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Research Paper

Effects of Audio-Visually Prompted Collaborative Dialogue on EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension Development

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Abstract

This study investigated the comparative effects of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue on the listening comprehension development of symmetrical, asymmetrical, and asymmetrical teacher-fronted EFL learner groups. Besides, it explored the attitude of the participants of the groups concerning the effectiveness of collaborative dialogue for their listening comprehension improvement. The participants of the study were 120 Iranian female EFL learners who were conveniently chosen from several English language institutes and put into three experimental and one control groups, each with 30 learners. In the first experimental group, coequal learners engaged in collaborative dialogue. In the second experimental group, the expert peer(s) and less knowledgeable peers applied collaborative dialogue, and in the third experimental group, in addition to the peers, the teacher was involved in collaborative dialogue with the group members. As for the control group, the collaborative dialogue was abandoned and the participants worked individually. Quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that collaborative dialogue in asymmetrical teacher-fronted, asymmetrical peer and symmetrical peer groups were respectively the most effective procedures for listening comprehension development of the EFL learners. Also, it was found that

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the participants of the asymmetrical teacher fronted group had a more positive attitude towards the efficacy of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue compared with asymmetrical and symmetrical peer groups. The findings underscore the cognitive and affective efficiency of a more knowledgeable source, either a teacher or a peer, in asymmetrical dyadic interactions for the less knowledgeable partners' ZPD sensitive development.

***Keywords**:* Collaborative dialogue, Scaffolding, Expert peer, Co-equal peer, Listening comprehension, EFL learners

Jean Piaget and Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky are often associated with the constructivist school of thought. For Piaget, "learning is a developmental process that involves change, self-regulation, and construction, each building on prior learning experiences" (Kaufman, 2004, p. 304). However, for Vygotsky (1978), "children's thinking and meaning-making is socially constructed and emerges out of their social interactions with their environment" (Kaufman, 2004, p. 304). To Vygotsky, knowledge is a change from the interpsychological status to intrapsychological status (McCarthy& McMahon, 1992) and learning is first intermental, then it becomes intramental (Mitchell & Myles, 2013).

Such Vygotskian (1978, 1986) dispositions on the nature of knowledge and learning encapsulated in his sociocultural theory of mind (SCT) compelled Swain (2000) to extend her output hypothesis (Swain, 1985; 1995), to what she termed 'collaborative dialogue' (Swain, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 2001). In doing so, she aimed at emphasizing the function of collaborative dialogue as a socially constructed tool that helps second language learning through "mediating its own construction and construction of knowledge about itself " (Swain, 2000, p.112). Collaborative dialogue is a dialogue in which learners collaboratively "engage in problem-solving and knowledge building" in the second language learning process (Swain, 2000, p.102).

Although some studies have reported that collaborative dialogue plays an effective role in L2 learning (e.g., Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002) and certain kinds of learner groupings and patterns of interaction are more helpful for L2 learning than others (e.g., Kowal & Swain, 1994, 1997; Leeser, 2004; Storch, 2001, 2002; Yule & Macdonald, 1990), the efficacy of collaborative dialogue for the improvement of L2 learners' listening skill has rarely been explored (e.g., Garcia & Asencion, 2001; He & Ellis, 1999). As a partial attempt in this regard, this study was an attempt to examine if different patterns of EFL learners' grouping influences the efficacy of collaborative dialogue for the listening comprehension improvement of EFL learners. Moreover, the study explored the L2 learners' attitudes towards various patterns of collaborative dialogue in symmetrical, asymmetrical, and teacher mediated group work contexts.

Literature Review

Collaborative Language Learning and Collaborative Dialogue

Collaborative dialogue is used to refer to much the same idea as scaffolding in SCT (Ellis, 2008) and it is viewed as a result of speaking or co-construction of meaning that could be questioned, improved, or discredited (Swain & Watanabe, 2013). In collaborative dialogue, the learners mutually scaffold each other by giving and receiving help as they interact with each other to find how to express their intended meaning (Swain, 2000). While working on a particular task, learners become contributing members who share their available knowledge and resources for joint decision making and problem-solving (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). This mutual knowledge construction leads to the individual's access to each other's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and their assisted performance (Ohta, 2000; Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009). According to Swain (2000), collaborative dialogue is both

a cognitive and a social tool that mediates language learning. Moreover, it is a meta-cognitive tool that makes language form and function visible to the interlocutors (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Collaborative dialogue is a type of languaging as well (Swain & Watanabe, 2013) and is claimed to be a source of second language learning (Swain, 2006, 2010). Languaging refers to a "process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (Swain, 2006, p. 98), the aim of which is to solve a cognitive problem by using language as a mediating tool (Swain & Watanabe, 2013).

Swain (2001) maintains that a collaborative task that requires learners to work in pairs and attend to both language form and content can prompt collaborative dialogue. Audio-visually prompted tasks seem to be among the activities which could stimulate collaborative dialogue among EFL/ESL learners mainly on the grounds that as many educators observe, the use of audio or video tools has become an essential part of the educational settings in general and language learning in specific (Burns & Siegel, 2018; Herrero, 2016). Woolfolk (2016) suggests teachers incorporate various activities including videos and group works to keep students involved and interested as the video technique will enhance the authenticity of communicative teaching, and integrate simulation exercises in language learning situations (Zettersten, 1986) and authentic group discussions.

