

The impact of collaborative planning of an oral task on learners' language performance in an EFL context

O impacto do planejamento colaborativo de uma tarefa oral na performance de aprendizes no contexto de EFL

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ABSTRACT: Learning a new language is permeated by several cognitive processes which are believed to demand a high load of attentional resources during oral performance (SKEHAN, 2014). Strategic (ELLIS, 2005) and collaborative planning (SWAIN, 2000) appear as an alternative to lower these demands. In the light of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (COOK, 2011; EAST, 2017) and aiming at contributing to this background, in this study, an oral task was elaborated with the purpose to analyze the performance of basic speakers of English as a Foreign Language from a language course in an oral task under two different conditions: after individual and collaborative strategic planning. Fourteen students were divided into two groups: four pairs planned collaboratively, and six students planned individually. Both groups had ten minutes to plan, followed by a few minutes to record their messages.

RESUMO: Aprender uma nova língua depende de diversos processos cognitivos que podem demandar uma grande carga de atenção no momento de sua produção oral (SKEHAN, 2014). O planejamento estratégico (ELLIS, 2005) e colaborativo (SWAIN, 2000) aparecem como uma alternativa para a sua diminuição. À luz do Ensino de Línguas Baseado em Tarefas (TBLT) (COOK, 2011; EAST, 2017) e visando contribuir com esse cenário, neste estudo, uma tarefa oral foi elaborada com objetivo de analisar o desempenho de falantes de inglês como língua estrangeira de um curso de idiomas em uma tarefa oral em duas condições diferentes: após o planejamento estratégico individual e colaborativo. Quatorze estudantes foram divididos em dois grupos: quatro duplas planejaram colaborativamente e seis estudantes planejaram individualmente. Ambos os grupos tiveram dez minutos de planejamento, seguido de alguns minutos

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Participants also answered a perception questionnaire concerning the activity. Statistical results indicated that students performing under the peer-planning condition had higher scores in all three measures of adequacy: organization, convincingness, and clarity than students performing under the individual-planning condition, which was confirmed by the results of the independent t-test. Furthermore, qualitative results showed that most students appeared to enjoy the task, especially the ones who performed under the peer-planning condition. These contributions bring important implications for classroom, allowing teachers to acknowledge collaborative strategic planning as a valuable tool.

para gravação das mensagens. Os participantes também responderam a um questionário de percepção da atividade. Os resultados estatísticos indicaram que os estudantes submetidos à condição de planejamento entre pares obtiveram melhores avaliações nas três medidas relativas à adequação: organização, convencimento e clareza. Essa diferença foi observada através do teste independente t-test. Além disso, os resultados qualitativos mostraram que a maioria dos estudantes pareceu gostar da tarefa, especialmente aqueles que realizaram o planejamento em pares. Essas contribuições trazem implicações importantes para a sala de aula, permitindo aos professores reconhecerem o planejamento estratégico colaborativo como uma ferramenta valiosa.

KEYWORDS: TBLT. Oral task. Strategic planning.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: TBLT. Tarefa oral. Planejamento estratégico.

1 Introduction

Research investigating Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has grown considerably during the last two decades to comprise studies involving different learning settings, study designs, and task designs (VAN DEN BRANDEN, 2006; COOK, 2011; EAST, 2017; VAN DEN BRANDEN; BYGATE; NORRIS, 2009). In this context, studies focusing on planning, based on Skehan's (1998, 2009, 2014) framework for task design and implementation have become a major field of investigation, more specifically in relation to strategic planning in a pre-task phase (D'ELY, 2006; GUARÁ-TAVARES, 2008; XHAF AJ; MUCK; D'ELY, 2011; SPECHT, 2017; ZACCARON, 2018a, 2018b; ZACCARON; XHAF AJ; D'ELY, 2019).

According to Skehan (1998, 1998), strategic planning in a pre-task might be crucial to influence the demand for attentional resources, since planning allows time

for focusing separately on each aspect of language before performance. This way, assigning students with time to prepare their message - in terms of the ideas and meaning they intend to convey, and as well, how the language should be structured to attain their communicative objective - prior to the performance, might encourage them to try language structures they are not very acquainted with, and/or deliver a more adequate message.

