



# FIRST LANGUAGE (L1) AS A MEDIATIONAL TOOL IN PEER INTERACTION IN ENGLISH SPEAKING TASKS BY EFL COLLEGE STUDENTS IN VIETNAM

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**Abstract.** The sociocultural theory provides new perspectives towards learning, shedding new lights on the potential role of the first language (L1) in language learning conducive to linguistic development and higher mental achievements. Drawing on the sociocultural theory, the author investigates the use of L1 in speaking tasks by EFL college students in Vietnam. The study provides insights into the use of L1 in the EFL learning in English speaking tasks. Data collection was carried out by videotaping five pairs of students on completing two speaking tasks. The findings reveal the mediational functions of L1 in peer interaction with two prominent features of attention to vocabulary and meaning, and task elaboration. The L1 use in the two speaking tasks is reported in close relation to learners' proficiency and task types. The results also claim the use of L1 in promoting the target language learning, which provides the pedagogical implications for using the mother tongue in teaching and learning English in the peer context.

**Keywords:** L1, sociocultural theory, mediation, peer interaction

## 1. Introduction

Using first language (L1) in the language learning context has been a controversial subject with much debate due to the conflicts of exclusion or inclusion of L1 in the second language (L2) classrooms between audiolingual approach followers and advocates of L1. Many researchers claim the necessity of L1 in the target learning process and reveal that using L1 in some situations of L2 learning is useful [Atkinson, 1987; Cook, 2001; Kieu, 2010; Tang, 2002; Wells, 1999]. They view L1 as an additional cognitive tool [Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003], a psychological tool for providing scaffolded help as well as creating intersubjectivity when learners face cognitive difficulties [Antón & DiCamilla, 1998] or a mediational tool for regulating behaviour [Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Swain, Brooks, Lapkin, Knouzi, & Suzuki, 2009; Swain & Lapkin, 1998] for understanding the tense [Harun, Behak & Massari, 2014]. The sociocultural

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theory (SCT) emphasises social interaction including peer interaction in language learning and the knowledge co-construction is mainly mediated in cultural contexts through language and other symbols. In this sense, L1 is also a mediational tool for English as a foreign language/English as a second language (EFL/ESL) learning from which higher mental abilities arise during peer interaction on solving the linguistic problems. The current study adopts SCT as a framework to investigate the amount of L1 use and its functions as a mediational tool in peer interaction during completing English speaking tasks.

## 2. Literature review

The sociocultural theory highlights the role of interaction in language learning with the introduction of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), scaffolding and mediation. Vygotsky [1978, p.86] defines ZPD as “The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”. This notion suggests the ideas of working together in the learning environment where the more capable peers (experts) can scaffold the less capable peers (novices) to obtain the new knowledge until they can do it independently. The scaffolding process can be done in the forms of using mediational tools of physical materials, interacting with others and using symbolic signs, with the language being the most powerful sign [Vygotsky, 1978]. It is to say that through using the language of L1 and L2, we mediate our reasoning process, alter our ways of thinking, and develop a mutual understanding of the communicated information in order for us to act and solve problems.

Mediation has been defined as the way in which people change aspects of the world around them using “psychological tools”. Psychological tools are cultural artifacts, language, signs or symbols that facilitate interaction with the world and enable cognitive change. In the case of language learning, mediation can take the form of the textbook, visual material, classroom discourse, opportunities for L2 interaction [Le, 2003, p. 33]. The author also points out that social mediation in the form of interaction can occur as expert-novice mediation or peer mediation. Mediation, in general, occurs in the forms of material tools, interaction with another person and the use of symbols [Ellis, 2003].

