The Effects of Convergent and Divergent Tasks on Language Related Episodes in Tertiary EFL Classrooms*

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to investigate how convergent and divergent task designs affect learners' attention to form during interaction. Previous investigations into task types have revealed that varying task types can lead to changes in focus during learners' meaningful language exchanges, but many specific task designs remain underexplored, which leaves a gap in the understanding of the effects of particular task types in language classes. To address this gap, the study divided an intact class of English as foreign language learners at a Korean university where half the students performed a convergent task (CT), and the other half performed a divergent task (DT). To measure attention to language form during interaction, language-related episodes (LREs) were identified, categorized, and then analyzed. The results revealed that while both groups produced a similar number of LREs, with lexis-focused LREs being the most common in both groups, there were differences in how the groups attended to language during their task. It was found that the CT group produced a similar level of lexis-focused and form-focused LREs, while the DT group's LREs were mostly lexis-focused. Also, only the DT group produced pragmatic-focused LREs while the CT group produced more mechanical-focused LREs than the DT group did. These findings suggest that the use of CT and DT in language classes provides teachers with a tool to encourage a focus on specific, different language features. The results and implications are discussed in more detail.

KEYWORDS
TBLT, convergent and divergent tasks, LREs, interaction, meaning-focused tasks

1. Introduction

The modern era of second language teaching and learning has advocated for the benefits of communication-focused classes. This movement rests in part on the understanding that through interaction and using language as a communication tool, opportunities to develop exist, and through intentional pedagogical interventions, students can maximize these opportunities as they interact with each other to create opportunities for language development. Among the various communication-focused pedagogies, task-based language teaching (TBLT) has garnered significant attention. TBLT encourages the use of language as a meaning-focused tool as learners perform tasks that aim to imitate aspects of authentic language use. Through tasks, L2 learners engage in meaningful interactions with peers, obtaining ample language practice. While the benefits of TBLT have received a lot of attention and support, there has remained consistent debate regarding how to integrate a focus on language forms into TBLT's meaning-focused lesson design (Ellis 2017b, Long 2016). Researchers such as Willis and Willis (2007) suggest that incidental attention to language is a natural occurrence in meaning-focused activities, with researchers indicating that the attention to language and adjustments that occur during task interaction aid language development (Long 2016, Swain 2005). Theories such as the interaction hypothesis (Long 1981) and the output hypothesis (Swain 1995) outline specific effects of interaction for language development.

While scholars have provided different definitions of tasks (See Long 2016, Nunan 1989, Skehan 2003, Willis 1996), these descriptions can be summarized as tasks are classroom pedagogical activities that encourage a focus on meaningful language use to accomplish a set aim (Kim 2020). According to Ellis, Skehan, Li, Natsuko, and Lambert (2019), tasks can be classified into several types to investigate communicative and cognitive processes, such as (1) One way versus two way, (2) Monologic versus dialogic, (3) Closed versus open, (4) Convergent versus divergent, (5) Rhetorical mode. Among these classifications, convergent and divergent tasks exhibit opposite task goal orientations. Convergent tasks "require learners to converge on an agreed solution to the task" such as in a jigsaw task, while divergent tasks "can allow learners to arrive at their own individual solutions" (Ellis et al. 2019, p. 11) such as opinion exchange tasks. Due to the different nature of these tasks, several studies investigated the effects of convergent and divergent tasks in different situations and confirmed the task type effects (Dao 2021, Duff 1986, Kim 2020, Yilmaz and Granena 2010).

To investigate learning from interaction during task performance, researchers have used language-related episodes (LREs) as they allow for the identification of moments that involve both interaction between speakers and a focus on form. LREs are described as episodes of interaction in which learners talk about language (Swain and Lapkin 1998, Swain and Lapkin 2001). Research regarding LREs has been actively conducted for the last decade, and how various aspects of tasks affect the occurrence of LREs has been examined in terms of the impact of learner proficiency (Kim 2009, Kim and McDonough 2008), task modes (Niu 2009), the complexity of tasks (Révész 2011), and task features and types (Kaivanpanah and Miri 2017, Mayo 2002, Yilmaz and Granena 2010, Zabihi 2022). Particularly, studies investigating the effects of task features and types have shown that students created more numbers of LREs in performing a text-reconstruction task than either a dictogloss or jigsaw task (De la Colina and Mayo 2007, Mayo 2002). Additionally, Yilmaz and Granena (2010) compared the attributes and number of LREs across convergent and divergent task types in synchronous computer-mediated communication. Their study revealed that convergent tasks generated more LREs than divergent tasks did, with LREs being explicit in divergent tasks and implicit in convergent tasks. Further, subsequent studies investigated the types of LREs produced depending on task conditions (Kim 2009, Révész 2011), demonstrating that complex task types yielded more complex language uses as well as lexical LREs. In this way, the variations within tasks have been shown to affect the performance of tasks and how learners incorporate form-focus into the performance of tasks.

Despite the number of studies that have examined LREs in various frameworks, gaps still remain in the use of specific elements of tasks to elicit moments of explicit focus on language in meaning-focused exchanges. While task types have been shown to have an impact on the occurrence and types of LREs that students produce while completing a task, there are few studies that have investigated the effects of task types with opposite goal orientations, such as convergent and divergent tasks, on LREs. As such, although convergent/divergent tasks have been popularly researched in terms of language performance, how they affect LRE production has yet to be examined. In this regard, the present study aims to examine the effects of a convergent and a divergent task type on the frequency and types of LREs. Based on the findings, this study hopes to provide pedagogical insight regarding how LREs can be increased to better elicit affordances for students to engage in form-focused interactions in meaning-focused lessons.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Interaction and Task Type Effects

Interaction between learners stands as a cornerstone of second language acquisition and learning (Loewen and Sato 2018, Mackey et al. 2013). The dynamic exchanges involved in interaction foster language development through a series of input, output, and feedback. In order for learners to benefit from provided input, they must actively notice and attend to specific features in the language (Schmidt 2010). However, it is known that this process can be hindered by factors like learned attention (Ellis and Sagarra 2011) or internal syllabi (Corder 1967), which prioritize certain aspects of language.

