

## ENGAGING WITH LANGUAGE, PEERS, AND EMOTIONS: MIGRANT LEARNERS' COLLABORATIVE WRITING IN A GREEK RECEPTION CLASS

**Anastasia Paspali**

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Faculty  
of Philosophy, School of Philology,  
Department of Linguistics, LingLab  
**GREECE**  
paspalia@lit.auth.gr

### ABSTRACT

This study explores migrant learners' engagement during collaborative writing (CW) tasks conducted in a Greek reception class. Adopting a multidimensional framework (Zhang, 2025), the analysis focused on cognitive, social, and affective engagement. Two pairs of primary school migrant learners with an advanced B1 level of proficiency in Greek reconstructed two dictogloss texts collaboratively. Using a qualitative approach, audio-recorded peer interactions and follow-up questionnaires were analyzed. The results reveal strong links between engagement dimensions: cognitive engagement was highest when learners socially collaborated through shared control and mutual negotiation. Elaborate language-related episodes (LREs) emerged when learners engaged equally, scaffolding each other's ideas, and successfully resolving linguistic problems. Positive emotions such as enjoyment and excitement were reported during text reconstruction, further sustaining cognitive and social engagement. Conversely, dominant/passive interaction patterns restricted both cognitive elaboration and emotional investment. Limited or dismissed peer contributions resulted in a higher number of unresolved or incorrectly resolved LREs and were associated with frustration, withdrawal, and reduced collaboration. These results highlight that successful engagement during CW tasks depends not only on individual attention to language but on the quality of interaction and learners' emotions towards collaboration. The present study contributes to research on migrant education by emphasizing that fostering equitable peer collaboration and emotional safety is crucial for both linguistic development and social integration. Affective and social dimensions are not peripheral but central to understanding how migrant learners engage and learn in formal educational settings. The present findings reflect the need for structured support of both interactional and emotional processes during collaborative language learning tasks.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Writing, migrant language education, peer interaction, learners' engagement, dictogloss.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Collaborative writing (CW) tasks have been shown to enhance language learning by creating more opportunities for learners (Li & Zhu, 2017) to co-construct meaning, negotiate form, and make joint decisions throughout the writing process (Storch, 2013). During CW tasks, learners engage in collaborative dialogues where they discuss vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, and often notice and resolve language problems together. These peer interactions provide learners with rich opportunities for languaging, i.e., the verbalization of thought processes around language. Many studies on CW have focused on its cognitive and linguistic benefits. However, certain studies also highlight the impact of the social and emotional context in which language

learning occurs (Firth & Wagner, 2007) on learners' cognitive engagement, i.e., their attention to the target language and their awareness of language use (Svalberg, 2009, 2018; Zhang, 2025). CW is thus not only a linguistic activity, but also a situated, relational, and affective practice, in which learners' attention to form and meaning emerges through the dynamics of interaction (e.g., Mercer, 2004; Philp & Duchesne, 2016; Svalberg, 2018).

Consequently, researchers have recently begun to study CW through the lens of learners' engagement. For example, Zhang (2025), following Svalberg (2018), proposes that engagement can be analyzed across three dimensions: cognitive engagement (how learners focus on and process language), social engagement (how they relate to and collaborate with peers), and affective engagement (how they feel about the task and their partner). These three dimensions are interrelated and enable scholars to explore how learners experience collaboration (i.e., how they reason, position themselves, and emotionally invest in peer work).

Importantly, such an approach is particularly valuable in studies with child/adolescent migrant students since it can promote their integration and success in formal education settings. Migrant learners often face additional barriers to participation, including linguistic insecurity, unfamiliar school norms, and emotional vulnerability (Frank & Papadopoulou, 2024; Paspali & Papadopoulou, 2025). For these learners, engagement must be built, supported, and sustained through inclusive and sensitive pedagogy. Migrant learners often face severe academic and social challenges, i.e., learning the language of schooling while simultaneously adjusting to new cultural, social, and educational practices and expectations, and facing high risks of academic underachievement and early school dropout, particularly when they do not feel safe, seen, or supported (Ferguson-Patrick, 2020; OECD, 2015). In this context, collaborative tasks like CW hold promise — not only for facilitating language development, but also for promoting social inclusion, emotional security, and classroom belonging. Yet, research on how migrant learners experience these activities, i.e., what they focus on, how they interact, and how they feel, remains limited, especially in the context of formal school settings (Busse et al., 2020; Paspali & Papadopoulou, 2025).

