



**Two heads better than one: the potential of collaborative
dictogloss for EFL students at high proficiency levels.**

Masters' degree final project

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Abstract

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research confirms that collaborative writing might be conducive to L2 learning for students at all proficiency levels (Storch 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). The current small-scale study compared the effectiveness of a collaborative and individual dictogloss task on the acquisition of L2 vocabulary by high proficiency English learners (N-14). The learners completed a pre-test, a dictogloss task, and a post-test over a two-week period. Part of the students (N-10) carried out the task in pairs and the other part worked individually (N-4). The written output was collected and compared in terms of accuracy, fluency and similarity to the original passage when completing the task. Also, a survey was carried out to elicit student's attitudes. Results show that collaboration in a dictogloss has no significant influence on vocabulary acquisition however it improves task outcome: collaborative texts are more accurate, fluent and more similar to the original. In light of the results, attention will be drawn to the dictogloss task as a pedagogical tool at high proficiency levels in order to enhance language learning in EFL classrooms in similar contexts.

Key words: collaborative writing, dictogloss task, task outcome, vocabulary acquisition

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INTRODUCTION

The use of pair or group work in foreign language teaching seems to be common in classrooms (Fernandez Dobao, 2012). It is advocated from the sociocultural approach which claims that knowledge is constructed through interaction between individuals and its internalization (Vyogtsky, 1978). This viewpoint has led to numerous research studies encouraging collaborative dialogue (Donato, 1994; Swain, 1998, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 2001) while writing activities are still considered a solitary task (Storch and Wigglesworth, 2009; Storch, 2011).

In recent years, scholars have called attention to the benefits of collaborative writing tasks, since they encourage learners to work collaboratively during the entire writing process, pooling their resources together in order to resolve linguistic problems (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2009). This kind of negotiation is considered to facilitate the co-construction of language knowledge and to yield a higher level of performance (Donato, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 2001).

Among the different written tasks, the dictogloss task, which basically entails the reconstruction of a text after having heard it, has been proven to be an effective way of promoting language negotiation and drawing students' attention to form in a meaningful context. In particular, it is claimed to enhance accuracy and be conducive to language learning (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain, 1995; Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2007; Basterrechea & García Mayo, 2013; Basterrechea, García Mayo & Leeser, 2014).

A substantial body of research has investigated students' collaborative interaction in a dictogloss task (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 2001; García Mayo, 2002), however, little attention has been paid to the benefits of collaborative work on acquiring particular L2 items. In fact, all the research has been conducted in ESL or CLIL contexts and has placed its focus on grammatical structures (with Kim, 2008 targeting lexical items being an exception). The results have been conflicting and they have questioned the positive role of collaboration in this particular task (e.g., Kim, 2008; Besterretxea & García Mayo, 2014 with positive results, and Kuiken & Vedder, 2002; Besterretxea, García Mayo & Lessser, 2013 with negative or non-significant differences).

Within this backdrop, this small-scale study aims at shedding some light onto the link between the collaborative condition and L2 acquisition in a dictogloss task and it does so by examining the effect of collaboration on the acquisition of lexical items, in particular, of English phrasal verbs. Additionally, it examines the influence of collaborative work on task outcome in a dictogloss task, that is, of how well students are able to reconstruct the original text – an issue, which, to the best of our knowledge, has not been addressed in previous research. Previous studies have focused on particular structures embedded in the texts produced, hinting at a partial image of the task outcome. In our study, however, we would like to compare individual and collaborative task outcome in a comprehensive way considering text accuracy, fluency and the similarity to the original passage in terms of content.

This paper is conducted among adult learners in an EFL classroom (in the Official Language School of Languages in Pamplona (Spain)). In the foreign language class, teachers spend less time with their students and L2 exposure is limited, both inside and outside the classroom (Philp & Tognini, 2009), which might influence the task results. On the other hand, it might also be assumed that EFL classroom in a language school is a good testing ground to assess collaborative work, as this teaching methodology, with learner-learner interaction and dialogic activity, is very present in these settings.

The study was designed to meet the needs of the high-proficiency students we worked with. Since lack of accuracy, L1 interference and poor vocabulary seem to be one of the most problematic areas at this level, according to their own teacher, we chose to focus students' attention on phrasal verbs – a challenging lexical item considered to be present in native-like speech (Esquivel, 2000). Besides, at the time of the experiment, students were working on lexis and lexical collocations.

Our study was carried out with EFL learners whose native language was Spanish. A dictogloss task was employed to draw students' attention to English phrasal verbs and by means of pre-test, post-test and analysis of texts produced in pairs and individually we set out to verify whether collaboration leads to greater knowledge gain of the targeted verbs than individual work and whether the collaborative condition has positive influence on task outcome. Students' impressions on the task were gathered thanks to a questionnaire administered once the task was completed.

We hope that this small-scale investigation will help us evaluate the pedagogical implications of the dictogloss task and deliberate on its effectiveness in the classroom with high proficiency learners as well as put forward students' views on this particular task.

The paper is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 presents a review of the literature regarding the dictogloss task, the task chosen for the present study, and an overview of the studies comparing individual and collaborative work in form-focused tasks, including the influence of the collaborative condition on task outcome and L2 acquisition. Chapter 2 describes the context and the participants, the materials employed in the study, as well as the procedure followed by data analysis. Chapters 3 and 4 present the results and discussion, respectively. This paper is closed by a conclusion which includes limitations in the study and lines for further research.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section is divided into two subsections. The first one gathers the existing knowledge on the dictogloss as a form-focused collaborative task and presents the variety of angles it has been researched from. The second section is more specific and focuses on the benefits of collaborative writing tasks by comparing them to individual performance in terms of task outcome and the acquisition of particular L2 structures.

1.1. DICTOGLOSS

Dictogloss is a pedagogical tool designed in Australia by Ruth Wajnryb (1990) to promote negotiation of meaning as well as negotiation of form. In a dictogloss task, a short text is read twice at normal speed: during the first lecture students listen and are not allowed to take notes, the second time they listen, they jot down words. Afterwards, individually or collaboratively, learners reconstruct the original text as faithfully as possible (Wajnryb, 1990).

It is a task which satisfied the need, coming from the immersion language acquisition settings, for a form-focused approach that would get learners to produce language and reflect upon it. Arguments have been raised, though, that tasks focused on mere communication may enhance fluency, but do not lead to target-like proficiency (Spada & Lightbown, 1989; Swain, 1985). Swain (1995) was the researcher who drew attention to the dictogloss task and set out to prove that it might be conducive to language learning and effective in enhancing accuracy and native-like speech (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain, 1995; Swain & Lapkin, 2001).

Since its introduction in 1990, the dictogloss task has been in the spotlight of numerous studies (Abadikhah, 2011; Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2007; Basterrechea & García Mayo, 2013; Basterrechea, García Mayo & Leiser, 2014; Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 2001; Kim, 2008; Lesser, 2004; Stroch, 2005).