To overcome these hurdles, Long (2016) suggests that classrooms can facilitate learner-paced learning through promoting interaction. The benefits of interaction present opportunities for creating output which allow learners to test their hypotheses about language rules, refine their knowledge through feedback (Swain 2005, Gass 2018), and develop metalinguistic skills (Swain 2005). Additionally, feedback during interaction encourages adjustment to output to make the intended message more understandable by the listener, which allows learners to test their hypotheses and refine their output (Long 1981). This aligns with Swain's (1995) concept of noticing a gap as learners realize an area of deficit they would like to amend, and this reinforces the idea that feedback during interactions is essential for language development. In this way, output fosters both individual understanding and provides opportunities for the construction of shared knowledge through production and feedback. As such, interaction is a multifaceted process that fuels second language development through input, output, and feedback. By fostering active engagement and providing opportunities for learners to notice, test, and refine their language knowledge, interaction is as a powerful mechanism for language learning.

With the understanding of the important role of input, output, and interaction in developing language knowledge, language teaching pedagogy has responded with methodologies that encourage these features. In language learning classes, TBLT is an often-employed pedagogical tool that facilitates interaction, and its popularity has resulted in wide-spread uses and a variety of definitions. TBLT employs tasks to have learners primarily focus on meaningful interaction to achieve an outcome, such as resolving a gap in information, with occasional attention to language forms as required (Long 2016, Ellis et al. 2019, Ellis 2017a). Ellis et al. (2019) offered a general framework that allows for an umbrella understanding of tasks and presented tasks as a workplan, not as a strict lesson framework because of the unpredictable nature of tasks in the classroom. This workplan was suggested to have the following criteria: (1) a primary focus on meaning, (2) some kind of gap, (3) learners utilize their own language resources,

(4) the task aims to accomplish a communicative goal.

While TBLT involves a primary focus on meaning, there is general acceptance that attention to form during these meaning focused tasks is beneficial for learning (R. Ellis 2015, Ellis 2017a, Long 2016, Storch 2018, Svalberg 2021, Willis and Willis 2007). The challenge has been what is the best method to direct attention to language within a meaning-focused task. Long (2016) maintains that incidental form-focused instruction (FFI) to address errors or shortcomings in communication is sufficient. In support of this, Swain (2005) highlights a specific process, collaborative dialogues, where "speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building" (p. 478). Swain (2006) further articulates this process and labels this "process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (p. 98) as languaging. Languaging is not only the process of language development, but also of learning, and involves interaction with others as well as self-talk as learners use language to describe language (Swain and Watanabe 2013). Taken together, these outline a process that involves learners, individually or together, using language during meaning-focused tasks, that consider features of language.

Tasks can be manipulated in a number of ways, with many manipulations already having been shown to have an effect on task performance. Among these, several studies have examined the effects of convergent and divergent task types on students' language performance. Based on a psycholinguistic typology of tasks (R. Ellis 2015), convergent tasks (CT) and divergent tasks (DT) display distinct characteristics. CTs involve students reaching an agreement on a solution, emphasizing a convergent goal orientation. In contrast, DTs entail open-ended information exchanges where agreement among students is not mandated, reflecting a divergent goal orientation. Due to their distinct characteristics, CTs and DTs are frequently employed as classroom activities, and the related research has confirmed an effect due to task type on language performance (Dao 2021, Duff 1986, Foster and Skehan 1996, Kim 2020, Smith 2003, Yilmaz and Granena 2010).

With a view to investigating the effects of different task types, Foster and Skehan (1996) used narrative, personal information exchange, and decision-making tasks. Their results indicated differences in the performance of the tasks regarding attention to accuracy and complexity of production. They found that the decision-making group, in which learners were required to reach an agreement on a decision, which is similar to a CT, produced a number of collaborative dialogues related to language repair. Smith (2003) discovered that CTs (decision-making) fostered the most active co-construction of meaning among participants. Additionally, Duff (1986) observed higher frequencies of turn-taking, questions, and c-units in problem-solving tasks than in debate tasks which can be classified as a DT. Similarly, Kim (2020) investigated how a CT (decision-making) and DT (opinion exchange) affected accuracy, complexity, and fluency during the task performance. She found that the learners produced a higher degree of fluency, complexity, and turn-taking in the CT. Additionally, Lim and Lee (2015) conducted research exploring the impact of task types and modalities on interactions among Korean learners. They found that CTs resulted in more interactional modifications compared to DTs. Likewise, Dao (2021) also found better cognitive and social engagement in the CT than in the DT. Nonetheless, Lee (2001) displayed different findings, in that negotiation for meaning was more actively performed in the DT. These studies indicate that the CT and DT task types do affect learner task performance differently and might also affect what learners attend to.

With the understanding that attending to form during meaning-focused tasks is beneficial for learners, it is important to understand how this can be encouraged. As it has been shown that task type has an effect on task performance, and that meaning-focused CTs produce different performances than DTs, it is essential to determine how these tasks affect attention to language during task performance.