Regarding this topic, in the Brazilian context, a growing body of research has been focusing on the difference in terms of learners' performance when dealing with strategic planning of an oral task collaboratively or individually in the pre-task phase. Some of the studies approaching this object are: Xhafaj, Muck and D'Ely (2011), Zaccaron (2018a), and Zaccaron, Xhafaj and D'Ely (2019). Despite having the same aim of finding out if students have a better performance in an oral task when they plan it previously with or without a peer, these studies present some differences in relation to students' level of proficiency and classroom setting. While Xhafaj, Muck and D'Ely (2011) analyzed advanced undergraduate students, Zaccaron (2018a) and Zaccaron, Xhafaj and D'Ely (2019) had high school students with an intermediate level as participants. Results from Xhafaj, Muck and D'Ely (2011) as well as Zaccaron (2018a) and Zaccaron, Xhafaj and D'Ely (2019), despite not being statistically significant, pointed out some advantages in relation to the performance of students in the peer-planning condition, mainly in terms of fluency. Besides this, in all of the studies, students reported that they enjoyed the tasks and had some benefits from it, especially the ones planning in pairs.

Taking into account these studies, the relevance of this research relies on the need of investigating these both planning conditions (individual and collaborative) in a very common context where many students learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL): in language courses. This setting is analyzed with EFL speakers with a basic level of proficiency, which has been a challenge in TBLT research, since most research

in the field address intermediate and advanced speakers (VAN DEN BRANDEN, 2006). Furthermore, this study also involves the use of technology, through mobile phones and *WhatsApp*, which may be relevant to the Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) field of research (ZACCARON, 2018a). This way, by gathering all these elements, it may provide a tool for teachers to work with oral skills in the classroom which might allow students with opportunities to think more carefully and in an organized way what they intend to communicate.

Based on this context, this article aims at investigating the performance of basic speakers of EFL from a language course in an oral task in two different conditions: after individual and collaborative strategic planning. Based on this, this study also poses two research questions: (1) Does planning condition (individual and with a peer) influence students' performance in oral tasks concerning the adequacy of the outcome?, and (2) What are students' perceptions regarding the planning conditions under which they perform?

To accommodate this aim, besides this introductory section, this article has four other sections: review of literature; method; results and discussion; and final remarks. The review of the literature approaches the theoretical background of the study with an emphasis on TBLT and strategic planning. Next, method used to collect data for the study is described along with qualitative and quantitative techniques employed in the analysis of the data. The fourth section discusses the findings readdressing the research questions. Finally, the last section is dedicated to the summary of the main results and brings some pedagogical implications.

2 Review of literature

In this section the fundamental constructs of TBLT pertinent to this article are presented, as well as its connection to strategic planning in oral tasks performance

under the two conditions of investigation proposed here: individual and collaborative planning.

2.1 TBLT

TBLT was born as an approach with no fixed method or activity sequence, based on a sociocultural-linguistic understanding of how language learning can be materialized. There have been different understandings of what the TBLT approach entails and, consequently, what a task is. Each definition may favor specificities of different approaches, such as its deep connections with task instructions and implementation to the pedagogical settings, or its employment in laboratory settings. One of the most cited definitions is Ellis's (2009), who claims that for an activity to be considered a task:

1. The primary focus should be on 'meaning' (by which is meant that learners should be mainly concerned with processing the semantic and pragmatic meaning of utterances).
2. There should be some kind of 'gap' (i.e. a need to convey information, to express an opinion or to infer meaning).
3. Learners should largely have to rely on their own resources (linguistic and non-linguistic) in order to complete the activity.
4. There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language (i.e. the language serves as the means for achieving the outcome, not as an end in its own right). (p. 223).

Although presenting a primary concern with meaning, there was a moment of questioning in the field in which the effectiveness of TBLT for developing adequate language learning was put under investigation. Learners are believed not to be able to focus online (meaning, at the time they are speaking) on the content of their speech, to speak fluently, to be grammatically accurate and to use complex language. According to Skehan (1998, 2009, 2014), this phenomenon could be explained by a Limited Attention (or Trade-off) Hypothesis, arguing that these dimensions of language production compete for our attentional resources. In this scenario, attempting to raise

the probabilities of language learning, taking such a hypothesis as true, the manipulation of tasks could work as a tool to enhance language performance. As indeed, stated by Van den Branden (2006), there should exist the possibility of handling tasks in order to enhance the possibility of learners paying attention to specific features of language under the context of a significant activity, which is considered to promote second language acquisition.

Skehan (1998, 2009, 2014) proposed a framework to work with tasks in such a way as to balance the cognitive load that tasks may present. This framework proposes the idea of a cycle of tasks composed of three main phases: pre-task, during-task, and post-task. The first one focuses, generally, on introducing language that is important to perform in the following phase. The second refers to the moment in which learners are expected to “use” language to achieve a communicative objective. Finally, the third, the post-task, can be considered, for instance, an evaluation of the previous performance or a moment of focus on form, to attain for complexity or accuracy.

