Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research, V18, N1, 2023

The Distribution of Interactional Space and Collaboration in EFL Task-Based Peer Interactions*

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the influence of task types, namely divergent and convergent tasks, on the interactional space of learners and the amount of collaboration in EFL adult learners' interactions naturally emerging from performing each type of task. To define interactional space, behavioural engagement measurement was adopted, and the total number of turns and words were quantified to define the distribution of learner talk in each task. Additionally, the categories of collaborative behaviours were quantified for both task types to illustrate their distribution in the tasks. The data of this study involve eleven hours of learner interactions collected from an EFL context where the learners voluntarily participated in a speaking club and completed eight tasks. The interactions were audio-recorded and used for the analysis of the influence of task types on learners' L2 production and the distribution of collaboration in each task. The results yield a difference in the amount of L2 production between tasks; for example, convergent tasks facilitate more L2 turns and more L2 words than divergent tasks although the mean length of utterance is higher in divergent tasks. Similarly, the distribution of collaborative behaviours is mostly higher in convergent tasks. The results are discussed in relation to both interactionist and sociocultural theories of L2 learning and some implications are also provided based on the results.

Keywords: convergent and divergent tasks, peer interaction, collaboration, task engagement

DOI: 10.29329/epasr.2023.525.1

Submitted:06 March 2021 **Accepted:** 18 October 2022 **Published:** 08 March 2023

* This study is part of the author's PhD thesis which was submitted to Hacettepe University, Turkey in 2018.

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Introduction

The theories of foreign/second language (L2) learning have different perspectives for a successful L2 learning. The interaction hypothesis, for example, emphasizes the importance of meaningful interaction for a successful L2 acquisition (Brown, 2014; Ellis, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2019). In L2 contexts, learners can only find opportunities to practise L2 in language classrooms. In these settings, though, it is the teacher who talks most and decides who can talk, when and about what (Walsh, 2006). To maximize the interaction between learners in L2 classrooms, Sato and Ballinger (2016) suggest using peer interaction activities as an ecological and effective tool since they create opportunities for everyone to speak and participate, and talking time for any student is dramatically expanded in peer interactions.

Peer interaction is different from teacher-learner interactions, and it is described as "any communicative activity carried out between learners, where there is minimal or no participation from the teacher" (Philp et al., 2014, p.3). Language tasks have been widely used for both triggering meaningful interaction among learners and also investigation of the types of tasks which can lead to more interaction. Ellis (2003; 2018) defines tasks as meaning-based language activities including a gap, and learners need to communicate with appropriate linguistic resources to achieve an outcome. Nunan (2004) states that there are many types of tasks as the number of people who have written on task-based language teaching (Duff, 1986; Long, 1990; Pica et al., 1993; Prabhu, 1987). For this study, Duff's (1986) proposal of convergent and divergent tasks has been favoured. Convergent tasks are coined from problem-solving tasks; and they are defined as tasks in which learners are required to converge on a single mutual correct answer (Tan Bee, 2003). On the other hand, divergent tasks resemble discussion tasks. These tasks encourage a range of possible responses and there is not a single correct answer in contrast to convergent tasks. Tan Bee (2003) also suggests that debates and opinion-exchange tasks may resemble divergent tasks.

From the interactionist perspectives, the researchers investigated the interactional modifications such as negotiation of meaning, in other words, outcomes of this kind of interaction, in different types of tasks. There is a substantial body of research suggesting that the learning outcome of peer interaction tasks may be related to the nature of the task (Ellis, 2008; Philp et al., 2014). Pica et al. (1993), for example, studied the impact on task type on interaction patterns by using jigsaw, information gap, problem-solving, decision-making, and opinion exchange activities. They found that jigsaw and information gap activities provoke the most beneficial interaction patterns because the first type requires learners to converge on a single outcome after sharing what they have in hand; and the second one requires one learner to elicit information from other learner who holds the information. Fotos (1994) found that more negotiation was triggered in a task which involved split information and required a closed outcome. Duff (1986) found that convergent tasks promoted more interactional

modifications than divergent outcome tasks. Gass et al. (2005) examined the incidence of negotiation of meaning, language-related episodes (LREs), and recasts in three different tasks, two of which required information exchange between participants and the last one in which information exchange was optional. The findings show that there are more occurrences of 'focus on form' in the required information exchange tasks.

The researchers from sociocultural perspectives, on the other hand, investigated which tasks lead to more collaboration between learners by analysing LREs. They state that learners pool their individual knowledge and resources with each other; and as a result, they are mostly able to solve each other's problems and co-construct new language knowledge (Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Donato, 1994; Swain, 2000). It is believed that the interaction emerging from the resolution of LREs will facilitate language learning. There is a considerable number of studies that investigated the task types by analysing LREs (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2007; Storch, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). They found that tasks with a closed outcome generated more language-related episodes. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) also state that collaboration can be promoted by using certain tasks in which students work towards a common goal and a single group product.