The present study addresses this gap by exploring how migrant learners engage cognitively, socially, and affectively in CW during dictogloss tasks in formal educational settings. Drawing on learners' interaction data and post-task open-ended questionnaires, the study analyses (a) the outcome and quality of their language-related episodes (LREs), (b) the learners' interactional patterns and talk types which shape their collaboration and social dynamics during CW, and (c) the emotional impact of those CW activities on them (see below).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Language teaching interventions in migrant contexts: the overlooked social and emotional outcomes

Migrant children and adolescents frequently report lower school satisfaction, weaker peer relationships, and lower performance compared to their non-migrant peers. However, higher emotional well-being and a sense of belonging correlate strongly with improved academic outcomes (OECD, 2015).

Despite this, most research on language teaching interventions for migrant learners — whether in mainstream classrooms or reception classes — has primarily focused on academic and linguistic outcomes. The social and affective dimensions of such interventions have received comparatively little attention. This gap is critical, especially when considering socio-cultural theories of language learning, which posit that learners' cognitive engagement is deeply

interconnected with their social participation and emotional well-being (Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Learners who experience positive emotions, supportive peer interactions, and a strong sense of belonging are more likely to achieve successful educational outcomes.

Recent studies with adult L2 learners highlight the value of affective-experiential approaches and plurilingual practices in promoting positive emotions and engagement. Franck & Papadopoulou (2024) found that adult learners of French and Greek as L2 reported greater positive emotions and fewer negative emotions during a plurilingual lesson. Forced migrants demonstrated higher levels of both hope and shame compared to voluntary migrants, and they benefited more from the plurilingual teaching approach, largely due to increased enjoyment.

Focusing on language learning in migrant children and adolescents in formal education settings, most research on the social and emotional outcomes has been conducted in EFL classrooms, exploring foreign language learning in learners from diverse backgrounds (Busse et al., 2020, 2021), and not on the language of schooling and of the host country. Importantly, these intervention studies highlight the importance of addressing linguistic diversity and emotional well-being in migrant education. Busse et al. (2020) conducted a study with young English learners in Germany and found that encouraging the use of learners' linguistic resources fostered higher positive affect and greater vocabulary gains. Similarly, Busse et al. (2021) found that both translingual scaffolding and motivational activities significantly enhanced vocabulary development and learners' well-being, with plurilingual approaches reducing negative affect.

However, evidence on the emotional and social impact of certain language teaching interventions on migrant learners in formal school settings is still limited. One of the few exceptions, which is also highly relevant to the present study, is Paspali & Papadopoulou (2025). Paspali & Papadopoulou conducted a study with migrant and non-migrant children and adolescents in formal education across different educational levels (primary and junior high schools) and settings (mainstream and reception classes), implementing dictogloss tasks (see below for dictogloss). They explored students' attitudes towards CW as well as the emotional impact of CW activities on them. The findings showed that students generally experienced more positive than negative emotions, with primary school students in the mainstream class exhibiting the most favorable emotional responses toward collaboration. In contrast, junior high school students reported more negative emotions and greater collaboration difficulties, suggesting the influence of age, group dynamics, and curricular orientation on emotional experiences.

To date, the number of studies exploring how CW activities shape the emotional and social experiences of migrant learners in formal education settings is limited. These dimensions are critical for designing inclusive pedagogies that foster not only academic achievement but also emotional resilience and social cohesion.

## **2.2 Collaborative Writing (CW)**

Drawing on collaborative learning and socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1986), CW is a communicative activity where two or more students compose a single text together, sharing responsibility across all stages (Storch, 2002). Through CW, students develop critical thinking, and negotiation skills as they co-construct texts (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007).

