

Collaboration and Writing Development in L2 Spanish: A Microanalytic Perspective

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Abstract

This case study focuses on how two learners position themselves as partners in a collaborative writing activity in a Spanish Writing course. I utilize a micro-discourse analytic approach (Eskildsen & Markee, 2018; van Compernelle, 2015, 2018) to highlight the situated nature of collaboration and the dynamicity of the collaborative writing process as it unfolds turn-by-turn during their interactions. This type of analysis permits researchers to explore how learners orient to their partners and to the language they are producing, and what learners do with their talk (Markee, 2000), so that researchers can observe their competence-in-action (Pekarek Doehler, 2013). The discursive practices of the pair suggested that they viewed collaboration as a way to trade off the role of being expert based on whether their attention was focused on content or language.

Keywords: *collaborative writing, L2 Spanish, micro-discourse analysis, peer interaction*

Introduction

Most collaborative writing research to date (Li & Zhu, 2013; Storch, 2005, 2009, 2013) applies Storch's (2002) patterns of interaction framework to examine the relationships peers form when working together and their influence on the quantity and quality of learners' attention on language form. In this seminal study, Storch (2002) found four types of relationships that pairs form in terms of equality (i.e., learners' level of contribution and task control) and mutuality (i.e., learners' level of engagement with others' contributions) when working in dyads: collaborative (high mutuality and high equality); expert/novice (high mutuality, but low equality); dominant/dominant (high equality, but low mutuality); and dominant/passive (low equality and low mutuality). However, some researchers (e.g., Philp et al., 2014) argue that there are limitations to Storch's approach: (1) the predetermined typology; (2) the assumption of the importance of individual differences; and (3) the assumption that the patterns of interaction are generally stable throughout the interaction.

Similarly, other researchers, such as van Compernelle (2015), have found that the approach of imposing an interpretative framework based on pre-theorized categories represents "an overtly 'psychologizing' analytic mentality (i.e., making assumptions about the state of mind, desires, and/or feelings of a participant to explain his or her actions)" (p. 22). Instead, he advocates for an microanalytic

discourse analysis approach that “does not pre-theorize the relevance and significance of language-in-use...but instead attempts to uncover participants’ own displays of the relevance and significance of communicative interaction” (p. 22).

In this study, I used an emic, micro-discourse analytic approach to examine the situated nature of collaboration as it becomes observable in the moment-by-moment unfolding of talk-in-interaction between a dyad engaged in a collaborative writing task in second language (L2) Spanish (Kunitz, 2018; Lazaraton & Davis, 2008; van Compernelle, 2015). This type of analysis of the moment-by-moment unfolding of the talk participants produce while engaged in a collaborative activity allows researchers to explore how and what learners do through their talk when they take turns at talking (Markee, 2000).

Literature Review

Learner-Initiated Language Awareness in Peer Interaction and L2 Learning

Collaborative writing provides opportunities for students to engage in verbalization to mediate solutions to complex problems and tasks. Informed by Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, which argues that through one’s mediated interactions with a more knowledgeable other, cognition moves from being co-constructed to being internalized individually, Swain (2006) popularized the term *languageing* to reflect the “process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language” (p. 89). *Languageing* is most often operationalized by L2 researchers as language-related episodes (LREs), which are the instances in which learners discuss, question, and/or reflect on the language issues that arise while writing together (Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2005). Per sociocultural theory, LREs are both engines and instances of learning (Swain, 2006). By identifying LREs, researchers are better able to understand the characteristics of peer interactions, as LREs provide researchers with insight into how learners use language to attend to linguistic features and solve the language-related problems that arise during collaboration. Furthermore, LREs offer clues about L2 development (Swain, 2006, van Compernelle, 2015, 2018).

Previous collaborative writing research has shown that collaborative writing provides abundant opportunities for learners to produce LREs of various types: form based (discussion of grammatical forms); lexicon based (discussion of word/phrase meaning or word choice); mechanics based (discussion of punctuation/spelling); coherence based (discussion of how ideas flow together); and discourse based (discussion on the overarching structure) (Philp et al., 2014; Storch, 2013). Some typologies create an additional stratum of LREs by subcategories (e.g., form-based noun–adjective agreement; form-based subject–verb agreement) (Olovson, 2018; Philp et al., 2014; Storch, 2005, 2013). According to Storch (2013), the functions of the aforementioned LREs are to: (1) provide negative feedback (e.g., recasts, corrective feedback); (2) provide positive feedback (e.g., confirmation, praise); (3) seek confirmation; and (4) explain grammatical choices and words meanings. It is also important to note that when working together, learners do not necessarily resolve all of their LREs correctly. Therefore, researchers often classify the aforementioned types of LREs as correctly resolved or incorrectly resolved. However, Storch (2013) argued that there is sufficient empirical evidence across languages and task types

to establish that most LREs learners generate while working together are not only resolved, but resolved correctly (p. 35).

Micro-Discourse Analysis as a Tool to Understand Interaction and L2 Development

More recently, researchers working within a sociocultural theory-derived framework have begun to examine learner interactions using micro-discourse analytic tools to focus on L2 developmental processes that occur during interactions that may not be visible to researchers (van Comperonolle, 2015). Researchers examining how learners engage in meditation sequences through interaction in this way have tended to use two different micro-discourse analytic approaches to highlight the contextual and interactional dimensions of language use, and demonstrate that language learning is a situated, social practice (Pekarek Doehler, 2013). The first approach researchers have used to document various and dynamic ways in which participants position themselves and shift between participant roles is through examining learners' interactive footing (Goodwin, 2007; van Comperonolle, 2014, 2015). Interactive footing involves the speaker/recipient participant roles that learners adopt and manage during conversation. Van Comperonolle (2014), for example, found that participants were able to shift from a role of communicative partners to roles of teacher/student as language-related issues arose while completing a concept-based pragmatics lesson in French. He also found that recipients were not passive listeners, but instead were doing listening by attending to their interlocutors talk, gaze, and gestures.