2.2 Language-Related Episodes

A reported benefit of interaction is that it promotes opportunities for learners to share their knowledge with each other and to develop a collective pool of knowledge to address comprehension errors (Svalberg and Askham 2020, Zabihi 2022). Attention to form during the free exchange of meaning-focused interactional tasks provides opportunities for language development through the input and output affordances, but these incidental, unpredictable learning opportunities are difficult to measure (Aubrey 2020). To this end, language related episodes (LREs) are frequently used to measure and analyze spontaneous attention to form in meaning-focused tasks. LREs are episodes of interaction that involve learners talking about or questioning their language usage (Swain and Lapkin 1998, Swain and Lapkin 2001). LREs are learners engaging in constructing connections between meaning and language forms and functions (Swain and Lapkin 1998) and involve both cognitive and social engagement (Svalberg 2021). Further, this engagement has been shown to trigger noticing (Storch 2008, Svalberg 2021) which has been suggested as a key indicator in the process of second language development (Mackey, Abbuhl, and Gass 2013). Kim (2009) sees LREs as "operationalizations of learning opportunities that arise during task performance" (p. 255). In this way, LREs are a product of the dynamic interplay between input, output, and interaction in second language acquisition (Solon et al. 2017) and provide opportunities to investigate learning opportunities during interaction.

LREs have been classified and divided in several ways in previous studies. Storch (2008) labelled LREs as either simple or elaborate to represent the degree to which they were discussed, and Kim (2009) defined LREs as either grammatical or lexical focused. In their investigation of the number of LREs and their relationship with improvement in pronunciation, Solon et al. (2017) categorized LREs as grammatical, lexical/meaning, spelling, lexical spelling, lexical/pronunciation. These classifications highlight how LREs have been operationalized to understand both the conditions that create LREs, as well as the effects that LREs have on learning. In reporting on previous research, Storch (2013) suggested a detailed differentiation of LREs indicating five classifications: discourse focused, form-focused, lexis-focused, mechanical-focused, and incorrectly resolved.

To date, some studies have examined the effects of task types on LREs in various aspects (De la Colina and Mayo 2007, Kaivanpanah and Miri 2017, Kim 2009, Mayo 2002, Révész 2011, Swain and Lapkin 2001, Yilmaz and Granena 2010, Zabihi 2022). For instance, Mayo (2002) investigated the effects of two task types, a dictogloss and text reconstruction, and discovered that the pairs who collaboratively conducted a text reconstruction created more LREs and paid more attention to form, compared with the dictogloss pairs. De la Colina and Mayo (2007) also showed that a text-reconstruction task yielded more LREs than either a dictogloss or jigsaw task. In addition, Kaivanpanah and Miri (2017) explored how task type affects the creation of lexical LREs. 24 Iranian students were paired up to perform two different tasks, writing a composition and completing a cloze task. The result also showed that a higher number of detailed episodes were discovered in the collaborative dialogues than in the composition task. Along this line, Yilmaz and Granena (2010) compared LREs across convergent and divergent task types in synchronous computer-mediated communication and showed convergent tasks generated more LREs than divergent tasks. Zabihi (2022) also compared the effects of two task types on the frequency and the resolution of grammatical LREs. The results indicated that the students produced more detailed LREs when completing the text editing task than the narrative writing task. In contrast, Swain and Lapkin (2001) reported no significant difference in the amount of LREs or degree of students' attention to form between a dictogloss and a jigsaw task. Nonetheless, more studies have confirmed differences in LREs between different task types (Mayo 2002, Kaivanpanah and Miri 2017, Zabihi 2022).

Studies have also examined how task conditions, such as complexity, can affect the categories of LREs that

students produced. Studies by Liao (2020) and Storch (2013) investigated collaborative writing and showed that during the oral discussion stages of a collaborative writing process, students produced more focus on lexical items, though they also found some LREs involving form. This suggests the use of oral production tasks elicit a focus on lexical focused LREs, while writing tasks elicit more focus on grammatical and mechanical elements of language. Kim (2009) found that complex tasks were associated with more lexical LREs, while Révész (2011) found that complex tasks produced more LREs. Both studies also found that task complexity has a positive relationship with attention to partner speech. Following this, increasing complexity in tasks has been shown to have the result of an increase in attention to language during task performance.

Given that task designs and conditions affect learners' attention during tasks and thus yield a different focus on LREs, it seems essential to investigate the effects of a convergent and a divergent task on the occurrences and categories of LREs. In line with this, two research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1) Are there any differences in the university students' LRE types between a convergent and divergent task?
2) If there are differences in the students' LREs between a convergent and a divergent task, what are the differences in interaction displayed in LREs?

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

A total of 13 Korean students who were enrolled in an English course at a local university in Daegu, Korea participated in the current study. The number of students was chosen to include a single intact class and to ensure adequate attention was given to the analysis of the transcripts. The course from which the students were drawn from aimed at improving students' English communication skills. Due to the communicative focus, students were familiar with performing different types of tasks in groups were used provided language use in various situations that students might encounter in real-world contexts. The class size was fairly small, and prior the data collection, the students had attended several classes in this course and had frequent opportunities to share their opinions about a range of topics in English. Hence, during the task performance for the data collection, the students did not appear to be hesitant or encumbered when they spoke in English to each other. That being said, there was still L1 (Korean) used during the interactions.

The students were primarily first-year university students who had been assigned to the class based on having a similar English score range according to the Korea Scholastic Assessment Test. The two researchers in this study evaluated the recordings of their speaking following the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 for Speaking[1], and their speaking level was determined to be Novice High. Two raters came to an agreement after evaluating the participants' speaking based on the descriptions. The participants consisted of 3 male and 10 female students from various majors that included public health, food and nutrition, life science, etc. A demographic questionnaire was used, and the results indicated that the participants had similar educational backgrounds and did not have any experience living in an English-speaking country. Additionally, students who submitted their recordings agreed to

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[1] See the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2012 ad for Speaking (https://www.actfl.org/educator-resources/actfl-proficiency-guidelines/english/english-speaking)

have their responses utilized for research purposes under the promise of anonymity.

