

## **Title page**

**Title of the manuscript:** Young learners' attitudes towards oral peer interaction and interactional feedback: insights from a pedagogical intervention in the EFL classroom

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## **Young learners' attitudes towards oral peer interaction and interactional feedback: insights from a pedagogical intervention in the EFL classroom**

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### **Abstract (English)**

The present study aimed at exploring the effect of a task-supported peer interaction teaching intervention on the young EFL learners' attitudes towards peer interaction and interactional feedback. More specifically, we explored the learners' perceptions of an 8-week-long pedagogical intervention involving different types of pre-task instruction and oral peer-interaction tasks. A questionnaire with Likert-scale statements and closed and open questions was administered to 90 9-10-year-old Catalan/Spanish bilingual EFL learners, who were divided into four intervention groups. Each group received either interactional strategy instruction, grammar instruction, both interactional strategy and grammar instruction or no instruction during the first part of a weekly intervention session and all groups participated in procedural repetition of peer interaction tasks during the second part of the same sessions. Findings show that children already had positive attitudes towards peer interaction and the provision of interactional feedback at the onset of the study. The different types of intervention favoured the children's awareness of the potential language learning benefits of peer interaction to different extents and made them reflect on their weak communicative abilities in the FL.

**Key words:** young learners, EFL, peer interaction, attitudes, pedagogical intervention.

### **Abstract (Catalan)**

Aquest estudi té com a objectiu explorar l'efecte d'una intervenció docent amb tasques d'interacció entre iguals en les actituds d'infants aprenents d'anglès com a llengua estrangera envers la interacció entre iguals i la retroalimentació interaccional. Més concretament, s'explora la reacció dels aprenents davant d'una intervenció pedagògica de vuit setmanes que implica instrucció prèvia a la tasca i tasques orals d'interacció entre iguals. Es va administrar un qüestionari amb escala Likert i preguntes tancades i obertes a 90 joves aprenents d'anglès com a llengua estrangera d'entre 9 i 10 anys dividits en quatre grups d'intervenció. Cada grup d'intervenció va rebre o bé instrucció d'estratègia interaccional, instrucció de gramàtica, instrucció d'estratègia interaccional i de gramàtica o cap tipus d'instrucció durant la primera part de la sessió setmanal i tots ells van dur a terme la repetició procedimental de les tasques d'interacció entre iguals durant la segona part de la seva sessió setmanal. Els resultats mostren que els infants ja tenien actituds positives envers la interacció en anglès, així com en relació a la retroalimentació interaccional al començament de l'estudi. La intervenció va afavorir la seva consciència dels beneficis potencials de les tasques d'interacció entre iguals en l'aprenentatge de l'anglès en funció del grup d'intervenció i va fer-los conscients de les seves dificultats comunicatives en la llengua estrangera.

**Key words:** aprenents joves, anglès com a llengua estrangera, interacció entre iguals, actituds, intervenció pedagògica.

## Plain Language Summary

Knowing how young learners feel and perceive classroom activities is crucial to engage them and enhance their foreign language learning process. Perceptions and attitudes towards peer interaction and the provision of interactional feedback were explored in the present study. Peer interaction tasks were designed and implemented in 4<sup>th</sup> grade EFL weekly sessions in four groups of Catalan/Spanish bilingual children. In each group, a different teaching intervention was used before task participation each week. A group received grammar instruction, another group received interactional strategy instruction, a third group received both grammar and interactional instruction and the fourth group did not receive any instruction. Children's attitudes were gathered through a questionnaire including statements and questions. Findings show that children already had positive attitudes towards peer interaction and the provision of interactional feedback before the teaching intervention started. The different types of intervention favoured the children's awareness of the language learning benefits of peer interaction to different extents and made them reflect on their weak communicative abilities in the FL.

### 1. Introduction

Attitudes entertained by young learners (YLS) towards English as a foreign language (EFL) learning in school have been shown to vary over time on account of children's cognitive, affective and linguistic development and to be mediated by factors such as the amount of instruction received, the age of the learners and contextual variables like the class size, the teacher and the type of activities and tasks provided in class (Mihaljevic Djigunovic & Vilke, 2000; Mihaljevic Djigunovic & Letica Krevelj, 2009; Muñoz, 2017; Nikolov, 2002; Tragant & Muñoz, 2000). Many YLS start their EFL learning journey with positive attitudes towards the classroom experience and the teacher, which strengthen as they accumulate hours of instruction (Tragant & Muñoz, 2000). Yet, some authors have reported that towards the end of primary education fewer children consider English their favourite subject (Mihaljević Djigunovic & Letica Krevelj, 2009). Changes seem to be brought about by the shift in children's perceptions of the nature of the English classes, from exciting and fun to more literacy oriented (Muñoz, 2017), and also of themselves as foreign language (FL) learners, from an overly favourable to a more realistic outlook on their language learning abilities (Enever, 2011). Hence, primary education and particularly its middle years (roughly between 8 and 10 years old) represent a turning point in the shaping of YLS' attitudes towards FL learning.

Against this background, oral peer interaction (i.e. interaction between foreign language learners) has gained empirical support in favour of its implementation with YLS on account of its psycholinguistic benefits for FL instructed settings, namely opportunities for learners to receive comprehensible input, produce modified output, and attend to linguistic form as they try to make themselves understood and understand their interlocutor (Mackey, 2007; Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014; Sato & Ballinger, 2016). YLS have been shown to be able to engage in peer interaction tasks and deploy a range of negotiation of meaning strategies provided they have reached a certain proficiency threshold (García-Mayo, 2018; Lázaro-Ibarrola &

Azpilicueta-Martínez, 2015; Pladevall-Ballester & Vraciu, 2020). They have also been shown to be able to work out linguistic problems and provide each other with corrective feedback during peer interaction as a result of explicit strategy instruction (Sato & Ballinger, 2012). The feedback which occurs during interaction is referred to as interactional feedback and differs from other types of corrective feedback in that its main function is to support communication and overcome communicative breakdowns (Lyster & Mori, 2006; Mackey & Oliver, 2002).

Yet, there is little insight into YLs' attitudes towards oral peer interaction and interactional feedback as a class activity. In FL settings, these attitudes have been explored mostly with older or adult learners (Khezlou, 2023; Kim, 2020) and from the perspective of how they impact learners' interactional behaviour (Baralt et al., 2016; Sato, 2017). The empirical evidence we have to date points to a positive relationship between affective variables such as willingness to communicate (WTC) (i.e. the learners' readiness to use the L2 at a particular time with a specific person or persons (MacIntyre et al., 1998)) and situation-specific motivation (i.e. attitude towards the English course, the task and learners' linguistic self-confidence) and the amount of speech produced during peer interaction (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000). Research also reveals that learners' positive orientation towards the task, the interlocutor and participation in the task affects the extent to which they focus on language forms in peer interaction (Baralt et al., 2016), a behaviour conducive to L2 learning. There is considerably less evidence on how attitudes (i.e., understood as a dimension of the L2 motivational system (see Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) for a discussion) towards oral peer interaction and interactional feedback can be altered through interactional strategy instruction, even less so with YLs in primary education (but see Sato and Dussuel Lam (2021)). The present study aims to fill this gap by exploring YLs' attitudes towards oral peer interaction and interactional feedback as a result of a peer interaction intervention in primary education. This empirical evidence is necessary to further our understanding of how peer interaction fosters L2 learning in the classroom and inform FL curriculum and syllabus design for primary education.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 The affective dimension of peer interaction**