The second micro-discourse analytic approach used by researchers to examine learner interactions borrows from conversation analysis (CA), which is concerned with the interactional configuration of behavioral and linguistic patterns of learning (Pekarek Doehler, 2013). This approach is particularly relevant for collaborative writing research because it examines "how patterns of language use are jointly elaborated and restructured within courses of practical activities" (Pekarek Doehler, 2013, p. 4). Through an analysis of the moment-by-moment unfolding of the talk participants produce while doing collaborative activities, CA allows researchers to explore how and what learners do when they take turns at talking (Markee, 2000), in order observe their competence-in-action (Pekarek Doehler, 2010, 2013). Such an approach can be used to characterize: (1) how students orient to what they accomplish together (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005), (2) how their actions are formed and delivered (Pomerantz & Fehr, 2011); and (3) how they enact the collaborative accomplishment of pedagogic interaction (Markee, 2000). More specifically, research done within this framework has documented how learners do collaborative attention related to planning and task performance (Markee & Kunitz, 2013), how learners construct test-taker identities in paired oral assessments (Lazaraton & Davis, 2008), and how learners orient to lexical learning opportunities (Mori, 2004) and grammatical learning opportunities (Markee & Kunitz, 2013).

Kunitz (2018) is one of the few studies to date to use CA methods to examine the discourse produced by students during a collaborative writing activity. In this study, the researcher uncovers how L2 Italian students identify and solve issues related to grammatical accuracy through observable actions as they work to collaboratively compose a presentation script. Specifically, Kunitz (2018) documents the sequential

trajectory of participants' gender-focusing sequences (i.e., the instances where students work to identify and solve language issues related to grammatical gender). Kunitz (2018) argues that these episodes represent learning-in-action, because "in such sequences the participants' attention to and awareness of linguistic forms are done as publicly displayed behaviors and socially distributed cognition becomes observable as participants do learning" (p. 77). The researcher also hypothesizes that the students' engagement with the collaborative writing activity itself, combined with the students' desire to write accurately, triggered students' focus on grammatical form in the first place. In other words, Kunitz (2018) suggests that the reason the gender-focusing sequences took the form they did, was because students were focused not only on writing, but writing accurately—with their grade in mind.

The Current Study

In this article, I provide a micro-discourse analysis of the collaborative composition process by using learners' own discourse to demonstrate the means they deploy to position themselves as partners during their interaction together. In addition to the transcripts of learners' collaborative dialogues, I use their individual reflection essays to analyze and interpret how they attend to language while writing and what the learners do through their talk during the interaction.

In order to analyze the collaborative composition process from such a perspective, I focus on participants' interactive footing (Goodwin, 2007; van Compernelle, 2014, 2015), which are "the methods by which interactants organize themselves to jointly accomplish various production and recipient roles through language...[and] is the basic interactional mechanism through which mediation is collaboratively achieved in situ and internalization processes are set in motion (van Compernelle, 2015, p. 119). More specifically, I focus on two components of the interaction: (1) learners' topic management and (2) learners' participant frameworks. Topic management involves what content students orient to during the interaction and how they do so through their discourse (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Rine, 2009; van Compernelle, 2015, 2018). For example, previous studies in this area have examined how learners do collaborative attention work related to grammatical gender in L2 Italian (Kunitz, 2018) or how learners do task management and orient to lexical learning opportunities in L2 Japanese (Mori, 2004). Participant frameworks, on the other hand, are the social roles participants adopt—and manage—throughout the interaction (Rine, 2009; Rine & Hall, 2011; van Compernelle, 2015, 2018). Jacoby and Gonzales (1991), for example, studied how the roles of expert and novice were manifested and ratified on a moment-by-moment basis in the interactions between university physics researchers.

I use these components to highlight the dynamicity of the collaborative writing process by documenting the set of interactional practices and competencies through which students focus on language features of the collaborative task (e.g., how they do being language learners and language users) and construct their individual identities (e.g., how they do being collaborative). I demonstrate how these competencies are constructed, mediated, and displayed in the talk; and I show how these features can be fluid and change on a turn-by-turn basis through a manifestation of "epistemic stances that reveal different levels of (un)certainty" (Kunitz, 2018, p. 65).

Using data from these two sources—collaborative dialogue and individual reflections—I present a case study of one pair of learners to answer the following research question:

What are the means by which members of a collaborative pair position themselves as partners in a collaborative writing activity and how does this change based on whether they orient to content-related or language-related issues?

Methods

The Context of the Study

The case study is drawn from a larger study (Olovson, 2018) that examined the processes (i.e., interactions) and products (i.e., written documents) of a collaborative writing module that focused on the creation of narratives in a fifth-semester Spanish Writing course at a large public university in the Midwest (Midwest University for the purposes of this study). In the larger study, the analysis of learners' collaborative dialogue produced during the planning and writing phases of the interaction focuses on: (1) at a macro level, how learners apportion their time while collaboratively planning and producing a written narrative; and (2) at a micro level, the types, frequency, of their language-related episodes (i.e., the instances where they talk about the language they are producing and question their language use). Learners' jointly produced texts were also examined analytically in terms of complexity, fluency, and accuracy measures, as well as holistically using a rubric. Additionally, a micro-discourse analytic approach was used to examine the means by which members of a collaborative pair position themselves as partners in a collaborative writing activity. In this case study I discuss only the portion of the larger study that pertains directly to the microanalysis.

The Course

The course serves as a bridge between the fourth-semester Spanish course, which is the last course in the university's general education language requirement sequence, and the more advanced courses in Spanish offered by the department in literature, linguistics, culture, and creative writing that are designed for undergraduate majors and minors.