In these studies, students' collaborative interactions and their influence on task outcome have been thoroughly examined in different contexts. One of the first studies to consider the benefits of a collaborative dictogloss task was a research conducted by Kowal & Swain (1994) with L2 French 8 Grade learners in an immersion class in Canada. The researchers valued the grammar orientation feature of the task and wondered whether it would push the students to syntactic processing. The task was proven effective for making students aware of language form and function. The authors came to the conclusion that the dictogloss task helped students to co-construct the language – to find gaps in their linguistic recourses, notice the link between form and meaning and gave them opportunities for peer feedback. Further

research confirmed the task to be form-focused and proved its effectiveness for promoting discussion on meaning and form, scaffolding, and corrective feedback (Nabei, 1996; Swain & Lapkin, 2001).

Further studies compared the dictogloss task with other form-focused tasks in terms of their effectiveness in generating collaborative dialogue, operationalized in the form of Language Related Episodes (LREs), which are episodes in which learners discuss the language they are using in order to solve their language-related problems (Abadikhah, 2011; Swain & Lapkin, 2001; Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2007; García Mayo, 2002). It was confirmed to generate a substantial amount of LREs (Swain & Lapkin, 2001; Nabei, 1996; Alegría de la Colina & Garica Mayo, 2007).

By contrast, García Mayo (2002) in a study carried out with high proficiency EFL learners in a Spanish university, comparing dictogloss with a text reconstruction task, observed that in the former, students focused more on producing a coherent paragraph than on discussing the language, and consequently produced a very low number of LREs. Some researchers (Abdikhah, 2011; Alegría de la Colina and García Mayo, 2007) attributed this low number of LREs to the nature of the task – on the one hand, input may solve many doubts and on the other, students have limited access to the input provided.

The nature of the LREs produced during a dictogloss task has also been taken into consideration to discern whether students focus in this task was placed on grammar or lexis (Lesser, 2004; Kim & McDonough, 2008; Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). As it was designed as a task for learning grammar, it comes as no surprise that the vast majority of the studies analyzed, confirm it to be effective for drawing students' attention to grammar structures, especially among high proficiency learners. Low proficiency learners tended to focus more on lexis (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Nabei, 1996; Lesser, 2004; Storch, 2005; Lesser, 2004; Kim & McDonough, 2008).

Nevertheless, in a study in an EFL setting, Abadikhah (2011) observed that the dictogloss task was the one to generate the highest percentage of meaning-based LREs among the three activities she compared (a picture description, 'let's complain' and dictogloss tasks); they were produced three times more frequently than grammatical episodes.

Additionally, some scholars (Lesser, 2004, Kim & McDonough, 2008) drew their attention to the interaction process in a dictogloss task in terms of the characteristics of learners who were

engaged in the collaborative dialogue in relation to LREs they produced. This issue seems to be of particular importance since in quite a few research papers, evidence has been put forward to prove that pair composition may influence the collaborative dialogue. Some have attributed this fact to differences in learner's proficiency (Lesser, 2004; Kim, 2008). Consequently, they have argued that high proficiency learners tend to produce more LREs (Lesser, 2004; Kim & McDonough, 2008). Many sustained, therefore, that this particular task is especially suitable for high proficiency learners (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2007; Fortune, 2005; Lesser, 2004). Other scholars however, went a step further and concluded that although learners' proficiency is important, the pattern of interaction in form-focused tasks is of greater value (Storch, 2007; Watanabe & Swain, 2007).

Finally, several studies have also considered the benefits of dictogloss carried out collaboratively versus an individual one (Kim, 2008, Kuiken & Vedder, 2002; Besterretxea & García Mayo, 2013). As this particular issue is of importance to our study we would like to examine it thoroughly in a broader context and present the data we have gathered from studies comparing collaborative to individual performance in form-focused tasks.

1.2. COLLABORATIVE TASKS VS. INDIVIDUAL TASKS

In the framework of the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) a number of studies have empirically examined the benefits of collaboration by comparing collaborative and individual oral tasks. On the other hand, collaboration in writing still seems to be under-researched, although scholars suggest that the benefits claimed for oral interactions might as well apply to other modalities such as writing Ortega (2007).

Collaborative writing has also been advocated from the immersion language acquisition studies in the light of the output hypothesis. Swain (2001) argued that producing output together helps learners to (1) notice the gap between what they want to say and what they are able to say – a hole in their interlanguage; (2) it allows them to test their hypothesis by trying out new forms and structures and receive feedback and (3) they may consciously reflect on the language they produce.

Within this theoretical backdrop many researchers have set out to verify the beneficial role of collaboration vs individual work in a variety of written tasks. In some papers in order to compare individual and collaborative performance they examined the written product of students working in pairs and individually, as we will show in subsection 1.2.1, and in others

– they took a closer look at the acquisition of particular targeted structures, as we will explain in subsection 1.2.2.

1.2.1. Task outcome

Up to date, general task outcome in the dictogloss task has not been compared in terms of collaboration; therefore, we've looked into the data from other form-focused tasks, where researchers compared task performance of students working individually and those who worked in pairs by comparing the texts they produced.

In one of the first studies of this kind, Storch (1999) analyzed the texts produced by pairs and individually working students, carrying out three different tasks (a composition, text reconstruction and a close exercise). The Australian researcher observed that pairs produced shorter and less syntactically complex, but overall more accurate texts (Storch, 1999), which may suggest that such form focused tasks enhance students' accuracy. Her later study (Storch, 2005), where a composition task with graphic prompt was employed, included two different groups of students and confirmed this hypothesis.

Storch's conclusions have also been verified on a larger scale. In a study with 24 pairs and 24 individual learners (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007), students' performance was compared in two different tasks: a rapport and an argumentative essay. Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) compared 24 pair and 48 individuals writing an argumentative essay. The outcome of each task and the pair interaction were analyzed. In both studies the texts written in pairs were significantly more accurate than those produced individually and evidence of collaboration was found in the recordings. Researchers concluded that this more accurate production is a result of a collaborative dialogue during the writing process, since it is then when decisions process occurs.

In a similar vein, Fernández Dobao (2012) proved collaborative effort to be more successful than individual performance. She compared individual and collaborative work of intermediate level SFL learners at a public university in the USA. She analyzed the texts produced in a jigsaw task in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity and the recordings of students who worked in pairs and groups. The results, like in the previous studies (Storch, 2005; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007), showed that collaborative condition lead students to produce shorter, but more accurate texts.

However, Storch (2007) also provided some evidence to contradict her own findings. In a small-scale study carried out in four intact ESL university classes, she examined the nature of

learners' interaction and task outcome in an editing task. The upper-intermediate learners who took part in the experiment were divided in groups: two groups working collaboratively and two others, individually and asked to improve the text in terms of accuracy. The analysis of the edited text scores indicated that learners in the two individual and collaborative conditions did not differ significantly in the mean accuracy score.

