The Effectiveness of Pretask Activities on Accuracy during Collaborative Dialogue*

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This study investigated whether pretask instructions and/or planning opportunity affect second language (L2) learners’ ability to solve their linguistic problems on their own during collaborative dialogue. One hundred and ten Korean learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) were assigned to one of the four conditions (i.e., specific instructions with planning time, specific instructions without planning time, general instructions with planning time, and general instructions without planning time). They were asked to orally retell a picture-based story with their partners during their regularly scheduled classes for two sessions. The resulting dialogues were analyzed for resolutions of lexical versus grammatical language-related episodes (LREs) (i.e., correctly resolved, unresolved, or incorrectly resolved LREs). The findings indicated that irrespective of pretask instruction type and/or planning availability, the learners correctly resolved their grammatical problems significantly more often than they did not resolve and/or incorrectly resolved them. Possible explanations are discussed along with pedagogical implications.

I. INTRODUCTION

The investigation of pretask planning for its effects on L2 production has been one of the most frequent topics examined in task-based research (e.g., Crookes, 1989; Ellis, 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Sangarun, 2005; Wendel, 1997; Williams, 1992; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). The theoretical rationale is that learners, particularly low proficiency learners, have limited attentional resources to devote to both

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meaning and language at the same time (e.g., Skehan, 1998; VanPatten, 1990). If learners have time to plan for a task, this may lessen their cognitive and communicative workload, thus improving their language during actual performance. The studies referenced above have shown that planning does positively affect fluency and complexity, but its effect on accuracy is mixed.

One way to improve accuracy may be to manipulate pretask instructions prior to the provision of planning time to see if different types of instructions affect the accuracy of the planned speech. This strategy is in part motivated by some of the past and recent planning studies showing that accuracy improved most when learners planned under specific instructions intended to orient learner attention to certain targeted areas (Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Sangarun, 2005). In fact, the previous planning researchers referenced above did not isolate pretask instructions from pretask planning, making it difficult to determine which variable improved the subsequent L2 performance – pretask instructions, planning opportunity, or a combination of both variables. Thus, there is a need for a study to investigate both the separate and the combined effects of pretask instructions and planning opportunity on the quality of the subsequent L2 production.

However, the attempt to implement pretask planning as a pedagogical tool (Ellis, 2005) in an EFL context faces some challenges because of the large size of a typical EFL classroom, that is, 30 to 40 students. This means it would be impossible for the teacher to assess each individual student’s planned speech. A more reasonable and practical way seems to be to measure the effects of planning in collaborative learners rather than in individual learners performing a task. This could also benefit learners in promoting their communicative language use, which is observably a need in an EFL classroom (Fotos, 1998). In short, in an EFL situation, it would be pedagogically useful for a study to examine planning in the context of collaborative dialogue.

Thus, given these theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical motivations, the present study investigated whether type of pretask instructions and/or planning opportunity affect learners’ linguistic accuracy during collaborative dialogue. In order to explore this topic, a review of the literature on pretask instructions and/or planning in relation to their effects on accuracy follows.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Effects of Pretask Instructions and Planning Opportunity on Accuracy

Over the past decade of pretask planning research, the majority of the studies investigated the effects of planning opportunity versus no planning on the accuracy of the
subsequent speech (e.g., Crookes, 1989; Ellis, 1987; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Wendel, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). However, there is a possibility that the type of instructions that learners receive prior to planning may immediately affect the content of their planning and the quality of the subsequent speech. The first study that examined this issue was Hulstijn and Hulstijn’s (1984) study. Four groups of L2 Dutch learners (i.e., grammar/fast, grammar/slow, content/fast, and content/slow) were asked to retell stories following response frames that were intended to elicit two word orders (i.e., inversion of subject and finite verb in main clauses and placement of finite verb in final position in subordinate clauses). They were instructed to attend either to the contents of the stories or to grammar and either to begin retelling as quickly as possible or to take as much time as possible. All participants also received explicit feedback on their practice responses before producing the target ones. The findings indicated that the word order accuracy significantly increased with the grammar-focus groups (i.e., grammar/fast and grammar/slow) only, while the grammar/slow group produced the greatest accuracy, though not significantly different from the other groups. These results suggest that in promoting accuracy, the type of pretask instructions may be more beneficial than planning time and that if the instructions have a specific focus (in this case, grammar), they are likely to direct learners’ attention to the targeted area successfully, thus affecting the subsequent production.

While the study by Hulstijn and Hulstijn (1984) examined content versus grammar, Sangarun (2005) went a step further, investigating meaning-focused (i.e., generating/revising/rehearsing/organizing ideas), form-focused (i.e., focusing on vocabulary, transitional words or phrases, and grammar), and meaning- and form-focused (i.e., focusing on a combination of both) planning as well as no planning. Intermediate EFL learners were asked to complete two monologic, oral tasks (i.e., instruction and argumentative) under the four conditions. Similar to in Hulstijn and Hulstijn’s explicit practice session prior to the target one, Sangarun seeded, in the written instructions which targeted both meaning and form, specific model structures and rules that were likely to be used in completing either task. The results showed that in both tasks, the meaning- and form- focused planning group produced significantly higher accuracy than the no planning group. This seems to indicate that planning under specific instructions with detailed explanations is the most effective in improving learners’ accuracy. However, unlike in Hulstijn and Hulstijn’s study, it is not clear what caused the improved performance, the individual or the combined effects of specific instructions and planning.