From the information processing theorists' point of view, group discussion is valuable as it helps group members to practice and extend their knowledge through reviewing, organizing, and connecting their information during its process (Woolfolk, 2016). During the process of group discussion, those learners who ask questions, receive answers, and explain problems are expected to learn more than those whose questions remain unasked or unanswered (Woolfolk, 2016). It appears that the more thoughtful and elaborate explanations a learner gives to others in a group, the more the

explainer learns (Woolfolk, 2016). On the other hand, it needs to be considered that without careful teachers' planning and monitoring, group interactions might hinder learning and social relations in classrooms instead of improving them (Gillies & Boyle, 2011) partly because, for instances, misconceptions, incorrect, or superficial understanding might occur (Battistich, Solomon, & Delucci, 1993), particular learners might dominate the others, low-status learner ideas might be overlooked or even mocked whereas high-status student proposals are acknowledged and strengthened, regardless of the validity of any set of ideas (Anderson, Holland, & Palincsar, 1997).

Empirical Research

Up until now, the studies of collaborative dialogue have explored patterns of pair interactions (e.g., Storch, 2002; Watanabe & Swain, 2007), focus on form in pair tasks (Philp, Walter, & Basturkmen, 2010), the levels of L2 proficiency (e.g., Kim & McDonough, 2008; Leeser, 2004; Storch & Aldosari, 2013; Watanabe, 2008), type of tasks (e.g., de la Colina & Garcia Mayo, 2007; Swain & Lapkin, 2001), computer-mediated communication (e.g., McDonough & Sunitham, 2009; Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009) and the application of various mediational means including scaffolding (e.g., Ahmadi Safa & Rozati, 2017; Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2000; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1998), repetition (DiCamilla & Antón, 1997), and the use of the L1 (Antón & DiCamilla, 1999; Scott & De la Fuente, 2008; Thoms, Liao & Szustak, 2005; Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996). More recently, Baker (2020) introduces various types of educational dialogue and enquires into the principles of these dialogues. Gillies (2019) also reviews the studies on the importance of collaborative dialogue and its effect on the cognitive developments and promotion of problem-solving skills.

Against this backdrop and as the studies on the role of collaborative dialogue in EFL learners' listening comprehension development are quite rare (Swain & Watanabe, 2013) and the term scaffolding is used to refer to much the same idea as collaborative dialogue (Tavakoli, 2012), it seems inevitable to review some of the studies that focus on the impact of scaffolding and/or collaborative dialogue on the development of other L2 skills in addition to listening comprehension development as well.

He and Ellis (1999) compared the effectiveness of the peers' and teachers' scaffolding in post-listening tasks and concluded that although the learners took advantage of the teacher's scaffolding, they profited more from working with their peers. Rather similar findings were reported in Ahmadi Safa and Rozati (2017) that examined the impact of expert and co-equal peers' scaffolding on listening comprehension improvement of intermediate EFL learners and confirmed the superiority of the expert peers' scaffolding over coequals and teacher scaffolding. Contrastingly, Ableeva (2008) and Poehner (2005) investigated the effects of teacher mediation on L2 listening comprehension, instruction and assessment and reported that teacher mediation facilitated and enhanced the L2 learners' ability to comprehend authentic auditory language. Besides, their findings revealed that the teacher's intervention could help teachers to determine sources of the learners' comprehension problems. Al-Yami (2008) and Garcia and Ascencion (2001) studied the influence of scaffolding on the development of the listening comprehension ability of L2 learners and concluded that scaffolding techniques had a positive influence on listening comprehension improvement of the learners.

Focusing on language learners' writing skill, several studies compared the writings of the learners working in pairs applying some forms of collaborative interaction with those working individually (e.g., Dobao, 2012; Nassaji &

Tian, 2010; Storch, 2005; Storch & Aldosari, 2013; Toth, 2011; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). The findings revealed that collaborative task completion in pairs led to more accuracy or higher ability in task completion.

Furthermore, Ohta (2001) examined the interactions that occurred during peer collaborative dialogues among EFL learners. The findings revealed that even less proficient peers could offer assistance to more proficient peers. In contrast, Swain and Lapkin (1998) observed that mediation may not always be effective and occasions may arise in which 'expert' mediation is required. Several studies (e.g., Leeser, 2004; Kim & McDonough, 2008) revealed that as the proficiency of the dyads increased, the learners produced a considerably greater number of Language-Related Episodes (LRE). However, Edstrom (2015), Storch (2001, 2002), and Watanabe and Swain (2007) reported that the proficiency level of the learners may not play a crucial role in their peer's second language development, rather it is a different pattern of peer interaction which is of more importance in this process.

Based on the literature reviewed and briefly reported above, it seemed that collaborative task completion and dialogue might enhance L2 learners' listening comprehension ability; however, attempts were made in this study to investigate the effect of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in groups with different scaffolding and grouping schemes on the EFL learners' listening comprehension development. In addition, attempts were made to explore the attitudes of the participants towards the given techniques. To these ends, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Does audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in symmetrical peer groups have any significant effect on the listening comprehension improvement of EFL learners?

2. Does audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in asymmetrical peer groups have any significant effect on the listening comprehension improvement of EFL learners?
3. Does audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups have any significant effect on the listening comprehension improvement of EFL learners?
4. Is there any significant difference among the effectiveness of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in symmetrical peer, asymmetrical peer, and asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups, on the one hand, and individualistic listening in the control group, on the other, for the listening comprehension improvement of EFL learners?
5. What do the symmetrical, asymmetrical, and asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups' members think about the efficacy of the audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue for their listening comprehension development?