1.2.2. Acquisition of targeted L2 structures

Some research has looked into the relationship between the collaborative condition in an output task and learning of particular language structures. In order to verify this particular link, they compared students' initial knowledge of a structure and the knowledge gain acquired after carrying out a particular task by means of pre- and post-tests. (Kim, 2008; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Kuiken & Vedder, 2002; Basterretxea, García Mayo & Lesser, 2013; Basterretxea & García Mayo, 2014). The studies examining the issue were conducted in different settings and targeted mainly grammar (with the exception of Nassaji & Tian, 2010 and Kim, 2008 where the linguistic focus was placed on lexis).

One of the first investigations of this kind was carried out with Dutch high school ESL students by Kuiken and Vedder (2002). They put into spotlight English passive forms. Learners' knowledge of the passive was measured before and after the treatment in order to determine the learning gain. Their analysis showed that while interacting, learners drew attention to the passive form; however, in terms of quantity there was no prove that the collaborative condition improves the recognition and frequency of use of the passive. This study had some limitations which might have influenced the results. The researchers pointed to the limited number of participants, individual differences within the collaborative and individual group they compared and, most importantly, they observed differences between the results of collaboration depending on the text used for the dictogloss.

More recent studies coming from CLIL context (Basterretxea, García Mayo & Lesser, 2013, Basterretxea & García Mayo 2014) seem to go in line with Kuiken and Vedder's findings (2002). In these papers (Basterretxea, García Mayo & Lesser, 2013; Basterretxea & García Mayo 2014) the noticing of two grammar structures was compared. The first study investigated noticing and producing of present and past tenses and its results suggested that although the dictogloss improved the correct use of the target form in the reconstruction procedure, it was regardless whether students worked individually or collaboratively. The sample, however, was once more limited – only 16 subjects were included.

In the second study by Basterretxea and García Mayo (2014), which improved the size of the sample (116 participants), the production of third person –s in a dictogloss task was the means to compare CLIL the mainstream EFL methodologies. The study also addressed the issue of individual and collaborative work in these two settings. Once again, the performance of students working collaboratively versus those who reconstructed the text individually in terms of accuracy of production of the target form was compared. On this occasion collaborative interaction yielded positive results but only in the CLIL context, whereas in a mainstream classroom the collaboration was not related to knowledge gain.

While these three studies focused on the noticing of a particular grammatical structure its acquisition and production, others targeted lexis.

In a small-scale study by Nassaji & Tian (2010), carried out with ESL Canadian students, the effectiveness of two tasks (cloze and editing) on learning English phrasal verbs was compared. The results were pessimistic – the study provided no evidence of greater vocabulary knowledge gains for the collaborative condition. The phrasal verbs for the study were those students had difficulty with, and were selected by the teacher. During the treatment the selected vocabulary items were first introduced through an input-based mini lesson, which was deemed indispensable by the teacher. It is worth mentioning that in this study the texts produced by individuals and pairs were compared in terms of general accuracy and there, a positive difference in favor of collaboration was proven.

Nevertheless, Kim's study (2008), which also focused on lexis comparing the effectiveness of collaborative and individual dictogloss task on the acquisition of vocabulary, stands in contrast to those negative results. It was carried out in a group of 32 Korean second language learners and its results indicated positive relationship between collaboration and L2 acquisition, since students working in pairs outperformed individual students on the vocabulary post-test. She, like Nasaji & Tian (2010), worked with initially unknown vocabulary items. Interestingly, Kim (2008) not only compared the vocabulary gain by means of tests but she also examined the collaborative dialogues and the think-aloud protocols of individual students where more evidence of collaboration were observed. Nevertheless, one has to bear in mind the specific language instructional context (intensive KSL course).

To summarize, although in the light of existent theoretical background, numerous studies have proven collaboration to be beneficial for L2 acquisition, the benefits of pair work in collaborative writing still needs to be addresses. Thus, the existing research, as shown above,

is fragmental, comes from different settings and, most importantly, yields contradictory results. It is also clear that the research community while exploring the dictogloss task chose to focus on grammar rather than lexis, although studies have shown that learners, depending on the group, may draw attention to both (Abadikhah, 2011; Lesser, 2004). Moreover, while targeting a particular structure, in none of the above studies, researchers examine the influence of the collaborative condition on the success of general task outcome.

Research questions

Based on the findings from previous research, the present study aims at shedding some light onto the effectiveness of collaboration on vocabulary acquisition in a dictogloss task with high-proficiency EFL learners by comparing pair to individual performance. It also sets out to compare task completion success between pairs and individuals.

This paper addresses the following research questions:

- (1) Does performing the dictogloss task collaboratively lead to greater gains of vocabulary knowledge (phrasal verbs) than performing the tasks individually? Are there any differences among the different items?

- (2) Is the collaborative dictogloss task equally effective for pairs and individuals regarding successful task completion?

Although not specifically a research question we also asked the students about their impressions on the task.

II. METHODOLOGY

Participants

The research was conducted in an educational context different from the ones described in previous studies (Kim, 2008; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Basterretxea, García Mayo & Lesser, 2013; Besterretxea & García Mayo, 2014). The study was based in the Official Language School in Pamplona (*Escuela Oficial de Idiomas – EOI*) – institution dedicated to foreign language teaching. Students of EOI differ in sociocultural background and age and are grouped according to their level of competence in the L2. Although there are clear background differences, the proficiency level is homogenous. This second condition has been said to be positive for research, since heterogeneity in proficiency levels may hinder the collaborative dialogue (Lesser, 2004; Storch, 1999; Kuiken & Vedder, 2002).

The participants of the study were students of a group of 14 EFL learners who were enrolled in a C1 course (according to CEFR) on the basis of a placement test, carried out as entrance requirement at the beginning of the school year in September. Their proficiency levels at the time of the study were rated by both – the teacher and mock exam results, and ranged from B2.2. to C1.1 according to CEFR. Students had lessons twice a week in sessions of 2 hours 15 minutes and were accustomed to pair and group work.

They were all native Spanish speakers (8 women and 6 men) and had been studying English for an average of 16 years. The average age of the participants was 34, ranging from 24 to 51. The selected students were divided into two groups randomly: a collaborative group (10) and an individual group (4).

Target vocabulary

In the study 12 phrasal verbs were selected as target vocabulary. Phrasal verbs are two- or three-word idiomatic expressions, consisting of a verb and a particle or a combination of a particle and a preposition (Darwin & Gray, 1999). After carrying out the pre-test with a native speaker two items were excluded from the research because of ambiguity of meaning. Therefore only 10 verbs were considered in the analysis.