Recent research exploring how L2 learning takes place in peer interaction has uncovered an interconnectedness between learners' attitudes towards interaction and their interactional behaviour which seems to play a key role in maximising language learning opportunities through peer interaction. In his affective-social-cognitive model of L2 learning in peer interaction, Sato (2017) operationalised learners' affective state in interaction as their interaction mindset (IM), a dynamic construct which refers to learners' "disposition toward the task and/or an interlocutor prior to and/or during the interaction" (p. 255). Working with 53 L1 Spanish EFL learners (aged 15-16) who received a 4-week intervention involving peer interaction activities focused on the simple past, Sato (2017) uncovered a series of potentially causal links between learners' IM and their interactional behaviour. More specifically, the learners who exhibited a collaborative IM prior to the interaction tended to provide corrective feedback and engage in language-related collaboration during the interaction more than the learners with a non-collaborative mindset. These interactional behaviours were conducive to FL learning, as evidenced by the higher scores obtained by the collaborative-minded learners in the English past tense development tests. It seems that learners' IM mediates the

effectiveness of peer interaction for FL learning. Nevertheless, a limitation of the study was that data on learners' IM was collected only before the peer interaction intervention, without the possibility to explore potential changes following the intervention.

Sato and McDonough (2020) further explored the relationship between IM and provision of EFL peer feedback. Based on data elicited from one hundred and two university-level L1 Spanish learners of EFL, the authors unpacked the construct of IM into five components, namely peer interaction, peer collaboration, form orientation, and provision and reception of feedback. Only the form orientation and provision of feedback factors were predictive of learners' noticing errors in peer EFL production - those learners who believed in the importance of paying attention to language form and that providing feedback is efficient and socially appropriate tended to notice peer errors more than others. This is indicative of the complex relationship between IM, interactional behaviour and, ultimately, FL learning.

Research on YL affect towards tasks that involve oral peer interaction and interactional feedback in FL settings is extremely scarce and mostly focused on collaborative tasks which combine written and oral modalities with children in the last year of primary education (i.e. 11-12 years old) (Azkarai & Kopinska, 2020; Calzada & García Mayo, 2020; Calzada & Azkarai, 2024). Unlike the studies on IM reviewed above which involved adult learners, YL research has tapped into affective variables both before and after peer interaction. Drawing on a corpus of oral interactions elicited from 62 L1 Spanish YLs of EFL carrying out a dictogloss task in pairs, Azkarai and Kopinska (2020) found that all the participants showed a positive disposition towards the task before doing it, which increased significantly after performing the task. Unlike findings from adult learners in Baralt et al. (2016), learner affect towards the task did not correlate with children's focus on form during the task but was mediated by the interactional patterns between the peers in the dyads - the facilitative/cooperative pattern (i.e. dyads with a moderate level of equality and mid-low mutuality<sup>1</sup> between the peers) was the one that showed the highest level of task motivation before and after the task, whereas the dominant/passive pattern (i.e. dyads with low mutuality and equality between the peers) displayed the opposite trend. This indicates that YL affect towards collaboration through peer interaction is co-constructed between the peers. Working with a similar EFL learner population and a picture-story collaborative writing task, Calzada and Azkarai (2024) further explored the relationship between learner psychology and interactional behaviour. The two variables in focus were children's IM and their WTC, which were tapped into by means of a questionnaire administered prior to their collaboration in the writing task. Despite the generally positive attitudes towards the task, IM and WTC did not explain the children's L1 and L2 use during peer interaction. The proficiency level was a better predictor for the children's L1 use - the higher the proficiency, the less reliance on the L1 during peer interaction. Previous research has indeed observed that young learners' proficiency level and their proficiency pairing (whether matched or mixed) might have an influence on their interaction patterns and language learning opportunities (Choi & Iwashita, 2016; García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2019). Therefore, it seems that in the case of YLs, the relationship between learner-related psychological variables and interactional behaviour is less straightforward than with adult learners, and situational factors such as the type of task, the friendship between the peers, the perceived self and interlocutor linguistic competence and/or their proficiency level may play a

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<sup>1</sup> Mutuality between the members of a dyad refers to "the level of engagement with each other's contributions" and equality refers to "the level of contribution and control over the task" (Storch & Aldosari, 2013, p. 37).

role and need to be further explored. More recently, researchers have attempted to gauge the impact of interactional strategy instruction on the affective variables in peer interaction. Some relevant studies in this respect are summarised in the next section.

## **2.2 Interactional strategy intervention: The impact on learner affect towards peer interaction**

Interactional strategy intervention was initially explored with regard to its impact on learners' interactional behaviour, particularly the extent to which it enhanced collaborative dynamics and language-related episodes during peer interaction (Kim & McDonough, 2011) or the frequency of corrective feedback provision (Fuji, Ziegler & Mackey, 2016; Sato & Ballinger, 2012; Sato & Loewen, 2018). More recently, researchers have focused on the impact of pedagogical interventions on all three dimensions of peer interaction, the cognitive, the social and the affective one (Sato, 2017). Relevant to this study is the affective dimension, where findings come mostly from adult learners and indicate that such interventions facilitate learners' positive beliefs about peer interaction, the provision of corrective feedback and collaboration in interaction, and their self-confidence (Dao, 2020; Sato, 2013; Van Batenburg et al., 2019). In a study measuring the impact of a pedagogical intervention aimed to raise awareness of the effectiveness of peer interaction and teach learners how to provide corrective feedback to each other in meaning-based communicative activities, Sato (2013) tapped into 167 L1 Spanish university-level EFL learners' beliefs about peer interaction and corrective feedback before and after the intervention. The findings revealed that the intervention consolidated the positive beliefs that the learners already held about peer interaction and corrective feedback. Dao (2020) also reported that her 56 young adult Vietnamese learners of EFL considered that strategy training enhanced their interactional effectiveness, collaboration, cognitive and problem-solving skills. In a slightly different vein, Van Batenburg et al. (2019) carried out a 9-lesson, strategies-directed intervention on oral interaction with 156 L1 Dutch teenagers learning EFL (i.e. aged 14-15). The study showed that participants significantly increased their self-confidence but the intervention did not have a positive impact on their WTC nor on their enjoyment of oral interaction. The authors argue that a boost in WTC might require lengthier interventions and could be conditioned by other individual factors such as learners' age and proficiency level. A note should be made that the interventions reviewed above include different interactional strategy types, ranging from compensation strategies, negotiation of meaning, audience awareness strategies to metacognitive instruction, implemented separately or in combinations.

Interactional strategy intervention studies involving YLs of EFL are extremely scarce. In one of the earliest, Sato and Ballinger (2012) found that the effectiveness of such training with primary school Canadian French immersion YLs was mediated by the interpersonal relationships between the children. More recently, Sato and Dussuel Lam (2021) explicitly instructed 44 L1 Spanish YLs of EFL aged 8-9 on the concept WTC and conversational strategies. There were no significant changes in children's WTC as a result of the intervention, as reported in a questionnaire administered before and after the intervention, but children were found to display more sophisticated metacognitive knowledge of oral communication in qualitative data collected in the study. Despite the mixed impact on the affective dimension, the intervention did bring about an improvement in the amount of FL produced by the children during group work. All in all, a lot more evidence is needed on the impact of pedagogical interventions with YLs of EFL and the extent to which such interventions can impact children's

attitudes towards peer interaction as a learning activity. Positive attitudes towards peer interaction are key in maximising its effectiveness in instructed settings.