Method

Participants

The participants were 120 Iranian female EFL learners from Hamedan province ranging in age from 15 to 26. They were chosen from intermediate level classrooms of two English language institutes. They were, first, selected through convenience sampling, and then, based on proficiency test results, they were assigned to different study groups. The researchers also invited two associate EFL teachers to help them in the data collection process.

Instruments and Materials

Abridged Sample TOEFL Junior Standard Test. The first instrument was an abridged sample of the TOEFL Junior Standard Test which was used as a measure of the general proficiency level of the subjects. The listening

comprehension section of the same test also was used as the pre and post-test. Concerning the reason for the abridgment of the test, it is noteworthy that the practicality considerations and the limiting regulations of English institutes compelled the researchers to curtail the test to half of its original length to suit the allotted time and institutional limitations.

To abridge the sample test, the researchers chose the even items of the full test. The resulting abridged sample test comprised 63 multiple-choice items in three parts of Language Form and Meaning, Listening Comprehension, and Reading Comprehension. Each part contained 21 four-choice items with 21 minutes of allotted test-taking time (Educational Testing Service, 2015). However, as the reliability of a test is heavily reliant on its length, steps were taken for the revalidation and the reliability re-estimation of the abridged sample test. First, two experts in the field were requested to comment on the adequacy of the test items, the sufficiency of the number of the items in each part, and the construct coverage and relevance of the abridged sample test. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency measure was used to reassess the reliability of the abridged sample. The re-estimated total reliability index of the sample test was $\alpha = 0.82$, and the re-estimated reliability of the listening comprehension section of the test turned out to be $\alpha = 0.75$.

Short Animation Videos. The second instrument comprised of several authentic short animation videos which served as the audio-visual prompts. The criteria for the choice of the animations were the voice clarity and a relatively low-speed speech delivery of the characters. The content relevance of the videos to the age level of the participants was not considered as a determining selection criterion. The selected short animations were *Mater's Tall Tales: Time Travel Mater* (2012), *Dug's Special Mission* (2009), *George and A.J*, (2009), *Hawaiian Vacation* (2011), *Jack-Jack Attack* (2005), *Mater and the Ghostlight* (2006), *Mike's New Car* (2002), *Partysaurus Rex* (2012),

Small Fry (2011), *The Legend of Mordu* (2012) from Walt Disney Pictures, Pixar Animation Studios; *Frosen Fever* (2015), *Tangled ever after* (2012) from Walt Disney Pictures, Walt Disney Animation Studios; *Puss in Boots: The Three Diablos* (2012) from DreamWorks Animation; *Granny O Grimm Sleeping beauty* (2008) from Brown Bag Films, Irish Film Board.

Animation-Related Listening Comprehension Quizzes. The third instrument included several animation-related listening comprehension quizzes that were developed by the researchers. Each quiz involved a various number of multiple-choice listening comprehension questions, including four to nine items depending on the length of the videos. Two experts in the field were asked to judge the relevance and coverage of the items of the quizzes. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha internal consistency was applied to evaluate the reliability measure of the animation-related listening comprehension quizzes. Table 1 summarizes the reliability indices of the quizzes.

Table 1.

The Reliability Statistics of the Animation-related Listening Comprehension Quizzes

Quiz	N of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Cars Toon-Time Travel Mater	۶	.۷۶
Dug's Special Mission	۵	.۷۳
Frozen Fever	۷	.۷۷
George & A.J.	۵	.۷۵
Granny O Grimm Sleeping Beauty	۵	.۷۴
Hawaiian Vacation	۶	.۷۳
Jack-Jack Attack	۵	.۷۵
Mater and Ghost light	۴	.۷۲
Mike's New Car	۴	.۷۱
Partysaurus Rex	۵	.۷۲
Puss in Boots-The Three Diablos	۹	.۷۹
Small Fry	۶	.۷۶
Tangled Ever After	۴	.۷۱
The Legend of Mordu	۸	.۷۸

Semi-structured Interview

The last instrument was a researcher-made semi-structured interview which consisted of 8 question items addressing the participants' attitudes towards the audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue (see Appendix B). In an attempt to ensure the dependability of interview findings, two TEFL researchers were requested to reflectively appraise the interview process and content. They commented on the design of the semi-structured interview, adequacy and usefulness of the questions, and adjustments were made accordingly.

Data Collection Procedures

At the outset of the study, informed consent and permissions were obtained from the involved learners, teachers, and the institute managers. Secondly, two associate teachers with approximately similar teaching experiences and proficiency levels were invited to assist in the data collection stages and all the steps were adequately clarified for them in a 90-minute briefing session.

Next, the researchers chose twelve intact classes at an intermediate level of general English proficiency from two language institutes of Hamedan. Each intact class included 10 female EFL learners. Because of the limited number of learners in the classes, every three selected classes were considered as a single research group, so that each research group included 30 learners. Three groups served as experimental groups (A total of 30 female learners in each one), and one served as the control group (30 female learners). It is noteworthy that in addition to one of the researchers, the associate teachers were involved in collecting data in each one of the experimental and control groups.