The most recent study by Mochizuki and Ortega (2008) corroborates Sangarun’s (2005) findings. In targeting English relative clauses, beginning EFL learners were asked to carry out a picture-based, oral story-retelling task under guided planning (essentially Sangarun’s meaning- and form- focused instructions), unguided planning (essentially Sangarun’s meaning-focused instructions), or no planning. The guided planners were instructed that
they should retell as detailed a story as possible while referring to the handout that explained how to create English relative clauses. In contrast, the unguided planners were told to convey the details of the story only (without the handout provided). The accuracy of the relative clauses that the participants produced was assessed considering developmental errors and the participants’ low proficiency. The results revealed that the planners produced a significantly higher quality of relative clauses under the guided instructions than did the other two conditions. Together with Sangarun’s study, this finding supports the hypothesis that planning under instructions that give specific guidance positively affects the accuracy of the subsequent language. Nonetheless, as with Sangarun’s study, the researchers did not investigate the effect of specific pretask instructions alone on subsequent speech. They only had three conditions: guided instructions + planning time, unguided instructions + planning time, and unguided instructions + no planning time. Since they lacked the fourth condition (guided instructions + no planning time), one cannot rule out the possibility that the reason for the improved accuracy may have been due to the pretask instructions alone. A future study needs to address this issue.

Despite the positive effects of specific instructions and/or planning opportunity on accuracy, two other studies showed the opposite effects. Foster and Skehan (1999) hypothesized that if planners receive language-focused instructions, their subsequent production will be more accurate than if they receive content-focused instructions. Intermediate EFL learners carried out a decision-making task, which showed no such effect. In a similar vein, their earlier study (1996) reported no accuracy effect. Pre-intermediate EFL learners were asked to complete personal information, narrative, and decision-making tasks under specific versus general instructions. The specific instructions provided basic instructions for task completion and also asked participants to plan for content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar (essentially the same as Sangarun’s (2005) meaning- and form-focused instructions). The general instructions, however, provided basic instructions only. The results were that, surprisingly, in all tasks, planners under general instructions produced the greatest accuracy, though not significantly different from in the other conditions.

It is interesting to note that previous studies that manipulated pretask instructions along with planning reported mixed results for accuracy (Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Sangarun, 2005). Given that more studies reported positive effects for planning under specific instructions, it may be hypothesized that pretask instructions manipulate learners’ orientation of attention to targeted aspects of language, which then influences learners’ focus during planning time. However, contrary to this hypothesis, it is also possible that what actually improved the quality of planned L2 speech may be the separate effects of pretask instructions or planning alone, not a
combination of both. Unfortunately, most previous planning studies have not addressed this issue. Thus, the present study will disentangle these two variables to shed light on both the separate and the combined effects of pretask instructions and planning. The following section will then review previous studies on collaborative dialogue and their accuracy results in the form of resolution of LREs.

2. Collaborative Dialogue Research and Learners’ Linguistic Accuracy

Collaborative dialogue has often been used in L2 research and teaching contexts since it provides learners with a number of learning opportunities (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980; Long & Porter, 1985; Savignon, 1991; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). These opportunities have typically been assessed with an LRE, which Swain and Lapkin (1995) defined as “any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others” (p. 326). Although there have been many studies that have examined the amount of these opportunities or LREs during collaborative dialogue (e.g., Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2002; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001; Kim & McDonough, 2008; Leeser, 2004; Loewen, 2003; Storch, 2007; Swain, 1998; Williams, 1999, 2001), only a few of these have investigated the resolution of LREs in addition to the amount. One examined the accuracy rate between individual work and pair work; another, the effects of a certain task; and the last two, proficiency effects.

More specifically, Storch (2007) investigated whether pair or individual work resulted in different degrees of accuracy. During regularly scheduled hours in four English classrooms of the same level, high intermediate learners were asked, either individually or in pairs, to edit a text that had errors. The LREs that the pair work produced were analyzed for grammatical (i.e., morphology or syntax), lexical (i.e., word choice, meaning, or preposition), and mechanical form (i.e., punctuation, spelling, or pronunciation) and were scored on whether the collaborative outcome was correct, unresolved, or incorrect. The findings indicated that the revised text did not significantly differ when learners collaborated than when they worked individually. However, interestingly, the grammatical LREs, which consisted of most of the total LREs (67%), were 80% correctly resolved.

Swain (1998), on the other hand, explored resolution of LREs under a certain task called a dictogloss. In a dictogloss task, learners are asked to reconstruct a text in writing after listening to it twice. Two classes of French immersion mixed-ability students were asked to carry out four dictogloss tasks. The first three were practice tasks targeting the French number and gender system, while the fourth one was recorded for analysis and targeted the compound past and imperfect. Prior to each dictogloss, the students received a brief but explicit review of the relevant vocabulary and the target grammatical forms. Analyzed for LRE outcomes, the results showed that 55% of total LREs were correctly resolved, 20%
were unresolved, and 8% were incorrectly resolved, suggesting that collaborative dialogue under the dictogloss task benefits learners more than disadvantages them. However, this finding remains descriptive, because the statistical differences between the outcome types are not known. Also, what consists of the total LREs is not certain, although it is likely that most of them, if not all, were grammatical LREs, given the target forms of the study.