This particular type of vocabulary item was selected because of two reasons. Firstly, we wanted to focus on lexis, since high proficiency courses mainly aim at extending students' vocabulary. Our course was of no exception – the teacher underlined the importance of phrasal verbs and collocations in course content. Secondly, we opted for phrasal verbs, since as research indicates (Dagut and Laufer 1985; Laufer and Eliasson, 1993) the difficulty of this

particular linguistic category may lead to avoidance, causing learners to choose a single word synonym instead. Nevertheless, phrasal verbs are considered to be present in native-like speech and, high-proficiency students, as the ones we work with, are learners who aim at native-like proficiency (Esquivel, 2000).

Research procedure and the dictogloss task

The study lasted two weeks and was distributed in four sessions. It involved a pretest, a dictogloss, a post-test and a survey, all carried out in separate sessions. The pre-test evaluated students' knowledge of the selected phrasal verbs, the dictogloss task was the treatment and the post-test was used to verify the gains in vocabulary knowledge. The survey was administered to gather students' views, once the task was completed.

During the first session students were given 15 minutes to complete a pre-test. During the second, the task was carried out.

The current study used a dictogloss task based on a text extracted from a grammar handbook, *English Phrasal Verbs in Use* published by Cambridge University Press in 2004. In order to adapt suitable length and difficulty the text had been modified by the teacher and the researcher. In terms of difficulty, the text was considered accessible for a C1 group; its grammatical structures and lexis (with the exception of the targeted phrasal verbs) were assumed to be known to the students. The length of the text was decided based on previous studies (Kim, 2008; Nassaji & Tian, 2010) and teacher's impressions. The text was 189 words long and embedded 12 phrasal verbs (Appendix 1).

Just before the experimental dictogloss, a trial one was carried out to ensure students' familiarity with the task. After introducing the procedure, the topic of the dictogloss (Time at work) was introduced to elicit content-related vocabulary and focus attention. Afterwards, the experimental dictogloss was carried out.

Learners were not informed about research aims, that is, they completed a meaningful task, which consisted in reproducing a text as faithfully as possible and accurately in terms of grammar.

The dictogloss task was carried out following the procedure of Wajnryb (1990). Students listened to a short passage and were asked not to take notes. Secondly, they listened to the passage again and were instructed to jot down notes in English. Next, learners in the individual group were asked to reconstruct the text individually, whereas learners who were assigned to the collaborative group reconstructed the text with a partner. Learners then listened to the passage for a third time, took notes, and subsequently compared it with the text

previously written. On the spot, bearing in mind the reconstruction difficulties students had, decision was taken to read the text for the third time (as in Kim, 2008).

Students had 30 minutes to complete the dictogloss task. Once it was completed all the worksheets were collected and analyzed.

Two days after the dictogloss task the post-test was administered – it lasted 15 minutes.

After the experiment has finished, to gather some insight into students' appreciation of the task a short survey was applied. In the survey students' opinions and suggestions were elicited (Annex 2).

Pre-test and post-test

In order to ensure that learners were not familiar with the vocabulary items, a VKS (Vocabulary Knowledge Scale) was applied. The VKS is a five-point scale self-report test that measures lexical knowledge on a continuum from no knowledge to the capacity to produce a correct sentence containing the target word (see Table 1 below).

<p>Clock on</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I don't remember having seen this word before.2. I have seen this word before, but I don't know what it means.3. I have seen this word before, and I think it means _____ (synonym or translation).4. I know this word. It means _____ (synonym or translation).5. I can use this word in a sentence (write a sentence): _____.

*Table 1. An example of the vocabulary knowledge scale used for testing the phrasal verbs
(Paribakht and Wesche, 1996)*

This kind of test has been chosen because it has been claimed to be an effective tool when measuring the increase in vocabulary knowledge as a result of instruction (Read & Chapelle, 2001) and it has also been applied in previous research for that purpose (Paribakht & Wesche, 1996; Read & Chapelle, 2001; Kim, 2008; Nassaji & Tian, 2010).

The VKS was introduced in 1993, however, the version we use in the study is the one from Wesche and Paribakht (1996), since it is said to offer the most explicit description and justification and is claimed to be one of the instruments in L2 empirical research that is

currently best known for assessing both receptive and productive vocabulary development of specific targeted words (Burton, 2009).

The pre-test and the post-test were scored according to VKS by Paribakht and Wesche (1996) (see Table 2). This is, 1 point was assigned when the learner said he/she did not know the meaning of the word; learners scored 2 points if they indicated having seen the word before, however being unable to recall its meaning or if they provided a meaning which was inaccurate. A score of 3 was given when a learner gave a synonym or a translation of the phrasal verb. If they managed to use it in a sentence in accordance to its meaning, but with a syntactical error they were assigned 4 points. Five points were given to students who created semantically and syntactically accurate sentences. The pre-test included some distractor questions.

Self-report categories	Possible Scores	Meaning of scores
I. —————→	1	The word is not familiar at all.
II. —————→	2	The word is familiar but its meaning is not known.
III. —————→	3	A correct synonym or translation is given.
IV. —————→	4	The word is used with semantic appropriateness in a sentence.
V. —————→	5	The word is used with semantic appropriateness and grammatical accuracy in a sentence.

Table 2. Scoring categories: Meaning of scores (Paribakht and Wesche, 1996)

Data analysis

The analysis had two main parts: a qualitative analysis of pre- and post-test results and the task outcome and a qualitative analysis based on the phenomena observed in the texts produced by both conditions. Additionally, students opinions expressed in a post-task survey were analyzed.

Analysis of pre and post tests

Ten target words were included in the analysis. Analysis included two steps. First, the results of pre- and post- vocabulary tests on all 10 targeted phrasal verbs were compared between the collaborative and individual condition to examine the difference in the gain of vocabulary knowledge for each condition. Then, the mean scores on pre- and post-tests for each item were compared to determine whether there were any differences between the targeted phrasal verbs.

Analysis of general task outcome

In order to determine whether the task was successfully accomplished, the passages written in collaboration and individually were examined and compared in terms of their fluency, accuracy and similarity to the original dictogloss passage. Unlike previous studies, complexity was not taken into account. Since the goal of the task is to reconstruct the text as faithfully as possible, its complexity was mainly imposed by the input.

Following previous studies (Storch, 2005; Storch & Wiggsworth, 2007), fluency was measured by counting the total number of words in each text. To assess accuracy the texts were examined for grammatical and lexical errors including spelling errors. Accuracy values were measured using the ratio of errors to total number of words in each text.

Additionally, each text was compared with the original and its degree of similarity was evaluated and marked according to the number of ideas included. By comparing the number of ideas we determined how semantically close the produced texts were to the original passage.

An idea was usually equal to a sentence which conveyed a clear message. On some occasions a sentence expressed more than one idea. In the example shown below, the ideas are marked with numbers.

E.g. Florence works as a nurse (1).

When she starts work she clocks on (2) and when she finishes she clocks off (3).

Each text could be assigned a maximum of 22 points. (In the passage we used for the dictogloss 22 ideas were identified). If the idea was present, a point was assigned. If it was not as clear as in the text, conveyed with different lexis or morphology, half point was assigned; in those cases where the message was changed the text received no points.