The data collection for this study was implemented during regular class hours in the 10th week of the fall semester, 2023. To perform the tasks, the students were divided randomly into six groups, three groups for each type of task. Two different types of tasks were employed for this study, a CT and a DT. According to Ellis et al. (2019), a CT requires students to converge on an agreement to complete the task, while a DT asks students to arrive at their own answers, and agreement is not required. Also, Pica et al. (1993) classified CTs as decision-making tasks and DTs as opinion-exchange tasks. Drawing from the definitions provided by Ellis et al. (2019) and the classifications from Pica et al. (1993), the CT and DT were developed for the current study with reference to Jackson (2011). The tasks intentionally set the same topic in order to specifically investigate the effects of the two task types' differing goal orientations. Namely, the CT mandated students to engage in discussion and collaboratively produce and select only four questions to ask international students who had recently arrived at their university (see Figure 1). In contrast, the DT required students to freely generate questions about the same topic without restriction.

Both groups were given approximately 15 minutes to complete their task and were provided with more time if they wanted to use it. In addition, they performed their task in different physical spaces away from the other groups so that there was no interaction. It was hypothesized that the ample amount of time would affect the group interaction differently. The convergent groups were expected to discuss ideas about questions and select the four that they agreed on, while the DT groups were expected to freely make questions about similar topics. The students recorded their discussions using Naver Clovanote app through their mobile phones and completed a provided task sheet to write their questions during the task performance. They were asked to write the questions as Storch (2008) indicated that performing a joint-written task can provide opportunities for collaborative dialogues, which the researchers expected would include LREs for the analysis of the study.
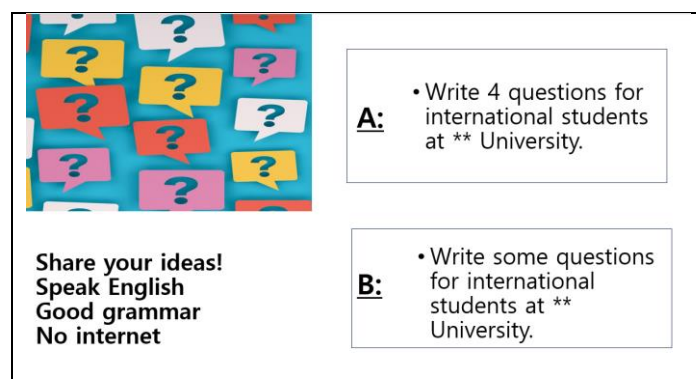

Figure 1. Examples of Two Tasks

3.3 Data Analysis

The present study employed quantitative and qualitative data analyses. The frequencies of LREs and their subcategories were calculated to examine if there was any difference between the two task types, and LREs were examined qualitatively to explore the difference in interactions in LREs. All of the students' collaborative discussions during task performance were audio-recorded using their mobile phones. The total combined length

of all recordings was 86 minutes and 56 seconds. The students discussed in both English and Korean, and their discussions were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The results showed that the CT groups spent an average of 15 minutes and 50 seconds completing their task while the DT groups spent 13 minutes and 5 seconds.

The transcripts were then coded for LREs based on the classifications that were adopted and modified from Storch (2013). While Storch divided LREs into five categories, "discourse-focused," "lexis-focused," "form-focused," "mechanical-focused," and "incorrectly resolved", this study made the following amendments. The two categories "discourse-focused" and "incorrectly resolved" were excluded as they were not relevant for the research aims. The tasks in this research were based on speaking, not writing as in Storch (2013), and thus the students did not talk about discourse. In addition, Storch's category of "incorrectly resolved" was not used in this study. The scope of this study was to understand the focus of attention of students during the tasks and not to determine if the LREs were correctly resolved or not—in fact, many of the LREs were not correctly resolved which is discussed in the next section. This study also added the category of "pragmatic-focused" based on the dialogues that students produced as pragmatic topics were discussed in a few groups, and it was a topic that is appropriate to understanding the focus of students' attention during the task. Therefore, the final LRE categories used in this study are: lexis-focused, form-focused, pragmatic-focused, and mechanical-focused, as presented in Table 1.

The transcripts as well as the recorded audio files were examined through multiple rounds of coding to identify all LREs and salient group interactions focusing on the categories of LREs. The LREs were individually coded by two researchers and compared to check intercoder reliability. The agreement rate was 93.5%, which was high, and they resolved disagreements in the coding of LREs through discussion. Student names were changed to pseudonyms for the analysis.

Table 1. Classification of LREs

Codes	Classification of LREs	Example
1.	Lexis-focused LREs	A: 건물 *(building)* is 영어로 *(In English?)* B: Buildings A: Ok. Which buildings are you going to study?
2.	Form-focused LREs	A: Where you have been? 아닌가? *(Isn't it?)* Have have? B: 그렇게 적으면 좋겠는데. *(It's great if you could write it like that)*
3.	Pragmatic-focused LREs	A: Do you like CC? *(CC is an abbreviation for a campus couple, referring to two students from the same university dating)* B: CC? 외국인학생한테 물어봐도 돼? *(Is that okay to ask to a foreign student?)*
4.	Mechanical-focused LREs	A: 일반 화학 어떻게 적지? *(How do you write general chemistry?)* B: Chemical A: 어떻게 적냐고. *(How do you write that?)* B: c-h-e-m-i-c-a-l

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Differences in LRE Types between the CT and DT

In both groups, the pattern of interaction was observed to typically begin with one student presenting an idea,

and then the other students negotiating how to accurately produce in English the question they wanted to say. It was during these negotiations that the LREs used to analyze the group interactions in the two task groups were produced.

The first research question was designed to examine if the two tasks resulted in students producing different types of LREs. As presented in Table 2, the total number of LREs produced throughout the CT was 27. Among them, the most produced were lexis-focused LREs, 48.1%, followed by form-focused LREs 40.7%, and mechanical-focused LREs comprised 11.1% of the total LREs. There were no pragmatic-focused LREs generated from the groups in this task condition.