Although there are studies (e.g., Foster & Ohta, 2005; Sato & Viveros, 2016) from both interactionist and sociocultural perspectives to investigate the impact of different task types on learners' discourse, there is a scarce number of studies that bring together both paradigms. This study, therefore, attempted to unveil the interactional distribution of learner talk between convergent and divergent tasks, and then present the amount of collaboration in quantity in different tasks. Although LREs have been widely used to quantify learners' collaboration, the categorisation in author's previous study (Aksoy, 2018) has been adopted for this study. Although it is suggested that tasks facilitate more interaction between learners, Donato (2004) states that interaction does not necessarily lead to or mean collaboration (Storch, 2002). Therefore, the following two research questions were formulated accordingly:

1. Is there an influence of different task types on learners' L2 production?
2. What are the proportions of collaborative behaviours in divergent and convergent tasks?

Engagement in Different Tasks

Number of Turns

Duff (1986) earlier compared the number of turns during a problem-solving task, which she categorised as a convergent task, with a discussion task which was defined as a divergent task. She reported that there were significantly more turns generated during the convergent task than the divergent task. The results also showed that the total number of turns in problem-solving tasks nearly

doubled the turns distributed in discussion tasks. Following this study, Long (1990) hypothesised that closed tasks, which require learners to reach one single solution, would produce more interaction either in pair or group work and further claimed that during free conversation tasks such as open or divergent tasks, there was a high possibility of learners to show less engagement with the task, maybe even drop in case of a crisis. His hypotheses were supported by the learners' less engagement during the open nature tasks. Similarly, in divergent tasks, some learners dominated the interaction and allowed others to take less turns than theirs. In another study, Altay (2004) used task-based and topic-based activities and compared the talk of the learners. Task-based activities were explained to carry the same features as convergent tasks in another study of the author (Erten & Altay, 2009). Additionally, topic-based activities were regarded as divergent tasks. The author reported that during the task-based sessions, the learners produced higher number of turns in total as a group than topic-based sessions. Erten and Altay (2009) also compared task-based and topic-based activities in learner groups and quantified the total number of turns. Their results report that the number of turns is higher during the task-based activities. Finally, Gass et al. (2005) compared three different tasks, two of which had a required information exchange while the third had an optional information exchange task. The researchers concluded the tasks which had the required information exchange as in convergent tasks produced more interactional patterns than optional information exchange task which resembles that of divergent tasks.

Number of Words

Duff (1986) observed that there were shorter turns during convergent tasks and more immediate feedback for the previous speaker's utterance as well. Additionally, these turns mostly included simple turns, which were also found in Altay's (2004) study. Duff also provided that during divergent tasks, extended discourse could be observed. She concluded that convergent tasks resulted in more words in total and further explained that there were more words per turn during divergent tasks. Altay (2004) measured the turns by making a distinction between mono-syllable, short and long turns. The results in her study also showed that shorter turns were more frequent in task-based activities. Learners had much longer turns during the topic-based activities. She concluded that learners tended to produce more words in task-based activities than topic-based activities. In another study, Erten and Altay (2009) found similar results. The researchers provided that there were more turns taken during task-based activity than topic-based activity. Moreover, they observed that learners produced a large proportion of short turns during task-based activity while they produced a large proportion of long turns during topic-based activity. Fujii et al. (2016) also provided that closed outcome tasks such as convergent tasks could result in short lexical exchanges while open tasks such as divergent tasks might result in longer expressions of opinion.

Studies Reporting on Task Engagement

Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) proposed a phenomenon named as 'task engagement' to refer to an active involvement in a learning task. They suggested measuring engagement in terms of actual language output measures such as the number of words and turns, as it has been done in this study as well. Recently, multidimensional frameworks of task engagement have been proposed by the researchers (Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Svalberg, 2009, 2018), and much of the recent research has followed the multidimensional framework of task engagement. In the model proposed by Philp and Duchesne (2016), there are for example four sub-components of task engagement: behavioural, cognitive, social and emotional. The authors describe behavioural engagement, which is relevant to this study, as the amount of time learners spend during on-task or off-task, which can be measured through language output. They state that measures involving word counts (Bygate & Samuda, 2009) and turn counts (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000) help measuring behavioural engagement. Phung (2017), for example, examined the impact of task preference and engagement in L2 use in a US higher education context and found that the preferred tasks which learners found personally relevant in terms of topic and content familiarity led to more behavioural engagement. In another study (Qiu & Lo, 2017), more behavioural engagement was noted in tasks with familiar topics. The researchers stated that the learners produced significantly more words on tasks with familiar topics as well as showing a more positive response to those tasks.