During six weeks, excluding pretest and proficiency test administration session (session one) and posttest and interview session (session15), 13

treatment sessions were held by the researchers and the associate teachers. The classes were held three days a week. Each session lasted for an hour and a half, and approximately 25-40 minutes of the class time was allocated to the study depending on the time length of the short animations. To assess the participants' level of proficiency, they sat for an abridged version of a sample of the TOEFL Junior Standard Test and according to the test results, the co-equal peers and the expert peers in each classroom were identified based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) rubrics. To this end, the learners' correct responses to each part of the test were mapped to a scale ranging from 200 to 300 in increments of 5. Next, based on the scaled scores, they were assigned to various levels of belowA2, CEFR Level A2, CEFR Level B1, and CEFR Level B2. The learners with listening comprehension scores under 225 were assigned to belowA2, 225 to 245 were assigned to CEFR Level A2, 250 to 285 were assigned to CEFR Level B1, and those who scored 290-300 were assigned to CEFR Level B2 (Educational Testing Service, 2015). Expert peers in each group were those whose CEFR level was at least one level higher than the other group mates and the co-equal peers were those who had a similar CEFR level.

In the first experimental group (symmetrical group), at least two co-equal members were assigned to each subgroup. However, in the second and third experimental groups (asymmetrical and asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups), at least an expert peer and a less knowledgeable peer were put into each subgroup. During each treatment session, in all groups, first, a silent version of a short animation was played. Then, the groups were asked to discuss the theme and the plot of the animation. Next, the voiced version of the animation was played after which the learners were requested to share and discuss their understanding with their group members. Finally, they were asked to answer the animation-related quizzes. In the asymmetrical teacher-

fronted group, the teacher also joined each subgroup for a short time and engaged in collaborative dialogue with the group members. However, in the control group, in each session, the learners were asked to listen to the same animations individually, and then answer the animation-related multiple choice quizzes without any help from the teacher or the peers. After the 13 treatment sessions, participants of all groups were given the listening part of the same abridged version of a sample of the TOEFL Junior Standard Test as a measure of their listening comprehension improvement. Furthermore, 10 participants from each of the experimental groups were invited to sit a semi-structured interview probing into the efficacy of the method applied in their group.

Data Analysis

The collected data were fed into and analyzed by the SPSS program. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to all sets of scores to assure the normality of data distribution. Moreover, a one-way ANOVA analysis was employed on the scores of the TOEFL *Junior* Standard test to ensure the homogeneity of groups in terms of their general English proficiency. To answer the first, second, and third research questions, a paired-samples *t*-test was used. Concerning the fourth research question, a one way ANOVA was run on the participants' posttest scores. Moreover, to determine the differences between the groups, a Tukey post-hoc analysis was utilized. At last, to answer the fifth research question, the obtained data were subjected to qualitative content analysis.

Results

As stated above, to check the normality of data distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to the TOEFL *Junior* Standard test,

pretest, and posttest scores of the four groups, the results of which revealed that the data were normally distributed. Moreover, to confirm the homogeneity of the group members' English general proficiency, a one-way ANOVA was run on the scores of the TOEFL *Junior* Standard test and the results showed no statistically significant difference among the performance of the groups at the outset of the study. Furthermore, to test the homogeneity of the groups regarding the listening comprehension ability of the participants, another one way ANOVA was run on the listening comprehension pretest scores, the findings of which showed no statistically significant difference in the pretest scores of the groups (see Appendix A for the abovementioned preliminary analyses results).

To answer the research questions one to three and test the related null hypotheses addressing the impact of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in symmetrical, asymmetrical, and asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups on listening comprehension improvement of EFL learners, three paired-samples *t*-tests were run. The results are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Three Groups

		Mean	N	SD
1.Symmetrical	Pre1	8.63	30	4.081
	Pos1	9.67	30	4.229
2.Asymmetrical	Pre2	8.73	30	3.999
	post2	11.23	30	4.207
3.Asymmetrical teacher-fronted	Pre3	8.67	30	4.080
	Post3	13.07	30	3.973

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the groups' pre- and post-test results. As shown in the Table, the listening scores of all three groups

increased from pretest to posttest. Nevertheless, the significance of the differences needs to be checked against the inferential data in Table 3.

Table 3.
Paired Sample T-test Analysis of the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Four Groups

		Paired Differences								
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
		M	*SD*	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	*t*	*df*	*p*	Effect size
1.Symmetrical	Pre1 - Pos1	-1.033	.556	.102	-1.241	-.826	-10.179	29	.000	.000
2.Asymmetrical	Pre2 - post2	-2.500	.572	.104	-2.714	-2.286	-23.924	29	.000	.95
3.Asymmetrical teacher-fronted	Pre3 - Post3	-4.400	.563	.103	-4.610	-4.190	-42.788	29	.000	.95

The results of the groups' paired sample t-tests are demonstrated in Table 3. As is evident, the null hypotheses assuming no significant differences among the groups' pretest and posttest scores were rejected. A statistically significant increase was found in the scores from pretest (M = 8.63, SD =

4.08) to posttest (*M* = 9.67, *SD* = 4.22), *t*(29) = -10.179, *p* < .05 in the symmetrical group. According to Cohen (1988, pp.284-287), the eta squared statistic (.78) indicated a large effect size.

Moreover, a statistically significant increase was found in the scores from pretest (*M* = 8.73, *SD* = 3.99) to posttest 2 (*M* = 11.23, *SD* = 4.20), *t*(29) = -23.92, *p* < .05 in the asymmetrical group. The eta squared statistic (.95) verified a large effect size.

As can be seen in Table 3, there was also a statistically significant increase in the scores from pretest (*M* = 8.67, *SD* = 4.08) to posttest (*M* = 13.07, *SD* = 3.97), *t*(29) = -5.385, *p* < .05 in the asymmetrical teacher-fronted group. The eta squared statistic (.98) displayed a large effect size.

To address the fourth research question, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance was applied to compare the differences between the effectiveness of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in the experimental and control groups. The results are illustrated in Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7.