Wertsch [1991, p. 12] claims “Human action typically employs mediational means such as tools and language and that these mediational means shape the action in essential ways”, while Daniels [2015, p. 34] implies that mediation is “The process through which the social and the individual mutually shape each other”. In other words, mediation can be done through means of communication as language and artifacts, and mediation itself is a process through which human beings gain the awareness and control of the mental ability [Lantolf & Thorne, 2006]. In

this sense, language is a vital factor in social interaction by which human beings mediate and are mediated to move to a higher form of mental ability. In language learning settings, especially in peer interaction in classrooms, language, i.e., both L1 and L2, is used as the most essential tool for language learners to complete the tasks through interacting with each other. With the emphasis of language in mediating cognitive processes, Swain [2006, p. 98] proposed a term “*linguaging*” to refer to “The process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language.” It means that *linguaging* becomes a process in which language is used to mediate linguistic problem solutions in language learning. As a result, this mediational process results in newly constructed knowledge through collaborative efforts by using language [Swain, 2000].

In general, from a SCT perspective, language plays an important role in EFL learning in a variety of aspects in which benefits of L1 use have been confirmed in different classroom contexts as foreign language classrooms [Antón & DiCamilla, 1999; Brooks & Donato, 1994] and immersion classrooms [Swain & Lapkin, 2000] due to its role as a mediating tool in all forms of higher mental processing. Simply put, *linguaging*, using language as a mediational tool for cognition to make and shape meaning [Swain, 2006], has helped the participants to mediate their understanding, and knowledge is constructed actively by the learners [Donato, 1994].

#### *Studies on L1 as a mediational tool in peer interaction*

The benefits of using language including L1 and L2 as mediational tools in cultural contexts have been theoretically supported by SCT’s principles of association between learning and development. The sociocultural theory claims that learners co-construct knowledge when using language to interact with other people, objects and events in the collaborative environment through social interaction with the environment. From a sociocultural perspective, research shows that L1 enables learners to work effectively in the ZPD as a mediational tool and the role it plays in the production of L2 particularly in peer work [Algería de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Bao & Du, 2015; Harun, Massari & Behak, 2014; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 1998].

Swain and Lapkin’s [1998] study on two grade 8 French immersion students doing a jigsaw task reported that the students use their L1 and L2 in order to communicate to each other and as tools to aid their L2 learning. The results showed three functions of L1 use as a tool to regulate students’ own behaviour, as an aid “to focus attention” as well as to generate and assess alternatives “on specific L2 structures”. The findings of another study by Swain and Lapkin [2000] also revealed three other functions of L1 use to develop a joint understanding of the prompt and the instructions in the tasks, and to negotiate their collaboration throughout the tasks; to draw the learners’ attention to vocabulary and forms emerging during task completion and to build an interpersonal interaction between learners. In other words, the appropriate use

of L1 could promote L2 learning.

Storch and Wigglesworth [2003] conducted a study exploring the use of L1s as a mediating tool when 12 pairs of university students (6 with a shared L1 and 6 with different L1s) performed a text reconstruction task and a short joint composition task. In spite of the small amount of L1 use by learners due to their reluctance, the researchers informed that during interviews the learners still perceived L1 use as a useful tool to assist them to discuss the prompt and structure of the composition in more depth and thus complete the task more easily. The use of L1 could also help learners provide each other with definitions of unknown words more directly and perhaps more successfully [Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003, p. 768].

Algería de la Colina and García Mayo [2009] reported the use of L1 and its functions in the oral interaction of twelve pairs of undergraduate EFL learners with low proficiency. Data from analysis of learners doing three collaborative tasks (jigsaw, text reconstruction and dictogloss) indicated that low proficiency EFL learners make use of L1 as a mediational tool to manage the task and to discuss grammar and vocabulary. The authors concluded that L1 provided essential cognitive support for focusing attention and understanding meaning.

Harun et al. [2014] investigated the use of L1 as a semiotic mechanism in mediating learners' understanding of the English tense-aspect system from working on concept-based instruction materials by eight Malay university-level learners. The study confirmed the mediational tool of L1 in order to structure and organise thought in helping learners gain a deeper understanding of the target grammatical concept.

Bao and Du [2015] explored the extent to which L1 and its functions when beginner-level lower-secondary school learners of Chinese performed tasks in pairs and groups. The researchers confirmed the role of L1 in foreign language learning and that L1 use mainly occurred in learners' efforts to mediate completion of the tasks. The findings showed that learners used L1 to assist their peers to find unknown words, clarify and discuss these words, explain and analyse them.

