

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS ON L2 DURING PAIR WORK

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Abstract

SLA researchers have spent considerable time investigating pair work in both first and second language education (Ellis, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 1994). However, in the context where this study was carried out, Saudi Arabia, little is known about pair work and language learning. In addition, while most of the research on L2 pair work has focused on the examination of the nature of pair work in relation to a particular factor, such as proficiency levels, task type, or social relationships, there is a lack of consideration about the influence of social relationships on the L2 production during pair work.

This study examined how social relationships influence on the quantity and quality of L2 in a regular English classroom. Thirty six college-level Saudi students were paired in three groups according to their proficiency levels: high-high, (H-H), high-low (H-L), and low-low (L-L) and performed three tasks (jigsaw, joint composition, and text editing) over three weeks. Three types of social relationships were observed to form during the dyads' interactions (collaborative, expert/novice, and dominant/passive).

Findings suggested links between the social relationships formed by the learners during pair work and the quantity and quality of the L2 produced in the pair work. Pairs forming collaborative and expert/novice relationships produced more interactions in the target language than pairs forming dominant/passive relationships. Pedagogical implications are discussed in language classrooms.