Table 4.
Descriptive Statistics of the Posttest Scores of the Four Groups

	N	*M*	*SD*	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
1. Symmetrical	30	9.67	4.229	.772	8.09	11.25	2	19
2. Asymmetrical	30	11.23	4.207	.768	9.66	12.80	4	19
3. Asymmetrical teacher-fronted	30	13.07	3.973	.725	11.58	14.55	6	20
4. Control	30	9.07	3.183	.581	7.88	10.26	3	16
Total	120	10.76	4.173	.381	10.00	11.51	2	20

Table 4 demonstrates the descriptive statistics of the groups' collective performances in the posttest. As indicated in Table 4, the mean score of

posttest results for the asymmetrical teacher-fronted group (*M* = 13.07, *SD* = 3.97) was rather higher than that of the asymmetrical group (*M* = 11.23, *SD* = 4.20) and symmetrical group (*M* = 9.67, SD = 4.22) respectively. The control group had the lowest mean score (9.07, SD = 3.18). To explore whether the differences among the groups were significant, a one-way between-groups ANOVA was applied to see whether the variances of the groups were homogeneous, and Levene's test of homogeneity of variances was checked as well (*p* = .242).

Table 5.
One Way Between-groups Analysis of Variance *of the Posttest Scores of the Four Groups*

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*	Eta squared
Between Groups	۲۸۸,۲۲۵	۳	۹۶,۰۷۵	۶,۲۴۸	.001	.13
Within Groups	۱۷۸۳,۷۶۷	۱۱۶	۱۵,۳۷۷			
Total	۲۰۷۱,۹۹۲	۱۱۹				

As revealed in Table 5, the results of the one-way between-group analysis of variance showed a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in the posttest scores of the four groups: $F(3, 119) = 6.2$, $p = .001$. The effect size (eta squared = 0.13) indicated that the difference among the mean scores was large (Cohen, 1988, pp.284-287); furthermore, to spot the exact location of the differences, Tukey HSD post hoc test was applied (Table 6).

Table 6.

Tukey Post-hoc Test for the Participants' Posttest Scores

					95% Confidence Interval	
(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	*p*	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1. Symmetrical	2 AP	-1.567	1.012	.413	-4.21	1.07
	3 ATF	-3.400*	1.012	.006	-6.04	-.76
	4 Control	.600	1.012	.934	-2.04	3.24
2. Asymmetrical	1 SP	1.567	1.012	.413	-1.07	4.21
	3 ATF	-1.833	1.012	.274	-4.47	.81
	4 Control	2.167	1.012	.147	-.47	4.81
3. Asymmetrical teacher-fronted	1 SP	3.400*	1.012	.006	.76	6.04
	2 AP	1.833	1.012	.274	-.81	4.47
	4 Control	4.000*	1.012	.001	1.36	6.64
4. Control	1 SP	-.600	1.012	.934	-3.24	2.04
	2 AP	-2.167	1.012	.147	-4.81	.47
	3 ATF	-4.000*	1.012	.001	-6.64	-1.36

As Table 6 indicates, the mean score for the symmetrical group (M = 9.67, SD = 4.22) was significantly different from that of the asymmetrical teacher-fronted group (M = 13.07, SD = 3.97). The asymmetrical group (M = 11.23, SD = 4.20) did not differ significantly from either symmetrical, asymmetrical teacher-fronted, or control groups, and asymmetrical teacher-fronted group (M = 13.07, SD = 3.97) was significantly different from control group (M = 9.07, SD = 3.183).

To answer the last research question, i.e., the attitude of symmetrical, asymmetrical, and asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups' members towards the efficacy of the audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue for their listening comprehension development, qualitative data analyses were done on the data gathered from the semi-structured interview. The audio-recorded responses were transcribed, analyzed, codified, and tabulated. The frequencies

and percentages of the different ideas extracted from the interview data are shown in Table 7.

Table 7.

The Results of Interview With Participants of Symmetrical, Asymmetrical, and Asymmetrical Teacher-fronted Groups

Content analyses	Highly effective						Quite effective						Rather effective						Ineffective					
	S		A		ATF		S		A		ATF		S		A		ATF		S		A		ATF	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. How effective do you think were short film animations in English class?	10	100	10	100	10	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. How effective do you think post- listening group discussions were in your listening comprehension improvement?	2	20	7	70	9	90	2	20	3	30	1	10	6	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. How efficient do you think your expert peer(s) were in your listening comprehension improvement?	#	#	2	20	3	30	#	#	6	60	6	60	#	#	2	20	1	10	#	#	0	0	0	0

Content analyses	Highly effective						Quite effective						Rather effective						Ineffective					
	S		A		ATF		S		A		ATF		S		A		ATF		S		A		ATF	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
4. How effective do you think your expert peer(s) was/were in resolving disagreements among group members?	#	#	2	20	3	30	#	#	3	30	3	30	#	#	5	50	4	40	#	#	0	0	0	0
5. How effective do you think your peer(s) with similar proficiency levels was/were in your listening comprehension improvement?	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	20	3	30	2	20	5	50	4	40	6	60	3	30	3	30	2	20
6. How effective do you think your peer(s) with similar proficiency levels was/were in resolving disagreements between group members?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	50	5	50	3	30	5	50	5	50	7	70

Content analyses	Highly effective						Quite effective						Rather effective						Ineffective					
	S		A		ATF		S		A		ATF		S		A		ATF		S		A		ATF	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
7. How effective do you think your teacher's interventions were in your listening comprehension improvement?	#	#	#	#	10	100	#	#	#	#	0	0	#	#	#	#	0	0	#	#	#	#	0	0
8. How efficient do you think your teacher was in resolving disagreements between group members?	#	#	#	#	10	100	#	#	#	#	0	0	#	#	#	#	0	0	#	#	#	#	0	0

S: Symmetrical A: Asymmetrical ATF: Asymmetrical Teacher Fronted

As shown in Table 7, concerning the effectiveness of short film animations (item1), 100 percent of interviewees in all symmetrical, asymmetrical, and asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups supported the use of short film animations as teaching material in their English class.