Accuracy in producing the targeted phrasal verbs in the texts

Each text was analyzed in terms of accurately produced target verbs. The number of times each verb was produced correctly in the text in the collaborative group was compared with the results from the individual group.

III. RESULTS

3.1. Quantitative analysis

3.1.1. Results for targeted phrasal verbs

The first research question asked whether a collaborative dictogloss task would lead to greater gains of vocabulary learning than an individual task and whether there were differences between the targeted items. In order to answer this question, the results of the pre-tests and post-tests and the accuracy of producing the targeted phrasal verbs in the texts were analyzed. First, the results of the vocabulary tests of all 10 targeted phrasal verbs by the two groups were compared. To analyze learners' actual gain of knowledge the mean scores of VKS pre- and post-tests for each condition were calculated and compared. The descriptive statistics for the pre and post-tests for each group (collaborative and individual) are gathered in Table 3. Before proceeding with the results of comparison of the two groups, we would like to underline that the sample is small and as standard deviation values (Table 3) indicate, there might be noticeable individual differences between the learners. Although the results from the pre-tests point to a relative homogeneity of the group, in the post test results, however, scores among the students in the collaborative group were quite disparate. The high standard deviation indicates that there were important differences between the individual scores. In the post-tests one learner obtained a very high score (41 points), there were two high scores of more than 30 points (32 and 31) and some learners were assigned only 22 points.

GROUP	PRE-TEST				POST -TEST			
	M	SD	Min	Max	M	SD	Min	Max
COLLABORATIVE	15,1	2,53	14	21	28	5,65	22	41
INDIVIDUAL	16	0	16	16	25	2,45	23	28

Note, the total possible score was 5 (VKS level) x 10 (number of vocabulary items) = 50.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the pre and post-tests

As shown in Table 3, the collaborative group performed slightly worse on the pre-test (15,1) than the individual group (16) and slightly outperformed (28) the individual group (25) on the post-test. To observe the actual vocabulary gain the mean scores between the pre-test and post-test were compared. The vocabulary gains were greater in the collaborative group (+12,9) than in the individual group (+ 9).

However, the detected differences in vocabulary gain are small and may not be considered significant because of the small scale of the experiment.

In order to address the second part of our research question and illustrate the possible differences between the targeted phrasal verbs, the mean scores for each phrasal verb in the pre- and post-tests for both conditions were calculated, as shown in Table 4.

MEAN RESULTS FOR EACH WORD IN PRE- AND POST-TESTS IN THE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLABORTIVE GROUPS							
		INDIVIDUAL CONDITION			COLLABORTIVE CONDITION		
	TARGETED PHRASAL VERBS	PRE-TEST	POST- TEST		PRE-TEST	POST- TEST	
1.	clock on	1,25	4,25	+3	1,6	4,4	+3
2.	clock off	1,25	4,25	+3	1,4	4,4	+3
3.	bring forward	1,75	2	+0,25	1,7	2	+0,3
4.	settle for	1,5	2,25	+0,75	1,6	2,6	+1
5.	fit in	2	2,25	+0,25	2,5	3,1	+0,6
6.	press on	1,5	1,75	+0,25	1,6	1,8	+0,2
7.	hang out	3,75	3,75	+0	3	3,7	+0,7
8.	while away	1,5	1,75	+0,25	1,4	2,1	+0,7
9.	muck about	1	1,75	+0,75	1,1	1,8	+0,7
10.	latch on	1	1,5	+0,5	1,3	2,1	+0,8

Table 4. Mean scored for each phrasal verb in pre- and post-tests for Individual and Collaborative groups

As we can observe (Table 4), in the majority of cases there is a positive difference in the mean score for each word between the pre- and the post-test results for both conditions. This knowledge gains, however, are usually very little and present only a slight difference in favor of the collaborative condition. The differences between the pre-test and the post-test on a particular verb in the Individual group normally range from +0,25 to +0,75 point and in the collaborative condition from +0,2 to +1.

There are two exceptions. In the case of the phrasal verbs “clock on” and “clock off”, the vocabulary gain is, by far, greater and is estimated to be +3 in both groups: collaborative and individual. The second exception is observed in the individual group, where no knowledge gain has been observed in case of “hang out”.

In the bar chart (Chart. 1) the differences between the collaborative and the individual groups in production of the targeted phrasal verbs in the text are shown. In general, pairs are more accurate when producing the targeted phrasal verbs than individual students. If we focus on particular verbs and their accurate use in the text, depending on the verb, we may spot some differences between the individual and collaborative conditions.

Out of the eight verbs considered unknown on the pre-tests (they obtained less than 2 points in both groups), three (*latch on to*, *while away* and *muck about*) were not accurately reconstructed in neither group.

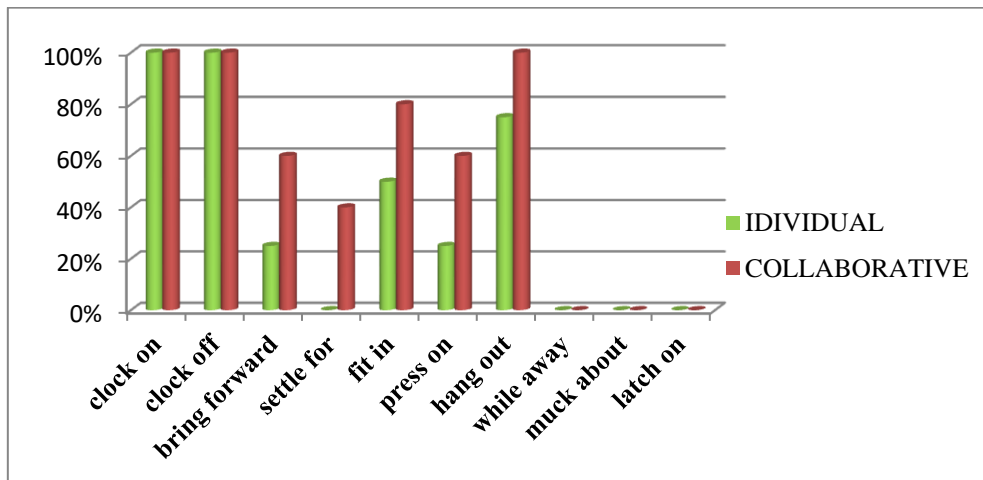


Chart 1. Accurate use of the ten targeted phrasal verbs in the text in the Collaborative and Individual groups

The other verbs considered unknown, which obtained between 1,25 and 1,75 points on the pre-test, varied in terms of the accuracy of their production in the text. “Press on” was used correctly in 3 out of 5 collaborative texts (75%) and in one of the four texts written by individual students (25%). “Bring forward” was accurately produced by three pairs (60%) and by one individual (25%). “Settle for” was not produced correctly by any member of the individual group and was accurately used by two out of five pairs (40%). The verbs: “clock on” and “clock off” although rated as unknown on the pre-test, were reconstructed correctly by all of the students (100%).