The course has three main goals: (1) to develop L2 writing skills; (2) to provide contexts for oral communication practice using pair/small group work and situational activities; and (3) to develop the ability to think and read critically in Spanish. To meet the course goals, the instructors use a variety of activities done individually, in pairs, in small groups, and as a whole class. Course grades are based on writing and revising several genre-specific compositions, other shorter writing assignments, and class participation

Participants

In the spring of 2017, 16 university Spanish students enrolled in the course were invited to participate in a study. Although 15 students signed consent forms, this research report focuses on the interactions of two participants: Maddy and Nick (pseudonyms). This pair was selected based on several dynamic features of their process data (e.g., how they used their interactional resources to correctly solve

LREs and to mediate their identities throughout their interaction). Additionally, differences in their perceptions of their roles during their interaction and their overall experiences also made them interesting.

Maddy was a 20-year-old sophomore majoring in Global Health and minoring in Spanish. At the time of data collection, she had studied Spanish for four years in high school and had taken three previous Spanish courses (Intermediate Spanish I and II; Spanish Skills: Speaking) at Midwest University. She indicated that she was not a heritage speaker, had no prior experience living/traveling abroad, and that she spoke no other languages besides English and Spanish. She also had no experience with collaborative writing prior to this study.

Nick was an 18-year-old freshman majoring in Spanish. He had studied Spanish for four years in high school and had taken one university-level Spanish course (Spanish Skills: Speaking) prior to enrolling in the course. Additionally, he noted that he had studied Portuguese and Arabic, each for two months. He had not traveled or lived abroad, and to the question of whether or not he was a heritage speaker, he responded, "No, but I am fluent." Like Maddy, he also had no previous experience with collaborative writing. Both students indicated that they knew each other from prior classes and that they had a friendly relationship.

Instruments

Various instruments were used to collect data for this study, including a demographic questionnaire, a collaborative writing task, and reflection assignment. The demographic questionnaire, several versions of the writing tasks, and different versions of the reflection essays had been subjected to pilot testing in a previous semester.

Demographic Questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) was used to collect information about the participants. The questionnaire elicited general background information about the students, as well as their previous experiences learning Spanish, including courses in high school and at Midwest University, whether they were heritage speakers of Spanish or another language, and if they had any study-abroad experience. Participants also had to list whether they spoke or had studied other languages besides English and Spanish and, if so, for how long. Finally, they listed their reasons for enrolling in this course in particular and if they had any prior experience with collaborative writing activities.

Collaborative Writing Task. In the collaborative writing task used in this study, the participants recounted a popular children's fairy tale: *La Cenicienta* (Cinderella). The participants wrote their stories in Spanish based on a series of images. However, the end of the story was open ended, and the participants were encouraged to be creative in inventing their own ending. The directions indicated that students should begin with the setting, describing the background and introducing the main character of the story. Then they needed to describe the supporting characters as they appeared in the story and tell in detail what happened, step by step, being sure to include the characters' feelings and reactions, in addition to the events depicted in the images.

Reflection Essay. Upon completing the collaborative narrative, learners individually composed a reflection to enable the analysis their attitudes toward

collaborative writing and their thoughts about the process (Appendix B). Students were required to write short essay-style answers to questions related to: (1) the experience they had with their partner; (2) their perceptions of the benefits and disadvantages of collaborative composition; (3) whether (or not) they thought any aspects of their language improved as a result of working with a partner; and (4) whether or not they would recommend that other instructors use collaborative writing assignments in their courses. This is similar to reflection tasks used by previous researchers (e.g., Fernández Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2005).

Data Collection

During Week 3 of the semester the instructor introduced the researcher to the class and explained that participation in this study was optional, would have no bearing on course grades, and that the instructor would not know who had opted or declined to participate. Then the instructor left the room and the researcher presented the study, along with the English version of the fairy tale that served as the base of the writing activity (to assure that they would be familiar with the content) and, finally, a short IRB-approved overview of the study. The researcher distributed the informed consent document and the demographic information questionnaire. Students who did not wish to participate in the study had the option of either indicating so on the informed consent document or simply not returning the questionnaire or the informed consent document. However, all of the students chose to participate.

Students carried out a practice collaborative writing activity one week prior to completing the collaborative writing activity that is the subject of the present study, so that they could get experience with the collaborative writing process before the operational data collection began. Like the task used in the present study, the practice task involved students writing a narration based on a series of pictures, which were taken from a popular Spanish comic. Additionally, the ending of the story was missing, so the students needed to work together to produce a creative ending of their own. The practice activity took place in their regular classroom and students were partnered with the same person/people they worked with for the collaborative narrative used for data collection.

Students completed the writing assignment of the present study during Week 6 of the semester. At this point in the course students had focused on how to analyze and compose narratives, and as part of the unit, the collaborative task involved students composing a fairy tale in Spanish. Data collection took place over a 50-minute class period during Week 6. The majority of collaborative writing studies have limited the task time to 30 minutes or less (Storch, 2013), so the present study extended knowledge in the area by allowing for a longer period to plan, collaborate, and produce the jointly written text.

Data Analysis

After all of the data were collected, the collaborative dialogue that the pair produced during their interaction was transcribed. First, the researcher coded the LREs by type: lexical, grammatical, or mechanical. Lexical LREs were defined as any episode where learners engaged in a discussion of word/phrase meaning or word choice. Mechanical LREs were those in which learners discussed punctuation, spelling, or diacritics. Grammatical LREs were defined as the episodes in which

learners discussed grammatical form. Next, LREs were further coded in terms of whether the participants solved them correctly, incorrectly, or left them unresolved completely.