In general, these previous studies adopting SCT as a framework have confirmed L1 use as a mediational tool to create the social space for EFL and ESL learning in peer interaction where learners can mutually support to solve linguistic problems and gain common knowledge. They have demonstrated that L1 can serve a number of functions, including discussing the prompt and structure of the composition, negotiating their collaboration, drawing attention on grammar and vocabulary [Algería de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; Bao & Du, 2015; Brooks & Donato, 1994; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 1998, 2000], managing the task [Algería de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003], checking for understanding [Kieu, 2010], and creating an atmosphere for social interaction in classroom [Yaghobian, Samuel & Mahmoudi, 2017]. The use of L1 may assist

learners “to gain control of the task” [Brooks & Donato, 1994, p. 271] and work with the task at a higher cognitive level than might have been possible had they been working individually [Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003]. It is also acknowledged that the amount of L1 use depends on the proficiency level of learners [Bao & Du, 2015; DiCamilla & Antón, 2012; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Storch & Aldosari, 2010] with the larger amount of L1 use by elementary-level learners than that of the intermediate-level learners.

A large body of L1 research was conducted in various contexts around the world except for Vietnamese contexts with a few studies on the use of L1 by teachers [Bui & Nguyen, 2014; Kieu, 2010]. Therefore, it is necessary to widen our understanding of L1 use in the EFL learning context in Vietnam, especially by intermediate learners at the tertiary level in terms of the amount of L1 use and the mediational functions that L1 plays in peer interaction. The current study attempts to find the answers to the following two questions:

– How is L1 used by Vietnamese EFL college students in peer interaction in English speaking tasks?

– How does L1 mediate Vietnamese EFL college students in peer interaction in English speaking tasks?

### **3. The study**

#### *Participants and procedures*

The participants in this study were 10 second-year students of English teachers’ training major. They were chosen randomly from 3 classes at the college level. The students worked in 5 pairs to carry out two speaking tasks. The participants were instructed to collaboratively produce dialogues and encouraged to make any decisions and conclusions they might have. They were allowed to use their mother tongue while completing the tasks. Students had around 10 minutes to prepare their tasks individually before discussing with their partners.

#### *The tasks*

Task 1: The decision-making task is adapted from Pica et al. [1993] in which learner dyads are given a problem for which there are a number of possible outcomes and they must choose one through negotiation and discussion. “The Desert Island” task provides the situation of two people on a sinking boat and they are allowed to bring five out of twelve items for their survival on a desert island until they are rescued. The task requires the participants to reach a mutually acceptable decision or an agreed solution following their discussion (see Appendix A).

Task 2: The picture differences task is adapted from Gass et al. [2005] in which learner dyads are given two different versions of a picture (each learner has a different version) and

asked to identify differences between the pictures. The set of pictures used in the task depicts identical park scenes with differences between the pictures; for example, in one picture, there is one girl playing on the merry-go-round; in the other picture, the merry-go-round is missing (see Appendix B).

A decision-making task is claimed as two-way interactant relationship and convergent goal orientation that requires mutual relationship of request, suppliance and collaboration result in more meaning negotiation [Ellis, 2003, p. 215] while the picture differences task provides more negotiation of meaning in the classroom than the laboratory which is shown in the total amount of negotiation [Gass, Mackey & Ross-Feldman, 2005]. Therefore, the current study hopes to find out the answers for the application of the two tasks in Vietnamese contexts.

#### *Data collection and analysis*

Classroom interactive data were collected during the task completion of each pair. The discussion parts were videotaped with the use of video feature on the smartphones by other students from the participants' classes in order to reduce affected responses due to the researchers' presence. The videotaping started as soon as the students began the activities. The researcher was waiting outside the videotaping room, instead of interfering in the discussion. Ten discussions where L1 occurred were transcribed verbatim, extracted and coded for the analysis.