Another collaborative dialogue study examined the relationship between proficiency and LRE resolution. Leeser (2004) investigated whether interlocutors’ proficiency has any impact on their ability to resolve linguistic problems by themselves. The participants were grouped into low-low, high-low, and high-high dyads and were asked to undertake a dictogloss that targeted Spanish morphology (preterit and imperfect) during a content-based class. This target dictogloss was preceded by an explicit review of its content and target forms, a video demonstration of a sample dictogloss, and a practice dictogloss that learners had engaged in earlier. The findings were that, pooling all dyads, 77% of total LREs were correctly resolved. Specifically, when different proficiency levels were compared, the high-proficiency dyads correctly resolved their LREs (88%) significantly more often than the other dyads, and the mixed-proficiency dyads correctly resolved their LREs (64%) significantly more often than the low-proficiency dyads (58%). In terms of within-proficiency comparison, the high-proficiency dyads correctly resolved their LREs significantly more often than they left them unresolved (4%) or resolved them incorrectly (8%). Similarly, the mixed-proficiency dyads correctly resolved their LREs significantly more often than they left them unresolved (16%) or resolved them incorrectly (20%). The low-proficiency dyads, on the other hand, showed no differences (unresolved 33%, incorrect 8%). These findings indicate the effect of proficiency in resolving linguistic problems. However, as with Storch (2008), this study did not report LRE resolutions that may have differed depending on LRE type.

The research question concerning proficiency was also recently examined by Kim and McDonough (2008), who used Korean as a second language. In their regularly scheduled Korean classes, the participants (intermediate-intermediate versus intermediate-advanced) completed three practice dictogloss tasks and a target dictogloss preceded by a pre-listening activity on the content and vocabulary of the dictogloss text. The findings support Leeser (2004)’s study in that the intermediate-advanced dyads reached correct resolutions of LREs significantly more often than the intermediate dyads. More specifically, the mixed-proficiency dyads correctly resolved 70% lexical as opposed to 78% grammatical LREs, with unresolved (13% lexical, 10% grammatical) and incorrectly resolved LREs (17% lexical, 12% grammatical). In contrast, the intermediate dyads correctly resolved 58% lexical as opposed to 56% grammatical LREs, with unresolved (28% lexical, 28% grammatical) and incorrectly resolved LREs (15% lexical, 16% grammatical). These differences among types of LRE resolutions look large; unfortunately,
however, this study did not report whether or not the differences were statistically different.

To summarize, the previous collaborative dialogue studies reviewed here (Kim & McDonough, 2008; Leeser, 2004; Storch, 2007; Swain, 1998) have different focuses, but all seem to suggest that there are more advantages to collaboration among learners than there are disadvantages. However, these studies have neglected the possibility that learner collaboration might have different effects depending on what aspect of language they were focusing on. Furthermore, their results remain largely descriptive, limiting their significance. Thus, while addressing these gaps, the present study explores whether type of pretask instructions and/or planning opportunity affect the resolutions of LREs during collaborative dialogue.

III. METHOD

1. Participants

The participants consisted of 110 Korean EFL learners (80 women and 30 men), who were taking English conversation classes at a local university in Korea. They were undergraduate students from American Studies, English Literature and Language, and European Studies. Their ages ranged from 20 to 37 years (M: 24, SD: 3.14) and at the time of the study, they had studied English for 7 to 22 years (M: 11, SD: 2.38). The participants’ proficiency level was determined to be intermediate, which followed the class level as well as the instructors’ overall perceptions. Using an objective measure of proficiency was not important in this study because mixed-level proficiency is the usual situation in an intact language class. Since this study aimed at portraying the typical classroom context that learners and instructors are exposed to, the study becomes more ecologically valid.

2. Materials

Two collaborative dialogue activities were used, one for a practice and one for a target session. The activities involved asking learners to retell the content of six loosely connected pictures and make them into a storyline, to be consistent with previous studies in pretask planning (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996; Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Ortega, 1999). Using a different set of pictures for each session (Heaton, 2001).

If the reader is interested in the role of pretask instructions and/or planning in the types of LREs during collaborative dialogue, please see Park (forthcoming).
1975; see Appendix A for the target pictures), two partners told a story orally, as though they were telling the story to someone who had not seen the pictures before.

3. Operationalizations of Pretask Instructions and Planning Opportunity

Following Foster and Skehan (1996), the pretask instructions consisted of two subtypes: general versus specific instructions. The general instructions were operationalized to contain the general procedures involved in completing a picture-based story retelling. The specific instructions included more specific instructions in which learners should specifically focus on detailed content, smooth organization, grammatical utterances, and appropriate vocabulary, in addition to the general instructions (see Appendix B, an English translation of the specific instructions for planners, as an example). Planning opportunity was operationalized as either providing learners with no planning time or providing them with a 10-minute planning time before engaging in a collaborative dialogue activity. The choice of planning time was based on previous planning studies and a pilot study of the current study in which 10 minutes turned out to be sufficient (e.g., Crookes, 1989; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Wendel, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

4. Procedure

The two collaborative dialogue activities were administered to the students during their normally scheduled classes by visiting them once a week in the two successive weeks. Each class was divided into two groups of students, each group being randomly assigned to one of the four conditions in a separate classroom accompanied by the researcher or a trained research assistant. In order to ensure that the researchers implemented the planned procedure for each condition in the same way, an additional assistant was present with each researcher and took notes on what happened in that classroom. Figure 1 illustrates the entire procedure.