Next, following van Compernelle (2018), the participants' LRE sequences were transcribed using micro-discourse analytic conventions in order to focus on the pair's interactive footing (see Appendix C). As discussed previously, two components of the pair's interaction were identified and coded: (1) learners' topic management; and (2) learners' participant frameworks. Two themes were identified related to how the participants enacted the role of expert and how the participants embodied doing being good language students.

Findings

For Maddy and Nick, their discursive practices suggest that they viewed collaboration as a way for them to trade off the role of being expert (Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991; Rine, 2009; van Compernelle, 2015, 2018). Their interactional patterns imply that they enacted the role of expert based on whether their attention was oriented to content or language (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Rine, 2009; van Compernelle, 2015, 2018). When the pair discussed content, Maddy took on the role of expert and facilitated Nick's understanding of the original story. Meanwhile, Nick embodied the role of story disruptor by questioning the conventions of the fairy tale genre. When the pair focused on lexical issues, Nick took on the role of expert by suggesting a resolution to their lexical LREs right away; however, when they focused on grammar, Nick positioned himself as the teacher, scaffolding Maddy's performance as they worked to collaboratively solve their grammatical LREs. In this way, Nick did not immediately offer Maddy a solution like he did when the pair focused on lexical issues. In both types of language issues, Maddy's discursive patterns reveal that she acts as a student by orienting to Nick as the language expert.

Doing Being a Language Student

In her reflection essay, Maddy expressed the value of working together in terms of being able to rely on her partner's language knowledge:

I think my partner helped in choosing the correct verb tense. I get confused often with preterit and imperfect, so that is always tricky for me. I also think he helped with vocab, obviously, there are still many words I don't know in Spanish. [Working with a partner] makes writing a little easier because you don't have to spend time trying to think of a different way to phrase something in a way you can say in another language.

Maddy's belief manifested through the specific interactional pattern of the pair's LRE sequences as Maddy—for better or for worse—defers to Nick as the language expert and accepts without question or further debate his solutions to the LREs she triggers. In this way, she is 'doing being a language student,' because she accepts Nick's authority as if he were the language teacher.

Most of the LREs the students produce together follow a particular sequential trajectory: (1) Maddy mobilizes attention to a problematic word or language form; (2) Nick provides a candidate form; (3) Maddy accepts the candidate form without

further deliberation; (4) Nick writes the accepted form in their essay. In Excerpt 1, this interactional pattern plays out for the better, as the pair correctly resolve an LRE.

Excerpt 1. Maddy relying on Nick's language expertise - correct LRE resolution

- 245 M *Todo el mundo estaba invitado a una gran fiesta por el ++ por el +++* [1]
 (Everyone was invited to a grand party by the) (by the)
- 246 M I don't know what prince is. [1]
- 247 N Oh, prince? *Principe.* [2]
 (Prince.)
- 248 M *Principe.* Okay. [3]
 (Prince)

However, Maddy's strategy of treating Nick as the language expert holds even when Nick offers an incorrect form. Excerpt 2 below is an example of the same sequential trajectory as in Excerpt 1, but this time for the worse, as Nick produced an incorrect form, and Maddy's strategy of relying on Nick thus fails her. In Excerpt 2, Maddy accepts Nick's authority as if he were the teacher, continuing to position herself as a language student in the interaction. In this excerpt the two students are discussing how to correctly say "fairy godmother" in Spanish (i.e., *hada madrina*).

Excerpt 2. Maddy doing being language student - incorrect LRE resolution

- 299 M *Y cuando ella lloraba, una fairy godmother +++ No idea how to say that.* [1]
 (And when she was crying, a fairy godmother)
- 300 N I would say, [like +
- 301 M Fairy.
- 302 N *La comadre mágica.* [2]
 (magic *godmother)
- 303 M Sí. [3]
 (Yes)
- 304 N Okay, so she got real sad and then +
- 305 M *La + fairy g-?*
 (The)
- 306 N *La comadre mágica. So, I am going to say + de repente.*
 (The fairy godmother) (suddenly)

In this excerpt Maddy triggers the LRE in line 299 by indicating that she does not know how to say fairy godmother in Spanish. Nick offers an incorrect response: *la comadre mágica*, and Maddy accepts his answer by responding *sí* (line 303) without indicating any doubt or uncertainty. Nick then writes his solution in their composition. In the next turn, line 304, Nick begins generating content and ideas for the next part of their story. When Maddy questions whether he is referring to the fairy godmother as the one being sad in line 305, she begins to say *la fairy godmother*, but Nick interrupts her, reinforcing his certainty that *comadre mágica* is the correct term. He then moves on to the next part of the story.

There is evidence to suggest in Nick's reflection essay that, in line with Maddy's perception of him, he also views himself as the language expert:

She and I are at different levels. The truth is that I speak and write with enough fluency that it doesn't matter if I am with a partner or if I am alone. I prefer to write alone more than write with another. Every time in my Spanish classes when I am paired up, the other person always says to me I'm lucky I'm with you, you're the smart one. [Spanish] isn't my native language, but it isn't very hard for me at all. If there were a person like me in every class, it would function optimally.

This belief is evident in Nick's positioning as language expert at several moments while working with Maddy. In Excerpt 3 he asserts himself as more proficient in Spanish than Maddy by teasing her and explicitly talking about his fluency.