Similar to the results from the CT groups, the DT groups produced a total of 29 LREs with the most produced LREs being lexis-focused which accounted for 72.4%. This is much more than the 48.1% lexis-focused in the CT group. The second most common category was form-focused at 17.2%, followed by pragmatic-focused (6.9%), and mechanical-focused LREs (3.5%), respectively.

Table 2. Types and Frequency of LREs by Task Types

	Lexis-focused	Form-focused	Pragmatic-focused	Mechanical-focused	Total
Convergent task	4	7	0	1	12
	5	2	0	1	8
	4	2	0	1	7
Total	13 (48.1%)	11 (40.7%)	0	3 (11.1%)	27
Divergent task	5	3	1	1	10
	8	1	1	0	10
	8	1	0	0	9
Total	21 (72.4%)	5 (17.2%)	2 (6.9%)	1 (3.5%)	29

As can be seen in the results, although the number of LREs produced in the CT was similar to the DT, the types of LREs produced showed some disparities. Approximately 89% of the CT groups' LREs were divided between lexis-focused and form-focused LREs, 48.1% and 40.7%, respectively, while 72.4% of the DT groups' LREs were lexis-focused. This indicates a strong focus on lexis in the DT, while the CT groups split their attention between the lexical and structural features of their questions assigned for the given task. Further, 2 of the DT groups produced pragmatic-focused LREs, while no CT group did, and the DT groups only produced one mechanical-focused LRE to the CT's three.

An example of the most commonly created LREs from the CT groups is presented in Excerpt 1 below.

Excerpt 1
(from the CT groups)
1   Gabby: 무엇이 너를 힘들게 하니? (*What is hard for you?*)
2   Liam: What is your? Almost. 아니다. (*It's not right.*)
3   Gabby: What is hard in your school life?
4   Liam: Hard?
5   Gabby: Hard. Hard in your school life?
6   Liam: Okay. What is hard in your school life?
7   Gabby: Umm… Okay.
8   Liam: 가장(*most*)? Almost?
9   Gabby: Most.

Excerpt 1 presents a typical form-focused LRE found in this study. In Turn 1, Gabby presents a question in Korean that she would like to use in completing the given task. In the subsequent lines, the two students negotiate how to correctly ask the question in English. There is negotiation regarding the question form (Lines 2-6), but there is also negotiation involving a lexis-focused LRE (Line 4 and Lines 8-9). It was common to see both form-focused and lexis-focused LREs in the same episodes, and as is presented in Table 2, these categories more commonly appeared in the CT.

The LREs that were only lexis-focused were typically shorter than the form-focused LREs, involving less negotiation. For example, in Excerpt 2 below, two students from Group 5 (DT) discuss the words needed to create a question.

Excerpt 2
(from the DT groups)
1   Charlotte: 입학하다가 영어로 뭐야? (*What is "입학하다 (enter a school)" in English?*)
2   Will: 입학하다(*enter a school.*) *Enroll*?
3   Charlotte: Enroll? Ah enter a school.
4   Will: When you enter a school…
5   Charlotte: When you enter a school, do you dormitory, or…. do you live dormitory or house?
6   Will: Home?
7   Charlotte: House 아닌가? (*Isn't it house?*)
8   Will: Ah. When you enter a school… where do you live?

In this excerpt, Charlotte wants to make a question in English about where the person is going to live when he/she enters a school but feels she needs help to correctly express this in English. She asks her partner for help, and in Lines 2 and 3, they pool their knowledge together to create a question they are satisfied with. After this, they moved on to another word in order to form a question and then talked about the word they felt was most appropriate for their question. These lexis-focused LREs were the most common LREs seen in the DT, and they were also found in the CT. A further difference in LREs is the number of mechanical-focused and pragmatic-focused LREs. The mechanical-focused LREs involved interactions related to punctuation, spelling, or capitalization. There was only one instance in the DT, while each CT group had one mechanical-focused LRE. Finally, only two DT groups produced pragmatic-focused LREs with none being observed in the CT group. Both of the observed LREs pertaining to pragmatics involved whether communicating with a university student necessitated a different language usage than what had been initially proposed.

Based on the recordings, it was difficult to identify the number of completed questions, but each CT group completed their four questions, and each DT group completed a lot more than four. The challenge in tabulating the number of questions was because most questions had grammatical problems which made it difficult to determine if questions were completed or were just incomplete suggestions. However, it was clear from the recordings that the CT groups did focus on only four questions, while the DT groups focused on creating more questions during their task.

4.2 The Analysis of Interaction in the CT and DT

The second research question aimed to examine if the differences in LREs indicate a difference in focus in the two task types. The analysis of the recordings and transcripts found patterns in the two task groups which indicate

some similarities and differences. As mentioned in the previous section, the LREs often followed a similar pattern of interaction. A student would present a topic that they were interested in making a question about, then the students would begin to construct the question. A student would either present a first attempt at a question or would present a fragment of a complete question. Students would then engage in consideration of specific aspects of the questions. The first aspect was lexical, where students would discuss translations or which word was correct for the question. After this, some groups moved to form structural LREs. Finally, a few groups moved to pragmatic and mechanical considerations. This process represents the process in which students considered the language for their questions: lexical→ grammatical→mechanical/pragmatic aspects.

The CT groups were found to have spent more time considering the language structure of the questions than the DT group, and they paid attention to the forms and mechanics in the questions as well as the lexis. Excerpt 3 is an example.