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2 The other three types of pretask instructions were not reported in this paper due to space limitations. However, the general instructions for both planners and nonplanners did not have specific guidance in which learners should specifically focus on content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. Similarly, neither general nor specific instructions for nonplanners contained any words on planning. Finally, all pretask instructions in this study were delivered in Korean.

3 One class could not find an extra classroom nearby, so this class received the same treatment.
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FIGURE 1
Experimental Procedure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1: Practice session</th>
<th>Week 2: Target session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-5 min. general instructions for all participants</td>
<td>4-5 min. respective instructions for all participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min. plan-aloud demonstration for planners</td>
<td>10 min. planning time for planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 min. planning time for planners</td>
<td>20 min. collaborative dialogue for all participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 min. collaborative dialogue for all participants</td>
<td>15 min. questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 min. background survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first week each class was visited, the students were coupled with other students, each of whom was given an audio-recorder with a clip-on microphone. They then received the general instructions and had 15 minutes to engage in a practice collaborative dialogue activity. The general instructions were given to all participants in order not to confound the treatment effects with the possible repetition effects of giving specific instructions in the first week. Those who had time to plan had an additional 5 minutes prior to the dialogue, observing the researcher’s or the assistant’s demonstration of how to plan aloud, receiving the general instructions, and 10 minutes planning for the collaborative activity. When the 15 minutes had passed, all students were asked to fill out a 5 minute background survey. The entire practice session took between 25 and 40 minutes. The second week the participants took part in the study, similar procedures were in place. However, unlike in the first week, all the students, most of whom had the same partners they had had previously, engaged in a 20-minute collaborative activity. Also, those who were assigned to the conditions requiring specific instructions received specific instructions, and those who had planning time skipped the plan-aloud demonstration. In addition, all participants were asked to individually fill out a 15-minute questionnaire upon completing the collaborative activity. The target session took between 40 and 50 minutes.

5. Data Analysis

The collaborative dialogues were transcribed and analyzed for LREs, which were defined as any part of a dialogue where learners talk about, question, or correct their language use, excluding self-correction (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). However, when learners

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4 Due to space limitations, the questionnaire was not reported in this paper. It consists of two sections: one section on planning and the other one on collaborative dialogue. In the first section, the planners were asked, for example, how they used planning time or whether having planning time before the task was helpful or not and why. In the other section, both the planners and the nonplanners were asked, for example, what their focus was in completing the picture-based narrative task or whether talking with their classmates in English was helpful for improving English.
attended to more than one form during a single LRE, all of these LREs were added up as different LREs. Simultaneously, when the same form was repeatedly focused on via many LREs, those LREs were calculated as one (Fortune & Thorp, 2001). The LREs were further categorized into lexical or grammatical LREs (Williams, 1999). Lexical LREs dealt with definition, word form, oral spelling, pronunciation, preposition choice, idiomatic/formulaic expressions, or expressing meaning. Grammatical LREs included word order, agreement, article, tense choice, or omission of verbs. To check for LRE coding reliability, 25% of the data were coded by an independent coder. The inter-rater reliability was 96% for LRE identification and 93% for LRE type. These classified LREs were then coded in terms of whether they were correctly resolved, unresolved, or incorrectly resolved (Leeser, 2004), and a portion of the data that needed a native English speaker’s judgment was checked by two native speakers of English, resolving any discrepancies by discussion. To illustrate the identification, classification, and resolutions of the LREs, three example LREs from the data of the current study are shown below.

Example 1 illustrates a correctly resolved grammatical LRE. In this episode, F1 correctly supplied the plural -s after the word “adult” in turn 1; however, in turn 3, she omitted the -s immediately after F2 undersupplied it in turn 2. After several repetitions of the word, F1 finally noticed the need for the plural -s in turn 7, probably hinted at by F2’s use of the plural be-verb “are” in turn 6. In turn 10, F2 correctly supplied the -s, which F1 confirmed by producing immediate uptake in turn 11 with stress on the plural form and by incorporating it in her next production in turn 13.

Example 1: Correctly resolved, grammatical LRE

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1 F1: adult peop- [adults] are cutting the line =
2 F2: [adult]
3 F1: = adult
4 F2: adult
5 F1: adult
6 F2: adult are
7 F1: adult are?
8 F2: are?
9 F1: adult are adult
10 F2: adults
11 F1: adults uh adults
12 F2: ((laughter)) [adults]
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5 -: abrupt cutoff; [x]: simultaneous speech; -: linked or continuous speech; ((laughter)): laughter; … : pause; ?: rising intonation; bolded letter(s): stressed; ((private speech)): private speech
Example 2 illustrates an unresolved, lexical LRE where F2 asked F1 how to express “cut in line” in English, something which F1 did not know either. Unfortunately, they did not try harder to search for the expression, so they abandoned it and moved on.