Excerpt 3. *Nick positioning himself as language expert*

- 428 M *Perdió el zapato. El + high heel.*
(She lost her shoe. The high heel)
- 429 N *El high heel? ((Nick laughs.))*
- 430 M *Yeah.*
- 431 N *En voz gringa? ((Nick laughs.))*
(In a *gringo* voice)
- 432 N *El high heel. That was ME! Oh my God, that was ME. I had no clue how to say that word, and I used to have a gringo pronunciation like you until last year.*
- 433 M *THEY never taught me that word. ((In a defensive tone.))*
- 434 N *I know. It's such a + like ++ little disparity. Isn't it sad?*
- 435 N *Entonces, salió corriendo rápido para el castillo pero... I'm going to keep it in the same sentence
(Then, she left running for the castle but)*
- 436 M *Si.*
(Yes)
- 437 N *Mientras corriendo +++ Well, mientras corría, perdió un tacón.*
(While running) (while she ran, she lost a heel)
- 438 M *Oh, it's tacón?*
(heel)
- 439 N *Si.*
(Yes)

While attempting to say that Cinderella lost her high heel, Maddy struggles to find the correct word for high heel in Spanish (i.e., *zapato de tacón alto*), first producing the word for shoe (*zapato*) and then deciding to say it in English, preceded by a Spanish article (line 428). In lines 429–431, Nick teases Maddy with words and through laughter about her *gringa* pronunciation and about not knowing the word in Spanish. Then, in line 432 he explicitly positions himself as being more advanced than Maddy by overtly expressing that he no longer has a *gringo* pronunciation, and he knows that specific word (unlike Maddy). Essentially, Nick is raising himself up through criticizing Maddy. However, through attempts to build rapport with Maddy in lines 432–434, Nick performs various solidarity moves. We know that they are solidarity moves because Nick implies that he used to speak like Maddy does (i.e., in a *gringo* way) last year, and that someday her Spanish can be as good as his.

Interestingly, Maddy's response to Nick's turn in lines 433–439 suggests that she does not interpret Nick's turn in line 431 as an insult. Instead, her responses

in her subsequent turns are consistent with her *doing* being a student: Maddy has one self-defense move in line 433 and then three turns in which she orients to Nick as the language expert, thereby repeating the sequential trajectory pattern that the two exhibit for solving LREs already discussed. Moreover, Maddy's use of "they" in 433 sets up an opposition between her (as a student) and teachers (as source of new words). This use of "they" could be interpreted as a statement about how Maddy thinks learning happens; her "they teach me" comment is both (1) further evidence that she enacts the role of being a student; and (2) different from how Nick talks about learning (i.e., "I used to do/be X, and now I do/am Y"), with no mention—at least not here—of the mechanisms of that learning.

However, unlike with most of the LREs the pair generates, with this LRE, Nick never explicitly offers Maddy the correct word for high heel in Spanish. It is not until she notices it in Nick's discourse in line 437 that she mobilizes attention to it by explicitly asking Nick if the word for high heel is *tacón*, thereby repeating the sequential trajectory pattern that the two exhibit for solving LREs.

Doing Being a Language Teacher

Although most of the pair's LREs followed the sequential trajectory previously discussed, there was some variation worthy of further exploration. For example, for a few of the pair's LREs, Nick positions himself as not just a language expert, but as a language teacher, offering Maddy scaffolding and direct instruction. He also directly acknowledges his role as a language teacher when he says that "*ella era el cerebro y yo era la pluma* (she was the brain, and I was the pen)" meaning that he made her do the work while he wrote. However, he implies in his reflection essay that he made her do the work not because he did not want to or was not interested, but because he thought it would be of value to her learning—much like a teacher would do with his or her students.

In the instances in which Nick enacts the role of being teacher, the pattern of how the two students engage in LREs is slightly different from Excerpts 1 and 2 as well. The data suggest that the pattern is related to the target of the LRE and the way in which Maddy mobilizes the pair's attention to the form. In other words, when the target of the LRE is grammar, or when Maddy indirectly asks for help using rising intonation or by offering choices, Nick does being teacher through offering metalinguistic hints, rather than supply the candidate form outright, as he did in the lexical LRE sequences in Excerpts 1 and 2.

The sequential trajectory for these grammatical types of LREs is as follows: (1) Maddy mobilizes attention to a problematic word or language form by offering options and/or using rising intonation; (2) Nick offers direct instruction, explicit grammar rules, or some other type of scaffolding; (3) Maddy uses the scaffolding from Nick to reduce her uncertainty and arrive at an answer; (4) Nick either confirms her contribution or offers more scaffolding; (5) Nick writes the accepted form in their essay. By offering scaffolding and repeating steps 2 and 3 until Maddy comes up with the form he believes is correct, Nick acts much as a teacher would with students in the classroom, even celebrating Maddy's success. Excerpt 4 provides an example of Nick positioning himself as Maddy's teacher.

Excerpt 4. *Nick doing being teacher*

- 177 M *Un día cuando Cenicienta +++ Uhh ++ estaba + limpiando? +++* [1]
 (One day when Cinderella) (was cleaning [imperfect.; *estar*])
- 178 M *Era lipiando? ++* [1]
 (was cleaning [imperfect; *ser*])
- 179 M *Fuera limpiando? +* [1]
 (was cleaning [past subjunctive.; *ser*])
- 180 N Hmm. Well, it's not *fuera* + [2]
 (was [past subjunctive])
- N Is it *ser* or *estar*? [2]
 (to be) (to be)
- 181 M Umm ++
- 182 N Which is the only one that can go with the *-ando* verbs? [2]
 (-ing)
- 183 M *Estar. DUH. So, estaba limpiando.* [3]
 (to be) (was cleaning)
- 184 N BOOM. Estaba limpiando. You GOT IT.
 (was cleaning)

In the excerpt above, Maddy signals that she is unsure of how to say, “she was cleaning” by offering three candidate forms in lines 177–179. Rather than provide the correct form in line 180 as he did the sequences discussed previously, Nick begins to do being teacher by offering scaffolding, first eliminating one of Maddy’s options and then and giving her a hint about a relevant rule. Her “umm” response in line 181 could be interpreted as either uncertainty or as a placeholder as she thinks about the correct form. It appears that Nick interprets this response as an indication that she needs more help, so he offers her further scaffolding by asking Maddy to use her metalinguistic knowledge to determine which auxiliary verb matches the *-ando* morpheme. She immediately responds with the auxiliary verb in line 183 and then correctly conjugates it to match the subject and tense required. The audio recordings suggest that Maddy’s “duh” response was made in a tone of self-deprecation, very much in line with the student role she is enacting; by answering his question, she remembers the metalinguistic information she knows but could not access (as shown in line 177–179). Nick’s response of “boom!” and “you got it!” in line 184 is the type of encouragement that a teacher would offer his or her students.