The three-phase cycle can be composed of multiple activities in each one of them. In the pre-task phase, which is our focus in this study, the aim is to introduce language components that might be used in the performance of the following phase. In this sense, the pre-task phase could be a group of activities that can: a) present new vocabulary and or content; b) familiarize the student with the final task that will be performed at the end of the cycle; c) allow opportunity to rehearse the final task; d) focus on language structure that might be important; and/or e) set a proper time to prepare for the final performance, just to mention some examples. This latter activity is known as strategic planning, and has attracted attention from researchers given its believed probability to lower the attentional demand at the time of performance (SKEHAN, 2014). Taking into consideration the importance of this type of activity to our study and the number of studies focusing on this specific kind of task, the next

subsection is devoted to the concept of strategic planning and its main approaches that have been used in research conducted regarding TBLT.

2.2 Strategic planning

Strategic planning, as presented above, based on Skehan's (1998, 2009, 2014) framework for working with tasks, has been the trigger to many studies investigating it mainly during the pre-task phase (D'ELY, 2006; GUARÁ-TAVARES, 2008; XHAF AJ; MUCK; D'ELY, 2011; SPECHT, 2017; ZACCARON, 2018a, 2018b; ZACCARON; XHAF AJ; D'ELY, 2019). They have worked with it mostly in the sense of allowing learners a proper time to cater for focus on other aspects of language besides meaning which may result in an improved overall performance.

According to Ellis (2005), learners can have some planning time in two moments of the task cycle: in the pre-task and during-task. In the pre-task phase, which is the focus of this study, there are two possibilities for planning: the rehearsal planning and the strategic planning. Rehearsal planning refers to task repetition considering the first performance of the task as a preparation for a following performance, whereas strategic planning involves learners preparing for a task performance by taking into account the content they need to work with and the way they intend to communicate it (ELLIS, 2005).

Focusing on the latter, strategic planning, D'Ely (2006), based on Ellis (2005), from a metacognitive perspective, perceives it as an important tool that provides learners with the benefit of time to get ready for and elaborate the conceptualization and production of the message. This time of preparation - or planning - would help the learners to ease the processes of this complex phenomenon (SKEHAN, 1998, 2009, 2014). Moreover, D'Ely also understands it as an activity involving strategy and problem solving, in which learners are allowed to have some control over it with the objective of improving their performance. However, it is important to point out that

being strategic in planning is an activity that relies on how the time provided for the preparation is used by learners and does not depend on any guidance previously received. When learners are given tips on what to plan, this is referred to as 'guided planning' (FOSTER; SKEHAN, 1998, as cited in D'ELY, 2006).

Beyond thinking on what strategic planning is, research has been conducted on how to do strategic planning in real language classrooms from a sociocultural perspective. In the light of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which conceives language learning co-constructed dialogically within the interaction between users of the language, the role of interaction in language development has been discussed. Nourished by this, researchers such as Swain and Lapkin (1998, 2002) have focused on how learners co-construct language during task performance (oral or written), attempting to produce not only adequate meaning but also adequate form (LIGHTBOWN; SPADA, 2006). Consequently, investigating learners' collaborative work could be critical to create further possibilities on how to lower the burden of cognitive processing in the performance of oral tasks.

Previous exploratory research in the field has already been conducted and indeed has shown significant results in language performance in many different study designs, not only when talking about planning and/or oral performance (D'ELY; MOTA; BYGATE, 2019; SPECHT, 2017; SWAIN, 2000, 2001; WANG, 2014). In the Brazilian context, according to Xhafaj, Muck and D'Ely (2011) as well as Zaccaron, Xhafaj and D'Ely (2019), studies focusing on collaborative work have been gaining attention since 1980. For instance, the previous presented studies from Xhafaj, Muck and D'Ely (2011), Zaccaron (2018a, 2018b) and Zaccaron, Xhafaj and D'Ely(2019) have brought contributions, especially, in the comparison of students performance after individual and collaborative planning, in which in all, results indicated a trend in favor of a better performance after collaborative planning, in both qualitative and quantitative analyses, despite not always being statistically significant.

Furthermore, Zaccaron, Xhafaj and D'Ely (2019), based on previous studies, asserts that collaborative work seems to contribute to students' own awareness regarding the gaps they might have in their learning of a foreign language and to improve their performance during a task. In addition to these advantages, these researchers as well as Xhafaj, Muck and D'Ely (2011) also highlight that some factors might impact students' performance in tasks, like their level of proficiency, their ability to plan effectively and to keep the plan, their approach to the instructions of the task, their effort to cope with time pressure while planning and performing a task, their working memory capacity, their former experience with planning activities, among others.