Concerning the efficacy of post-listening group discussions (item 2), the majority of interviewees in asymmetrical teacher-fronted (90 %), and asymmetrical (70%) groups maintained that post-listening group discussions were highly effective for their listening comprehension improvement. However, post-listening group discussions were conceived of as highly

effective by only 20 percent of the interviewees in the symmetrical group, and the majority of them thought it was only rather effective.

Concerning the efficiency of expert peers for the listening comprehension improvement of their less knowledgeable peers and resolving disagreement among group members (items 3 and 4), around 60 percent of interviewees in both groups maintained their expert peers were quite effective for their listening comprehension improvement, and the majority of the interviewees stated that their expert peers were rather effective for solving disagreement among group members.

Concerning the effectiveness of peers with similar proficiency levels for listening comprehension development of the learners and their ability in resolving disagreements among group members (items 5 and 6), the majority of learners in all the three groups believed they were rather effective for their listening ability improvement and rather effective or ineffective for resolving disagreements among group members.

All of the interviewees in the asymmetrical teacher-fronted group approved the highly effective role of teacher's intervention in their listening comprehension development and resolving disagreement among group members (items 7 and 8).

Discussion

The first research question aimed at investigating the impact of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in symmetrical groups on the listening comprehension improvement of EFL learners. The results revealed that collaborative dialogue in symmetrical groups had a significant effect on the listening comprehension ability of the learners. This is in line with the results of Ahmadi Safa and Rozati (2017), Donato (1994), Khatib and Ahmadi Safa (2011), and Ohta (2001), and indicates that knowledge or skills

development takes place not only through interaction with experts but also through interaction with peers of similar proficiency level. The possible justification might be that no learner may constantly be less or more proficient than others and s/he may have different levels of strengths and weaknesses that might be in complementary distribution with that of the other learners (Ohta, 2001); hence, different learners may assume the expert peers' role in different stages of tasks completion.

Regarding the second research question which investigated the impact of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in asymmetrical groups on the listening comprehension improvement of EFL learners, a significant effect was found. This finding is in line with those of Klingner and Vaughn (2000), Lantolf and Thorne (2009), and Mercers' (2004) in that in a supportive group environment, more knowledgeable learners help with the improvement of the less knowledgeable partners. This effectiveness might be related to the fact that such communicative activities could provide opportunities for negotiation of meaning and conversational repair which maximize the appropriateness of available input for the learner's ability level (Mitchell & Myles, 2013).

The third research question addressed the effect of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups on listening comprehension improvement of EFL learners. The findings in this regard verified the statistical significance of the effect and were in agreement with those of Ableeva (2008), Al-yami (2008), and Pehner (2005) as they reported that interaction between the teacher and students during interactive activities could improve and facilitate L2 learners' listening comprehension ability. Even more recently, Mercer, Wegerif, and Major (2020) verified that teacher scaffolding seemed to be a beneficial educational act facilitating interactions between the learners. A plausible justification for this finding might be that each learner usually needs various levels of prompting, and the

teacher's carefully graded prompting would contribute to the learners' improvement (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). In other words, the teacher could interpret the learners' needs on a moment-to-moment basis and render classroom interactions according to the learners' emergent abilities (Poehner, 2009) or learners' ZPD (Gibbons, 2003). Moreover, the teacher has a primary role in involving learners in tasks and offering support to subgroup members (Poehner, 2009) during which the learners could also take advantage of overhearing mediation directed to the other peers (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011).

Concerning the fourth research question, the differential efficacy of collaborative dialogue in symmetrical, asymmetrical, and asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups for the listening comprehension development of EFL learners was attested to through the comparative analyses of variances. Post-hoc analyses proved a significant difference between asymmetrical teacher-fronted and both symmetrical and control groups, and no significant difference among the asymmetrical group with asymmetrical teacher-fronted, symmetrical, and control groups. Based on descriptive statistics and class observations, it seems collaborative dialogue in the asymmetrical teacher-fronted group was more effective than in asymmetrical and symmetrical groups**.** These findings are in line with Ahmadi Safa and Rozati (2017), who reported that collaborative task completion with the assistance of expert peers was more effective than task completion with the help of coequals and individual task completion for the learners' listening comprehension improvement. The superiority of peer's collaborative task completion over individual task completion has been reported in other studies as well (for example, Garcia & Ascencion, 2001; Kim, & McDonough, 2008; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Storch, 2005; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). Studies also corroborate the superiority of collaborative dialogue with more knowledgeable interlocutors over coequal interlocutors (Leeser, 2004; XU,