L1 use was identified if students spoke in Vietnamese or contained phrases in Vietnamese shown in the recording, which can be varied in length from a single word as in the case of code-switching or several turns students spoke in their mother tongue. The extent of L1 use is evaluated as a percentage of the total turns in tasks. In order to code the interaction data, a list of L1 functions with the suggestions from previous studies [Bao & Du, 2015; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Algeria de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009] was established with similar descriptions although the terms might be slightly different. Task elaboration category is added and specified to meet all the aspects of the present study. Table 1 below defines L1 functions in the present study with explanations and examples in specific discussions.

Table 1. The operational definitions of L1 functions

Functions	Explanations	Examples
Task management	Discussing how the task should be completed	Student (S) 1: You want to write it? S2: You know my handwriting is not good (Pair 6, joint composition task; translated from Chinese) [Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003, p. 765]
Task clarification	Discussing the meaning of the task prompt and instructions	S1: Chose a few that are special, this one, this one. . . S2: Right, this small one, . . . 1985 ... let me first choose ...

		<p>S1: We just need to pick 2 points, this one. . .</p> <p>S2: What about this, . . . should we first group which subject that have most women and which has most men according to its tendency? Then compare the two groups, which will give us 3 paragraphs.</p> <p>S1: Right, . . . this one increased, this one also increased.</p> <p>S2: Right, and this one has been increasing continuously.</p> <p>S1: This one is also continuously increasing (Pair 9, joint composition task; translated from Chinese) [Storch &amp; Wigglesworth, 2003, p. 764]</p>
Vocabulary and meaning	Clarifying unclear vocabulary, searching for the unknown vocabulary, making explanations, translating, and clarifying the pronunciation of the words	<p>S2: Yes and . . . mm. . . around . . . mm. . . everything in the park have “cái tường là cái gì ta” (<i>what is “cái tường” in English?</i>) . . . mm. . . wall wall.</p>
Grammar	Explaining grammar, and discussing uncertain grammatical structures	<p>S1: Australia is drawn Australia is drawn Australia it should be passive voice currently . . .</p> <p>S2: Mhm (Pair 8, reconstruction task; translated from Indonesian) [Storch &amp; Wigglesworth, 2003, p. 765]</p>
Task elaboration	Discussing the specific ideas and elaborating the arguments to complete the task	<p>S4: Yes. Because in the desert island, it has a lot of things, it will dangerous for you so when you have first-aid-kit, maybe you can mm it helps you mm làm gì? (<i>help you do what</i>)</p> <p>S3: giải quyết (<i>solve</i>)</p> <p>S4: giải quyết được...</p> <p>S3: to solve. It helps me to solve the problems</p>

#### 4. Findings

In order to answer the first question about the amount of L1 used by Vietnamese EFL students in peer interaction when completing the decision-making task and the picture difference task, L1 turns were calculated from each pair. Table 2 reports the number and percentage of L1 turns produced by each pair in two tasks.

Table 2. The amount of L1 use across the two tasks

Pairs	Tasks	L1 turns	%	Total turns
S 1-2	Decision-making	1	1.9	51
	Picture difference	3	5.4	55

S 3-4	Decision-making	9	16.4	55
	Picture difference	6	8.3	72
S 5-6	Decision-making	7	9.5	73
	Picture difference	8	7.4	108
S 7-8	Decision-making	2	4.6	43
	Picture difference	7	15.6	45
S 9-10	Decision-making	1	4	25
	Picture difference	9	9	100

The amount of L1 use across two tasks by 5 pairs is limited with the highest at 16.4%, taking place in the decision-making task and the lowest at 1.9% also taking place in this task. Besides, the data reveals that pairs S 1-2, S 7-8, and S 9-10 used more L1 in the task of picture difference, while pairs S 3-4 and S 5-6 produced L1 more in the decision-making task. The gap of L1 use between two tasks is remarkably big in pair S 7-8 with the amount of L1 use in the picture difference task three times as much as that in the decision-making task. In contrast, pair S 5-6 produced L1 relatively equally across two tasks with 7 times of L1 use in the decision-making task and 8 times in the picture difference task.

Table 3 provides the data to answer question 2 about the different functions of L1 use by Vietnamese EFL college peers in completing the decision-making task and the picture difference task.