In the light of the previous research conducted in the field of TBLT on the topics of strategic planning and collaborative work, the next section presents the scope of investigation of the present study.

3 Method

This section describes the method employed to conduct the present investigation by presenting the context and participants involved, the instruments used, and the procedures undertaken in order to collect and analyze the data.

3.1. Setting and participants

This study was carried out during the first semester of 2019 at a public extension program from a federal university in the south of Brazil. This program offers English, Spanish, French, Italian and German courses to any person who wishes to learn a foreign language. The English program, which was the focus of this study, has 12 levels: intro (levels 1 and 2); basic (levels 1 to 3); pre-intermediate (levels 4 to 6); intermediate (levels 7 and 8); and advanced (levels 1 and 2). Each one of them lasts for a total of 60 hours, with three hours of class per week. From these courses, a group of

students from level 3 was chosen to participate in this study. The book used at the course was *Interchange 2*, 5th edition, from Cambridge University Press (RICHARDS, 2017). This group had 15 meetings of three hours once a week and studied units one to eight from this book.

Regarding the specificities of this group, there were 14 students (10 women and 4 men) in which most of them (nine students) reported they have been studying English for two years; two, from three to five years; and three, for more than 14 years. Nine students reported having previous experience with English in private courses or with private teachers, whereas five students have only had contact with the language during regular school. Six students have not been to an English-speaking country while eight students affirmed they have had this experience. In addition, half of these students stated they had been speaking English outside the classroom up to one hour; three students varied between 1 to 3 hours; two, for more than four hours; and two students stated they speak English only in class. Regarding the ones who claimed they have been using English outside the classroom, listening to music (10 students), reading and writing on the Internet (6 students), using apps (3 students), and watching TV series (2 students) were the most mentioned answers.

3.2. Tasks and procedures

All participants performed the same narrative task: sending an audio message to a friend on *WhatsApp* creating an excuse for not attending his/her friend's wedding. This task was chosen given its similarity to real life situations when people are using this application, which is an important aspect in a task according to Tavakoli and Foster (2008) and Long (2000). In order to encourage the production of more complex messages, students had to include in the message the following words: *bird*, *bike* and *to get* (not necessarily in this specific order). The design of this task was inspired by

Mehnert (1998), Xhafaj, Muck and D'Ely's (2011), Xhafaj's (2013) and Zaccaron's (2018a) studies.

Before doing this task, students read and signed an individual consent form, which explained the research and assured the anonymity of the students' participation. Additionally, the students answered the profile questionnaire, which, in turn, aimed at collecting information about the participants' background, such as age, time studying English, and time spent in contact with English outside the classroom. After answering the questionnaire, they performed a pre-task phase, being randomly divided into two groups in two different planning conditions. The first group, the individual planning group, had 10 minutes to plan and record the message individually while the second one, the collaborative planning group, had the same amount of time to plan for the task collaboratively and after planning they had to record the audio individually. In both groups, students were asked to record their response to the task using their own mobile phones with no time limit. The oral messages were sent to the teacher of the class by *WhatsApp*.


The individual planning group stayed in their original classroom, and the collaborative planning group went to another room with one of the researchers. After the groups were split, researchers handed in the instructions in print and read them out loud. Students, who were in the "Individual planning group", received instructions (Appendix 1) to prepare their response silently in 10 minutes while the ones in the "collaborative planning group" were instructed to plan in pairs for the same amount of time (Appendix 2). In the former group, students were also recorded while they were interacting with each other.

In the same way as Xhafaj, Muck and D'Ely (2011) as well as Zaccaron (2018a) and Zaccaron, Xhafaj and D'Ely (2019), in both planning conditions, students could plan what to say and how to say it before recording their task. During their planning time, they were asked to write notes in English, and they were advised not to write

everything they planned to say since they had to perform without their notes. The ones in the collaborative planning condition were told that although they planned with a partner, they had to record their messages individually and not produce the message in the exact same way.

After students performed the task, they answered a post-task questionnaire, in their mother tongue, adapted from Zaccaron (2018a), in relation to their perception about the task, the design of the activity and their performance (Appendix 3 and 4). This questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first, there were five closed questions in which they had to rate in a five-point Likert scale their perception regarding different aspects of the task. The Likert scale, composed in this study of five *emoji* faces, represented the level of satisfaction of each participant according to each aspect of the task, where at the left end of the scale the “smiley” face represented very happy, and where at the opposite end the “angry” face represented very unhappy. Figure 1 shows an example of a question. Besides this, in some questions, students also had to justify their answers. In the second part of the post-task questionnaire, there was one open question about the condition in which they performed the task and another question in case students had further information to share.