Lambert et al. (2017) compared the benefit of learner-generated content (learners' actual lives and experiences) and teacher-generated content (fictitious ideas or events to create an environment for L2 use) and examined learners' engagement in both tasks. Their results showed that in learner-generated content tasks, learners invested more time in performance and showed more responsiveness. Lambert and Zhang (2019) also found that learner-generated content condition allowed Japanese learners of both English and Chinese to engage more in tasks than teacher-generated content condition.

Dao (2021) investigated the effect of task goal orientation such as convergent and divergent tasks on learner engagement in task performance. The results indicated that learners more cognitively, emotionally and socially engaged in convergent decision-making task than divergent opinion-exchange task. Qiu and Cheng (2021) also examined the effect of task types, opinion-exchange and storytelling tasks, on L2 oral production and learner engagement. Their results showed that learners spent more time and had more turn-taking in story-telling tasks than the other type of tasks.

Method

Participants

The oral production of 15 adult learners while performing eight language tasks was analysed for this study. The participants were attending the language school of a state university in Turkey. Their ages ranged between 18-20, and they were reported to have B1+ proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) by the school administration. They voluntarily participated in the study which was designed as a speaking club. Their participation or performances during these activities did not have any effect on their academic grades at the language school. The learners worked in groups and performed the language tasks orally.

Language Tasks

Two types of tasks; namely, convergent and divergent tasks were used to elicit oral data for the current study. The reason of choosing these tasks is that previous research has proven that closed (Long, 1990) or convergent (Duff, 1986) tasks create more opportunities for learners to co-construct meaning, and as a result, they collaborate more, which facilitates L2 development. To compare the influence of different task types, open (Long, 1990) or divergent (Duff, 1986) tasks were preferred as complimentary tasks to convergent tasks.

The tasks were either replicated from previous studies or designed by the researcher by considering the features of these tasks. During this process, the familiarity of the learners with the topics was ensured since previous research has suggested that more elaborate discourse is likely to be elicited by familiar topics (Li et al., 1995) and background knowledge such as topic familiarity facilitates performance on tasks (Leeser, 2007). There was not any attempt to elicit any linguistic outcome from the tasks. The oral interactions of learners while performing 8 tasks, four of which were convergent tasks and the remaining were divergent tasks, were used for the analysis (see Aksoy, 2018 for the tasks). Some of them are exemplified in Appendix A.

Procedure

The author carried out the study over an academic term, which allowed to collect 11 hours of peer interaction in total. After getting the required ethics committee approval for the implementation of the study, learners from the same language proficiency classes were invited to participate in the study. 15 learners consented to participate in order to practise their speaking in L2 after their regular classrooms. They were grouped into 3 peer groups by random assignment to minimize the effect of any interacting variables. One type of a language task was assigned to each learner group to complete as a group in each session. The learners attended the data collection sessions twice a week, and the whole data collection procedure lasted for two months. All of the tasks were assigned by the

researcher in L2(English) and the learners were asked to perform the tasks in English as well. In order not to interfere with the nature of peer interaction, the researcher did not participate in learners' interactions and acted as a non-participant observer to control the research context in terms of recording the interactions. There was not any time limit for the completion of tasks. Therefore, the duration of tasks differed among groups and across different tasks. The selected tasks were performed in an order below:

Table 1. Data collection procedure chart

Step 1: Unstructured divergent task1
Step 2: Unstructured divergent task2
Step 3: Unstructured convergent task1
Step 4: Unstructured convergent task2
Step 5: Structured divergent task1
Step 6: Structured divergent task2
Step 7: Structured convergent task1
Step 8: Structured convergent task2

There were two sets of tasks, which are unstructured and structured tasks. The data collection started with an unstructured divergent task to avoid any effect of the task type and to have a more naturally occurring interaction data and see the collaborative behaviours. The first four tasks were completed by the learners without any possible intervention by the researcher. That's why the first set of tasks were regarded as unstructured tasks.

The researcher used an intervention between the first set and the second set of tasks. The reason of naming this second set of tasks as structured tasks is because learners had some specific roles during their interactions. Dörnyei and Malderez (1997) informs that roles contribute to the productivity of the group because if learners are given the right role, they will become useful members of the team. Therefore, the author decided to assign some group roles to the learners to perform during their interactions during the second set of tasks.