Table 3. The functions of L1 across the two tasks

Pairs	Tasks	Task management	Task clarification	Vocabulary and meaning	Grammar	Task elaboration
S 1-2	Decision-making	0	0	0	0	1
	Picture difference	0	0	3	0	0
S 3-4	Decision-making	0	0	6	0	3
	Picture difference	0	0	6	0	0
S 5-6	Decision-making	0	0	7	0	0
	Picture difference	0	0	6	0	0
S 7-8	Decision-making	0	0	2	0	0
	Picture difference	0	0	7	0	0
S 9-10	Decision-making	0	0	1	0	0
	Picture difference	0	0	9	0	0



Table 3 shows that two key functions of L1 use in peer interaction across two tasks are to clarify vocabulary and meaning and to elaborate the task. Between these two functions, participants most frequently made use of L1 for vocabulary and meaning. The following example illustrates how participants use L1 for an unknown word of swing by making it as the officially shared word during the task completion while the knowledge of the word “shuttlecock” was mediated by the explanation of the game for the Vietnamese word of “đá cầu”.

Excerpt 1:

S9: on the right, there are some kids

S10: Ok I see

S9: playing xích đu (*swing*)

S10: Ah, Ok

S9: There are exactly one two three, three kids. How about you? How about your picture?

S10: In my picture mm . . . I see five children. Three children play xích đu (*swing*), mm . . . two students play mm . . . near xích đu (*swing*)

S9: So the other two kids, what are they doing?

S10: I see they play “đá cầu” (*shuttlecock*)

S9: “đá cầu” (*shuttlecock*). So they are playing with a ball. Right?

S10: Right

Moreover, L1 seems to be a more useful mediational tool in peer interaction for clarifying the unknown words while gestures can't help the mutual understanding as in the conversation between S5 and S6 below.

Excerpt 2:

S5: What's else?

S6: There is a boy behind the second banana tree. She mm . . . is . . . mm . . . (*do the action of waving*)

S5: cái gì đó? (*What is that?*)

S6: vẫy tay (*wave hands*)

S5: Waving, Waving

S6: Waving his hand.

It can be seen that at first, S6 didnot know the word “wave hands” so he/ she mimed the gestures to express his/her ideas for S5. However, S6’s action couldnot mediate S5’s understanding, so S5 used L1 to clarify the meaning of S6’s action. In this case, L1 mediated the understanding between two participants. S5, then, could scaffold S6 with linguistic problems. As a result, S6 achieved linguistic development of obtaining a new word.

L1 is also used as the mediational tool to build up the knowledge of pronunciation and widen the ideas or explicit arguments as shown in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 3:

S3: First-aid-kit? Yeah, OK.

S4: Yes. Because in mm . . . từ này đọc là gì? (*How do we pronounce this word?*)

S3: cái gì? (*what?*) desert island

Both: in desert island.

S4: Yes. Because in the desert island, it has a lot of things, it will dangerous for you so when you have first-aid-kit, maybe you can mm it helps you mm làm gì? (*help you do what?*)

S3: (laugh) giải quyết (*solve*) (look at each other and laugh)

S4: giải quyết được . . . (*to solve. . .*)

S3: to solve. It helps me to solve the problems.

S4: Yes. OK. And mm . . . for you to solve problem for you and mm people.

In excerpt 3, it can be observed that the participants work collaboratively to build knowledge. Among the various techniques to mediate understanding, L1 is one of the favourable techniques they use when they have linguistics problems and even for the mental problems. S4 had difficulty in pronouncing the words “desert island” and asked for S3’s help in Vietnamese. In this case, L1 plays the function of clarifying the pronunciation of the words. However, S4 later might not have an idea about the necessity of bringing first-aid-kit to the desert island so he/she made a question in L1. S3 replied to S4 using his/her mother tongue and S4 failed to understand and repeated the words. Then, S3 elaborated the idea and S4 recast the idea. In other words, L1 in this excerpt served as the mediational role with the function of vocabulary and meaning in terms of using L1 to mediate the pronunciation of “desert island”, while task elaboration function has been demonstrated when S4 mediated understanding of the first-aid-kit use through L1.