Research has shown that CW supports language acquisition and writing development (Donato, 1994; Swain & Lapkin, 1998), encouraging greater attention to form (Philp & Duchesne, 2016)

and improved vocabulary and coherence (Talib & Cheung, 2017). Furthermore, collaborative pairs often produce more accurate texts than individuals (Basterrechea & García Mayo, 2013; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; but see Kuiken & Vedder, 2012). CW also provides a scaffolding context (Cazden, 1988), where students exchange feedback and support (Donato, 1994). Studies (e.g., Storch, 2005) reveal varied peer scaffolding strategies, such as collaborating, requesting information, and offering praise, among others.

However, social dynamics and emotional factors significantly influence linguistic outcomes (Swain & Miccoli, 1994). Collaborative activities can foster acceptance of diversity, self-esteem, and enjoyment (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Shehadeh, 2011), especially in heterogeneous groups where diverse perspectives enrich collaboration (Gardner, 1999). Yet, issues like conflict, slacking, or free-riding may arise, particularly when collaboration skills are weak (Deveci & Ayish, 2018 and references therein).

From a socio-cultural perspective, peer interaction and emotion are tightly intertwined. Learners achieve greater success when they listen to, scaffold, and learn from each other (Moranski & Toth, 2016; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). Language proficiency differences also matter: lower proficiency learners may benefit from working with higher-proficiency peers (Leeser, 2004), although the quality of interaction may also be more critical than proficiency level alone (Watanabe & Swain, 2007; Storch, 2002).

### **2.3 Dictogloss**

Dictogloss (Swain et al., 1985) integrates listening, note-taking, and CW. It is rooted in the Output Hypothesis, which posits that producing language, especially under communicative pressure, promotes noticing and acquisition (Swain, 2000). The reconstruction stage encourages peer negotiation, languaging, and attention to grammar in context, particularly when learners work in pairs (Kuiken & Vedder, 2002).

Dictogloss has been found to be motivating and affective, even for young learners (Calzada & García Mayo, 2020; Paspali & Papadopoulou, 2025; Shak, 2006). However, it also poses interactional challenges, especially when group dynamics are unbalanced. Studies report that strong personalities may dominate, while quieter students may disengage during reconstruction (Deveci & Ayish, 2018). This issue highlights the need to understand how different learners experience CW tasks not only cognitively but also socially and emotionally. Our study addresses this issue by examining how migrant learners experience dictogloss as a collaborative writing activity in a reception class of a Greek public primary school.

### **2.4 Engagement in Collaborative Writing**

Following Zhang (2025) and Svalberg (2018), the present study frames engagement in CW as operating on three interrelated levels. Svalberg's (2018) Engagement with Language (EWL) framework conceptualizes student engagement as a dynamic interplay of cognitive, social, and affective dimensions. Empirical studies (Baralt, Gurzynski-Weiss, & Kim, 2016; Ahn, 2016) have demonstrated the critical role of emotional and social factors in fostering cognitive engagement during task-based language learning. By moving beyond a solely cognitive focus, the EWL framework provides a more comprehensive analytical lens for examining dialogic interactions and language development. In the context of CW, EWL enables the capture of complex, interdependent processes underlying learners' engagement with linguistic forms. Its adoption offers valuable insights into the factors that mediate effective learner engagement and the differential outcomes observed in language-focused discussions.

The first level in the EWL framework is cognitive engagement. This level concerns learners' attention to the form, its accuracy, and meaning. This is typically observable in Language-Related Episodes (LREs), i.e., any part of the collaborative dialogue in which learners discuss language issues (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). LREs can be resolved correctly, incorrectly, or not resolved, depending on the different amounts of attention learners pay each time (Zhang, 2025), which is modulated by several factors (Storch, 2007). Storch (2007) distinguishes engagement between elaborate and limited, i.e., elaborate when learners question, reflect, and negotiate form, and limited when they merely repeat or comply. Overall, LREs reflect the learners' cognitive engagement in the task (Zhang, 2025, p. 36).