Example 2: Unresolved, lexical LRE
1 F2: and what is saychikihata?
   and how do you say “cut in line”??
2 F1: I don’t know ((laughter))
3 F2: so this how can I make ...
4 F1: e...
   uh...
5 F2: they just ride ride ... they ride in in they get in the bus ... laugh laughing
   laughs them behind
6 F1: eum
   mm

Example 3 demonstrates an incorrectly resolved lexical LRE in which two learners did not seem to understand the different usage of the adverbs “fast” and “quickly.” In turn 1, F1 indicated that she did not know how to say “go faster” in English so she inserted the Korean equivalent in her English utterance. F2 noticed this, and both learners tried to come up with the correct expression together. Finally, F1 suggested the adverb “quickly” (or “quick”), which is quite close, but nevertheless incorrect. F2, however, accepted it in turn 6, resulting in an incorrectly resolved lexical LRE.

Example 3: Incorrectly resolved, lexical LRE
1 F1: they they they can mmmm aph ciluta
   go faster
2 F2: aph ciluta?
   go faster?
3 F1: they can go? ((laughter))
4 F2: sting string?
5 F1: te ppalli quickly quicker than bus twenty six
   faster

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6 When learners spoke Korean words, the English translation follows in the second line.
To analyze these data statistically in terms of the occurrence of LRE outcomes, a 2 x 2 logistic regression and a 2 x 2 x 3 repeated logistic regression were performed for both the lexical and the grammatical LREs. The 2 x 2 logistic regression was used to analyze between-group comparison on LRE outcomes per LRE type (lexis vs. grammar); for example, it was used to answer whether the specific group correctly resolved, unresolved, and/or incorrectly resolved their lexical LREs significantly more often than the general instruction group. The variables used for the between-group analysis were (a) type of pretask instructions (specific and general) and (b) planning opportunity (planning and no planning) as the two independent variables and the occurrence of LRE outcomes as the dependent variable. On the other hand, the 2 x 2 x 3 repeated measures logistic regression was performed to conduct a within-group comparison on the occurrence of LRE outcomes. It was used to answer whether, for example, the specific instruction group correctly resolved their lexical LREs significantly more often than they left them unresolved or incorrectly resolved them. The variables used for the within-group analysis were (a) type of pretask instructions (specific and general), (b) planning opportunity (planning and no planning), and (c) type of LRE outcome (correctly resolved, unresolved, or incorrectly resolved) as the three independent variables, with the repeated measures on the last variable, and the occurrence of LRE outcomes as the dependent variable. Thus, the reason for using the repeated measures logistic regression was that although the analyzed data came from a single target session (i.e., the second week/session), each dyad was measured three times on the dependent variable per LRE type. Finally, the assumption for conducting logistic regression analysis was investigated, and all three sets of data (i.e., the occurrence of the three types of LRE outcome) followed the binomial distribution, which means that the assumption is satisfied.

III. RESULTS

The research question asked whether type of pretask instructions and/or pretask planning affect the outcome of LREs during collaborative dialogue. As shown in Table 1, whether or not learners had general or specific instructions and/or had planning time or no planning time, all pair groups produced similar percentages of correctly resolved, unresolved, and incorrectly resolved lexical and grammatical LREs. In the case of the main effects of pretask instructions and their correct resolutions, GI learners, for instance, produced 42% correctly resolved lexical LREs, while SI learners produced 48% correctly
resolved lexical LREs. In terms of grammatical LREs, GI learners produced 67% correctly resolved LREs, while SI learners produced 69% correctly resolved LREs. The other groups, too, displayed slight differences. As a result, no significant between-group differences were found.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>LRE Resolutions by Pretask Instruction Type &amp; Planning Opportunity</th>
<th>Lexical LREs</th>
<th>Grammatical LREs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI &amp; PO</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GI (n = 25)</td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IR</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI (n = 30)</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IR</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPL (n = 29)</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.95</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IR</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>PL (n = 26)</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>3.31</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>2.38</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IR</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNPL (n = 14)</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>3.21</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>2.43</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IR</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPL (n = 11)</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IR</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNPL (n = 15)</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IR</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPL (n = 15)</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UR</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IR</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* n = number of dyads. PI = Pretask Instructions; PO = Planning Opportunity. GI = General Instructions; SI = Specific Instructions; NPL = Nonplanning; PL = Planning; GNPL = General Nonplanning; GPL = General Planning; SNPL = Specific Nonplanning; SPL = Specific Planning. CR = Correctly Resolved; UR = Unresolved; IR = Incorrectly Resolved.