The verbs “hang out” and “fit in” according to the pre-test seemed familiar to the students. The first one appeared in 8 out of 9 texts (it was left out in the text written by individual 4) and in all of them it was used accurately. “Fit in” was not problematic, either – it was used correctly in the texts by 4 out of 5 pairs (80%) and 2 out of 4 individual students (50%).

3.1.2. Results for task outcome: accuracy, fluency and similarity

The second research question asked whether dictogloss task was equally effective for pairs and individuals regarding successful task completion. In order to answer this question, the texts from the individual and the collaborative groups were compared in terms of fluency, accuracy and similarity to the original passage.

We collected 11 texts – 7 written in pairs and four produced by individual students. In the collaborative group, two of the pairs (pair III and pair V) handed in two texts each. In case of

pair III the texts were similar and we only considered one of them. In the texts handed in by pair V some differences were observed. In the analysis we considered the text handled in first, assuming this was the one the dyad had agreed on, however, in the results section we mention some characteristics of the second text produced by pair V, we refer to it as the additional text. It is not however considered in the mean scores.

Fluency

In relation to fluency, there is a difference between collaborative and individual texts in favor of the former, as we may observe in table 5. Passages written in collaboration are longer (mean length of text 170 words) than the ones written individually (122,5 words).

The difference in text length seems considerable, as four out of five texts written by pairs are longer than any of the passages generated in the Individual group.

COLLABORATIVE GROUP		INDIVIDUAL GROUP	
PAIR I	186	INDIVIDUAL 1	142
PAIR II	174	INDIVIDUAL 2	129
PAIR III	178	INDIVIDUAL 3	123
PAIR IV	171	INDIVIDUAL 4	96
PAIR V	141		
PAIR V additional text	155		
Mean length of the written passage	170		122,5

Note The original passage had 189 words

Table 5. Total number of words in each text in the Individual and Collaborative groups

Within both groups there are considerable differences in length. In the collaborative condition the length ranged from 186 to 141 words, Pair I produced the longest text composed of 186 words and the text handed in by Pair V was the shortest (141 words). The additional text handed in by this last pair was 155 words long. In the individual group, text fluency ranged from 142 to 96 words.

Accuracy

In terms of accuracy, there also is a positive difference in favor of the collaborative condition, as may be observed in table 6. However, it is not as clear as in case of fluency. The collaborative texts seem to be somewhat more accurate (94% of accuracy) than the ones produced by individuals (91,25% of accuracy).

Collaborative group					Individual group					
	ERROR TYPE		ERRORS Total (%)	ACCURACY (%)		ERROR TYPE		ERRORS Total (%)	ACCURACY (%)	
PAIR I	Gram.	0	4 (2%)	98%	IND. 1	Gram.	3	7(5%)	95%	
	Lex.	4				Lex.	4			
PAIR II	Gram.	4	8 (4,5%)	95,5%	IND. 2	Gram.	8	11(8%)	92%	
	Lex.	4				Lex.	2			
PAIR III	Gram.	6	12(6,7%)	93,3%	IND. 3	Gram.	8	13(11%)	89%	
	Lex.	6				Gram.	4			
PAIR IV	Gram.	4	8(4,7%)	95,3%	IND. 4	Gram.	9	(11)11%	89%	
	Lex.	4				Lex.	3			
PAIR V	Gram.	7	13(11%)	89%					MEAN	91,25%
	Lex.	6								
			MEAN	94,2%						

Table 6. Text accuracy for Individual and Collaborative groups

In the collaborative group text accuracy ranges from 98% (Pair I) to 89% (Pair V). Once more there is a clear difference between these two pairs, whereas pairs II, III and IV have similar results. In terms of error type, usually learners committed a similar number of grammatical and lexical errors, with the exception of one pair, where no grammatical errors were detected (PAIR I).

In the individual group the accuracy ranges from 95 to 89%. In this condition, however, in the text produced by 3 out of 4 pairs, grammatical errors were more common than lexical, and accounted for more than half of all the errors detected in this group.

Similarity to the original passage

The original dictogloss passage contained 22 ideas. In the table (Table. 7) we may observe the number of ideas that were included in the texts written by each pair and by each learner in the individual group.

Collaborative group		Individual group	
PAIR I	21,5	INDIVIDUAL 1	12,5
PAIR II	20	INDIVIDUAL 2	13
PAIR III	18,5	INDIVIDUAL 3	15,5
PAIR IV	19,5	INDIVIDUAL 4	11,5
PAIR V	16	The average number of ideas in a text	13,1
The average number of ideas in a text	19,1		

Table 7. Number of ideas from the original passage in the collaborative and individual texts

The texts produced by pairs reflect more of the ideas from the original passage than those written by individual students. In the collaborative group a text contained on average 19 ideas from the original passage, whereas in the individual group only 13 ideas were present.

In the collaborative group, Pair I included the highest number of ideas (21,5), whereas pair V only mentioned 16 ideas from the original passage.

In the individual group, the text written by individual 3 presented the greatest similarity to the original (15,5) and individual 4 was the one to include the lowest number of ideas (11,5).

3.2. Qualitative analysis

If we have a closer qualitative look at the text we may see some interesting phenomena, which may not be expressed in numbers and can help us better understand our results. On the whole, after analyzing the texts produced in both groups comprehensively, we may say reconstruction problems appeared mainly when students came across an unknown lexical item, in their majority one of the targeted phrasal verbs. Commonly, these problems affected accuracy, fluency and made students incapable of reflecting some of the original ideas of the dictogloss passage.

In terms of accuracy, although in different proportion, grammatical and lexical errors appeared in both groups. Errors related to lexis usually referred to a phrasal verb or some other problematic lexis. Words like: *understaffed*, *cottage*, *extra-long shift* and *mediocrity*, were, on many occasions, missed out or used incorrectly. In many texts there were common spelling mistakes, e.g. **proffessional*, **imposible* and **particularlyly*. When it comes to grammatical errors, in their majority, they were related to syntax, however, there were some omissions of the third person *-s* or an incorrect use of articles.

There was a difference between the collaborative and individual groups concerning the type of errors they committed. The grammatical errors outnumbered the lexical errors in the individual group and in the collaborative group lexical errors were more common than the grammatical ones (see previous section: quantitative analysis). We assume that this high number of lexical errors in the collaborative group is a result of their urge to reconstruct the unknown phrasal verbs, thus errors related to these particular items accounted for the majority of all errors detected in this group. On many occasions, pairs ventured at writing down a word they did not know and committed an error. The individual group committed fewer errors related directly to the phrasal verbs as, frequently, they did not take the chance to write down the words they were uncertain off. Therefore, they were less exposed to the lexical errors

related to the targeted phrasal verbs, but without the verb they did not achieve to form syntactically correct sentences (e.g.1) or committed an error in its direct context (e.g. 2).