The second level is social engagement, which concerns the interactional patterns that emerge in group work, shaped by mutuality (responsiveness to each other's contributions) and equality (i.e., whether there is shared control over the direction of the task) (Storch, 2002). These patterns influence whether learners co-construct meaning or fall into dominant/passive roles. Thus, depending on the degree and direction of mutuality and equality, Storch distinguishes four patterns: (a) collaborative, (b) dominant-dominant, (c) dominant-passive, and (d) expert-novice. The collaborative pattern exhibits high mutuality and high equality. Learners repeat and elaborate on each other's utterances, challenge each other's ideas, and help each other (e.g., in response to requests about vocabulary, corrective feedback, recasts, scaffolding where the learners pool their linguistic resources, etc.). The dominant-dominant pattern exhibits high equality but low mutuality with high levels of disagreement, frequent rejection of each other's suggestions, and absence of collective scaffolding. The dominant-passive pattern exhibits low equality and low mutuality. In this pattern, there is one learner who dominates the discussion with long monologues, which are mostly directed to the self and its own mental activity (Vygotsky, 1986). The number of LREs in this pattern is usually limited due to the dominant person. Finally, the expert-novice pattern exhibits high mutuality but low equality. In this pattern, there is a leader in the task who provides help and explanations to the other member(s) of the team.

The present study also employed the taxonomy of talk types in the learners' group talk (Knight & Mercer, 2015; Mercer, 2004), which distinguishes three social modes of thinking: disputational, cumulative, and exploratory talk. The talk types have been used to categorize learners' interactions during collaborative work and to describe the quality of reasoning in peer dialogue. Talk types offer an additional layer for understanding social dynamics because they reflect how discourse styles impact learning. Disputational talk is marked by disagreement, unsupported assertions, and short exchanges, while cumulative talk involves uncritical agreement and repetition. In contrast, exploratory talk features critical engagement, justification, and joint knowledge construction, though it requires explicit training and support. Only exploratory talk has been shown to promote learning effectively, particularly in fostering metalinguistic thinking about writing.

The third level of engagement in the EWL framework is affective engagement. This concerns learners' emotional responses to the task, partner, and learning environment, including perceived comfort, enjoyment, frustration, or anxiety. Affective engagement in CW is typically assessed through participants' self-reports, with many studies finding that learners enjoy CW and view it as beneficial for L2 writing (e.g., Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2005). Positive perceptions often relate to collaborative benefits such as idea sharing and immediate feedback. However, most research does not link these attitudes to interactional dynamics or L2 learning outcomes. Chen and Yu (2019) showed that favorable attitudes correlated with more collaborative relationships and greater success in resolving language-related episodes,



highlighting the interconnection between affective, social, and cognitive engagement. Despite these insights, emotional aspects of the EWL process remain underexplored.

## 2.5 The present study: Research Questions

This study investigates how migrant learners engage with a dictogloss task targeting the Greek verbal aspect in a reception classroom. We focus on three dimensions of engagement, i.e., cognitive, social, and affective. The research questions (RQs) of the study are the following:

RQ1: How do migrant learners engage cognitively during a collaborative CW, as reflected in their use and resolution of language-related episodes (LREs)?

RQ2: What interactional patterns emerge during peer collaboration, and how do these patterns shape learners' co-construction of linguistic knowledge?

RQ3: How do learners perceive their CW experiences, and what do these perceptions reveal about their affective engagement with the task and their partner?

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study adopts a sociocultural and engagement-based approach. Specifically, it examines collaborative writing interactions through the lens of cognitive, social, and affective engagement (Svalberg, 2018; Zhang, 2025), using a dictogloss task designed to elicit joint attention to the Greek verbal aspect.

### 3.1 Participants, context, and data collection

The study was conducted in a reception class of a primary school in Greece with migrant learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Two pairs of learners were selected for the analysis based on the clarity of their recordings and the contrast in their interaction styles. All four learners were typically developing and were attending the fifth grade (age range: 10-11 years). They all attended the reception class daily (two hours/day). Their first language was Albanian and their mean exposure to Greek was 5 years. They completed the Diapolis Greek placement test (Tzevelekou et al., 2013) and the results revealed that they all had an advanced B1 proficiency level in Greek. Learners' parents provided written informed consent for their children's participation in the study, and the learners gave oral consent in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

### 3.2 Task design and procedure

Learners completed two dictogloss tasks, where they listened to two short narrative texts, took notes, and jointly reconstructed the story. The text was designed to feature both perfective and imperfective aspectual forms, encouraging learners to reflect on the different meanings encoded with each form in Greek (perfective for completed events, imperfective for continuous or habitual meaning). This is a grammatical distinction which is known to be challenging for L2 learners of Greek (Karpava et al., 2012; Tsimpli & Papadopoulou, 2009). Data sources included the audio-recorded peer interactions during the task and an open-ended questionnaire, along with the researcher's field notes from classroom observation. The questionnaire asked learners (a) how they felt about collaborating with their classmate in this activity and (b) what difficulties they faced during collaboration and what could have mitigated these difficulties.