The nature of the tasks might be a factor on the types of the roles, but there are some typical roles such as the leader, the organizer, the information-seeker, etc. (Dörnyei, 2007). These roles may emerge naturally among the members, or teachers can distribute the roles for everyone (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997). Dörnyei (2007) states that explicitly marked roles has the advantage of preparing learners to perform the roles effectively. For the intervention, some group roles such as facilitator, timekeeper, recorder, reporter, devil's advocate and checker were chosen and randomly assigned to the learners. The roles of timekeeper and facilitator were given to the same learner as both of the roles required managing the interactions of the group. The intervention session where learners practiced their roles were not included in the analysis. Only the last four tasks, while the learners performed these roles during their interactions were added to the analysis. It is noteworthy to mention here that structured tasks were performed by only two learner groups because the number of participants

unexpectedly decreased during the data collection process, which is also accepted as a limitation of the study. The oral interactions of learner groups were audio-recorded, and later transcribed in accordance with Jefferson's conventions (2004) for analysis by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Number of Words and Turns

To unveil the quantity of learners' engagement in different tasks, the number of words and the number of turns generated by the participants were counted. These measurements were previously used to understand learners' behavioural engagement or task engagement as well (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000; Kormos & Dörnyei, 2004). Firstly, adopting a sequential-production model (Sacks, Schlegloff & Jefferson, 1974), turn constructional units were calculated based on the transcriptions of the interactions. Similar to García Mayo and Azkarai's (2016) measurement of turns, the starting point of a turn was taken when a learner started to talk and finished when another student initiated a new utterance. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) suggested using mean length of turns alongside with number of turns measurements. In this study, the total number of words was counted and then divided by the total number of turns to understand mean turn lengths. To clarify the calculations of the turns, the extract 1 was excerpted from a divergent task session. In this extract, it is seen that there are 9 turns exchanged by two learners, ZUL and SIM, in total. Additionally, ZUL had 5 turns while SIM had 4 turns.

Extract 1. What do you think about online dating? (Unstructured Divergent Task 1, Group 3)

1	ZUL: I used wechat application and err I shake my phone and err my phones (1.0) found nearly err
2	SIM: people
3	ZUL: yes
4	SIM: in the peo- in the near people
5	ZUL: and use application
6	SIM: yes
7	ZUL: err and I meet (2.0)
8	SIM: one per[son
9	ZUL: [him yes

During the calculation of the number of turns, off-task talk where learners were talking something irrelevant to the task both in L1 and L2 was omitted. Only when the learners talked about the task either in L1 or L2, these turns were included in the calculations. Moreover, number of turns was further classified as target (TL) and non-target (NL). Target language (TL) turns involved the turns where learners were using English while non-target language (NL) turns consisted of the turns where learners were using their native language which was Turkish.

To examine the impact of task types on language production of the participants, the number of words was quantified as the unit of analysis. All parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverb, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, determiners and exclamations were included in the calculations. However, lexical tokens such as hesitation markers e.g., 'erm and err (or different representations)' were not included in the calculation of the number of words. However, the lexical token 'huh' (hı in Turkish) was included in the calculations when it signalled a clarification request. The confirmation token 'hu huh' (hı hı in Turkish) was also included in the calculations.

The following extract was excerpted to exemplify the quantification of the number of words for the whole dataset. Only target language words were counted for the quantification of the number of words. Following this, the mean length of TL turns was calculated in order to compare the effect of task types on the complexity of learners' production.

Extract 2. What do you think about online dating? (Unstructured Divergent Task 1, Group 2)

ARZ:	when we go same course but **(6 words)**
TUG:	hı? **(1 word)**
ARZ:	we me- we go we went to same course but err **(9 words)**
TUG:	in the a- **(2 words)**
ARZ:	we **(1 word)**
TUG:	in the Azerbaijan **(3 words)**
ARZ:	yes **(1 word)**
TUG:	hı **(1 word)**
ARZ:	and err we never meet **(4 words)**
TUG:	and you didn't know each other **(6 words)**
ARZ:	y- no **(1 word)**
	((head shakes))
TUG:	so it's a good thing **(5 words)**
ARZ:	yes **(1 word)**
TUG:	you to you **(3 words)**

Collaborative Behaviours

Collaborative behaviours were qualitatively defined with content analysis, and two broad categories of collaborative behaviours, namely language-related and task-related, emerged from the interactions. Language-related collaborative actions refer to the moments of the resolution of any language issues such as when learners struggled to find a word or provided corrections to group members' utterances. This kind of collaboration types also emerged in the resolution of any comprehension problems among learners. There are 8 different language related collaborative behaviours in the study. These are a)provision of the word/phrase, b)reconstruction of others' turn, c)request for clarification, d)comprehension check, e) summary of the others' turn, f) request for explanation, g)request for information, and h)provision of the L1 translation of the word/utterance. Task-related collaborative actions, however, refer to the task-related issues such as keeping group

members focused on task, simplification of the task and accomplishing the task in L2. They are a)pooling knowledge/ideas, b)encouragement for participation, c)task policing, d)simplification of the task, and e)language policing. A detailed description of these collaborative behaviours is available in author's previous study (Aksoy, 2018). For this study, the frequency of collaborative behaviours was summed, and the percentages were calculated for both convergent and divergent tasks to compare two types of tasks. The next section will present the results of the study.