Figure 1 -- Example of one of the questions with the Likert scale.

How much did you like having time to plan the message?	
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Source: adapted from Zaccaron (2018a).

3.3. Data Analysis

In this study, data from students’ oral production in the two planning conditions as well as the post-task questionnaire were analyzed, quantitatively and qualitatively, respectively (DORNYEI, 2007), in order to tackle the participants’ language performance and opinions. Studies focusing on the impact of planning on

students' oral performance have also adopted these types of analysis, as in Xhafaj, Muck and D'Ely (2011), Specht (2017), and Zaccaron (2018a; 2018b), just to name some of them.

In order to analyze the oral production of the students, adequacy was adopted as a measure in this study, given the fact that it looks at the result of the task through a holistic perspective in contrast to other traditional measures. Pallotti (2009) states that adequacy consists of the degree to which a student's oral production is relatively successful in accomplishing the task goals with efficiency. She also suggests that adequacy could be evaluated in relation to participants' performance by qualitative descriptors that comprise the adequateness of students' responses according to what is considered as the communicative purpose of the specific task being focused.

As the task analyzed in this study was a narrative, and it was expected that students could create an excuse for not being able to go to a friend's wedding, three characteristics were chosen by the researchers regarding the specifics of an excuse in order to be considered an adequate one. The descriptors used to evaluate the audios were: (1) The excuse is well organized – It has a beginning, middle and end; (2) The excuse is convincing – It provides arguments; and (3) The excuse is clear – It is easy to understand. These three descriptors were called (1) organization; (2) convincingness; and (3) clarity. Each descriptor was followed by a scale of scores that went from 1 to 5, being 1 very poor, 2 poor, 3 regular, 4 good, and 5 very good.

The 14 audio recordings (one per participant) were evaluated by three Brazilian raters – two PhD students and one master student with extensive teaching experience – according to the three descriptors and scale aforementioned. This way, each audio received three scores for each descriptor in which the mean scores were calculated for participants' narratives as well as independent t-tests using a software called SPS¹,

¹ This computer program helps researchers run statistical tests to analyze data and also has other tools, like creating graphs and tables.

version 20. In addition, a Cronbach's Alpha test was run in order to check whether the raters' final scores were correlated; in other words, if they followed a similar evaluation pattern since adequacy evaluation could be quite subjective. For all descriptors, the correlation number was close to or above 0,8, which suggests a strong correlation among the raters. As for the post-task questionnaires, data were grouped into categories which emerged from participants' answers. A qualitative analysis was adopted to examine them.

4. Results and Discussion

This section of the study presents and briefly discusses the results of the statistical and interpretive analyses of the data in order to answer the research questions posed by this research. Each of the research questions will be answered in sequence.

1. Does planning condition (individual and with a peer) influence students' performance in oral tasks concerning the adequacy of the outcome?

In the overall picture, results from descriptive statistics revealed that students who planned with a peer obtained higher scores for all three descriptors - organization, convincingness, and clarity. Students in the collaborative planning condition had as mean scores 3,40; 3,10; and 2,92 for the descriptors organization, convincingness, and clarity, respectively, while students planning individually achieved 1,96; 1,85; and 1,90 as mean scores for the same descriptors. These results were calculated based on the mean scores² given by the three raters' evaluation. Table 1 displays these scores given

² The mean score is considered by most people as the average and involves adding all the scores in a data set and dividing them by the number of scores (LARSON-HALL, 2010). Based on this, to calculate the mean score in this study the three raters' scores were added and divided by three, as there were three scores given by three raters.

by the descriptive statistics concerning the three variables and students' planning conditions.

Table 1 – Results from the descriptive statistics in relation to the descriptors and planning conditions.

Descriptors	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Organization	Collaborative Planning	8	3,400	,7819	,2765
	Individual Planning	6	1,967	,7062	,2883
Convincingness	Collaborative Planning	8	3,100	,5904	,2087
	Individual Planning	6	1,850	,4550	,1857
Clarity	Collaborative Planning	8	2,925	,5874	,2077
	Individual Planning	6	1,900	,5692	,2324

Source: elaborated by the authors.

From this table, besides providing the mean scores for the descriptors in relation to the two planning conditions, it is also possible to observe in more details the results from the three raters' evaluations in relation to the standard deviation³ and standard error mean⁴. For the standard deviation, in all variables, the raters' scores were closer to the mean score, as all of them were lower than 1, indicating that raters evaluated students' performance in a similar way. The same result was obtained for the standard error mean which means that in case this study would be replicated there would be a lower variation in the results.