### 3.3 Data coding and analysis

The data consisted of (a) the transcriptions of the audio-recorded peer interactions (45 minutes) of the two pairs and (b) learners' responses to the questionnaire. The transcription system followed previous studies (Zhang, 2025; Du Bois et al., 1993) and LREs were the unit of analysis (Swain & Lapkin, 1998) which can reveal learner's engagement with language items

(Svalberg, 2018). Cognitive, social and affective engagement were examined. In terms of cognitive engagement, each LRE was coded for type (grammar/form, vocabulary, spelling/mechanics) (Storch, 2007), resolution (resolved correctly, resolved incorrectly, unresolved) following Leeson (2004), and quality (elaborate vs limited LREs) following Storch (2008). Social engagement was analyzed using Storch's (2002) interaction patterns and Mercer's (2004) talk types. Thus, LREs were coded for levels of mutuality and equality, discourse features such as scaffolding, control, disagreement, and responsiveness, and talk types (disputation, cumulative, and exploratory). Affective engagement was captured through the learners' responses to the open-ended questionnaire, analysed by means of thematic analysis. Additionally, affective engagement was also explored in terms of the learners' emotional reaction within each LRE along with their social response (Zhang, 2025). Together, these methods allowed for a comprehensive view of how CW functions not only as a site of language learning, but also as a social and emotional space for migrant learners.

#### 4. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the percentages of correctly or incorrectly resolved, and unresolved LREs produced by the two pairs. Pair A correctly resolved 72% of their LREs, while 14% were resolved incorrectly and another 14% remained unresolved. In contrast, Pair B produced a smaller number of LREs overall (18) compared to Pair A (51). Pair B also showed a lower percentage of correctly resolved LREs (33%), with 28% remaining unresolved and 39% resolved incorrectly.

**Table 1.** Number and percentages (in parentheses) of correctly resolved, incorrectly resolved, and unresolved LREs by pair and by LRE type (grammar/form, vocabulary, and spelling/mechanics).

LREs	Pair A				Pair B			
	Total number	Correctly resolved	Incorrectly resolved	Unresolved	Total number	Correctly resolved	Incorrectly resolved	Unresolved
Grammar/form	22	17 (77)	3 (14)	2 (9)	9	4 (45)	2 (22)	3 (33)
Vocabulary	19	15 (79)	0 (0)	4 (21)	6	2 (33)	3 (50)	1 (17)
Spelling/mechanics	10	5 (50)	4 (40)	1 (10)	3	0 (0)	2 (67)	1 (33)
Total	51	37 (72)	7 (14)	7 (14)	18	6 (33)	7 (39)	5 (28)

##### 4.1 PAIR A (Orgesia – Eriselda)

In pair A, cognitive engagement was mostly high, reflected in the way learners paid attention to the linguistic form and its meaning by noticing, discussing, and resolving language issues. In Excerpt 1, learners discussed how to express the idea of wearing pirate costumes and traveling, negotiating both lexical choices ('wore hats and clothes for pirates' vs 'dressed like pirates' and grammatical choices ('wore' vs 'were wearing', 'travelled' vs 'were travelling')). Orgesia proposed 'dressed like pirates', while Eriselda expanded on the idea with 'wearing hats and clothes for pirates', correctly recalling the target lexical item *wear*, though using an incorrect grammatical form ('wore' instead of 'were wearing'). Mutual scaffolding is evident, as Orgesia acknowledged and upgraded the suggestion ('Sounds better than wore'). However, this LRE was ultimately resolved incorrectly in terms of grammatical form, as Orgesia accepted and adopted the incorrect tense of the target verb. Thus, while collaboration and mutual scaffolding led them to notice both lexical and grammatical forms, only the lexical item (*wear*) was correctly resolved.