Findings

Learners' Engagement During the Tasks

The total number of turns were counted for each group and for each task session (divergent vs. convergent and unstructured vs. structured) as described in the methodology section. This quantification allowed to measure the behavioural dimension of engagement and describe learner engagement by quantity (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000). Edstrom (2015), however, warns that counting the words may not provide a clear picture of participation or information about its quality and depth (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). However, it still gives an overview of the distribution of conversational space in each task. The following table presents the total number of turns for each task type along with the mean scores of target language turns per task. Since each task was performed by more than one learner group, i.e., 3 learner groups in unstructured tasks and 2 learner groups in structured tasks, mean scores of each task session were also calculated, and the findings were provided accordingly.

Table 2. Number of turns taken per session

Session types	Number of turns	Number of TL turns	Mean of TL turns per group	Mean of TL turns per TASK
Unstructured Divergent Task 1	1096	981	327	322.83
Unstructured Divergent Task 2	1074	956	318.7	
Unstructured Convergent Task 1	2602	2246	748.7	802
Unstructured Convergent Task 2	2775	2566	855.3	
Structured Divergent Task 1	1413	1197	598.5	459.75
Structured Divergent Task 2	781	642	321	
Structured Convergent Task 1	1196	936	468	473.5
Structured Convergent Task 2	1179	958	479	

Overall, table 2 shows that there is a difference in the total number of turns between divergent and convergent tasks. To start with, the total number of target language (TL) turns in the first and second unstructured divergent tasks are very close to each other. During the first unstructured divergent session, the learners exchanged a total of 981 TL turns with the mean value of 327 while

they exchanged 956 TL turns with the mean value of 318.7 per learner group. In terms of convergent tasks, the total number of TL turns during the unstructured convergent tasks doubles the total number of TL turns taken during the previous tasks. The learners had a total of 2246 TL turns with a mean value of 748.7 during the first unstructured convergent task while they had 2566 TL turns with a mean value of 855.3 per learner group in the second unstructured convergent task.

The scores of the structured tasks also shows that the number of TL turns taken during the convergent tasks are higher than the divergent tasks. For example, during the first structured divergent task, learners engaged in 1197 TL turns in total with a mean value of 598.5 while they had a total of 642 TL turns with the mean value of 321 during the second structured divergent task. Lastly, during the first structured convergent task session, learners exchanged a total of 936 TL turns with a mean value of 468 while in the second structured convergent task session, they engaged in 958 with a mean value of 479.

To see whether there is a task type effect on learners' engagement during the divergent and convergent tasks in terms of the total number of the TL turns, the overall mean values were further computed on a Microsoft Excel file. The results show that there is a task type effect on learners' engagement. For instance, the mean value of TL turns taken during the unstructured divergent tasks is 322.83 while it is 802 for the unstructured convergent tasks. In addition, the overall mean value of the TL turns for the structured divergent tasks is 459.75 which is relatively higher than the mean value of TL turns in unstructured divergent tasks. On the other hand, the overall mean value of the TL turns in structured convergent tasks is 473.5. Based on these results, it can be said that learners showed more behavioural engagement with the target language in convergent tasks compared to divergent tasks.

Learners' Production During the Tasks

The total number of words produced by the learners were also calculated, and table 3 summarizes the number of TL words produced during each task session.

Table 3. Number of words produced per session

Session types	Number of TL turns	Sum of TL words	Mean length of turns per group	Mean length of turns per task
Unstructured Divergent Task 1	981	5176	5.28	5.29
Unstructured Divergent Task 2	956	5065	5.30	
Unstructured Convergent Task 1	2246	8461	3.77	3.71
Unstructured Convergent Task 2	2566	9393	3.66	
Structured Divergent Task 1	1197	5272	4.40	4.65
Structured Divergent Task 2	642	3282	5.11	
Structured Convergent Task 1	936	4075	4.35	4.20
Structured Convergent Task 2	958	3876	4.04	

The results show that learners produced 5176 TL words during the first unstructured divergent task session with a mean length of turn value of 5.28. On the other hand, there were 5065 TL words produced in the second unstructured divergent task session a mean length of turn value of 5.30 per group. The mean values of interactional measurement indicate that the complexity of learners' language production is similar to each other in those tasks. During the unstructured convergent tasks, there is an increase in the number of TL words produced by the learners. In the first unstructured convergent task session, the learners produced 8461 TL words with a mean length of turn value of 3.77 while they produced 9393 TL words during the second unstructured convergent task session a mean length of turn value of 3.66 per group. The mean difference between first and second unstructured convergent task session is also very close to each other.

The number of TL words that learners produced during the structured task sessions was also quantified to see whether there was a change in the mean length of turns in those tasks. The results show that during the first structured divergent tasks, the learners produced 5272 TL words with a mean length of turn value of 4.40 per group. On the other hand, there were 3282 TL words produced with a mean length of turn value of 5.11 per group. During the structured convergent tasks, it is observed that learners produced 4075 TL words with a mean length of turn value of 4.35. On the other hand, during the second structured convergent task session, learners produced 3876 TL words with a mean length of turn value of 4.04 per group.