Excerpt 3
(from the CT groups)

1   Maggie: Where are you going? Which …. Which… which…건물(*building*) is 영어로? (*in*
2   *English?*)
3   Henry: Buildings
4   Maggie: Okay. Which buildings to study?
5   Henry: No. Which buildings are you going to study?
6   Maggie: Are you going to?
7   Henry: Umm…Is going to?
8   Maggie: Are you? Is you?
9   Henry: Buildings is… no, no.
10   Maggie: You, you are.

This excerpt shows the general pattern of the CT groups' dialogues. As in Line 1, Maggie suggested a topic, *which buildings do you study in*, then the two students discussed the word *building*, then worked on the tense of the question as well as the verb choice. The CT groups were asked to create only four questions, which enabled them to pay attention to other language features. They chose to focus on the grammatical aspects of the questions as well as the lexical. In a subsequent part of the dialogue in Excerpt 3, which cannot be fully displayed due to length constraints, the students also discussed the rules of capitalization to ensure the accurate writing of their questions.

The CT group's interactions while making their questions also indicated a focus on enhancing their questions by having a more complex sentence structure than the DT group did. As the CT students were required to make only four questions, they chose to spend time to make freshly created questions into more complex sentences, and often described the ones already made as "*simple*." As presented in the Excerpt 4, a student initiated making a longer sentence and suggested using a relative pronoun. In line 5, Charlie presented the idea of making a longer sentence using a relative pronoun, that, and adds a phrase *that* is followed by the relative pronoun. They then looked for more ideas to make the question more grammatically accurate, as can be seen from lines 9 to 17. Furthermore, they deliberated on enhancing the sentences by discussing the choice of relative pronouns, *which* and *that*, considering their grammatical aspects.

Excerpt 4

(from the CT groups)

1   Charlie: 계기를? (*Motive?*).

2   Jean: Motive.

3   Charlie: How did you come in Korean school?

4   Jean: Um…

5   Charlie: What's motive that 하고 (*and…*)

6   Jean: 그러니까 그러니까 that 절을 쓰면 길어져 (*So, if you use "that clause", it becomes*

7   *longer.*). 니가 여기 왜 한국왔는지 계기를 말해달라 (*Please tell me why you came to*

8   *Korea.*).

9   Charlie: 어떤 계기? (*Which motive?*)

10   Jean: 한국에 오게 된 계기 그러면 좀 길어지잖아. (*If you write the reason why you came*

11   *to Korea, it becomes a bit longer.*)

12   Charlie: that 절 (that *clause*).

13   Jean: What's motive that … you did come in Korean school? that 맞지? (*Is that correct?*)

14   Robert: Sorry.

15   Jean: That 말고 또 관계 대명사가 또 뭐 있지? (*In addition to that, what other relative*

16   *pronouns are there?*)

17   Charlie: which?

18   Jean: which 괜찮다. (*Which sounds good.*)

19   Sue: 근데 which는 불완전한 문장 아니야? (*By the way, doesn't which come with the*

20   *incomplete sentence?*)

21   Charlie: 그치? (*Right?*)

22   Jean: Did you come in Korea?는 완전한 문장? (*Is "Did you come in Korea?" a complete*

23   *sentence?*)

24   Charlie: That으로 하자. (*Let's use "that."*)

Additionally, it was found that the CT group expressed their interest in enhancing the initial question constructions through comments on the quality of the questions. For example. one student would frequently propose a completed question to the group, and another student would provide a general remark regarding the question's quality which was not specifically related to lexical, grammatical, mechanical, or pragmatic aspects, but indicated that they believed the question needed further development regarding its content or what to ask. This can be seen in Excerpt 5 taken from a CT group.

Excerpt 5

(from the CT groups)

1   Mike: 또 뭐 하지?

2   Jenny: What's your favorite class?

3   Mike: 너무 겹치고 (*It is too similar to another question*). So simple

4   Jenny: what are you thinking about Communication English class?

As can be seen in Line 2 in the previous excerpt, Jenny presented the question "*What's your favorite class?*", to which Mike responded that the question was too similar and simple—the comment about similarity is related to a previous question they had made. In this way, the students indicated they would like to develop the question more but only made a general comment. Jenny responded to Mike's comments with an updated question version that was different in form. This particular interaction continued to include both lexis- and form-focused LREs as the students continued to develop the question further. A similar process that was seen in the LREs in this group was also seen throughout the other groups during the CT task. Students used comments such as "*too simple*", "*make it longer*", as well as related follow-up questions. In this way, the CT group demonstrated a focus on developing questions beyond their first attempt.

In contrast, the DT groups primarily focused on lexis. They mainly engaged in translating individual words and discussing translation accuracy, concentrating on language at the lexical level without much attention to form, mechanics, or developing the questions further. As the DT groups were not limited to four questions, they chose to spend their time choosing the words for the questions and then moved on to generate more questions. This is demonstrated in Excerpt 6 from a DT group.

Excerpt 6
(from the DT groups)

1   Chris: 학교 축제 가보았니? (*Have you been to a university festival?*)
2   Diana: 학교 축제? 영어로 뭐지? (*University festival? What is it in English?*)
3   Chris: University festival.
4   Diana: Did you visit?
5   Chris: Visit?
6   Diana: 방문하다(*Visit*)
7   Chris: 참여하다(*participate*) Did you…
8   Diana: 참여하다, 잠깐만. (*Participate, wait.*)
9   Chris: Did you… did you participate at KMU festival?
10   Chris: Done

In Excerpt 6 Line 1, Chris introduced the topic first, then he and his partner discussed the words "university festival" and considered whether "visit" or "participate" was the appropriate word choice. After the lexical considerations were concluded, Chris announced, "Done", and the students stopped considering and developing the question. In this LRE, students demonstrate that after completing the translation, they no longer engaged in an analysis of the structural elements of the question or its quality. Once a question was written, the students proceeded to generate additional questions. This was a typical pattern for the DT groups, though as mentioned, there were occasional form-focus LREs.