Doing Being Content Expert

Although Nick is largely responsible for doing being a language expert and teacher, there is evidence that Maddy also assumes an expert role during the interaction. Nick admits to not having read the English version of Cinderella before class, and he reveals that he had not read the story or seen a film version of Cinderella during childhood. Therefore, he relies on Maddy to explain the story and facilitate his understanding of the plot.

There are three sources of evidence to suggest that Maddy assumes the role of content expert. First, in their reflection essays Nick explicitly acknowledges that Maddy helped him with the content of the story, and that she helped him better formulate his ideas. Maddy also revealed in her reflection essay that she saw her contribution to the interaction as helping with the plot, for example when she writes:

“I think we contributed equally but in different ways, my partner knows more Spanish, so I think he helped out more with writing in Spanish and phrasing. I contributed more with how the story should be told.” Second, the pair spent most of their time together generating content and ideas. While doing this work, Maddy talked more than Nick. Maddy controlled the interaction by positioning herself as the content expert. Third, the interactional patterns in the pair’s collaborative dialogue exemplify how Maddy manifested her role as *doing* being content expert.

The sequential trajectory for the episodes in the pair’s discourse where they discussed content was as follows: (1) Maddy generates ideas or content by explaining the original story; (2) Nick either (2a) acknowledges with a one-word turn that he follows her explanation of the plot (e.g., okay), or he (2b) follows up with a question; (3) Maddy then either (3a) continues the explanation, or she (3b) answers Nick’s question; (4) finally, either (4a) steps 1–3 are repeated, or (4b) the pair stops to discuss how to express in Spanish what Maddy has just said, triggering an LRE sequence, which ultimately leads to Maddy’s ideas being reflected in their collaborative essay. Excerpt 5 exemplifies this interactional pattern when Maddy positions herself as the content expert.

Excerpt 5. *Maddy doing being content expert*

28	M	She loses a shoe and then the prince is like, <u>nooo!</u> And then he searches.	[1]
29	N	Oh <u>my gosh</u> .	[2a]
30	M	And then her sisters try to fit in the shoe.	[1]
31	N	[Not to be vulgar, but	[2b]
32	M	And in one.	[1]
33	N	Why can’t you just ask, like, is this <u>your shoe</u> ? Why do you have to put it on <u>every freaking woman</u> ?	[2b]
34	M	Because everybody wants to marry him, because he’s the prince.	[3]
35	N	Ohh.	[2a]
36	M	So, they’re going to be like, yes, that’s my shoe.	[3]
37	N	Okay, that makes sense now + Okay.	[1]
38	M	But, like, <u>multiple females</u> have the same size of shoes. That’s not really realistic.	[3]
39	N	Exactly.	[1]
40	M	But, anyway, apparently this one only fit Cinderella.	[3]
41	N	Okay.	[1]

In Excerpt 5, Maddy is explaining the plot to Nick (lines 28–30). Nick then enacts the role of story disruptor, refusing to stay within the conventions of the fairy tale genre by questioning the reasoning behind the plot in lines 31 and 33. Maddy justifies the storyline (lines 34–36) by offering a list of reasons. However, she then offers her own objection to the logic of the fairy tale (line 38). By doing so, she orients to Nick’s interpretative frame, even though she has previously positioned herself as the content expert. Nick ratifies her agreement with what he has been saying (i.e., that the premise of the story is not logical) in line 39. Maddy finds a middle ground in line 40 with the resolution token “but, anyway,” which has the effect of bridging between the fairy tale world and the modern, rationalistic world of foot sizes, hygiene, and direct communication. Besides acting as a story disruptor, Nick’s contribution to this part of the interaction is limited to short turns.

In some cases, the instances in which Maddy is acting as content expert also trigger an LRE that require the role of expert to shift to Nick (as discussed earlier). Excerpt 6 shows how the position of expert can shift between Maddy and Nick on a turn-by-turn basis.

Excerpt 6. *Shifting expertise from Maddy to Nick*

- 117 M And then her *padre* ++ Ummm +++ *casó?*
(father) (got married [missing reflexive pronoun])
- 118 N *Sé casó.* Who'd he get married to?
(Got married [with the correct reflexive pronoun])
- 119 M *Sí.*
(Yes)
- 120 N Okay.
- 121 M *A ++una mujer evil.* I don't know what evil is.
(to) (a woman)
- 122 N *Mal.* Or in this case, *mala.*
(bad) (bad [feminine form])
- 123 M There's not a better word?
- 124 N Umm +That's + I think that's the only word for evil, like cruel.
- 125 N *Entonces su padre se casó con una mujer cruel.*
(So her father got married to a cruel woman)
- 126 M Oh, okay. *Con dos hijas terribles.*
(with two terrible daughters)

In Excerpt 6, while Maddy is explaining to Nick that Cinderella's father got married, she expresses doubt about the correct form of "got married" in line 117. Nick recasts with the correct form in line 118, and wonders who the father married. Maddy then answers Nick's question about the plot in line 121, but she also signals midturn that that she does not know the word for "evil." Nick proposes *mal/mala* in line 122; Maddy then asks (line 123) for a better word to express "evil." Nick offers an explanation in line 124, Maddy accepts it in line 125, and the interaction continues with her offering more details about the plot.