In addition to the quantifications of the total number of TL words, the mean length of turn values was calculated to provide more convincing evidence for the influence of task types on the complexity of learners' production. The mean length of turn scores suggest that learners produced longer turns in divergent tasks than convergent tasks. In this regard, the overall mean length of turn value for two unstructured divergent tasks was calculated as 5.29. On the other hand, the overall mean length of turn value for two unstructured convergent tasks was calculated as 3.71. The same measurement was also conducted for the structured tasks as well. The overall mean length of turn value of two structured divergent tasks was calculated to be 4.65. On the other hand, the overall mean length of turn value during structured convergent tasks was calculated to be 4.40. There is yet a slight difference between convergent and divergent tasks in structured contexts as well.

The Frequency of Collaborative Behaviours Between Tasks

To see the impact of task types on learner's collaboration, the frequency of collaborative behaviours was quantified on Microsoft Excel file and the joint distribution of collaborative behaviours is presented in table 4 below.

Table 4. The joint distribution of collaborative behaviours between tasks

	DIVERGENT				CONVERGENT					
	UNST	ST	TOTAL		UNST	ST	TOTAL		OVERALL	
	f	*f*	*f*	%	*f*	*f*	*f*	%	*f*	%
Language-related C.	191	123	314	43	276	140	416	57	730	100
Task-related C.	34	39	73	63	32	11	43	37	116	100
TOTAL	225	162	387	45.74	308	151	459	54.26	846	100

The frequency of both language- related and task-related collaborative behaviours in convergent tasks is higher (f= 459), representing 54.26% of overall collaborative behaviours than divergent tasks (f=387). In terms of the categories of collaborative behaviours, the frequency of language-related collaborative behaviours is also higher in convergent tasks (f=416) which accounts for 57% of overall distribution of the language-related collaborative behaviours. However, the distribution of task-related collaborative behaviours is higher in divergent tasks (f=73), representing 63% of the overall distribution than convergent tasks (f=43) which accounts for 43% of the overall task-related collaborative behaviours. These findings suggest that there is a task type effect on learner's use of collaborative behaviours. However, these results should be interpreted carefully as there was an intervention of assigning group roles before the second set of language tasks.

Having presented the findings, the next section will discuss the results with relevant literature and present a conclusion with some implications for language learning.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to show the distribution of interactional space and collaboration in adult EFL learners' interactions while performing convergent and divergent in unstructured and structured conditions. A quantitative analysis was carried out to investigate learners' engagement in the tasks and the complexity of their language production. The results may give an overall representation of conversational distribution in each task type; yet, word count may not provide a clear picture of learners' participation and its depth and quality. Collaborative behaviours previously defined in author's previous studies were also counted to see whether engagement would lead to observing more collaborative behaviours. The results will be discussed under separate subtopics as follows:

Total Number of Turns

The results can be summarised as the learners had more turns during convergent tasks compared to divergent tasks, and this may suggest more learner engagement in convergent tasks. However, the mean length of turn scores in convergent tasks was lower than in divergent tasks. This

can be explained as the learners produced shorter turns such as one-word turns or more insert expansions in convergent tasks. On the other hand, the higher mean length of turn scores in divergent tasks suggest the learners produced more extended turns in this type of tasks. The number of turns taken especially in unstructured tasks which resulted in a naturally occurring interaction present similar results to earlier studies (Duff, 1986; Fotos, 1994; Long, 1990; Gass et al., 2005; Pica et al., 1993). These results can be explained by the inherent nature of the tasks (Duff, 1986; Gillies, 2006). For example, as convergent tasks require learners to produce one single outcome in the end, more shorter exchanges between learners were observed. Whereas, divergent tasks carry the same features as discussion tasks and learners can only present their ideas about the topic the task in extended turns without expecting any confirmation or counter argument from other participants. Therefore, the conversational unfolding of divergent tasks may follow an initiation, response, feedback (IRF) sequence without any elaborations on the current speakers' contributions. These results are congruent with what Erten and Altay (2009) stated in their paper. The authors suggested that tasks which require learners to achieve an outcome such as convergent tasks lead to a type of interaction that resembles everyday communication. They further stated that long turns are less frequent than shorter turns in everyday communication because it is much more important to convey meaning clearly rather than producing linguistically longer and complex sentences. The results of this study also support the findings of Altay's (2004) study in which the author reported that during the task-based sessions, the learners produced higher number of turns in total as a group than topic-based sessions which were regarded as divergent tasks. These findings also support what Dao (2021) recently reported that tasks with convergent goal orientation led to more learner engagement than divergent task orientation. Similarly, Qiu and Cheng (2021) stated that opinion-exchange tasks such as divergent tasks elicited less learner engagement than story-telling tasks.