These results from descriptive statistics were confirmed with an independent t-test since data was normally distributed for all descriptors for both planning

³ The standard deviation provides an average of the differences from all the scores from the mean value; the lower its value is, the closer are the participants results to the mean score (LARSON-HALL, 2010). Thus, here it was used to evaluate whether the three raters' scores had closer values from the mean score.

⁴ The standard error mean is related to the variation in the mean score a set of data would get if the same experiment would be repeated (LARSON-HALL, 2010).

conditions as confirmed with Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests ($p > .05$). This test was used to compare the performance of the two planning conditions (planning with a peer and individually) in relation to their scores obtained for each adequacy descriptor. Results from the t-test pointed out that the mean differences of 1,43; 1,25; and 1,02 for organization, convincingness, and clarity, respectively, between the performance of the two groups were statistically significant ($p < .01$). This way, students in the collaborative group outperformed students who worked individually in all three descriptors provided which composed the adequacy measure employed in this study. That is, students' planning conditions might have had an impact on their oral performance. Tables 2 presents the results of the independent t-test.

Table 2 – Results of the independent T-test.

Descriptors	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Organization	3,53	,004	1,43
Convincingness	4,30	,001	1,25
Clarity	3,27	,007	1,02

Source: elaborated by the authors.

These results were in line with Specht (2017) who also showed improvements in terms of adequacy in the groups with some type of treatment regarding planning. In addition, despite having different variables, Zaccaron's (2018a, 2018b) findings statistically favored the collaborative planning condition as well. Thus, based on them and on the results found in the present research, planning with a peer seems to yield a positive impact on the oral performance of L2 learners, mainly in relation to adequacy measures, as it was the case presented here.

2. *What are students' perceptions regarding the planning conditions under which they perform?*

Both groups were asked to express their perceptions concerning the planning condition under which they performed in the first question of the post-task questionnaire. Regarding the issue of time, while five participants of the peer-planning group felt very happy, two felt happy and one was indifferent about having a time allotted for planning, the opinions of the individual-planning participants were: five participants were very happy and one was very unhappy. Concerning the amount of time given to perform the task, the feelings among the participants varied. The perceptions of the peer-planning group were very happy (two participants), happy (four participants), indifferent (one participant) and unhappy (one participant), whereas the individual-planning participants felt very happy (one participant), happy (two participants) and unhappy (three participants). The participants explained that they chose the unhappy face or the indifferent face because there was not enough time to perform the task in their opinion. However, the participants who chose the very happy and happy faces felt the amount of time was sufficient or too long. These results may indicate the participants who performed under the collaborative condition perceived the amount of time for planning to be sufficient while the individual-planning participants felt the time for planning was not enough.

These responses regarding the amount of time provided for planning might be discussed in light of Zaccaron, Xhafaj and D'Ely(2019), who pointed out that the collaborative work might help students create awareness about their linguistic gaps, whereas in the individual-planning, language co-construction does not take place, as suggested by Swain and Lapkin (1998, 2002). According to the authors, the students alone might take more time to be aware of their linguistic gaps and overcome them. However, these results differ from Zaccaron's (2018) results, in which participants demonstrated to be happier with time when planning alone instead of collaboratively. According to him, this might be due to the conversational nature of the collaborative planning, which demands more time than individual planning.

Concerning the students' opinions in relation to the task, the data showed a slight difference between the two planning groups. The peer-planning groups chose the very happy face (six participants) and happy face (two participants), whereas the individual-planning participants felt very happy (two participants), happy (two participants) and unhappy (two participants). One of the participants who expressed negative opinions concerning the task affirmed she was shy to record an audio speaking English while the other one felt uncomfortable and declared she thought the activity was difficult, out of real context and not relevant to the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, the participants who felt very happy and happy affirmed the task was interesting and a good opportunity to challenge themselves. Therefore, in general terms, the majority of the participants, twelve out of fourteen, had positive feelings regarding the task. This result was also found in Zaccaron (2018a) and in Xhafaj (2013) which might favor this task as a successful tool for students' learning and oral performance in the EFL context.