Excerpt 6 exemplifies the dynamic nature of expertise embodied in the pair's collaborative dialogue. The pair seamlessly switches from Maddy being the content expert to Nick being language expert, and then back again to Maddy being the content expert, all within a matter of a few turns. For this pair, collaboration involved both members enacting expertise throughout the interaction, which ultimately benefits both understanding of the story and the language used to develop it.

Discussion

This study sought to answer the research question: What are the means by which members of a collaborative pair position themselves as partners in a collaborative writing activity and how does this change based on whether they orient to content-related or language-related issues?

To examine participants' perspectives from an emic perspective, I utilized a micro-discourse analytic approach to highlight the situated nature of collaboration and the dynamicity of the collaborative writing process as it became observable, turn-by-turn as the interaction unfolded (Kunitz, 2018; Lazaraton & Davis, 2008;

van Compernelle, 2015). This close analysis of the moment-by-moment unfolding of an interaction permits researchers to explore how learners orient to themselves and to the language they are producing, and what learners *do* with their talk (Markee, 2000), so that we can observe their competence-in-action (Pekarek Doehler, 2010, 2013).

I primarily focused on learners' interactive footing (Goodwin, 2007), specifically on the learners' topic management and their participant frameworks (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005; Rine, 2009; Rine & Hall, 2011; van Compernelle, 2015, 2018). I used these components to highlight the dynamicity of the collaborative writing process by documenting the set of interactional practices and competencies through which students focus on language features of the collaborative task (e.g., how they *do* being good language students) and construct their individual identities (e.g., how they *do* being expert/teacher/collaborative). The analysis revealed both how these competencies are constructed, mediated, and displayed in the talk, how these features can be fluid, changing on a turn-by-turn basis. The pair's discursive practices suggested that collaboration provided a platform for them to trade the role of expert.

Overall, the pair exhibited a high degree of mutuality and equality, and consequently could be classified as "collaborative" using Storch's (2002) patterns of dyadic interaction. This model assumes that patterns of interaction "are fairly stable...regardless of the task or passage of time" (Storch, 2009, p. 157). However, the results of the micro-discourse data analysis presented in this case study indicate that the collaborative writing process is far more dynamic than Storch's approach would suggest.

To summarize, the prevailing theme present in Maddy and Nick's collaborative dialogue and reflection essays highlights the ways in which they position themselves within and through the discourse as either experts, teachers, or students. Their interactional patterns imply that they enacted the role of expert based on whether their attention was focused on content or language. When the pair discussed content, Maddy adopted the role of expert and facilitated Nick's understanding of the original story. Meanwhile, Nick embodied the role of story disruptor by questioning the conventions of the fairy tale genre. When the pair focused on lexical issues, Nick enacted the role of expert by providing the answer right away; however, when they focused on grammar, he positioned himself as the teacher, scaffolding Maddy's performance. In both cases, Maddy's discursive patterns reveal that she acts as a student by orienting to Nick as the language expert.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study confirm that collaborative writing activities can be a powerful tool in an instructor's pedagogical repertoire, as viewed from two perspectives: (1) a fully collaborative writing event is a productive site for co-constructed learning as students pool their knowledge to solve language-use problems and generate content; and (2) the collaborative behaviors students develop and use in their language courses are not limited to that context alone; rather, these skills will serve them later in the workplace. These findings can be directly translated into pedagogical implications at the course level and program level and when making

curricular decisions.

Course Level

At the course level, collaborative writing activities can be used to elicit a particular language form or function. Storch (2013) recommends the backward design approach, in which the teacher starts with a pedagogical goal in mind and then designs a task that will help learners meet it. She argues that there is enough empirical evidence to suggest that if the teacher's primary goal is to draw learners' attention to form–meaning connections and to generate a greater depth of engagement with language choices, then the teacher should use a meaning-focused task (e.g., jigsaw, data commentary). Conversely, if a teacher wants to draw students' attention to form, then the tasks of choice should be ones that focus on language (e.g., dictogloss) or grammar (e.g., cloze). The findings from the present study seem to suggest that narrative tasks offer a way to focus on both form (e.g., preterite and imperfect) and meaning, because the students focus on lexis and grammatical accuracy in their discussions.

Another important finding of the present study is that the language produced between Maddy and Nick throughout the interaction takes place largely in English. In the study students were told that they could use whatever language they desired with each other during the composition process. Therefore, in language courses, an instructor may consider allowing students to use their first language (L1) during collaborative interactions. This pedagogical decision is supported by research on L1 use in metalinguistic discussion. Within the sociocultural approach to interaction research, for example, the L1 is seen as a mediating tool that learners use to establish understanding, manage the task, and support each other as they produce collaborative dialogue (Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Philp et al., 2014. Swain and Lapkin (1998) demonstrated that learners use their L1 to reflect on their language production, which facilitates cognitive processing. Swain and Lapkin also found that learners used the L1 to discuss issues that arose during the collaborative composition process, which allowed them to work better together to resolve them. Philp et al. (2014) argue that “L1 use in peer interactions may support learner cognition, allowing for more in-depth discussion of task content and, therefore, a higher level of task completion” (p. 84). The use of the L1 can also affect the relationships formed during the collaborative session. Similar to the case of Maddy and Nick, Kibler (2010) found that the use of the L1 allowed learners to switch between expert and novice roles as they demonstrated knowledge related to language and content.

Program Level

Collaboration is a skill that is used in other courses within and beyond Spanish and also post-graduation. Collaborative writing is a common practice in L1 settings, and it is also found outside of academia in general (Storch, 2013). Therefore, by engaging in collaborative writing in language classrooms, teachers are both extending the practice from other disciplines and preparing students for future careers. Collaborative writing activities provide a platform for teachers to model collaborative behavior and teach students what effective collaboration looks

like, with the goal that students use these skills in other classes and, later on, in the workplace (Kim & McDonough, 2011).