The assignment of group roles could have allowed learners to show similar engagement in structured divergent and convergent tasks. An interesting result is to see that learners had more turns in the structured divergent tasks than the unstructured divergent tasks although these tasks shared similar features with one another. The reason of observing such a difference can be attributed to the nature of roles because the roles define how the work will be done (Cohen, 1994; Cohen & Lotan, 2014). During the structured tasks, each learner was given a role and they had to practise his or her role during their interactions. Cohen and Lotan (2014) state that unstructured grouping may lead to the dominance of some students and non-participation of others. For example, as the non-participant observer, the researcher realised that some learners dominated the discussions. During the transcription process of the data, it was seen that two learners had barely turns during the first unstructured divergent tasks. Although the learners were chosen from the same proficiency level, one of these learners particularly had long inserted pauses and many hesitation markers in his formulations of L2, which may be regarded a lower proficiency compared to other participants of the

learner group. Another learner also was not eager to participate much as she refused to take turns and frequently claimed that she made a mistake in her use of L2. Another reason for the limited participation of these learners can be explained by social interdependence theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). As the participants came from different classrooms, they were randomly assigned to learner groups and they had to work with other learners they were unfamiliar. This may have avoided to form a positive relationship in their learner groups; and consequently, they did not participate in the following data collection sessions.

Phung (2017) and Qiu and Lo (2017) reported that preferred tasks or tasks with familiar topics allowed learners to show more behavioural engagement in those tasks. Although the task design of both unstructured divergent and structured tasks was similar to each other, the learners may have found the structured tasks more familiar to themselves, which in turn elicited more turns in structured tasks. These results suggest that even though task design can be a determining factor in task engagement, topic can also have an impact on learner's engagement (Li et al., 1995).

Learner-generated content has also been reported to an increase in learner's performance and engagement compared to teacher-generated content (Lambert et al., 2017; Lambert & Zhang, 2019). In addition to task design and topic, the tasks which allowed more learner-generated content may have caused a higher task engagement in convergent tasks. This can be also observed in the tasks with the same task design even though no group roles were assigned to the learners.

Total Number of Words

The results suggest that there is a task type effect on learners' production of target language words. Learners seemed to produce more words in convergent tasks than divergent tasks. The results also indicated that the mean length of turns was higher in divergent tasks than both of the convergent tasks. However, the mean difference between unstructured divergent and unstructured convergent tasks was observed to be higher than the mean difference between structured divergent and structured convergent tasks. Overall, these findings suggest that learners produced more turns and more words during convergent tasks; but the mean length of turns observed in convergent tasks was really small. This suggested that learners produced shorter turns such as one-word turns in convergent tasks, which provides similar results to Duff's study (1986). On the other hand, the results suggest learners produced extended turns in divergent tasks due to the fact that the mean length of utterance was bigger in divergent tasks.

Structuring was also observed to have an effect on the total number of words. The mean length of turn was smaller in structured divergent tasks. Assigning group roles might have caused the learners to engage in more like real conversations, leading to having much shorter turns during structured divergent tasks as of native speakers. Brown and Yule (1983 cited in Altay, 2004) stated that L1 speakers tended to produce short turns and chunks of language in their interactions even if

they gave an academic or formal speech. Unstructured convergent tasks seemed to resemble the features of L1 speakers' interaction more compared to the structured convergent tasks during which learners tended to produce more words per turn. The unstructured convergent tasks might have been interpreted as real-life tasks defined by Nunan (1989), and therefore, learners tended to have more L1 similar interaction. On the other hand, assigning roles might have created an academic atmosphere during the convergent tasks. Learners seemed to have longer turns during the structured convergent tasks than unstructured convergent tasks. Additionally, there was not an intention to search for the overlaps during the interactions, but it was observed that learners tended to have more overlaps during the convergent tasks. However, they waited for other speakers to finish turns in order to initiate a turn in divergent tasks.

The Effect of Task Types on Collaborative Behaviours

The results of the study suggest there is a task type effect on the quantity of learners' use of collaborative behaviours. The overall distribution of collaborative behaviours is more frequently observed in convergent tasks. In terms of the categories of collaborative behaviours, language-related collaborative behaviours are more frequently observed in convergent tasks whereas task-related collaborative behaviours are more frequently observed in divergent tasks. As Donato (2004) states that interaction does not necessarily lead to or mean collaboration (Storch, 2002), this study yielded results to show that the amount of interaction in terms of number of turns and words does not guarantee the emergence of collaborative behaviours.