**TABLE 2**

Findings from Repeated Measures Logistic Regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Lexical LREs</th>
<th>Grammatical LREs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Chi-Sq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL x INS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL x LRT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INS x LRT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instead, Table 2 shows a statistically significant main effect of LRE resolution type both for lexical ($p = .0065$) and grammatical LREs ($p < .0001$). Table 1 shows that regardless of pretask instructions and/or planning, all dyad groups correctly resolved their lexical and grammatical LREs more often than they did not resolve or incorrectly resolved them. To examine where the significant differences lie in each group, multiple hypothesis testing was conducted with adjusted $p$-values. GPL learners did not resolve their lexical LREs (34%) significantly more often than they incorrectly resolved them (20%, $p = .0192$). In contrast, the same group of learners incorrectly resolved their grammatical LREs (33%) significantly more often than they did not resolve them (6%, $p = .0024$). Also, PL, SI, and SPL learners correctly resolved their grammatical LREs (76%, 69%, and 84%) significantly more often than they incorrectly resolved them (16%, 23%, and 8%; $p = .0024$ or did not resolve them (7%, 8%, and 8%; $p = .0024$). Similarly, NPL, GI, and SNPL learners correctly resolved (63%, 67%, and 59%; $p = .0024$, $p = .0108$, and $p = .0024$) or incorrectly resolved their grammatical LREs (31%, 28%, and 33%; $p = .0024$, $p = .0024$, and $p = .0039$) significantly more often than they did not resolve them (7%, 5%, and 8%).

In summary, regardless of type of pretask instructions and/or planning, most of the collaborative learners correctly resolved their grammatical LREs significantly more often than they did not resolve and/or incorrectly resolved them. In addition, GPL learners incorrectly resolved their grammatical LREs significantly more often than they did not resolve them. Also, these learners showed exactly the opposite pattern with lexical LREs.

**IV. DISCUSSION**

This study set out to explore whether type of pretask instructions and/or planning opportunity affect LRE resolutions during collaborative dialogue. The finding of no effect of pretask instructions and/or planning on either lexical or grammatical LREs may be explained from previous studies in pretask planning. It was thought that the reason learners improved accuracy during subsequent L2 production was due to the specific guidance that they received, which may have influenced the content of the planning (Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Sangarun, 2005). However, two additional variables seemed to have also played a role, more or less in combination.
The Effectiveness of Pretask Activities on Accuracy during Collaborative Dialogue

The first factor may be the provision of an L2 model in the previous studies which was not implemented in the current study. For example, Sangarun (2005) added, in written form, to the meaning- and form-focused specific instructions, specific rules and their example phrases/sentences that were mostly likely to be needed by learners to successfully complete the given tasks. Mochizuki and Ortega (2008) also provided a similar degree of specific, oral instructions to Sangarun’s and in addition to this, a written grammar explanation sheet that contained correct or incorrect sample English relative clauses with the relevant rules on how to form this particular structure. In addition, both specific and general planners listened to the L2 aural narrative that retold the given pictures before they had planning time and produced their own retelling of the same pictures in the L2. Their finding that the specific planners only improved in accuracy may suggest that due to the limited nature of learners’ interlanguage (IL), planning time alone does not necessarily warrant accuracy. Foster and Skehan (1996, 1999) did not provide such explicit, specific L2 sample forms, which may be the reason that despite their specific instructions and planning, they failed to achieve significantly higher accuracy than did the other conditions (i.e., planning under specifically content-focused instructions in their 1999 study, and planning under general instructions in their 1996 study). Indeed, in Foster and Skehan’s 1999 study, the condition that improved accuracy the most, though not significant statistically, was teacher-fronted planning under specific language-focused instructions – in other words, when the teacher assisted the planners with the L2 model.

This lack of L2 input in or with pretask instructions and the consequent lack of access to it during planning time may be perhaps intertwined with the second factor – whether accuracy was measured on a specific targeted L2 form or not. Reflecting the previous planning studies (Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Sangarun, 2005), it surfaces that two of them showed improved accuracy, targeting specific L2 forms. For example, Hulstijn and Hulstijn investigated the use of two Dutch word orders, and Mochizuki and Ortega focused on the use of English relative clauses. In contrast, Foster and Skehan’s two studies measured global accuracy without targeting specific L2 forms. Sangarun’s study is the only one yet that has measured global accuracy, reporting a higher quality of planned language. In other words, together with the L2 model, it may be that for pretask planning to be effective, learners’ attention should be guided specifically towards a specific L2 form using the relevant L2 model rather than being given general instructions with no specifically targeted forms.

The information processing hypothesis (Skehan, 1998; VanPatten, 1990) states that learners, particularly low-proficiency learners, have limited attentional resources to process both meaning and form during a task. This means that if provided with planning time before the task, learners may be able to produce more accurate L2 in the subsequent production. If one combines this with the common result of previous planning studies (i.e.,
planning should be administered under specific guidance) and a specific grammatical L2 form as the language focus, the following hypothesis is formed. That is, if planners are specifically guided to focus on a specific grammatical L2 form with a relevant L2 model before a task, they may be able to devote more of their attentional resources to this area during the task, leading to a higher quality of that targeted language in the subsequent L2 production. This seems to be true compared to in the L2 task that is carried out after they attend to a range of L2 forms surfacing here and there during the completion of the task. In fact, little is known about the effectiveness of pretask planning on the use of a specific L2 form in the subsequent task production (e.g., Crookes, 1989; Ellis, 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Sangaran, 2005; Wendel, 1997; Williams, 1992; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Thus, there is a need for future research to replicate the few previous planning studies that investigated the use of a specific L2 form. In this research, a focused production task that elicits a specific linguistic feature (Ellis, 2005) is called for rather than the unfocused task used in the current study.