There were also findings unique to each of the task types. It was also discovered that each group in the CT task produced one mechanical-focused LRE, while only one group in the DT task did. Consistent with the other findings, the CT group appeared willing to analyze their questions more deeply beyond the semantic elements to make amendments, whereas the DT group appeared to see it was more important to focus on more questions. Interestingly, it was only the DT group that produced pragmatic-focused LREs, with each group in the DT producing one. These LREs involved learners checking if the question that they made conveyed their intended meaning with consideration of the given context. The pragmatic-focused LREs were comprised of lexical considerations regarding whether the language use was appropriate considering the given context.

5. Discussion

The current study examined if there were any differences in LRE types produced during convergent and divergent tasks and what the differences in the types of LREs were. To accomplish this aim, the LREs were coded and classified into different types based on the taxonomy provided in Table 1, and the frequency of LRE types was counted for each task type.

It was found the LREs followed a similar pattern of interaction. This began with one student usually initiating the LRE by presenting a topic or question in Korean that they wanted to develop, followed by a discussion of translations at a lexical level, and then moved to a grammatical or structural level discussion. Groups that continued to engage beyond this then transitioned to either mechanical or pragmatic considerations which produced further LREs. This initiating behavior was also discussed in Swain and Lapkin (2000) and Kaivanpanah and Miri (2017) who found that participants used their first language to determine the intended content that they wanted to write down. As Kaivanpanah and Miri (2017) pointed out, constructing the appropriate context serves as motivation for students to think about the target word and test their hypotheses. This was also found in this study as the students first clarified what they wanted to ask and then developed their questions further. Students regularly used their first language to provide a clearer context in order to deliver their intended meaning in a question. As will be discussed below, the DT group was more likely to engage only at a lexical level and then move on to produce a different, new question, while the CT group continued to engage which resulted in fewer lexis-focused LREs but more form-focused LREs.

It is of note that among both task groups, lexis-focused LREs were the most commonly produced LRE type. A similar finding was also found by Williams (2001) who observed that over 80% of LREs focused on lexis. In this study, as was discussed above, the reason why lexis-focused LREs were the most frequently found is because groups started their LREs by discussing the translation of a word or a phrase that they wanted to develop into a question. As a result, the DT groups had a higher percentage of lexis-focused LREs--72.4% in DT groups compared with only 48.1% of LREs in the CT groups--, as the DT groups made more questions during their task. The frequency of lexis-focused LREs for the DT groups is similar to the findings in Kaivanpanah and Miri (2017) who also investigated the effects of different task types and found that students displayed a higher frequency of detailed LREs about vocabulary and had greater vocabulary gains during a composition task compared to a cloze task. Zabihi (2022) points out that these results may be attributed to a feature of divergent tasks that require students to create multiple questions in order to complete their task which requires a broader vocabulary. In this study, the DT groups presented multiple ideas to create questions, analogous to brain-storming, which meant that the students talked about a variety of ideas and used a larger range of vocabulary to form the questions. Zabihi (2022) also indicated that the composition task led the students to talk about the vocabulary in more depth as it is an output-oriented task that has an open-ended nature. In this regard, the composition task shares some similar qualities with a divergent task, in that like a composition task, a divergent task allows students to exchange and write their own opinions. On the contrary, a cloze task requires students to reach a consensus as in a convergent task. Therefore, in light of these findings, it was found that the DT can stimulate the generation of lexis-focused LREs as a result of encouraging the creation of more questions than the CT group.

Further, it should be noted that the CT groups produced more form-focused LREs than the DT groups. The quantitative findings indicate that 40.7% of the CT groups' LREs were form-focused LREs while they accounted for only 17.2% of the LREs in the DT group. The findings indicate that the CT groups' sustained attention and refinement of their questions, rather than creating more questions, led to grammatically more accurate questions with more complex structures. This result parallels findings by Zabihi (2022) who found that students in a text

editing task, which requires an agreement similar to a convergent task, produced a larger number of grammatical LREs than they did during a narrative writing task which lets students write their ideas more openly. Zabihi noted that this difference was the result of the nature of each task *per se,* as was previously discussed in terms of a cloze task and a composition task. In this way, the CT groups were found to produce more grammatically accurate questions due to their increased attention on developing their questions.

Additionally, it was interesting that each task group displayed LREs that represented a different focus during the last stage of their task completion. As seen in some of the LREs in the CT groups, students paid more attention to specific aspects in order to develop their questions to improve the accuracy of language use. This was discussed previously in Excerpt 4 when a student asked another student to think of a better choice for a relative pronoun by saying, "*In addition to that, what other relative pronouns are there?*". Then, as seen in Lines 13 to 24, they focused on making a grammatically correct sentence using a relative pronoun.

Moreover, the same group also discussed connecting two sentences to make a more fluent sentence. In this LRE, students had a long dialogue which entailed 28 turns, where they discussed choosing the correct word among *view, scenery,* or *landscape,* and further discussed choosing the correct phrase from either *he has been* or *he has lived in,* and then tried to combine two sentences. It is worth noting that from this interaction, a student expressed that she had arrived at a realization after a long discussion: "Ah, now I understand why the teacher asked us not to make easy questions." Her statement demonstrated that she found the interaction meaningful as well as helpful for noticing and learning language. This interaction resulted in the development of her language awareness.