The following excerpt shows how experts use L1 to scaffold novice in precisising the name of the traditional game in ‘expert-novice’ pattern of interaction [Storch, 2002].

Excerpt 4:

S7: Oh in the centre, I see two . . . two the boys, I don't I don't see . . . you mm they . . . are doing . . . so I think mm . . .

S8: but I see two boys . . .

S7: two boys mm bắt mm bịt mắt bắt mm (*two boys play mm blind man...*)

S8: Bịt mắt bắt . . . (*blind man. . .*) chơi đuổi bắt (*play tag*)

S7: Oh, chơi đuổi bắt (*Oh, play tag*). I can see . . .

S8: Yes, I can see in my picture.

At the beginning of the interaction, S7 had some difficulty in describing the scene in his/her picture and was scaffolded by S7 with the detailed description of his/her picture. After that, S7 used the suggested phrase but got stuck with the name of the game in the picture so he/she used L1. S8 then corrected the name of the game in Vietnamese for S7 to repeat the word in L1. The interaction indicates that the more knowledgeable person or expert (S8) supports the less knowledgeable person (S7) to find the correct name of the game; as a result, S7 is able to use the right word although it is in Vietnamese. Thus, it can be argued that a peer (S8) is able to provide his/her peer with an opportunity for learning [Watanabe, 2008; Storch, 2002] by using L1.

## 5. Discussion and implications

First, the data revealed a small amount of L1 use during the two task completions with a higher percentage of 16.4% in the decision-making task. This moderate use of L1 is in line with that of Storch and Wigglesworth [2003] although this figure is much smaller. The fact that the students' high proficiency level can result in the small amount of L1 use is reported in various studies on the association of learners' proficiency with the amount of L1 use [Bao & Du, 2015; DiCamilla & Antón, 2012; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Storch & Aldosari, 2010]. Unlike Bao and Du's (2015) participants of beginner-level lower-secondary school learners, the participants in the current study are college students at the intermediate level in a highly demanding academic context similar to that of Storch and Wigglesworth [2003]. This similarity favours the facts of the shared findings of two studies in which students used a smaller amount of L1 during task completion. Moreover, the ten-minute preparation can also provide students enough time for recalling the words they forgot and checking the unknown words in dictionaries, which significantly reduces the amount of L1. It is to say that language teachers should be aware of the necessity and benefits of L1 in the L2 learning process and accept their learners' using L1 in classroom

contexts and during peer interaction. Teachers in language classrooms might need to think of providing enough time for preparation for linguistic achievements and learning success.

Second, participants use L1 mainly to assist their partners in finding the words they do not know or remember, clarifying unclear vocabulary, searching for unknown vocabulary, making explanations, and translating. The high-proficient learners in this study used L2 instead of L1 for the task management or task clarification, whilst the use of L1 was mainly for discussing vocabulary searches. The results are in line with the findings in DiCamilla and Antón's [2012] study. In fact, the meaning-focused nature of the tasks might result in the predominant function of L1 for vocabulary and meaning. Moreover, participants used L1 to elaborate on the ideas for their peers' arguments. The mediational functions of L1 have been restricted in two categories of vocabulary and meaning and task elaboration. The range of L1 functions used by intermediate level learners are smaller than that used by elementary level learners because the higher language abilities of the former result in lower needs of L1 in producing the grammar and explaining the task or finding the unknown words. Obviously, students with higher language proficiency seem highly reluctant to use their L1 even when allowed to do so [Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003]. The findings provide pedagogical implications for language teaching and learning in terms of teachers' concerns about their intermediate-level students' using L1 in pair work or group work when teachers are not always involved in their task completion. Moreover, language teachers should pay attention to the way of pairing students with different proficiency to maximise the scaffolding chances and mediational role of L1.

Third, L1 promotes language learning in peer interaction. With the use of L1, learners can make use of their available linguistic resources, relate their understanding of existing knowledge and identify the gaps between their current language and the target language, all of which are the prerequisite conditions for development. A large amount of evidence across two tasks by 5 pairs illustrates the mediational role of L1 use in language learning. The interactive conversations on decision-making and knowledge-building meanings between two participants can last longer with the use of L1 to mediate the understanding in peer interaction. It is to say that L1 use smoothens the language learners' path and then promotes EFL learning. These results are consistent with those reported by Algeria de la Colina and García Mayo [2009], Bao and Du [2015] and Bhooth, Azman and Ismail [2014].