Regarding the act of planning, two, five and one participants of the peer-planning groups chose the very happy, happy and indifferent faces, respectively, to express their opinion about the planning condition in which they performed, whereas the individual-planning participants felt very happy (one participant), indifferent (one participant) and unhappy faces (four participants) to represent their feelings. The students who chose the unhappy face justified their answers stating they were not able to follow what they had planned due to their lack of vocabulary and that they needed to improve their planning skills. The ones who chose the very happy and happy faces stated they were able to elaborate the content of the message in a satisfactory way. Overall, the peer-planning participants perceived their act of planning to be more effective and positive than the students who performed the task individually. The response from the individual-planning group might reinforce the hypothesis that strategic planning lowers the attentional burden (SKEHAN, 1998, 2009, 2014) as long

as the students know how to use the time provided for planning (2006), and moreover, it might indicate the need to introduce the 'guided planning' into the pedagogical practice (FOSTER; SKEHAN, 1996), as it was shown by Specht (2017).

In relation to the act of recording a message, five students of the peer-planning condition felt very happy and three chose the happy face to represent their feelings, while the participants who performed under the individual-planning condition varied their answers among very happy (one participant), happy (one participant), indifferent (one participant), unhappy (one participant) and very unhappy (two participants). The students justified their negative opinions stating they got stuck and could barely speak during the recording phase. One particular participant did not like to record the message because the situation was out of context and not real, which made it difficult to remember what she had previously planned to say in the message. On the other hand, the participants who chose the very happy and happy faces stated they thought the activity was very useful to practice their oral skills and they felt the situation presented in the task was very realistic which helped them to push themselves forward. These results indicate the participants who planned the task collaboratively enjoyed the act of recording the message in their cellphones whereas the individual-planning participants diverged in their answers, which differs from Zaccaron's (2018a) results in which the vast majority of the learners from both conditions reported positive feelings regarding this task feature. These differences in results might be justified by individual differences concerning the use of cellphones in the classroom, however, the reduced number of participants does not allow for firm conclusions.

Finally, after performing under a specific planning condition, participants were asked whether they would have preferred planning under the opposite condition analyzed in this research. Out of six participants who performed under the individual-planning condition, three answered they would have preferred planning with a peer and three would still prefer planning individually. The three students who answered

they would have chosen the peer-planning condition justified this choice affirming that classmates could help with the vocabulary and the exchanging of ideas. The other participants who would prefer to remain performing the task individually justified their opinion saying they like to work alone or that they would feel embarrassed to work with a peer. Regarding the participants who performed under the peer-planning condition, the vast majority, six out of eight students, answered they would still prefer the collaborative planning. The majority of participants of the peer-planning condition mentioned that “two heads are better than one” when they justified why they would prefer to perform the task collaboratively, which corroborates with Souza’s (2007) and Xhafaj, Muck and D’Ely’s (2011) findings, in which the participants also preferred to work under peer-planning condition. These results once more reinforce the positive impact of the collaborative work as a valid pre-task activity, contributing to students’ awareness of the opportunity provided to exchange ideas, or co-construct language knowledge as suggested by Swain and Lapkin (1998, 2002), and negotiate meaning (ELLIS, 2005) during the planning time.

5 Final Considerations

The main objective of this study was to compare the performances and perceptions of learners who performed an L2 oral task under two different planning conditions: individually and collaboratively. For this, students were separated into two groups and they had to plan for ten minutes their excuse for not attending their best friend’s wedding, adding three words - bike, to get, and bird. Their messages were sent via *WhatsApp* to the teacher’s number. In order to analyze the data, statistical and interpretative analysis were conducted aiming at answering the two research questions posed.

Statistical results indicated a trend favoring the peer-planning condition in terms of adequacy measures in all three descriptors (organization, convincingness, and

clarity). Learners in the peer planning group had higher mean scores than the individual planning group. These differences were statistically significant as reported by the independent t-test. Previous studies had also shed some light concerning the impact of collaborative planning on the oral performance of L2 learners (XHAF AJ; MUCK; D'ELY, 2011; SPECHT, 2017; ZACCARON, 2018a, 2018b; ZACCARON; XHAF AJ; D'ELY, 2019). This means that planning conditions might influence the level of adequacy in relation to the communicative goal of the task.

In relation to the interpretative analysis, the overall results indicated relevant differences between peer planning and individual planning conditions regarding learners' feelings about the task. Most students appeared to enjoy the task, especially the ones who performed under peer-planning conditions. Additionally, the majority of the participants, nine out of fourteen, seemed to prefer to engage in collaborative planning in order to afford the negotiation and exchange of vocabulary between peers. Thus, it appears that collaborative planning could be considered beneficial as part of classroom procedures of a pre-task activity in order to provide opportunities to exchange ideas and negotiate meaning between peers which may impact positively on the learners' performances.