The findings of the present study align with previous micro-discourse analytic research in that collaborative identities shift on a moment-by-moment basis during peer interaction. This implies that there is no one correct way to collaborate productively. With this in mind, teacher may consider designing a module for learners on general strategies for successful collaboration. Previous research has demonstrated that in practice, teachers can do this in a number of ways: (1) by providing explicit training in how to be good collaborators in terms of solving communication difficulties and giving each other feedback (Fujii et al., 2016); (2) by emphasizing collaborative over individual achievement (Dawes, 2004; Philp, 2016); (3) by explaining the rationale for collaborative writing (Storch, 2013); and (4) by teaching general teamwork and task management skills (Arnold et al., 2009; Dovey 2006).

Curricular Decisions

Collaborative writing can contribute to curricular decisions, because collaborative writing activities are part of the repertoire of strategies that teachers use to create a positive classroom environment that promotes teamwork, like that which was exhibited by Maddy and Nick. In classrooms that create this type of positive climate, students are more likely to adopt a collaborative mindset (Ballinger, 2013; O'Donnell, 2006), discuss and solve language issues together, (Wang & Vásquez, 2012), and engage in the overall types of peer interaction that are most helpful for language learning (Philp et al., 2014; Sato & Ballinger, 2016). In their reflection narratives, the students in the present study noted that they enjoyed the collaborative activities, because they felt comfortable experimenting with language in a low-stakes environment where only their peer heard their errors.

Collaborative writing activities also encourage teachers to be cognizant of peer dynamics and how they may influence the outcomes of the interaction. In choosing how to design student pairs or groups there are several factors that need to be taken into consideration. In terms of size, there are generally two schools of thought. Some researchers argue that grouping students in pairs is better, because learners are more likely to feel a stronger sense of text ownership and consequently their individual contributions will be greater (Storch, 2013); and pair work is more conducive to the types of interactions that facilitate language learning (Oskoz & Elola, 2011; Kuteeva, 2011; Storch, 2013). However, those in favor of larger groups argue that more students means more sources of knowledge to collectively pool during the interaction (Ewald, 2005; Fernández Dobao, 2014) and larger groups are more likely to resemble what learners will encounter during their careers after graduating (Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003).

In terms of pair selection, there also seems to be some disagreement within the field. Some researchers argue (e.g., Storch 2005, 2007, 2009; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007) that students should be able to self-select their partners, because the freedom to choose is more likely to result in collaborative relationships. Other researchers (e.g., Shehadeh, 2011) suggest that students should be able to self-select, but that they should change partners often—especially when the collaborative writing activity

occurs over an extended period of time. Finally, others argue that teachers should be the ones who assign the groups because they are more likely to be familiar with students' personalities (and can thus avoid potential personality clashes) and they can assign pairs based on learner proficiency level (Choi & Iwashita, 2016; Leeser, 2004; Philp et al., 2014).

Limitations

This study has some limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. First, the qualitative nature of studies of discourse like this one means that the findings are limited to the particular classroom context in which the data were collected. Had data been collected in a classroom at a lower level, for example, the results might have been different, given factors such as students' proficiency level and ability to engage in metalinguistic talk. Additionally, the narrative task may have affected the process outcomes in ways that would not remain constant with the selection of a different writing genre. For example, a data commentary task would certainly elicit many fewer past-tense LREs than the narrative task used in this study.

Another limitation is that data collection was limited to one instance of collaborative writing. Had this study been longitudinal in nature, differences in the processes, discourse patterns, and student perceptions among the pair could have been documented over a period of time. Additionally, had the research design permitted analysis of students in different partner configurations, I would have been able to see how much of what I observed is sustained across pairs, and how much their discourse patterns change in concert with different pair dynamics.

Conclusion

The inductive methodology used to characterize collaborative relationships presented in this article provides a more nuanced way of characterizing collaborative relationships. Instead of trying to make the learners' process fit within the parameters of Storch's (2002, 2009) model of patterns of dyadic interaction like many collaborative writing studies conducted to date (Storch, 2013), a microanalytic discourse analysis of their collaboration highlighted the dynamic nature of collaboration. This approach not only helps to illuminate the situated nature of collaboration, but it allows researchers to observe learners' competence-in-action through the language they produce during the interaction (Pekarek Doehler, 2010, 2013; van Compernelle, 2018). Finally, this study contributes to the limited body of research examining collaborative writing processes through the lens of micro-discourse analysis.

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Appendix B

Reflection Assignment

Please answer the following questions as honestly and completely as possible. Your answers will in no way affect your grade for this assignment—you will be given credit for responding to each question fully.

1. What was the process of working with someone else like? What were your interactions with your partner like? Do you feel like you both contributed to the assignment in equal ways?
2. How did you and your partner spend your time? What kinds of things did you discuss as you completed the assignment?
3. In what specific ways did your partner help you or hinder you?
4. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of writing with a partner versus writing alone? Would you have preferred to write on your own or did you like being able to write with a partner? Why?
5. Would you recommend that other Spanish instructors use collaborative writing assignments in their classes? Why or why not?
6. How helpful do you think collaborative writing activities are for improving your grammar, vocabulary and writing skills?

Appendix C

Transcription conventions (from van Compernelle, 2018)

+	Short pause
++	Long pause
+++	Very long pause
.	Full stop with falling intonation
,	Slightly rising intonation
?	Raised intonation
((comment))	Double parentheses indicate transcribers comments or descriptions
<u>underline</u>	Underlining indicates stress through pitch or amplitude
[Onset of overlapping speech
]	End of overlapping speech
CAPITALS	Capital letters indicate markedly loud speech