The findings show that the amount of L1 use is different from pair to pair and from task to task. In essence, task types provide greater impact on the amount of L1 use [Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Azkarai & García Mayo, 2015; Storch & Aldosari, 2010; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003] and have a closer relationship with L1 functions [Alegría de la Colina & García Mayo, 2009; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003]. Similarly, the results are in line with the previous findings, which reveal that participants made more use of their shared L1 in the picture

difference task (31 turns) than in the decision-making task(20 turns).Specifically, the surpassing amount of L1 use for vocabulary and meaning in the picture difference task with all 31 turns significantly indicates the influence of task types on the L1 use in peer interaction. The tasks per se, then, also serve as mediators of L2 learning, which provide the context for collaborative dialogues with the meaning of decision-making and knowledge-building dialogue with support evidence from Swain [1997, cited in Swain, 2000]and Swain and Lapkin [1998, cited in Swain, 2000]. However, further studies on the association of task types and L1 functions in EFL and peer interaction pattern in relation to L1 use may widen more understanding about the potentially valuable role of L1 in language learning.

## 6. Conclusion

The current study shows that, in this case, the Vietnamese language could be used as a mediational tool in language learning in terms of vocabulary and meaning, and task elaboration. The amount of L1 use is strictly related to the language learners' proficiency. The L1 use is inversely proportional to the learners' proficiency, i.e., the student's proficiency in the target language increases, the dependence on L1 decreases. Last but not least, L1 serves as a mediational tool to promote the target language learning in peer interaction. However, some limitations are also noted due to the smallscale with arestricted number of participants. The fact that L1 use and its functions during speaking-task completion in the Vietnamese context of tertiary level are the main focus leaves some unansweredquestions on the association of L1 and certain task types. Therefore, more research should be conducted to clarify the influence of task natures and task types, namely the decision-making task and picture difference task, on L1 use and its functions. Moreover, the new L1 function of task elaboration leaves a gap for more research to bridge.

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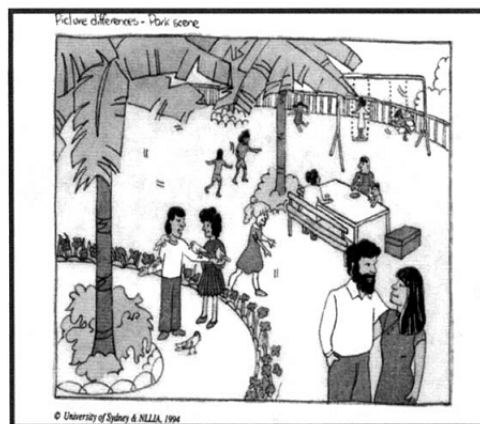
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## Appendix A

*Instruction: Look at the park below. Working with a partner, you must describe your picture and find out eight differences. You have 10 minutes to plan what and how to say. However, you are only allowed to talk without your notes.*



Spot the differences park scene. Communicative Tasks (1995). National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia, Language Acquisition Research Centre, University of Sydney. © National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA).

## Appendix B

## THE DESERT ISLAND

**You are on a sinking ship. There is only one lifeboat left for your rescue. The boat can only hold a limited amount of supplies and people. You can see a small desert island in the distance. If your boat makes it there safely, you will need things to help you survive until you are rescued.**

*Instruction: Look at the following list of items that you have. Choose only five items that you will bring with you. Working with a partner, you must decide and agree mutually on which five items to take.*



*You have 10 minutes to plan what and how to say. However, you are only allowed to talk without your notes.*

<b>Items</b>	<b>Tick (✓) to indicate your choice</b>
1. Torchlight	
2. Pillows	
3. Canned food	
4. Clothes	
5. Fresh water	
6. Knives	
7. Map	
8. Family documents	
9. Handphone	
10. First-aid kit	
11. Matches	
12. Gun	