman’s incorrect suggestion and building on it in Turn 26, the tutor realizes that the learners were unable to notice the error in the sentence they translated by themselves; therefore, in Turn 27, he uses a more explicit scaffolding strategy to call their attention to the problem without indicating its precise nature. This time, the tutor asks them to consult their textbooks; he points directly to the relevant grammatical rule while at the same time using verbal deixis “here” and asks them to read.

Excerpt 2 shows the interaction between the learners and the tutor as he provides scaffolding within the learners’ zone of proximal development (ZPD).

19. Tutor: Is there anything wrong in this sentence “My brother eat pizza sometimes”?
20. Yousef: Not sure (looking to the teacher to give them a clue).
21. Tutor: هل فيه غلط في ترجمة الجملة يا ايمن, particularly here? (Points to the verb “eat”). *Is there anything wrong in*
this sentence, Ayman? particularly here (points to the verb “eat”)
22. Ayman: Eat?
23. Tutor: Yeah.
24. Ayman: Eating?
25. Tutor: No (.) Look at the subject, my brother, third person and singular, (.) What is the correct form of the
verb *eat* to use here with *my brother*?
26. Yousef: My brother is eating?
27. Tutor: No, use the present simple tense, not the progressive one (.) Check with your textbook (.) Open your book
on page (.) On page 6 (.) read from here (points to the grammatical rule)

The tutor’s intervention here creates a supportive atmosphere; namely, it helps the learners to resume their efforts to successfully translate the sentence (see Excerpt 3). Yousef starts Turn 28 being very much object-regulated; with the help of the textbook, he manages to recognize the error. After a brief pause followed by loudly uttering the DM ايوه/*aywah* meaning “yes”, the student resorts to L1 and retrieves the grammar rule “نضيف اس هنا (eats)”/“*nadif as huna* (eats)” meaning “We add –s here (eats)”. In this instance, he tries to regulate again through repetition of the whole translated sentence; this regulatory tool demonstrates his understanding of the grammatical rule.

Excerpt 3 provides the interaction between Yousef and Ayman as they attempt to correct the error contained within the sentence they translated before.

28. Yousef: (.) “I usually work on weekends, she usually works in weekend (reading aloud from the textbook)
(.) نضيف اس مع الفعل,ايوه eats (.) my brother eats bitza
(.) *Yes, we add –s to the verb* eats (.) my brother eats pizza
29. Ayman: نضيف اس
We add –s
30. Yousef: ايوه، شوف هنا (pointing to the subject – my brother) واحد مو جمع
Yes, look here (pointing to the subject – my brother), *one* (person) *not plural*.
31. Ayman: “She usually works in weekend” (reading aloud from the textbook)
32. Tutor: Right, eats, you need to add the subject–verb agreement –s because the subject here is third person
singular مفرد غايب– my brother.
اذا الترجمة الصحيحة لهذه الجملة ؟
So the correct translation is?
33. Yousef: My brother eats pizza, sometimes.

34. Tutor: Ayman?
35. Ayman: My brother eats pizza, sometimes

During Turn 29, Ayman repeats his partner's utterance; it seems that he is questioning it and mapping it against his own knowledge. However, Yousef interprets this repetition as a request for additional explanation (Turn 30) and therefore illustrates the grammatical point to his peer, using L1 as a linguistic scaffold to not only facilitate the provision of help but also to facilitate the ZPD. For more detail about using L1 as an interactional mediator in peer-to-peer scaffolding within the ZPD, see Bakhoda and Shabani (2019) and Bao and Du (2015). Yousef's scaffolding activity is successful. This is because learning is taking place as becomes apparent later through turns 33–35 when the tutor verifies and prompts the learners with the leading question, "اذا الترجمة الصحيحة لهذه الجملة ؟" meaning "so the correct translation is?". Both learners produce the correct grammatical translation.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Using the principles of sociocultural theory, in the present study we set out to evaluate the learning benefits of the collaborative dialogue that took place between two lower-intermediate-level learners of EFL. Namely, we sought to investigate the potential relationship between learners' low proficiency level and the effectiveness of collaborative dialogue.

Detailed analyses of the peer interaction have revealed that both learners in the study benefited from engaging in the collaborative dialogue; they achieved together, as a group, what was beyond their individual linguistic ability. By sharing their points-of-view (assumptions, opinions, etc.), elaborating on each other's arguments, responding to each other's needs (providing scaffolded help), and using several regulatory tools (L1, repetition, private speech, and so on), the two learners tackled the linguistic problems presented within the task and co-constructed knowledge about language together with minimal help or interference from the teacher. For example, the results show that both learners started the task having no control over the third-person singular present tense marker. However, we witnessed that once the learners co-created a zone of proximal development while providing scaffolding to each other, they transformed their failure into success in that Yousef eventually managed to conjugate the verb at hand and provided scaffolding help to his peer who demonstrated his understanding of the grammatical rules. Evidently, learning was achieved among these two lower-intermediate-level learners.

On the one hand, these findings are consistent with the results of previous studies by the likes of Kowal and Swain (1994), Storch (2013), Storch and Wigglesworth (2007), Swain (2006, 2010), Swain and Lapkin (2001), Swain and Watanabe (2012), and Wigglesworth and Storch (2012) showing that peer collaborative dialogue facilitates the development, refinement, and internalization of L2 linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, the findings are inconsistent with several previous studies like those carried out by Kim and McDonough (2008), Kuiken and Vedder (2002), Leeser (2004), and Shehadeh (2011) that show that learners of low proficiency levels do not benefit from engaging in collaborative dialogue.

Note that this is not to claim that low level language proficiency has no impact on the L2 learning benefits of collaborative dialogue, but to argue that its effect can be minimized if the L2 linguistic problem is within the learners' ZPD, that is, it is not too simple to be solved independently and not too difficult to be beyond their reach, if the pooled knowledge and abilities of the learners engaged in collaborative dialogue are sufficient to solve the linguistic problem. It is important to mention that the presence of the teacher is an especially important factor regarding the learning benefits of collaborative dialogue carried out between learners of similar low linguistic proficiency; their central roles in the learning process are to scaffold learners to move through their ZPD and to ensure the quality of the constructed knowledge emerges during the collaborative dialogical activities. For more detail about the role played by the teacher, see Aguilera-Jimenez and Prados (2020), Pea (2004), or Yoon and Kim (2012), among others. Clearly, further studies with larger sample sizes are required to investigate in depth the impact of low linguistic proficiency levels on the L2 learning benefits of collaborative dialogue before a firm conclusion is drawn.

APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Symbol	Explanation
(.)	Pause
" "	Reading Aloud
(( ))	Any Comments
?	Rising Intonation
Italics	Translation into English

APPENDIX B. OXFORD QUICK PLACEMENT TEST

A PDF version of the test can be downloaded from the following website: <https://talk.m2.res.zabanshenas.com/original/3X/2/3/23334e1d02a0d2533c91397eb44159d2ee30417a.pdf> Accessed 19/05/2022.

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