Gelfer & Perkins, 2005; You Jin & McDonough, 2008), and the advantages of teacher mediation over peer mediation (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). However, contrary to the findings of this study, some studies have shown contrasting results. For instance, some studies demonstrated that the proficiency level of the learners did not play a significant role in their peer's language development (Storch, 2001, 2002; Watanabe & Swain, 2007), or the learners profited from collaborating with their peers more than they did from collaborations with their teacher (He & Ellis, 1999; Toth, 2011), and there was no difference between the efficacy of collaborative and individual task completion (Storch, 2007). The most likely explanation for improved performance of the learners who engaged in a teacher-learner collaborative dialogue seems to be that the teacher in this kind of interaction is more sensitive to the learners' ZPD (Fulcher, 2010) and, accordingly, the dialogue becomes a more influential way for identifying appropriate types of instruction and mediation (Poehner, 2008). The teacher-learner interaction might assist teachers to provide students with more suitable types of feedback and help learners recognize sources of their linguistic or nonlinguistic problems by means of a more marked negotiation with their teachers and reception of a more pointed mediation. On the other hand, learner-learner interactions may not be finely tuned to learners' ZPD and, accordingly, may not effectively assist learners concerning how to solve their problems. Moreover, the learners with the same level of knowledge and proficiency may not possess the requisite knowledge and skill needed to scaffold their peers during the collaborative discussion and help them in the completion of the tasks.

The fifth research question explored how the symmetrical, asymmetrical, and asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups' members think about the efficacy of the audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue for their listening comprehension development.

Concerning the effectiveness of short animations, all of the interviewees in three groups maintained that watching short films and animations could be a highly effective activity in English classrooms. This supports Jewitt's (2014) positive appraisal of video files. It seems that a likely explanation for such a positive view could be the motivating nature of audio-visual materials. Flowerdew and Miller (2005) maintain that audio-visual materials assist learners in perceiving the cultural contexts of the language and the same perception might lead to their enhanced motivation. In addition, the provision of the learners with opportunities to "see the language in use" (Harmer, 2007, p. 308) is another meritorious aspect of such educational materials that assist learners to become additionally conscious about non-verbal cues and paralinguistic elements (Bonsignori, 2018), acquire some pragmatic strategies in conversation (Bruti, 2015), and broaden their vocabulary knowledge (Webb & Rodgers, 2009).

Concerning the efficacy of post-listening discussions and collaborative dialogue, the number of learners who believed such collaborative dialogues highly affected their listening comprehension ability was greater in the asymmetrical teacher-fronted group than asymmetrical and symmetrical groups. The positive attitude of the learners towards the role of collaborative dialogue in L2 learning is confirmed in other studies including Dobao (2012), Nishioka (2016), Philp, Adams, and Iwashita (2014), Swain, Brooks, and Tocalli-Beller (2002), Swain and Lapkin (1998), Swain and Watanabe (2013), Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) and Zeng and Takatsuka (2009). Such findings might be justified in light of research that verifies that collaborative activities lead to meaningful learning (Windschitl, 2002), and meaningful learning is one key element for building long-lasting knowledge (Woolfolk, 2016) and development. Moreover, peer collaboration is found to bring about authentic communication, improved motivation, and as a result, enhanced

learning (Mennim, 2016). Another justification might be found in that even more reticent peers could learn from negotiations exchanged between other group members (Dobao, 2016). Besides, during such collaborative dialogues, the more proficient peers and teachers might be able to offer more constructive feedback and support, which in turn may influence the success of negotiations and form learners' positive attitudes towards the efficacy of collaborative dialogue (Allen & Mills, 2014).

Concerning the role of expert peers in the less knowledgeable peers' listening comprehension improvement and resolving disagreements among group members, the interviewees in both groups mostly maintained that the expert peers were quite effective for their listening comprehension improvement and rather effective for solving disagreements among group members. A possible justification for such a positive attitude of learners towards expert peers could be because of the capabilities of more knowledgeable peers in helping less knowledgeable peers to better comprehend the concepts, find answers to their questions (Kim & McDonoughs, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978), and be acquainted with new ideas and new ways of thinking (Baines, Blatchford, & Kutnick, 2009).

The effective role of co-equal peers in listening comprehension development of the learners and solving the learners' problems was confirmed in slightly weaker terms. The majority of learners in all three groups asserted that they were rather effective for the improvement of their listening comprehension, and either ineffective or rather effective in the process of solving problems. Some justifications are conceivable in this regard. For instance, similar to Leeser's (2004) findings, when the co-equal learners of the current study were not paired with more knowledgeable learners, they had considerably fewer opportunities to correctly resolve their problems in LREs and could not amply focus on form, or when they encountered a problem there

was no authoritative partner to guide them to the solution. Studies have revealed that as co-equal peers generally have less linguistic knowledge than expert peers, they are not as successful as more knowledgeable peers in resolving their peers' linguistic problems (Kim& McDonough, 2008).

Nearly all of the interviewees of the asymmetrical teacher-fronted group approved the highly effective role of teacher's intervention in their listening comprehension development and in resolving disagreement among group members. Lantolf and Thrones (2006) declared that through ongoing scaffolding and mediation, teachers can discover where learners encounter problems and can provide appropriate support to assist learners to overcome those problems. The learners also believed that while working on collaborative tasks, sometimes disagreements remained unresolved and learners were unable to reach consensus. In this case, the presence of a teacher in group discussions was of crucial importance. These findings are in line with Zeng and Takatsuka (2009) who stated that the missed opportunities would never be recovered for some learners without the teacher's supportive intervention. Furthermore, the learners see their teachers as a more useful resource for L2 learning than their peers (Mcdonough & Sunitham, 2009).