It is noteworthy that in the lengthy discussion in Excerpt 4 about the choice of relative pronoun and its subsequent usage, students exhibited characteristics similar to cognitive conflict episodes CCEs), as noted by Tocalli-Beller and Swain (2005). In CCEs, students initially hold different ideas about the language, but through exchanges and negotiation of views, they collaborate in constructing joint knowledge. As illustrated in Line 15, Jean inquired about various relative pronouns, and Charlie suggested "which" as an option in Line 17. Jean expressed her acceptance of using "which," but in Line 19, Sue pointed out the need for an incomplete sentence to follow it. Consequently, they agreed to use the relative pronoun "that." As Swain (2006) noted, this process allows students to enhance their learning and internalize the knowledge gained. Such LREs were more commonly found in the form-focused LREs in this study where students discussed their grammar knowledge. Indeed, it would be helpful to understand whether correctly resolved CCEs had an effect on students' learning and retention of the acquired knowledge.

Further, each of the CT groups displayed one LRE that focused on mechanical aspects. These LREs involved asking the spelling of a word, providing corrective feedback on spelling, and asking about a punctuation rule. These mechanical-focused LREs in the CT groups further support for the claim that the CT groups appear to have focused on trying to make more accurate sentences as they continually directed their attention to the questions they had made and did not proceed to make more questions. On the contrary, mechanical-focused LREs were only detected in one of the DT groups. Instead, their attention was on pragmatic-focused LREs. The DT groups were found to have made more questions than the CT groups, and during that process, they regularly deliberated on the question that they made to determine if it was appropriate for the context or not, creating pragmatic-focused LREs. These LREs included a discussion about the use of appropriate vocabulary and the deletion of a word or a phrase to fit the situation. These LREs were distinguished from lexis-focused LREs because pragmatic-focused LREs included an analysis of the context of the questions, considering both the speaker and hearer/reader, whereas lexis-focused LREs often only involved a discussion about simple translation. Mechanical-focused LREs and pragmatic-focused LREs were not frequently generated, yet they indicate and represent the task effects which enhance or encourage different qualities that are related to the different task types.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of convergent and divergent meaning-focused tasks on Korean university students' LREs. To accomplish this, the study examined the LREs produced in the two task types and divided the LREs into four categories: lexis-focused, form-focused, pragmatic-focused, and mechanical-focused. The results indicated differences in LRE types, as well as some preliminary insights into how these tasks led to these different LREs being produced.

First, the findings showed that during meaning-focused tasks learners did engage in an analysis of language with their partners. These findings showed that both groups produced a similar number of overall LREs, but that they consisted of different types. The LREs in the CT groups were mostly lexis-focused (48.1%) and form-focused (40.7%), while the LREs in the DT groups were mostly lexis-focused (72.4%). Furthermore, the CT groups produced three mechanical-focused LREs (11.1%), one per group, and no pragmatic-focused LREs; while the DT groups produced two pragmatic LREs (6.9%), more than the CT groups, and only 1 mechanical-focused LRE (3.5%) which is less than the CT groups.

These variations in the number of types of LREs between the groups were determined to represent a different focus between the two task types, and it is believed to be a result of the differences in the task types. The CT groups' task required completing only four questions while the DT groups' task did not have a limit on the number of questions they could produce. This resulted in the CT group with more time to focus on their fewer questions and resulted in the groups spending more time and focus on levels of analysis beyond an initial focus on lexis. The students in the DT group, however, focused on making more questions and did not demonstrate a deep focus on the language in their questions. In this way, the DT groups engaged in mostly lexical-level discussion with their partner to translate and choose appropriate words for their questions, then moved on to produce more questions.

Additionally, the analysis of the transcripts from both groups indicate that the students used the following procedure when considering the language in the questions. First, they began by presenting a topic they would like to create a question for, and they then focused their attention to lexical aspects. Following this, some of the groups continued to pay attention to the language in the questions and moved to form, and/or mechanics, and/or pragmatics in that order.

The present study has some shortcomings that should be acknowledged. First, the participants in this study are a small sample size. Although the total length of the recorded dialogues was relatively long, it may have yielded different results if the sample size was larger. Second, the number of students in each group and each student's individual differences such as language anxiety, willingness to communicate, etc. may affect the generation of their LREs as well. As the students were all L1 Korean speakers with similar educational backgrounds, varying the characteristics of the participants might produce different results. Finally, it would be a more insightful study if the analysis of students' reflections or interviews after the task completion was included in this study in light of their learning experience.

Overall, the pedagogical implications drawn from this study suggest that the nature of language tasks significantly influences the type of learners' LREs in a communication-focused EFL class. The findings highlight the importance of task design in promoting specific types of language analysis and engagement. One key observation is that the convergent task, which encourages attention to a more limited set of questions, tended to direct learners to delve deeper into various levels of language analysis and prompt learners to explore linguistic elements beyond the initial focus on lexis. On the other hand, the divergent task gave learners the freedom to create a larger number of questions, and thus their attention was primarily directed towards lexical choices and expressions. These findings suggest that educators should be mindful of the task types they employ in language

classrooms to ensure they are encouraging the appropriate attention during task performance. Also, this study underscores the value of meaning-focused tasks in fostering learners' pragmatic awareness through generating pragmatic-focused LREs. Teachers should consider incorporating tasks that encourage learners to consider the context and appropriateness of language use in different communicative situations to help develop pragmatic awareness. Ultimately, task design plays a crucial role in shaping the nature of language-related engagement in the classroom, and educators can strategically select tasks to target specific language components based on their pedagogical goals.

For future studies, it would be beneficial to investigate the types of LREs generated during the performance of CTs and DTs, and how these relate to students' language proficiency levels. Additionally, examining which LREs are correctly or incorrectly resolved could provide insights into students' learning processes. Furthermore, conducting a deeper analysis of CCEs based on students' language proficiency levels could offer valuable insights into how students collaboratively construct knowledge. This could involve examining how different proficiency levels influence the generation and resolution of CCEs. Lastly, investigating whether students retain the acquired knowledge from engaging in tasks would be worthwhile. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to assess the long-term impact of involvement in CCEs on language learning outcomes and retention.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Level: Tertiary