### 3. The Study

The present study aims at exploring the effect of a task-supported peer interaction 8-week teaching intervention on the young EFL learners' attitudes towards peer interaction and interactional feedback. More specifically, we wanted to gauge the learners' reaction towards different types of pedagogical interventions involving different kinds of pre-task instruction and the same oral peer-interaction tasks afterwards. To that effect, a questionnaire with Likert-scale and closed and open questions was administered to young EFL learners and the following research questions guided the study:

- (1) What are the young learners' attitudes towards peer interaction and interactional feedback in the EFL class before and after the teaching intervention?
- (2) Are there significant differences with regard to children's attitudes towards peer interaction and interactional feedback between types of intervention?

Taking into consideration the previous research outlined above (Calzada & Azkarai, 2024; Sato & Dussuel Lam, 2021), we expect children to have an initial, positive predisposition towards participating in oral peer interaction tasks and providing/receiving interactional feedback which might be enhanced in those groups that received pre-task instruction interventions. Nevertheless, the type of intervention might mitigate its impact on YL attitudes.

### 4. Methods

#### 4.1 Participants

The participants were 90 young EFL 4th grade learners (49 females, 41 males), aged 9-10 with an A1 level of English proficiency ( $M = 36.42$ ;  $SD = 14.66$ ) according to the Oxford Placement Test for Young Learners<sup>2</sup>. They were studying in two primary state schools sharing sociodemographic characteristics in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, Spain. The learners were Catalan/Spanish bilinguals and the accumulated in-class exposure to English prior to the study was of 350 hours approximately over the span of 6 years (since pre-school). The distribution of students who received extracurricular English lessons in the afternoon (ranging between one and two hours a week) was similar in the four intervention groups. Slightly more than half of the students on average attended extracurricular English lessons (55.55% - 50/90), which did not represent a significant difference among the groups ( $\chi^2(3, n = 90) = 6.43, p = .09$ ). Along similar lines, 40% of the learners were occasionally engaged in leisure activities in English (e.g. watching TV, videogaming). The children were divided into four intervention groups depending on the different kind of pre-task instruction they received: the Task-only group (T) ( $N = 23$ ), the Interaction Strategy group (I) ( $N = 22$ ), the Grammar+Interaction Strategy group (Gr+I) ( $N = 22$ ) and the Grammar group (Gr) ( $N = 23$ ). The four groups were created by the

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<sup>2</sup> Please see [https://elt.oup.com/feature/global/young-learners-placement/?srsltid=AfmBOoqNiAn4uagTVmv\\_Mgpsz3y7zHaYvkQN74Sueqfwghi0Kxq6JyH&cc=us&sellanguage=en](https://elt.oup.com/feature/global/young-learners-placement/?srsltid=AfmBOoqNiAn4uagTVmv_Mgpsz3y7zHaYvkQN74Sueqfwghi0Kxq6JyH&cc=us&sellanguage=en) for an explanation of scores and their correspondence with the CEFR levels.

teachers, who ensured that they were balanced in terms of cognitive and linguistic abilities. The teaching intervention carried out in each group is explained below. All children were pre and post tested with the questionnaire explained below, as well as a variety of other tasks as part of the overall research project. The general project included a control group which was not used in the present study, as they did not take part in any teaching intervention or any peer-interaction tasks.

## 4.2 Intervention

The teaching intervention lasted 8 weeks with a 50-minute session per intervention group each week. These weekly sessions were divided into two parts of 25 minutes each and were carried out by the same researchers throughout the intervention. The first 25 minutes were different in each group while the remaining 25 minutes were the same for all four experimental groups.

As for the first 25 minutes, the Task-only group (i.e. T) did not receive any type of pre-task instruction and did in-class EFL games or vocabulary activities (e.g. The Hangman, noughts and crosses, charades, etc.) which were unrelated to the target structure of the whole project but ensured the children received the same amount of exposure to English. The other three experimental groups (Gr, Gr+I and I) did receive pre-task instruction during this part of their weekly intervention sessions. This pre-task instruction was structured around the Present and Practice stages of the Present, Practice, Produce (PPP) approach to instruction (see Nassaji & Fotos, 2011; Shintani, 2013, among others) in which children were presented with the focused structures in an explicit way and then practiced them using a variety of activities depending on the group. The Grammar group<sup>3</sup> (i.e. Gr) was provided with metalinguistic explanations and rules for present continuous<sup>4</sup> verb forms (i.e. one of the target structures of the project) in affirmative and negative syntactic contexts and L1/L2 contrasts every week (i.e. Present). This was followed by the controlled production stage (i.e. Practice), where they carried out fill-in-the gap, error correction, translation, sentence completion and jumbled sentences exercises as well as dictation and running-dictation or competition games. The Interaction strategy group (i.e. I) was given explicit instruction of negotiation of meaning/form strategies (i.e. conversational adjustments, lexical requests) and interactional feedback strategies (i.e., recasts, explicit correction) through the use of glossaries which included examples and L1 translations of clarification requests, comprehension checks, confirmation checks, repetitions, recasts and lexical requests. We also illustrated such strategies with video modelling with videos we had created specifically for the sessions where children could watch other children interacting and using such strategies and expressions (i.e. Present). Children were asked to identify those expressions in the videos by raising flashcards depicting the expressions and also to repeat the expressions. They also participated in fill-in-the gap exercises, running dictation or sentence completion exercises so as to practice the expressions in a controlled way (i.e. Practice). The Grammar+interaction strategy group (i.e. Gr+I) was provided with a reduced version of the same activities carried out in the previous two groups, since the amount of time was the same. The interactional feedback strategies taught and practiced in this group focused

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<sup>3</sup> The children's grammatical development in relation to the target feature (i.e. Present continuous) was also analysed although it is not reported in this study. The Grammar group was included in the whole project design to explore if pre-task explicit grammar instruction followed by task performance led to developmental gains.

<sup>4</sup> The present continuous was chosen as the target feature as it is one of the key grammar components of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade EFL curriculum and it is formally taught in this grade for the first time.



on the target structure of the study (i.e. present continuous) whereas the other interactional strategies did not. Given the reduced time frame of the intervention, the intervention focused only on two types of interactional strategies, namely negotiation of meaning/form and provision of interactional feedback.

For all the intervention groups, the remaining 25 minutes in every session consisted in task-based peer interaction in the form of procedural repetition of collaborative picture narrative and an information-gap focused tasks carried out in pairs. This was the Produce stage of the PPP approach to instruction used in every session for the pre-task instruction groups (i.e. Gr, I, Gr+I), where children could actually use the structures (i.e. present continuous and/or interactional and corrective feedback strategies depending on the group) they had been previously taught. The Task-only group also participated in such tasks (without having received any kind of pre-task instruction). The tasks were the same in all experimental groups and they were different every week. They were all focused on the present continuous tense, the target grammar structure of the whole research project. The picture narrative tasks were collaborative story telling tasks where children were given six to eight vignettes which they had to describe as they told the story together. The prompts were all in the present continuous and vocabulary help was given if needed. The information-gap tasks consisted of a set of questions the students had to answer in relation to different timetables or different sets of pictures each member of the pair had in order to answer a final question with the information learners had been exchanging. Again, all the prompts were in the present continuous and vocabulary help was given if required. A sample of each type of task used can be found in Appendix 1.