These results present similar results to previous studies that investigated convergent tasks with a closed outcome (Duff, 1986; Erten & Altay; 2009; Fotos, 1994; Gillies, 2004; Gillies; 2006; Long; 1990). Similar to the studies that analysed LREs, it was found that tasks with a closed outcome generated more LREs (Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2007; Storch, 2001). As Altay (2004) earlier stated that tasks with a required outcome lead to more everyday communication, it is not surprising to observe more language-related collaborative behaviours since these helped resolve any comprehension problems or any language issues.

The reason of observing more task-related collaborative behaviours in divergent tasks can be explained by both the nature of the tasks and the assignment of group roles to the learners to perform during their interactions. It is highly possible that the learners would engage in off-task talk in divergent tasks as there was not any requirement to produce an outcome while performing these tasks. Still, the learners can have used task-related collaborative behaviours, for example, to keep their partners on task during their conversations. Aslan also (2015) observed that structured group work generated more collaborative behaviours and group performance than unstructured group work. In addition, she found that the outcomes of structured group work yielded better results in terms of learners' vocabulary development, written products. Gillies (2003) also states that learners benefit

from working together only when groups are structured so that learners create a sense of group identification and psychological interdependence since the social dynamics of peers in groups or pair interactions greatly affect learners' ability to profit from each other (Sato & Ballinger, 2016). This in turn reduces the free-loading effect (Gillies, 2003) as well.

This study is not without any limitations. As earlier stated in the method section, the structured tasks were performed by two learner groups. Although the mean scores of both total number of words and turns were calculated, the numbers may not represent each learner's engagement in the tasks. Although the learners were chosen from the same language proficiency classrooms, some learners were observed to possess a higher proficiency level than their partners. Finally, some of the learners met their partners and worked together for the first time in the study. This may have affected their actual performances during the sessions.

Implications and Suggestions for Further Research

Engagement with language (Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Svalberg, 2009, 2018) or task engagement (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000) has gained interest from researchers who conduct research on language tasks. The findings of this study can add to their studies in terms of which kind of tasks trigger more learner engagement. The results can also inform language teachers, task designers about types of tasks to facilitate more engagement which in turn can lead to a more successful language learning experience. In a broader context, policy makers can take actions based on the results such as integrating and implementing task-based language teaching into language education programmes. Not only adult learners as in this study, but also young learners can benefit from the implementation of such approaches in their language learning process. As the results of the study may suggest, using tasks will help learners more actively engage with language. This is especially important for foreign language contexts, such as the current research setting, where learners have no or limited opportunities to actively use or practise the foreign language.

Although the quantitative results can present an overview of the distribution of interactional space and collaborative behaviours, a qualitative analysis into learners' interactions can provide more robust insights to see the engagement of learners with the tasks. The pursuit of a language focus such as vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation, etc. can also be added to see the impact of different task types. The study can be replicated with younger learners or learners from different language proficiency levels to unveil possible differences. The same study can also be carried out in real classrooms by the classroom teachers as the research context may have had an impact on the results.

Acknowledgement

This study is part of the author's PhD thesis which was submitted to Hacettepe University, Turkey in 2018. I would like to thank my supervisor late Prof. Dr. İsmail Hakkı ERTEN, whose

sudden death deeply saddened in 2019, for his endless encouragement and guidance. I also would like to thank The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) for granting me scholarship (2219- International Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program for Turkish Citizens) to pursue my postdoc studies at Universidad del Pais Vasco. Finally, I owe many thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable comments on the manuscript and the editorial team for their guidance. All remaining errors are my own.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest.

Funding Details

This paper has been completed and submitted during author's post-doc studies supported by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK)-2219 International Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program for Turkish Citizens (Grant Number: 1059B192000036).

Credit Author Statement

The author confirms that she had all responsibilities for the following: conceptualization of the study and design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the findings, and preparation of the manuscript.

Ethical Statement

Ethics committee approval has been obtained from the Hacettepe University ethics committee of scientific research with the decision numbered No: 35853172/438-2194 on 13.07.2015.

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Appendix A: Examples of language tasks used in the study

Unstructured Divergent Task 1	What do you think about online dating? - Have you ever met someone from online websites? - Do you think it is a good idea to meet someone from online websites? - Do you think you may fall in love with someone that you have never met in person? - Are there any disadvantages? What may be disadvantages? - Will you continue your relationship? Will you marry in the end?
Unstructured Convergent Task 2	You are from the same student club. You want to go on a holiday together for the weekend. Unfortunately, you have a limited budget as most of the students do. So, as a group of friends, you should decide on the destination you would go. You might choose to go to a five-star hotel with all-inclusive option, but it is not possible to see around for instance the historical places or museums and so on. You might choose to go to a boutique hotel, but it only covers breakfast. You may see different places and so on. You might choose to go on a camping, but you have to stay in a tent in the nature.
Structured Divergent Task 2	What is the best age for marriage?
Structured Convergent Task 1	The craziest things each university students should do. - You will decide 5 of them and rank according to the more craziest one to the less craziest one.