Though pretask instructions and/or planning alone did not promote correct resolutions of LREs among the different groups, this study found that most of the participant dyads correctly resolved their grammatical LREs significantly more often than they did not resolve and/or incorrectly resolved them. This supports the descriptive results of previous collaborative dialogue studies that reported a tendency towards more correctly resolved LREs than unresolved or incorrectly resolved LREs. Storch, (2007), for example, reported that 80% of grammatical LREs were resolved correctly by the high intermediate dyads. Kim and McDonough’s (2008) study also displayed a similar tendency (78% for advanced-intermediate dyads and 56% for intermediate dyads). Thus, along with the 61% to 84% of correctly resolved grammatical LREs found in this study (see Table 1), it is suggested that learners, particularly intermediate or higher than intermediate, have the ability to correctly resolve their grammatical problems on their own to a high degree.

In terms of lexical LREs, however, no statistical differences were found except for a reverse pattern with GPL learners between lexical and grammatical LREs. That is, while not resolving their lexical LREs significantly more often than incorrectly resolving them, they did exactly the opposite with grammatical LREs. A possible explanation may be that learners behave differently in resolving different types of linguistic problems. In terms of lexical problems, if learners do not know how to express a certain meaning (or a specific aspect of a picture) and/or do not have the needed vocabulary, they seem to simply avoid expressing it and/or replace it with Korean words/phrases. This is understandable because once learners do not have certain lexical items and/or phrases in storage in their IL, there is no way they can retrieve them either (Nattinger & DeCarrio, 1992). This is even more so if one considers that Korean and English belong to completely different language families (Finegan, 2008). As a result, learners’ lexical problems are left unresolved, and the
meaning that they could not express is left out of their storyline as well (see Example 2 in the Methods section).

For grammatical LREs, on the other hand, learners tend to apply what they know to the context no matter how adequate it is in that particular context, as long as they have a lexical form at hand with which to attach grammatical forms. In other words, if their existing knowledge matches a specific context, it leads to a correct LRE; if it does not, it results in an incorrect LRE. Table 1 supports this possibility, showing that seven out of eight groups produced a higher number of incorrectly resolved rather than unresolved grammatical LREs. To illustrate this explanation, an incorrectly resolved grammatical LRE, extracted from the data of the current study, is provided in Example 4. In this episode, two learners are trying to say that because the bus is full of people, the three boys cannot take the bus. However, they incorrectly added the past participle to the end of the adjective, “full.” It seems that neither learner is aware of the fact that “full” is an adjective and cannot take a verb ending like the past participle. However, since they (appeared to) have knowledge of the passive voice and the lexical item to use, they seemed to apply their limited, incomplete knowledge to this context. Consequently, their grammatical problem was incorrectly resolved.

Example 4: Incorrectly resolved, grammatical LRE

1  F2: ... Uh bus is are uh full ((laughter)) full by fullled? fulling?
2  F1: full... ed? ani-ka?
4  F1: e

The intermediate or advanced learners’ strong tendency to correctly resolve their grammatical problems on their own (61% to 84%) provides some pedagogical implications for L2 teachers. That is, L2 teachers may consider this proficiency range when implementing collaborative dialogue activities to teach grammatical structures. For example, if learners are beginning proficiency learners, they may need additional assistance such as a list of grammatical structures they can choose from. They are also likely to require more of the teacher’s attention while performing the activities, as opposed to intermediate or advanced proficiency learners who can work more independently.

The relatively low likelihood of learners resolving their lexical problems on their own (40% to 51%) and their tendency to abandon these problems when they cannot resolve them also offer some teaching implications. As noted in the data of the present study, some learners expressed frustration when they did not know continuously the words that they
wanted to use in English. This may have led them to lose interest in the task they were involved in. Thus, it may be better to provide a list of English words/phrases along with the set of pictures to retell the story from so that they can refer to these whenever they need to in the retelling. Furthermore, if learners have useful words and/phrases for task completion at hand, they do not have to give their attention to lexical searches, which leaves more attentional capacity to devote to the other cognitive and linguistic aspects of task completion (Skehan, 1998; VanPatten, 1990).

In addition to providing learners with useful vocabulary for task completion to keep them interested in the task and to reduce their cognitive and linguistic pressures, providing matching pictures together with L2 words may have some other implications for language teachers. This is not directly related to the research question of this study, but since this study used pictures as the major data collection tool and pictures can be easily used in a classroom, it seems worth allocating some space for discussion of the use of pictures in L2 vocabulary learning. The principal EFL vocabulary learning strategy is memorizing a list of words through their L1 translations (Jiang, 2004). In other words, EFL learners are trained to understand L2 words through the L1 as the medium, which may mistakenly guide them to comprehend an L2 passage only after translating each word in that passage into their mother tongue (Yi, 2006). In overcoming this L2 vocabulary learning strategy, it may be helpful for the teacher to provide pictures which depict the meaning of an L2 word to help learners map the concept of an L2 word directly onto the L2 lexical form. To illustrate this, picture 1 in Appendix A describes a scene where a huge truck was passing by the bus stop, splashing those who were waiting for the bus. As indicated in most of the transcriptions, a majority of the learners had difficulty describing this content in English and particularly did not know the word “splash.” One way to present this lexical form and its semantic meaning is, as previously mentioned, simply to present the L2 form with its L1 translation (or with its L2 definition) without any other information. Another way to present the word may be to show the L2 word alongside the corresponding picture depicting the semantic meaning of the word used in such a context. In other words, seeing the picture, learners not only understand the meaning of the word but also the feelings associated with the word used in that context, depicted by the other elements of the picture, in this case, the frowning faces of those who were splashed by the muddy water.