### **4.3 The questionnaire**

The questionnaire employed was inspired by Sato and McDonough (2020) and included nine 5-point Likert-scale statements at pre and post-test, four additional statements only at pre-test and three additional ones only at post-test. In addition, it also included one closed-ended question and four open questions both at pre and post-test. The whole questionnaire was written and delivered in Catalan, the vehicular language in schools in Catalonia. Four main categories were defined on a conceptual basis. The first category included four statements on the children's attitudes to English and peer-interaction in English (e.g. I like trying to speak in English even if it's difficult for me; I like doing peer-interaction tasks in English). The second category included five statements on the children's attitudes to interactional feedback and its learning potential (e.g. Peer-interaction tasks where I can give and receive feedback help me learn and improve). The third category included four statements on the children's attitudes towards their usual English lessons at school (i.e. the ones delivered by their English teacher) and were only included at pre-test (e.g. I like my English lessons at school; I always try to speak in English with my classmates during my English class). The fourth category included three statements on the children's perceptions of the teaching intervention received (both the pre-task interventions and their participation in tasks) and were only included at post-test (e.g. I have enjoyed the teaching intervention sessions). Alpha Cronbach tests were performed to check the reliability of the four categories at pre and post-test where possible. Category 1 had an Alpha Cronbach value of  $\alpha = 0.65$  and  $0.70$ , the second one of  $\alpha = 0.70$  and  $0.64$ , the third one of  $\alpha = 0.65$  and the fourth one of  $\alpha = 0.77$ .

The closed question asked the learners whether they preferred to do the peer-interaction tasks with a partner who had a higher, same or lower level of English and included an open why question to explain their choice. This question was included as we wanted to explore how and to what extent the perceived proficiency of the partner was a concern for the children and was affected by the intervention. The three remaining open questions asked the children whether and why they liked or not doing peer-interaction tasks, what they found most difficult and easiest while doing peer-interaction tasks and what they did if, while doing peer-interaction tasks, they did not know how to say something in English. The complete version of the questionnaire is found in Appendix 2.

#### **4.4 Procedures and data analysis**

The children completed the questionnaire at both pre and post-intervention stages (i.e. the week before the first session and the week after the last session) in their classroom setting on a personal computer and through a Google form in Catalan (i.e. their school language). To maximise the efficiency of testing, each participant filled in the questionnaire alongside their classmates with the supervision of two researchers and a teacher. All participants as well as their caregivers and teachers provided informed consent to take part in the study<sup>5</sup>.

The data from the Google form was saved, transcribed, translated and coded in Microsoft Excel. The Likert-scale data was transferred and submitted to statistical analysis using SAS v9.4. For categories 1 and 2 (with pre and post values) a mixed lineal model was used with group, time and their interaction as fixed factors and school and participants as random effects and included intergroup and intragroup comparisons (Tukey post-hoc tests were applied for pairwise comparisons). For categories 3 and 4 (with only pre or post values), a mixed lineal model with school as a random effect with Tukey post-hoc tests was carried out for intergroup comparisons. The level of significance was set at  $p < .05$ . The answers to closed and open-ended questions were transcribed and classified by two researchers using the themes generated directly from the questions (i.e. partner's level of proficiency, enjoyment of/attitudes towards peer interaction tasks, difficulty carrying out peer interaction tasks, and actions taken when they did not know how to express themselves). Interrater reliability was achieved through agreement between the two researchers.

### **5. Results**

#### **5.1 Attitudes towards peer-interaction and interactional feedback: quantitative analysis**

The average mean score for all groups in category 1 (Attitudes to English and peer interaction in English) was already 3.97 at pre-test ( $SD = 0.59$ ) and went down in all groups at post-test ( $M = 3.82$ ;  $SD = 0.70$ ). A significant time effect was observed ( $F(1, 77) = 5.87$ ,  $p = .0178$ ) and pairwise comparisons yielded a significant pre to post-test decrease in the T group, which took part in peer interaction tasks but did not go through any specific pre-task intervention ( $F(1, 77) = 8.49$ ,  $p = .0047$ ). No significant group effect was found. The mean score for category 2 (Attitudes to interactional feedback and its learning potential) was similar to category 1 at pre-test ( $M = 3.93$ ;  $SD = 0.57$ ) and increased in all groups except the T group at post-test ( $M = 4.08$ ;  $SD = 0.53$ ).

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<sup>5</sup> The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain (CEREC).

A significant time effect was found ( $F(1, 77) = 5.59, p = .0205$ ) by which a generalized increase was observed. A time\*group significant interaction emerged ( $F(3, 77) = 2.81, p = .0452$ ) in the Gr group, which significantly increased pre to post-test ( $F(1, 77) = 8.27, p = .0052$ ). At post-test there was a significant group difference ( $F(3, 77) = 2.79, p = .0463$ ) by which all the groups got significantly (or marginally significantly) higher scores than the T group (Interaction  $p = .0157$ ; Gr+I  $p = .0160$ ; Grammar  $p = .0583$ ). Tables and Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the estimate means in each group at pre and post-test, the standard error and the confidence intervals.

Table 1. Attitudes to English and peer-interaction.

English and peer-interaction						
Group	Time	N	Estimate		Lower CI	Upper CI
			Mean	Std Err		
Task-Only	PRE	23	3.93	0.25	3.42	4.45
	POST	23	3.55	0.25	3.04	4.07
Interaction strategy	PRE	22	3.96	0.26	3.44	4.49
	POST	22	3.86	0.26	3.34	4.38
Grammar + Interaction strategy	PRE	22	4.00	0.26	3.48	4.52
	POST	22	3.84	0.26	3.31	4.36
Grammar	PRE	23	3.88	0.25	3.37	4.39
	POST	23	3.87	0.25	3.36	4.39

Figure 1. Attitudes towards English and peer interaction

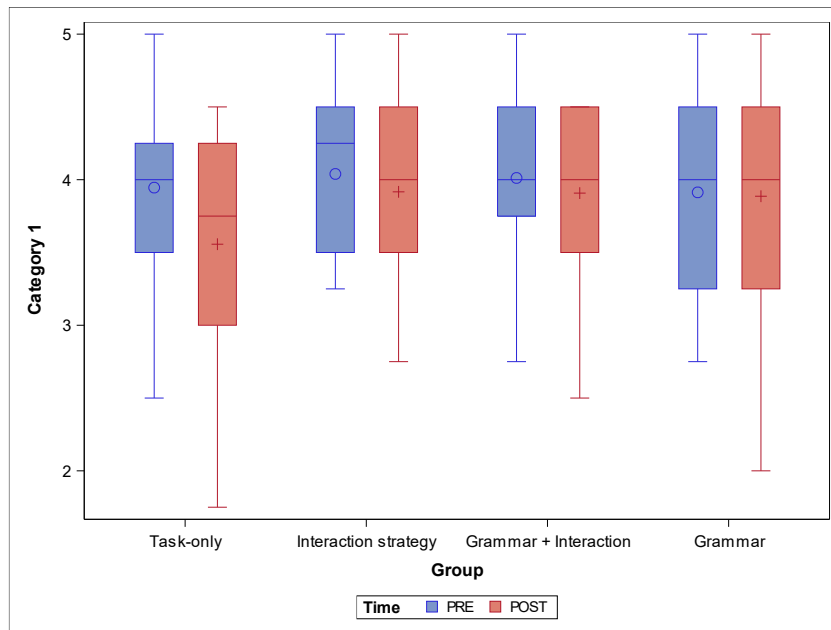
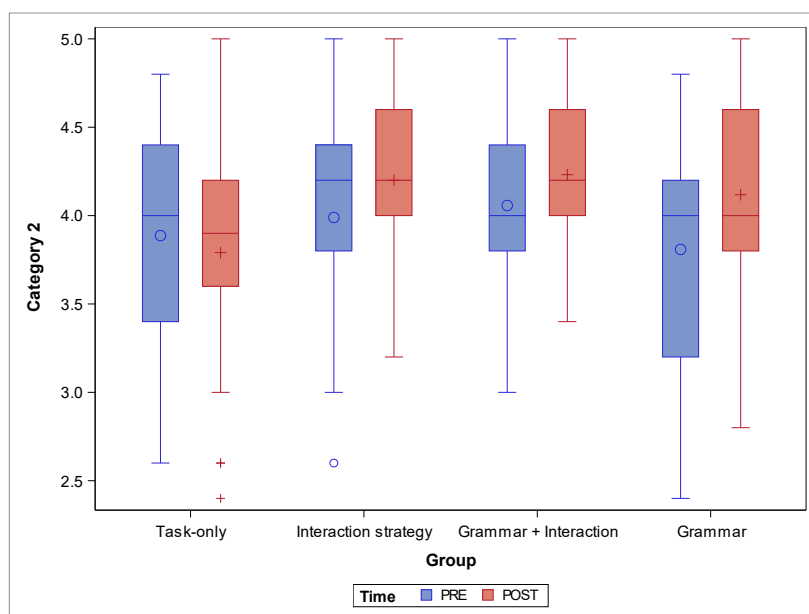