These findings bring important implications for EFL classrooms. It is essential that teachers acknowledge strategic planning as a valuable tool to be used with oral tasks, such as the one performed in this research. As shown in this study with basic students as well as in previous ones (XHAF AJ; MUCK; D'ELY, 2011; SPECHT, 2017; ZACCARON, 2018a, 2018b; ZACCARON; XHAF AJ; D'ELY, 2019), collaborative strategic planning could provide a variety of benefits in the classroom, among them, a better performance in terms of adequacy and students' preference for this variable. This way, teachers may use planning as a pre-task activity in class to help learners develop awareness in relation to the strategies they can embark on in order to improve their performance in a particular task.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Task Instruction Sheet (Individual Planning)

Instructions to the task:

Please, read carefully.

You received a wedding invitation from a close friend. You had already confirmed your presence at the wedding, but you had an unexpected problem to deal with. To apologize, you decided to send an audio message through *WhatsApp*. Come up with a story to justify your absence in your friend's wedding. Your apology should contain the words: *bike*, *to get* and *bird* (in any order). You decide how long your message should be. Add the number (XX) XXXX-XXXX to your contact list, this is the number to which you should send your audio message.

Instructions to the planning:

Before recording your message, you will have 10 minutes to plan what and how to speak. You can take notes in the paper given. It is better not to write the entire message once you cannot use your notes while recording the message.

If you have any questions, please, solve them before starting the task because after that no questions can be asked.

After 10 minutes, I (the researcher) will say: "You should stop now". And I will ask you to leave your notes aside and record the message you planned in English. If you prefer, you can leave the room to record the audio and come back after, but try to avoid noisy places.

You can listen to your message using headphones, but should not record your message more than once. After that, you will answer a questionnaire. If you have any questions about it, raise your hand and ask me.

Remain silent until all your colleagues have finished.

Thank you very much!

Appendix 2 - Task Instruction Sheet (Collaborative Planning)

Instructions to the task:

Please, read carefully.

You received a wedding invitation from a close friend. You had already confirmed your presence at the wedding, but you had an unexpected problem to deal with. To apologize, you decided to send an audio message through *WhatsApp*. Come up with a story to justify your absence in your friend's wedding. Your apology should contain the words: *bike, to get e bird* (in any order). You decide how long your message should be. Add the number (XX) XXXX-XXXX to your contact list, this is the number to which you should send your audio message.

Instructions to the planning:

Before recording your message, you will have 10 minutes to plan in group what and how to speak (your interaction with a colleague will be audio taped). After that, each of you should record the message individually, and your message should be different from your colleague's, meaning: only the planning is collaborative. You can take notes in the paper given. It is better not to write the entire message once you cannot use your notes while recording the message.

If you have any questions, please, solve them before starting the task because after that no questions can be asked.

After 10 minutes, I (the researcher) will say: "You should stop now". And I will ask you to leave your notes aside and record the message you planned in English. If you

prefer, you can leave the room to record the audio and come back after, but try to avoid noisy places.

You can listen to your message using headphones, but should not record your message more than once. After that, you will answer a questionnaire. If you have any questions about it, raise your hand and ask me.

Remain silent until all your colleagues have finished.






Thank you very much!

Appendix 3 - Post-Task Questionnaire (Individual Planning)

Federal University of Santa Catarina – UFSC/CCE/DLLE

Name: _____

1- Check the *emoji* face that better describes your feeling in relation to the question and justify your answer:

<p>How much did you like to have time to plan your message?</p>	
<p>How good the 10 minutes planning time was? Why?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>How much did you like to do the task?(create an excuse in English, having to use predefined words and recording the excuse). Justify your answer.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>How do you evaluate your planning?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>How much did you like to record your message on your mobile phone? Justify your answer.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	

2 – Would you prefer to have planned your message with a colleague? Why? Why not? _____

3 –Would you like to say something else that was not asked here? What? _____






Thank you very much!

Appendix4 - Post-Task Questionnaire (Collaborative Planning)

Federal University of Santa Catarina – UFSC/CCE/DLLE

Name: _____

1- Check the *emoji* face that better describes your feeling in relation to the question and justify your answer:

<p>How much did you like to have time to plan your message?</p>	
<p>How good the 10 minutes planning time was? Why?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>How much did you like to do the task? (create an excuse in English, having to use predefined words and recording the excuse). Justify your answer.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>How do you evaluate your planning?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>How much did you like to record your message on your mobile phone? Justify your answer.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	

2 – Would you prefer to have planned the message individually? Why? Why not?
(Your colleague will not have access to this information)

3 – Would you like to say something else that was not asked here?
What?_____

Thank you very much!

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