(1)**Not talk to her patients although she feels it's very important.* (INDIVIDUAL 2)

instead of

She finds it almost impossible to talk to patients although she feels it's very important.

or

(2)**Florence in the summer they mocked around scotish.* (INDIVIDUAL 1)

instead of

In the summer they mock about in their aunt's cottage.

We may assume that the unknown lexis might have been one of the reasons for the high number of grammatical errors in the individual group. Therefore, to certain extent, we may link the overall text accuracy to the accuracy of producing the targeted phrasal verbs, since they were the cause of the majority of lexical errors in the collaborative group and accounted for many of the syntactical errors in the individual group.

In reference to the accurate production of the targeted phrasal verbs, a more precise relation between verb form and error was observed; this is, depending on the phrasal verb, students committed errors more or less frequently and of different type. On the one hand, if the verb form was completely unknown (according to the pre-test results) to the learners (*latch on to, muck about, while away*) they had problems identifying it. These three phrasal verbs were not correctly reconstructed in any of the texts, regardless of the group. Usually students misspelled the word, like in: *willing, lash, mac, wailing*. On other occasions, they tried to adapt what they heard to their knowledge and instead of *whiling away her days off* wrote: *while in a way her day is off* (PAIR I) or *hangs out with her friends during her day off* (Individual 1) and instead of *He latched on to her – He launched on to her* (PAIR IV). In some texts, instead of the verb there was a gap in the sentence or the sentence which contained the verb was left out. Other students, however, opted for paraphrasing, e.g.

She goes to her aunt's cottage (PAIR II).

instead of

She mocks about in her aunt's cottage.

All of these strategies applied to determine the correct form of these three verbs were far more present in the collaborative group, since, as mentioned above, they were more willing to experiment with the completely unknown lexical items. Three pairs experiment with “muck about”, e.g., **mock about* (pair I/pair III) and **mack about* (Pair V). Three others tried to figure out the right form of “while away”, e.g. **wailing away the days off* (Pair II), **willing the way* (Pair III), *while in a way her day off* (Pair I). The negotiation on “latch on to” got pairs to write the following: **Lash on to them* (Pair II), **launch with them* (Pair III), **lashed on to them* (Pair I), **lunched on* (Pair IV).

On the other hand, if the phrasal verb considered unknown was composed of a verb, learners were familiar with, e.g., *press on* or *bring forward*, students were usually capable of hearing out the verb form and were more accurate. However, in those cases, they sometimes applied an incorrect preposition or committed a grammar mistake.

(1)**She is being pressed on her other duties* (PAIR IV)/

(2)*Then she *press on for her duties* (PAIR V)

instead of

She has to press on with her other duties.

and

(3)**She has to bring forward* (INDIVIDUAL 2).

instead of

She has to bring it forward.

In the first example (1), one of the two propositions which compose “press on with” is omitted; in the second example (2) the verb lacks third person –s and in the third sentence there is no direct object (3). In some cases, although the verb was easy to distinguish it was omitted.

Out of the group of verbs considered unknown, verbs “clock on” and “clock off” were reconstructed by every pair and every individual learner. There are a couple of possible explanations to this outcome. Firstly, students might have reproduced the verbs because they were very similar to one another, meant the opposite and their meaning was easy to guess out of context. Secondly, their position in the text – at the very beginning, where students are focused and have the time to write down, might have had some positive influence. Thirdly, as the teacher suggested, those two verbs had been seen in course content and might have been linked to the notion created during their presentation some weeks before.

The verbs, which were considered familiar in the pre-test (“fit in” and “hang out”) were produced correctly. Although students did not know how to define some of them or how to create a correct sentence using those verbs in the pre-test, when they heard the words in context, they were accurate in their reconstruction.

In terms of text fluency, there were differences between the collaborative and the individual groups (as shown in the previous section). We assume that this difference, bearing in mind what we have said is also related to the incapability of the individual students to produce the unknown lexis, especially the targeted phrasal verbs. In the individual group, many sentences containing challenging lexis were omitted or there were blank spaces in their close context. Although a gap was, on some occasion (especially in Pair IV and V), also present in a text written by the collaborative group, it was very rare to find a missing sentence in the texts produced by pairs.

This lack of sentences is directly related to the rate of semantic similarity to the original passage. The collaborative group wrote more sentences, thus reflected more ideas from the original passage (as shown in the previous section) and they did so with more precision. If we analyze their texts qualitatively, we may observe that the sentences written in pairs were usually complete, whereas in the individual group, unfinished clauses appeared instead of sentences: *Not talk to her patients* (Individual 2)/ *Free time to talk to the patients* (Individual 4). This practice was inexistent in the collaborative texts.

3.3. Students impressions on the dictogloss task

Students who took part in the experiment filled in the survey administered after the procedure was completed. All of them found the dictogloss task enjoyable. Twelve out of fourteen considered it easy to accomplish and only two suggested it was difficult. The majority (12 out of 14) agreed that carrying out the task was useful for English learning.

Among the positive sides of the task, three students acknowledged its effectiveness for vocabulary learning. Two found it useful for working on sentence and text structure (“you think about the words in a correct order”; “it helps you find the way to link words”). One student said the task made him consciously reflect on his spelling deficiencies.

However, when asked for suggestions, many learners pointed to some of the difficulties of the task. Among the once most commonly named we found the following: the quick pace of the lecture, the length of the passage and the difficulty to listen and write at the same time. One student criticized the lack of time between one lecture and another and one pointed out to the

spelling difficulties which appear while completing the task. One student argued that it would be difficult to accomplish in his own language.

It is worth pointing out, that collaboration may also have influence on students' attitude towards the task. As we observed our students carrying out the task, we noticed that in the collaborative group they enjoyed themselves – they laughed, negotiated what to write and encouraged one another to be persistent in the activity. In the individual group there was no dialogue. This hypothesis was partially confirmed by survey results. Each student was asked whether he/she worked individually or in a pair and those who worked individually admitted they would have preferred pair-work. On the other hand, only one person from the collaborative group suggested that he would not mind working on his own.

Therefore, it seems that students not only appreciate the dictogloss task but also find it useful for language learning. After being exposed to it, they also acknowledged that they prefer to carry it out in pairs than individually.

IV. SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the whole, the results show that working in pairs improves performance and task outcome in a dictogloss task, however considering our two research questions we would like to discuss some of our findings in the light of our aims and previous research.

In reference to the first question addressing the possible vocabulary gain, no significant difference between the collaborative and individual groups in favor of the collaborative condition was found in our settings. Although the investigation did prove that the dictogloss task might be conducive to vocabulary learning as learners in both conditions experienced a vocabulary knowledge gain. Our findings add to a growing body of literature on the acquisition of targeted L2 forms in form-focused tasks providing data from EFL settings. This small-scale research does not give proof in favor (or against) the collaborative condition, though. Therefore, it has not confirmed Kim's (2008) positive findings, but it stands in one line with studies carried out by Basterretxea and García Mayo (2013), Nasaji & Tian (2010) or Kukien and Vedder (2002).