Table 2. Attitudes to Interactional feedback

Interactional feedback
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Group	Time	N	Estimate		Lower CI	Upper CI
			Mean	Std Err		
Task-only	PRE	23	3.88	0.14	3.58	4.17
	POST	23	3.77	0.14	3.47	4.07
Interaction strategy	PRE	22	3.98	0.15	3.67	4.29
	POST	22	4.18	0.15	3.87	4.48
Grammar + Interaction strategy	PRE	22	4.07	0.15	3.77	4.37
	POST	22	4.19	0.15	3.88	4.49
Grammar	PRE	23	3.79	0.14	3.50	4.09
	POST	23	4.09	0.14	3.79	4.38

Figure 2. Attitudes towards interactional feedback



Category 3 was only examined at pre-test to explore the children's attitudes towards their current English classes. The mean score for all groups was 3.57 (SD= 0.67), lower than the previous two categories. No significant group effect was found. Category 4 (Attitudes towards the teaching intervention received) was only examined at post-test to explore how children felt towards the intervention after it took place (M= 4.10; SD= 0.75). It was above 4 in all groups except in the T group. There was a marginal main group effect ( $F(3, 79)= 2.43, p=.00716$ ) and pairwise comparisons yielded a significant difference between the T group and the Gr group ( $p=.0113$ ), whose score was the highest. Tables 3 and 4 and Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the estimate means in each group at pre and post-test, the standard error and the confidence intervals.

Table 3. Attitudes towards school English lessons: Descriptives

Attitudes towards school English lessons					
Group	N	Estimate		Lower CI	Upper CI
		Mean	Std Err		
Task-only	23	3.50	0.27	2.96	4.04
Interaction strategy	22	3.60	0.28	3.04	4.16
Grammar + Interaction strategy	22	3.52	0.27	2.98	4.07
Grammar	23	3.52	0.27	2.98	4.06

Figure 3. School English Lessons

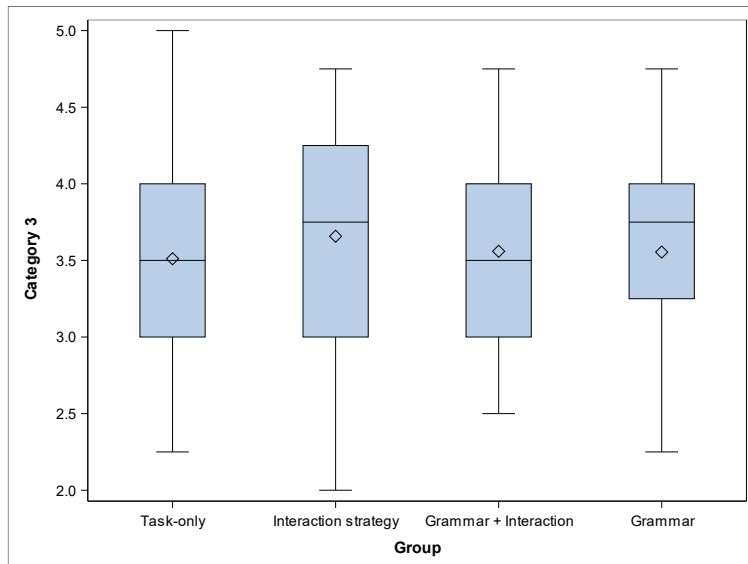
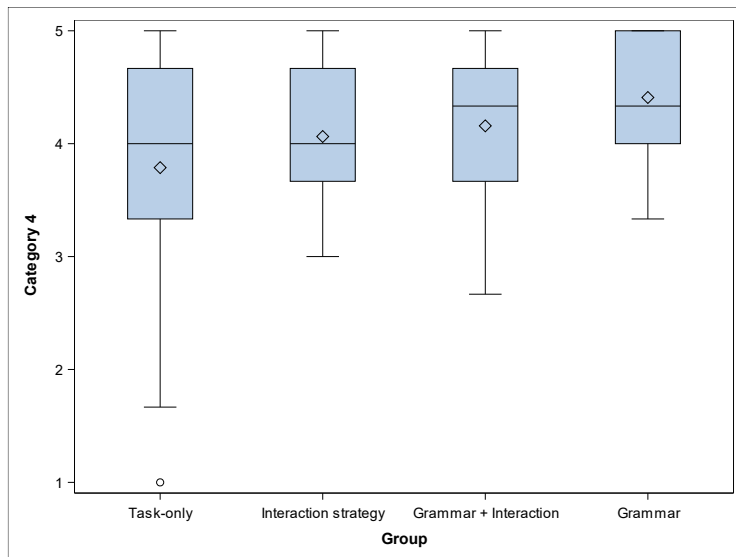


Table 4. Attitudes towards teaching intervention: Descriptives

Attitudes towards Teaching Intervention					
Group	N	Estimate		Lower CI	Upper CI
		Mean	Std Err		
Task-only	23	3.78	0.31	3.15	4.42
Interaction strategy	22	4.00	0.32	3.36	4.63
Grammar + Interaction strategy	22	4.08	0.32	3.44	4.73
Grammar	23	4.38	0.31	3.75	5.01

Figure 4. Teaching Intervention



## 5.2 Attitudes towards peer interaction and interactional feedback: descriptive and qualitative analysis

The close-ended question on whether the learners preferred to be paired up with a partner who had a higher, same or lower English proficiency was asked at pre and post intervention stages and its results are outlined in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Preferences on partner's level of English<sup>6</sup>

Group	Time	N	Higher %	Same %	Lower %
Task-only	PRE	23	43.47% (10/23)	56.52% (13/23)	0% (0/23)
	POST	22	59.09% (13/22)	31.82% (7/22)	9.09% (2/22)
Interaction strategy	PRE	19	36.84% (7/19)	57.89% (11/19)	5.26% (1/19)
	POST	21	28.57% (6/21)	66.67% (14/21)	4.76% (1/21)
Grammar + Interaction strategy	PRE	21	52.38% (11/21)	42.86% (9/21)	4.76% (1/21)
	POST	19	63.16% (12/19)	26.32% (5/19)	10.53% (2/19)
Grammar	PRE	23	39.13% (9/23)	52.17% (12/23)	8.70% (2/23)
	POST	22	40.91% (9/22)	40.91% (9/22)	18.18% (4/22)

<sup>6</sup> Some children left this question unanswered, which is why the number of participants differs from the one in the Likert scale statements.