The use of pictures in a language learning situation also seems to have a potential benefit for promoting contextualized use of L2 grammar. Celce-Murcia and Hilles (1988) stated that a series of pictures that tells a narrative like the one employed in the present study are likely to elicit certain grammatical structures such as tense or conjunctions and subordinators. For example, the participants in the present study were asked to begin picture 1 in Appendix A with “One day, three boys…” Those who started with the past tense tried to keep the tense consistent throughout the retelling or attempted to change it
based on the context. Also, most learners tried to use the pronouns appropriately in context. Sometimes they used incorrect pronouns in number and/or gender in referring to the person or persons mentioned previously. However, when they used the pronouns incorrectly, they often corrected themselves or pointed them out to others by simply recasting them and/or discussing them metacognitively. Thus, when learners are asked to produce a narrative with a series of pictures, they are likely to use and practice certain grammatical structures in context and possibly to communicate about the grammatical problems they encounter. This is desirable in an EFL context where grammar has been taught discretely by teacher-led instruction rather than communicatively in a learner-centered context (Fotos, 1998). In addition, when the pictures are interesting or entertaining such as the one in the present study, they can motivate and stimulate learners in a way that formal grammar instruction, which mainly uses a textbook or board, cannot (Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1988). Therefore, L2 teachers are strongly encouraged to implement collaborative dialogue where students can learn grammar in context and communicate about their grammatical problems.

In conclusion, the present study investigated whether type of pretask instructions and/or planning influence learners’ ability to resolve their linguistic problems during collaborative dialogue. The findings are limited in that no matter if and/or how they planned, most of the dyads correctly resolved their grammatical problems quite frequently. The most likely reason for these results may be that in addition to provision of planning time and specific guidance, provision of an L2 model focused on a specific linguistic feature in or with the pretask instructions may also be necessary so that learners can refer to this sample language during planning time (Foster & Skehan, 1996, 1999; Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984; Mochizuki & Ortega, 2008; Sangarun, 2005). The lack of a specific L2 model is perhaps the major limitation of the current study. More about the limitations will be discussed in the follow section, along with the directions for future research.

V. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several limitations which should be acknowledged along with the corresponding future research directions. As previously mentioned, the purpose of the study was to portray as closely as possible the normal learning situation in a language course; thus, mixed-level proficiency was not controlled in the study design. However, as an anonymous reviewer pointed out, it is possible that the mixed proficiency ranges in and among dyads may have affected the resolution of their LREs. A future study would then employ the objective measure of proficiency and explore whether proficiency can also affect learners’ use of pretask activities and the resulting effects on the subsequent
production. To examine this question, both qualitative and quantitative research methodology would be needed. Another limitation, which was mentioned in the previous section, is the lack of L2 model available to the participants of this study. Given that learners have incomplete IL representations, for accuracy to improve in 10 min planning time, they would probably need to be provided with some sort of L2 model or sample language that they can refer to while planning. In addition, it was hypothesized that the provision of a specific L2 form may further direct and devote most of the learners’ attention to the particular form, resulting in a higher quality of language in subsequent production. A follow-up study needs to test this hypothesis to see if attending to accuracy over a range of L2 forms versus over one specific targeted one makes any difference in the resultant language. For this research, both a focused production task like the one in Mochizuki and Ortega (2008) and an unfocused production task like the one used in the present study should be administered.

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APPENDIX A
Waiting for a Bus
APPENDIX B
Pretask Instructions for Specific Planners

Student A and student B will each receive a paper that contains six pictures. If you describe the pictures in the given order, it will make a story. Now I would like you to retell the story in English. When you do so, please make it as detailed as possible as if you were going to tell it to somebody who has never seen them before. If you think that some of the pictures do not go together, you may add new content in order to make them work. So, what A and B should do is to work together to make one English story. In discussing it, you may choose to speak English, Korean, or both, but do not write. However, when you actually retell the story from picture 1 to picture 6, you should only speak English as much as possible. You have 20 minutes and your story should start with the following: One day, three boys… Before you work with your partner, in order to assist you to prepare, you will be given a sheet of paper to take notes on. But please do not write a complete sentence either in Korean or English. Also, to assist you to prepare, you will be given 10 minute planning time. Please don’t forget to think aloud loudly and clearly. When thinking aloud, you can choose either Korean or English, whichever language you feel comfortable in. In 10 minutes, your notes will be taken away and you will begin to retell the story in English with your partner. Now you will be given the paper containing the six pictures. (Students received the papers.) While you are planning, please pay attention to detailed content, smooth organization, grammatical utterances, and appropriate vocabulary. If you have no questions, please start thinking aloud now. (10 minutes have passed.) It’s time for you and your partner to begin. Please begin now.

Applicable levels: secondary and tertiary education
Key words: pretask instructions, pretask planning, resolution of language-related episodes (focus on form), collaborative dialogue, EFL

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