In reference to the differences between the targeted phrasal verbs, it has been confirmed that according to the item the knowledge gain experienced by each learner may vary. As could have been predicted, the unknown verbs were usually more difficult to reconstruct, especially those which had a form students were unfamiliar with. Other general patterns were difficult to determine bearing in mind the limited number of targeted verbs.

However, in the case of the three unknown verbs that were not accurately reconstructed in any text (*latch on to*, *while away* and *muck about*) an interesting difference between the collaborative and the individual group in attitude towards the reconstruction of the text was observed. In the individual group, there were definitely more cases where the challenging verbs were omitted: there was either a gap in their place or the sentence containing them was left out. We may argue that since individual students did not risk producing the targeted words, they were less exposed to error. The collaborative group seems to be more open to experimenting with the new lexis. Those working in pairs tried out their hypothesis more often and on many occasions managed to write down a word quite close to the original. This particular finding might be considered one more empirical evidence for Swain's output theory, which considered trying out hypothesis in collaboration, one of the three main functions of output, to be true (2001).

In reference to this research question it is important to point out that the accurate production of the targeted verbs in the text did not have a direct translation to the acquisition of these

verbs. This tendency has also been observed in Nasaji & Tian (2010) who targeted the same lexical item.

In reference to the second research question, the results show that when learners carried out a dictogloss collaboratively they were more successful at completing the task than when they carried it out individually. Passages produced by pairs were longer, semantically closer to the original passage and contained more accurately produced phrasal verbs. Although the texts written in pairs were, on the whole, more accurate, the difference was too small to be considered. We may assume that the collaborative dialogue encouraged the exchange of ideas within pairs and helped students to convey the message of the original passage more effectively. Since they had more information, the texts produced were more fluent and more similar to the original, thus more successful than the texts written by individual students. These results strengthen the idea that collaborative tasks improve task performance (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Storch, 1999; 2005; Storch & Wiggelsworth) and their contribution lies in bringing new information on the influence of collaboration on general task outcome in a dictogloss task.

Bearing in mind the nature of the dictogloss task, which consists on reconstructing the text as faithfully as the original, we may argue that, in order to be successful in the task, pairs in the experiment exposed themselves to errors as they tried out their hypothesis of the unknown targeted phrasal verbs and failed. This particular attitude towards the task, mentioned previously, had influence not only on the production of verbs but on overall accuracy, fluency and semantic similarity to the original passage. The qualitative analysis of the texts prove that individuals did not risk producing the targeted words, omitted them or left out the sentence which embedded them; in consequence their texts were shorter, more accurate, but less similar to the original passage. Therefore, we may assume, it is the targeted structure, and more precisely the difference in students' attitudes towards its reconstruction in the individual and collaborative groups that produced the qualitative and quantitative difference in the general task outcome.

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to shed some light onto the possible differences in terms of task performance and vocabulary acquisition in a dictogloss task carried out collaboratively and individually in an EFL setting. Therefore, two research questions were formed. On the one hand, the study set out to provide additional empirical data to support collaborative versus individual work in vocabulary acquisition (English phrasal verbs) in a dictogloss task, considering that the existing studies on this particular task brought contradictory results and, with the exception of Kim (2008), focused on grammar. The possible differences among the targeted phrasal verbs were also examined. On the other hand, the investigation aimed at verifying whether a collaborative dictogloss task was performed more successfully than when carried out individually, since this issue has not been addressed in previous research.

The results show that in a dictogloss task pairs perform better than individual students, creating passages which are more accurate, fluent and more proximate to the original text. In terms of vocabulary acquisition, however, no significant evidence has been found in favor of the collaborative condition, thus the vocabulary gain in both groups was comparable.

Notwithstanding the relatively limited sample, this work offers valuable insights into students' attitudes towards form focused tasks, such as the dictogloss task. The results are encouraging and suggest students enjoyed the task and considered it useful for language learning.

This study has shortcomings that need to be acknowledged. Its main weakness was the limited size of our sample. Other complicating factors are L2 proficiency of the learners in the experiment. Although our students were rated as similar proficiency learners, considerable differences between individuals were observed (as shown in the results section). In future investigations a higher level of homogeneity would be recommendable in order to diminish proficiency level influence on the results. Another important drawback was the group dynamic of one of the pairs. Although our setting was considered suitable for collaborative work, this particular pair did not achieve to interact successfully. Thus, in the future it might be interesting to form pairs prior to the experiment to ensure successful cooperation.

Further studies should include a higher number of participants in both conditions. Besides, the number of targeted phrasal verbs should be raised in order to provide more information on the acquisition of this particular structure, since, as our study has shown, there are differences in the acquisition among the verbs we chose. It could be interesting to examine the effectiveness of form-focused task on the vocabulary knowledge gain in relation to vocabulary type or

initial vocabulary knowledge. Another issue, worth considering in future research on phrasal verbs acquisition is the way of measuring how familiar learners are with the targeted verbs. Our study has indicated that VKS might not be the best tool since it is difficult, even for native speakers, to determine the meaning of a phrasal verb without the context.

Moreover, our results concerning high-proficiency EFL students' attitudes towards the dictogloss task are promising and future research could verify our findings in a larger sample size or in other settings.

In reference to the pedagogical implications, our data suggest that the dictogloss task can be exploited in EFL classrooms with high proficiency learners, since it has been proven conducive to language learning and enjoyable for the learners. The study, however, seems to indicate that in future pedagogical practice with the dictogloss task it might be advisable to use structures or vocabulary items students have previously encountered in class. It might also be wise to work with shorter texts to make students focus more on form than on meaning. The issue that now demands our attention is how to maximize the benefits of collaborative interaction in the classroom.

ANNEXES

Appendix 1 Dictogloss text (adapted from *English Phrasal Verbs in Use*, 2004)

Florence works as a nurse. When she starts work she has to clock on and when she leaves she clocks off. If the machine shows that she has worked an extra long shift, then she is able to take time off at a later date. She was planning to take a holiday in July this year but has to bring it forward as July is going to be a particularly busy time for her hospital this year. Florence loves her work but the hospital is understaffed and she hates to always be pressed for time. She finds it almost impossible to fit in time to talk to the patients although she feels that is an important part of her job. She is a professional and doesn't settle for mediocrity. She can chat for a few minutes but then she has to press on with her other duties. In her free time Florence loves to hang out with her friends, whiling away their days off. In the summer they muck about at her aunt's cottage. Last year her husband latched on to them. It was so awkward having him around.

Appendix 2 Survey

Circle the correct option:

1. Did you carry out the activity individually or in pair?
2. Would you prefer to do it in a pair/individually?
3. Was it enjoyable? YES/NO
4. Was it difficult? YES/NO Why?

5. Do you find it is useful for language learning? YES/NO Why?

6. Do you have any suggestions? _____

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