Before the teaching intervention, we observe a generally clear preference for learners to have a partner with a similar English proficiency as theirs across groups. Having a partner with higher proficiency obtains moderately high percentages across groups while having a partner with lower proficiency is by far the least preferred option among learners. After the teaching intervention, preferences slightly changed. Percentages for higher proficiency raised except in the Interaction strategy group at the expense of same proficiency results, while preference for lower proficiency raised in all groups except the Interaction strategy group, who showed a strong preference for similar proficiency both at pre and post intervention stages.

The learners were asked the reasons for their choice and at pre-test their preference for similar proficiency levels was justified by their need to balance their contribution to the task and their learning and help each other as well as to understand each other better: *'Because they know what I know and we can help each other'* (EC4.10<sup>7</sup>), *'So that we can learn in the same way and at the same time'* (OL4.45). They also highlighted they wanted a partner with similar proficiency so that they could participate in the task: *'If I had a partner with a higher proficiency, they would do everything and wouldn't let me talk'* (OL4.19). Those who chose a higher level of English did so because they would like their partners to help them and they would be able to learn from their partners: *'If there's anything I don't know they can help me out'* (EC4.34), *'When I make mistakes they can correct what I've said'* (OL4.1), *'I can learn from them if they are better than me'* (OL4.5). At post-test, the increase in the preference for partners with higher proficiency is clearly linked to the learners' need to be helped: *'So that they can help me and teach me words and things I don't know'* (EC4.5). When they chose lower proficiency, the learners mentioned that they liked helping their partners and feeling they knew more than them: *'If they have a lower level I can be of help and correct them'* (OL4.50). Learners in the Interaction strategy group still had a strong preference for similar proficiency at post-test, which was basically explained by their need to understand each other and help each other in a more balanced way: *'If he had a higher level it would be too difficult and if I had a higher level it would be boring'* (OL4.21).

The next open question asked the learners why they liked or disliked peer-interaction tasks. At pre-test, the vast majority of students in all groups claimed they liked participating in peer-interaction tasks. They mentioned they thought they liked them because they could learn better, help their partners as well as receiving help, they are more fun and entertaining than the teacher leading the class and they could work and collaborate with their friends: *'I like it because I can ask my classmates about different things'* (OL4.32), *'Because we learn from each other'* (EC4.21), *'The activities are much more fun'* (OL4.8). Only four learners in the Grammar group, one learner in the Gr+I group and two of them in the Interaction strategy group said they did not like peer-interaction tasks. Their reasons included the difficulty of the tasks and the difficulty when trying to speak in English, that the tasks were sometimes boring, that they felt shy or that they usually had to do all the work and their partners did not usually pay attention to the task: *'Because I don't know how to speak in English'* (OL4.40), *'It is really difficult for me'* (EC4.37), *'I have to do it all myself, they won't do anything'* (OL4.22), *'I feel shy when speaking with my classmates'* (OL4.34).

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<sup>7</sup> The children's quotes were translated from Catalan into English and are presented together with the codes we assigned to them to preserve their anonymity.

After experiencing peer-interaction for 8 weeks, their feelings towards peer-interaction tasks remained positive across groups (although the Likert-scale statements showed a slight decrease in all groups and a significant one in the T group) but their reasons were much more varied and specific, and they could see both linguistic and pedagogical benefits in participating in peer interaction. Apart from the fact they could learn from their partners and correct and help each other, they now highlighted they could practise their speaking skills more often, learn new vocabulary, improve their English, talk more among their friends and get to know classmates whom they never played with. They also felt they were playing games, and felt it was all a new and different way of learning: *'In pairs we practise more than listening to the teacher'* (OL4.37), *'We learn new words in English'* (OL4.30), *'We learn how to speak English now!'* (OL4.4), *'I learn better and interact more'* (OL4.48). A given student even pointed out he focused more into learning and another one mentioned he was not so nervous when trying to use English: *'If I'm working with my friends, I focus more into learning new things'* (OL4.34), *'If we didn't know how to do it they helped us and I'm not that nervous now'* (OL4.5). Very few answers were negative and they mainly referred to the difficulty of speaking in English, some learners not enjoying others' corrections, or partners who did not work or had a very low level of English and did not cooperate: *'It is very difficult for me and I don't like being corrected'* (EC4.39), *'I do it all by myself'* (EC4.1), *'I like it but my partner didn't have enough level of English'* (EC4.33).

The following question asked the learners what they found easiest and most difficult about peer interaction. Before the teaching intervention, the learners mentioned many more difficulties than easy aspects about peer interaction in all groups. Among the easy aspects, they emphasized working with their friends, using their L1 when interacting, saying isolated words in English, carrying out the task (i.e. playing), gesturing to make oneself understood, receiving help from their partners or understanding what their partners said: *'The easiest thing is when I can gesture to make myself understood'* (EC4.37), *'When I listen to my partner it is easy to understand but it is really difficult to say sentences in English'* (OL4.26), *'Speaking English is difficult and speaking Catalan is easy'* (OL4.9), *'The easiest thing is being with your friends'* (EC4.13). When it comes to difficulties, the learners generally mentioned that they mainly and mostly struggled to speak in English, say full sentences in English and know particular words in English. They also pointed out that the most difficult aspect about peer interaction is not being able to interact and remaining in silence, as well as thinking what and how to say something: *'The most difficult thing is English'* (EC4.17), *'It is very difficult to make long sentences and put them together'* (OL4.20), *'The most difficult thing for me is communicating in English'* (OL4.7), *'When neither of the two know what to say or how to say it is difficult'* (EC4.36). As was the case with the last question, after the teaching intervention, the learners' perceptions became much more specific. The general difficulty remained basically the same in all groups, namely the learners' difficulty speaking in English and finding words. They also specified other problems they had in relation to the tasks in all groups, such as explaining differences between pictures, telling stories or describing images, and difficulties dealing with their partners, understanding each other or convincing their partners they had to try to speak English: *'The most difficult thing is to speak in English'* (OL4.4), *'Telling stories and explaining the differences was very difficult'* (OL4.5), *'It is very difficult when no one knows what to say and we don't understand each other'* (OL4.25), *'Convincing them we have to speak English!'* (OL4.28). As regards what they found easiest at post-test, the learners did not include so many aspects as in the pre-test but mentioned helping each other was easy and also solving the



tasks (if they could do them in their L1): *'The easiest thing was helping my friends'* (EC4.22), *'It's easy to do together but not in English'* (OL4.42).