It can be concluded that, in a group which applies a collaborative pattern of interaction, the proficiency level of the peers might affect the learners' quality of interactions and the extent they question their language use or give credit to each other's input and feedback (Kim & McDonough, 2008). This in turn affects the group members' language skills development in general and listening comprehension in particular.

Conclusion

Contrary to Watanabe and Swain's (2007) finding verifying the superior role of the interlocutors' pattern of interaction compared to their proficiency

level in their own improvement, the findings of this study revealed that in a collaborative pattern of interaction, the proficiency level of the learners and the teachers' interventions strongly affect the performance of the learners. Furthermore, the extent to which the learners appreciate the benefits of collaborative dialogues depends on their proficiency level and their teacher's interventions. In this study, the audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue in asymmetrical teacher-fronted, asymmetrical, and symmetrical groups had a significant effect on the listening comprehension development of intermediate EFL learners respectively. EFL learners generally had a positive attitude towards audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogue. Asymmetrical teacher-fronted groups' members had generally a more positive attitude compared with asymmetrical and symmetrical groups sequentially. This finding might indicate that learners' proficiency level is conducive to the efficacy of EFL learners' collaborative interactions. Moreover, the findings specifically imply that to improve EFL learners' listening comprehension ability, EFL teachers need to engage them in audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogues, and different patterns of collaborative group works with special attention to asymmetrical patterns of grouping. Besides, to improve the effectiveness of audio-visually prompted collaborative dialogues, teachers are recommended to embark on more collaborative interactions with their learners. On the other hand, the results verified that EFL learners were positive about short animation videos. They believed that the videos motivated them to listen more enthusiastically. On this basis, EFL teachers are suggested to employ such audio-visual materials to create a lively and motivating atmosphere. Finally,

The findings underscore that although collaborative dialogue with more proficient learners is beneficial for learning, co-equal peers also benefit from contributions and suggestions of each other and the collaborative dialogue in

such groups is likely to result in the development of the cognitive, social, and meta-cognitive skills and strategies.

In conclusion, it needs to be stated that the generalizations of the findings of this study to the other contexts need to be quite cautiously done on the grounds that a number of limitations might limit the generalizability of the results. First, due to the language institute's peculiar educational policies, the researchers and the associate teachers were allowed to dedicate only a part of the class time to the study procedures and the participants were given the conventional institute-specific type of instruction during the remaining class time. Furthermore, due to the limited number of learners in language institutes, the investigators had to use available intact classes, and random selection of the participants was not utterly possible.

Lastly, on the basis of the current study experience, the researchers feel compelled to recommend future studies to investigate the effect of EFL learners' self-selection of their own collaborative dialogue group members on their listening comprehension development rate. Moreover, researchers are suggested to comparatively study the influence of online collaborative dialogue and flipped audio-visual materials on the listening comprehension development of EFL learners.

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Appendix A: Preliminary Analyses Results

Table A1. *Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality for the four groups' TOEFL Junior, pre-, and post-tests scores*

	test	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Score	TOEFL junior	.065	120	.200
	pretest	.069	120	.200
	posttest	.080	120	.054

Table A2. *Descriptive statistics of the four groups' scores in TOEFL Junior Standard test*

					95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
	N	*M*	*SD*	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
1.symmetrical peer	30	40.67	8.142	1.487	37.63	43.71	24	54
2.asymmetrical peer	30	43.17	7.693	1.404	40.29	46.04	27	56
3.asymmetrical teacher fronted	30	42.30	7.489	1.367	39.50	45.10	28	55
4. control	30	40.10	8.339	1.523	36.99	43.21	22	53
Total	120	41.56	7.920	.723	40.13	42.99	22	56

Table A3. *Levene's test for homogeneity of variances of the four groups' scores in TOEFL Junior Standard test*

Levene Statistic	*df1*	*df2*	*p*
.142	3	116	.934

Table A4. *One way between-groups analysis of variance of the abridged TOEFL Junior Standard Test scores of four groups*

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	181.758	3	60.586	.965	.412
Within Groups	7281.833	116	62.774		
Total	7463.592	119			

Table A5. *Descriptive statistics of the four groups' scores in pretest*

					95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
	N	*M*	*SD*	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
1.symmetrical peer	30	8.63	4.081	.745	7.11	10.16	1	17
2.asymmetrical peer	30	8.73	3.999	.730	7.24	10.23	2	16
3.asymmetrical teacher fronted	30	8.67	4.080	.745	7.14	10.19	2	16
4. control	30	8.57	3.191	.583	7.37	9.76	2	16
Total	120	8.65	3.808	.348	7.96	9.34	1	17

Table A6. *Test of homogeneity of variances of the four groups' scores in pretest*

Levene Statistic	*df1*	*df2*	*p*
1.279	3	116	.285

Table A7. *One way between-groups analysis of variance of the pretest scores of the four groups*

	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	.433	3	.144	.010	.999
Within Groups	1724.867	116	14.870		
Total	1725.300	119			

Appendix B: Semistructured interview questions

1. How effective do you think were short film animations in English class?
2. How effective do you think post-listening group discussions were in your listening comprehension improvement?
3. How effective do you think your expert peer(s) was/were in your listening comprehension improvement?
4. How effective do you think your expert peer(s) was/were in resolving disagreements among group members?
5. How effective do you think your peer(s) with similar proficiency levels was/were in your listening comprehension improvement?
6. How effective do you think your peer(s) with similar proficiency levels was/were in resolving disagreements between group members?
7. How effective do you think your teacher's interventions were in your listening comprehension improvement?
8. How effective do you think your teacher was in resolving disagreements between group members?