Finally, the last question asked the learners what they did when they did not know a word or words in English during peer interaction. At pre-test, the main tendency was to ask the teacher across all groups. The learners also mentioned they asked their partner or said the word in Catalan/Spanish and some even said they tried and thought hard to remember in English and if that did not work then they would ask the teacher: *'I make an effort and then I ask the teacher'* (EC4.11), *'I will ask my partner and if s/he doesn't know then I ask the teacher'* (OL4.45). A couple of children mentioned they simply remained silent if they did not know a word or words and only one student mentioned s/he used the phrase "How do you say something in English?" because s/he learnt it outside school: *'If I don't know a word I'll say it in Catalan or I simply don't say it and stop talking'* (OL4.28), *'My English teacher outside school taught me 'how do you say''* (EC4.19). Again at post-test, the answers were very similar across groups but this time the majority of the children mentioned they would ask their partner. They also said they would ask the teacher if their partner did not know. The use of Catalan/Spanish was not so widely reported and absent or almost absent in the Interaction strategy and the Gr+I groups, respectively. In these two groups, several children attempted to report their use of the interaction strategies they had been learning in the intervention sessions: *'I will say: can do you say...?'* (How do you say...?) (OL4.31), *'I say: What does is mean...?'* (What does it mean?) (EC4.16).

## 6. Discussion

The study aimed at exploring the effect of a task-supported peer interaction teaching intervention on the young EFL learners' attitudes towards peer interaction and interactional feedback over an 8-week period. The first research question inquired into possible variations in YLs' attitudes towards oral peer interaction and interactional feedback as a result of the teaching intervention affecting all groups (i.e. participating in peer interaction tasks in a weekly session). The findings indicate that the children's attitudes towards English and peer interaction in English and towards the learning potential of interactional feedback were already positive at the onset of the study, in line with other studies exploring the affective dimension of peer interaction (Calzada & Azkarai, 2024; Sato, 2013; Sato & Dussuel Lam, 2021). This could be related to the fact that the children in our study enjoyed their EFL lessons and reported trying to speak in English to their peers during class time. The schools that participated in the project strove to provide quality EFL instruction through research-informed linguistic school projects and experienced teaching staff.

The pedagogical intervention did not bring about significant changes in the children's attitudes towards English and peer interaction, similar to what was found by Van Batenburg et al. (2019) with adult learners and Sato and Dussuel Lam (2021) with similar age children. This seems to indicate that attitudes towards English and peer interaction are slow to change and might require longer interventions for noticeable differences, irrespective of the age of the learners. These attitudes constitute the learners' interactional mindset (Sato, 2017), a composite construct which includes individual variables such as WTC that have been shown to be trait rather than state characteristics of speakers (see VanBatenburg et al. (2019) for a discussion). As a matter of fact, a slight decrease in the scores in category 1 was observed in all groups after the intervention and a significant one in the Task-only group. This may be related to the

fact that peer intervention tasks were implemented under very strict conditions in order to preserve the validity of the study, which may have been perceived negatively by the children. The children were not allowed to choose or change partners during the intervention and the tasks were systematically carried out for the last 25 minutes of every weekly session, which was cumbersome for some of the children and made the intervention sessions very predictable and repetitive, especially in the final weeks of the project. As already pointed out by Sato and Ballinger (2012), the interpersonal relations between children play a key role in interactional training with YLs and working with a partner who was not necessarily their friend could have mitigated the impact of the pedagogical intervention. As one of the reviewers pointed out, the onset of puberty may have also played a mediating role in how the children of our study related to English and peer interaction, enhancing their self-consciousness and fear of judgement when speaking in the target language with their peers. Nonetheless, after the intervention and as the children's answers to the open questions suggest, the children seemed to have developed an enhanced awareness of the language learning benefits of peer interaction (see also Sato and Dussuel Lam (2021)), particularly with regard to the opportunities that this activity generates for practising oral skills in EFL in safe environments. Lexical knowledge and access to it during interaction consolidates as a stumbling block for this type of learning activity in the children's opinion, pointing at a minimal L2 proficiency threshold that needs to be attained for minimising frustration (or silence) during peer interaction tasks (see also Lázaro-Ibarrola and Azpilicueta-Martínez (2015)). In fact, the most difficult aspect of peer interaction tasks was reported to be the children's difficulty to build sentences in English and find the words to complete the tasks. Yet the children also emphasised the fact that peer interaction tasks were entertaining and allowed them to talk to their peers and improve their language skills. This positive perception towards peer interaction could counterbalance other, more negative feelings that often arise among YLs when working with a partner, such as shame to expose oneself and fear of making mistakes and should be capitalised on to include peer interaction as a regular EFL practice activity in the classroom.

The pedagogical intervention brought about positive changes in the children's attitudes towards the provision of interactional feedback, in line with findings from interactional strategy intervention studies with adults (Sato, 2013). The intervention empowered the YLs in our study by expanding their knowledge of the target language form through explicit grammar and/or interactional strategy pre-task instruction and/or by validating them as providers/elicitors of interactional feedback, a role they did not think they could adopt in the EFL class. The increase in the children's preference for working with a stronger or weaker partner (except in the Interaction strategy group), an option which was unpopular at the onset of the intervention, is indicative of a shift in the children's perception of the shared learning benefits of peer interaction, both for the less and the more proficient partner, and the opportunities it generates for languaging (Swain & Watanabe, 2013) and learning from each other. The Interaction strategy group kept their preference for a similar proficiency partner. This group was explicitly instructed on how to collaborate and interact towards task completion and common understanding and learning, which would explain their preference for a perceived similar proficiency. The children's perceptions of their partners' proficiency and how this impacts the kind of collaborative relationship between them has been shown to impact learning (Choi & Iwashita, 2016; García Mayo & Imaz Agirre, 2019; Watanabe, 2008). Also, the fact that the children did not see the teacher as the main source of vocabulary knowledge during peer interaction at post-test and reported to turn first to their partner when

they did not know a word further supports the learners' awareness of the benefits of peer interaction.

As for the second research question regarding the impact of the different pre-task instruction types of intervention on YLs' affect towards oral peer interaction and interactional feedback, the Task-only group (i.e. the group that received no pre-task instruction) experienced the least positive evolution on their attitudes. As a matter of fact, the children in this group had significantly lower attitude scores towards English and peer interaction at the end than at the beginning of the intervention. This involution could be due to the fact that the learners found peer interaction tasks too challenging as they had not received any linguistic or interactional training, which resulted in a lack of desire to interact and a lack of awareness of its potential benefits. We could claim that, without the necessary linguistic and interactional scaffolding, peer interaction might be detrimental to learner participation in oral tasks and, with it, to the language learning potential of this type of activity in the EFL class. As for the attitudes towards providing and receiving interactional feedback, the Task-only group is the only one that did not experience an improvement, unlike the rest of the groups, and had significantly or marginally significantly lower scores than the other groups at post-test. Once again, without the linguistic and/or interactional strategy knowledge provided through training and pre-task instruction, the children in this group might not have perceived the relevance of interactional feedback or felt licensed to get involved in corrective practices with their peers. Interestingly, the Grammar group is the only one to experience significant progress in their attitudes towards the provision of interactional feedback, whereas the improvement does not reach the statistical threshold in the Interaction strategy and the Grammar+Interaction strategy groups. The continuity between the explicit focus on form in the training (i.e. the present continuous) and the focused nature of the peer interaction tasks might have been perceived by the children as a validation of feedback provision and enhanced their consideration of the usefulness of such practices. This is in line with the tenets of the transfer appropriate processing (TAP) framework which emphasises the importance of a match between the processes and conditions of learning (i.e. how we learn something in the first place) and those that are present when learning needs to be retrieved (e.g. in a production task) (Lightbown, 2008). The Grammar group also had the most positive attitude towards the pedagogical intervention of the four groups, possibly because the training received in this group (i.e. explicit instruction on the present continuous) was more relatable to their regular EFL classes and the children could directly apply the instruction received to task performance by putting their explicit knowledge into practice in a communicative context (Ellis et al., 2019; Pladevall-Ballester & Puig-Mayenco, 2025; Shintani, 2019). The interactional strategy instruction was less directly applicable to the completion of the tasks as such and to the extent to which the children felt the intervention was beneficial, which may explain why the Interaction strategy and Grammar+Interaction strategy groups had slightly lower scores (even though still higher than the ones of the Task-only group). Yet these two groups reported less frequent use of Catalan/Spanish if they did not know a word and a wider use of the interactional strategies taught during the intervention. The children's resilience in using the FL during task performance can also be attributed to the pedagogical intervention.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study has explored the effect of a peer interaction task-supported pedagogical intervention on YLs' reported attitudes to peer interaction tasks in English and towards the

benefits of interactional feedback. Although the children's attitudes towards peer interaction remained generally positive after the intervention, their experience brought about a more realistic view of the difficulty that task performance entails and also made them aware of the potential language learning benefits it might have. More specifically, linguistic and interactional strategy training previous to task performance has been shown to benefit the children's attitudes to peer interaction and their empowerment as interactional feedback providers. Our findings are also valuable for FL instruction and curriculum and syllabus design as they reveal the importance of providing learners with explicit instruction on those structures and strategies that support communication during peer interaction so that they can make the most of its L2 learning opportunities. Such training can be carried out with young learners in primary education to support them in becoming more strategic communicators from the early stages of L2 learning.

A number of limitations should be acknowledged. A longer and more intensive pedagogical intervention might have given the children more time to develop their attitudes towards peer interaction in English more significantly. Greater flexibility in the choice of partners might have also contributed to enhancing the YLs' positive perceptions of the intervention and might have given them a more realistic view of interaction. Despite these limitations, this study sheds additional light on the relationship between affective variables and peer interaction as a classroom task in primary school and the extent to which pedagogical interventions can enhance YLs' positive attitudes towards oral peer interaction. This positive outlook is the ignition point of the "motivation-behaviour-achievement chain" (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000, p. 294) and safeguards successful EFL learning in instructed settings.

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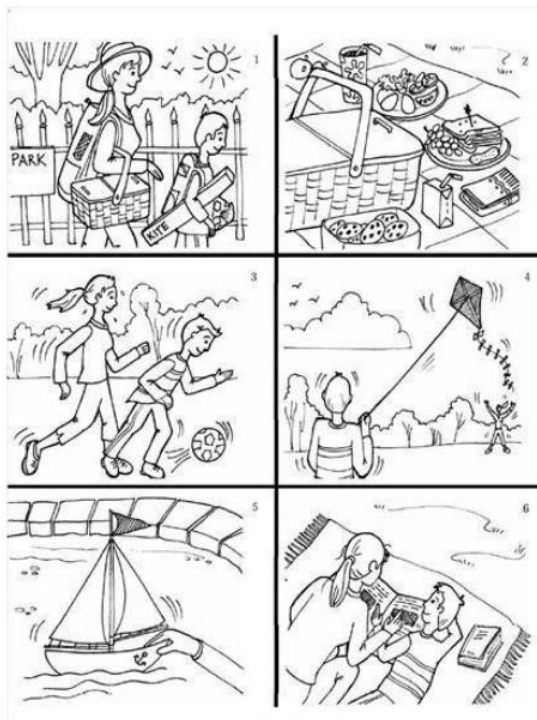
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## Appendix 1

### Sample tasks from the second part of the weekly intervention session

#### Example from a picture narrative task

Erik and his mum are having a day out today. In pairs, describe the pictures and tell the story together. You can use the words picnic (pícnic), basket (cistella), kite (estel) and toy boat (barqueta de joguina). What are they doing?





## Example from an information-gap task

### Student A

You and your partner have **6 pictures**. Some of the pictures are the same and some are a bit different. **Describe what the children are doing** in the pictures and discover which are the same and which are different. You can use these verbs: **eat, play, walk, watch, paint, make**.



## Student B

You and your partner have **6 pictures**. Some of the pictures are the same and some are a bit different. **Describe what the children are doing** in the pictures and discover which are the same and which are different. You can use these verbs: **make, play, walk, watch, paint, make.**



## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire

#### Attitudes towards English and peer interaction in English (pre and post-test)

1. I like English.
2. I like trying to speak in English even if it's difficult for me.
3. I like doing peer-interaction tasks in English in class.
4. When we do peer-interaction tasks in the EFL class I always try to use English.

#### Attitudes towards interactional feedback and its learning potential (pre and post-test)

5. Peer-interaction tasks where I can give and receive feedback help me learn and improve.
6. If I spot mistakes in my peers' speech in peer-interaction tasks I tell them in order to help them learn.

7. When we do peer-interaction tasks in the EFL class, if I don't know how to say something I ask my classmates/my peers.
8. I like/I would like my classmates to correct my mistakes when we do peer-interaction tasks.
9. Correcting and helping each other if we do not know a word can help us learn more.

**Attitudes towards school English lessons (pre-test)**

10. I like my English lessons at school.
11. I always try to speak in English to the teacher in my EFL class.
12. I always try to speak in English to my classmates in my EFL class.
13. I like my English classes best when the teacher speaks and we do not do peer-interaction tasks.

**Attitudes towards the teaching intervention (post-test)**

14. I've enjoyed the teaching intervention sessions.
15. I've enjoyed the first part of the sessions.
16. I would like to keep on doing peer-interaction tasks in my EFL class in the future.

**Close-ended question (pre and post-test)**

17. When doing peer-interaction tasks, do you prefer being paired with a partner who has...
  - a. a higher level of English than you?
  - b. the same level of English as you?
  - c. a lower level of English than you?
18. Why?

**Open-ended questions (pre and post-test)**

19. Do you like doing peer-interaction tasks in English? Why?
20. What are the easiest and the most difficult aspects while doing peer-interaction tasks?
21. What do you do when you do not know how to say something in English while doing peer-interaction tasks?

## **Figure captions list**

Figure 1 Caption: Attitudes towards English and peer interaction

Figure 1 Alt Text: A box-plot graph representing the mean scores and distribution of the data from category 1 (Attitudes towards English and peer interaction) in each intervention group at pre and post test.

Figure 2 Caption: Attitudes towards interactional feedback

Figure 2 Alt Text: A box-plot graph representing the mean scores and distribution of the data from category 2 (Attitudes towards interactional feedback) in each intervention group at pre and post test.

Figure 3 Caption: Attitudes towards school English lessons

Figure 3 Alt Text: A box-plot graph representing the mean scores and distribution of the data from category 3 (Attitudes towards school English lessons) in each intervention group at pre-test.

Figure 4 Caption: Attitudes towards teaching intervention

Figure 4 Alt Text: A box-plot graph representing the mean scores and distribution of the data from category 4 (Attitudes towards teaching intervention) in each intervention group at post-test.

## **Appendix**

Example 1 Caption: Example of a picture narrative task

Example 1 Alt Text: A six-vignette cartoon illustrating a boy and his mum having a picnic and spending the day in the park. Students need to tell the story in a collaborative way.

Example 2 Caption: Example of an information-gap task

Example 2 Alt Text: Two sets of 6 cartoon images illustrating actions. Three of the pictures are repeated in both sets and students need to interact to discover which pictures are repeated.