In contrast, the following grammatical form (were travelling) was resolved correctly. The learners noticed, discussed, and reasoned through the obligatory use of the imperfective aspect in the presence of the adverb *constantly* in Greek. In turn 21, Eriselda initially proposed the perfective aspect, but Orgesia questioned and challenged this form, eventually suggesting the correct imperfective aspect. This exchange shows that the pair pays attention to both grammatical and lexical forms, demonstrating noticing. However, such attention does not always result in correct grammatical resolutions.

Excerpt 1			
Turn	Who	Utterance	social response, emotion
18	Orgesia	Ήταν ντυμένοι πειρατές, έτσι δεν είναι; (?) They were dressed like pirates, right?	((confirming (asking for confirmation), curious))
19	Eriselda	Ναι, με ρούχα και καπέλα. Να πούμε, «φόρεσαν καπέλα και ρούχα για πειρατές»; (?) Yeah, with clothes and hats. Should we say '(they) wore hats and clothes for pirates'?	((suggesting, cooperative))
20	Orgesia	Καλό! Καλύτερο από το «φορούσαν» που είχα στο μυαλό μου! (!) That's good! It sounds better than 'were wearing' that I had in mind!	((validating, encouraged))
21	Eriselda	Και πήγαν παντού... να γράψουμε «ταξίδεψαν παντού»; (...) (?) And they went everywhere... should we write 'they travelled everywhere'?	((proposing, tentative/engaged))
22	Orgesia	Ναι, ταξίδεψαν όλες τις θάλασσες! (!) Yes, they traveled all the seas!	((affirming/reinforcing, excited))
23	Eriselda	«Φόρεσαν καπέλα και ρούχα για πειρατές και ταξίδεψαν όλες τις θάλασσες», εντάξει; (?) 'They wore hats and clothes for pirates and traveled the world', okay?	((confirming, supportive))
24	Orgesia	Αλλά είπε συνέχεια... (..) But it said constantly.	((reasserting, uncertain))
25	Eriselda	Εεε.. και ταξίδευαν συνέχεια όλες τις θάλασσες; (?) Eeh.. (They) were travelling constantly all the seas?	((appealing, curious))
26	Orgesia	Ναι, ωραία! Γράψ' το! (!) Yes, nice! Write it!	((approving, motivated))

In Excerpt 2, a similar discussion regarding the aspectual form of the verb takes place. The learners engaged in conceptual reasoning about aspect, demonstrating metalinguistic awareness. Their decision to select the imperfective aspect (were watching) aligned with the intended meaning, reflecting deep metalinguistic attention. This indicates that the learners were actively evaluating aspectual distinctions in Greek. Notably, Orgesia paused for five seconds to reconsider the form before ultimately agreeing with Eriselda (Turn 77), a moment that highlights high-level cognitive processing. Their resolution went beyond surface-level grammar, demonstrating conceptual understanding and resulting in a correct solution. As Svalberg (2009) argues, such instances of noticing and reasoning reflect rich cognitive engagement during collaborative writing tasks.



Excerpt 2			
Turn	Who	Utterance	social response, emotion
74	Eriselda	Είναι κάθε μήνα... (?) Is it every month?	((noticing / appealing, curious))
75	Orgesia	Ναι, όχι μόνο μια φορά. Όταν ήταν μικρός, είδαν κάθε μήνα. Yes, not only once. When he was young, they watched every month.	((reasoning, reflective))
76	Eriselda	Κάτσε, «είδαν» ή «έβλεπαν»; (?) Wait, 'watched' or 'were watching'?	((Proposing/clarifying, tentative))
77	Orgesia	Εεε.. ... σωστά, «έβλεπαν», γιατί το έκαναν πολλές φορές. Uhh.. 'were watching', because they were doing it many times.	((Explaining, engaged))
78	Eriselda	Ναι, ναι! (!) Yes, yes!	((affirming, confident))
79	Orgesia	Γράφουμε «έβλεπαν μια παράσταση κάθε μήνα». Are we writing 'they were watching a theater performance every month'.	((summarizing/deciding, clear))
80	Eriselda	Τέλεια! Γράφ' το έτσι! (!) Perfect! Write it!	((approving, happy))

Overall, the elaborate nature of these LREs suggests deep language processing (Swain & Lapkin, 1998) for this pair. Their dialogue reflected elaborate LREs, involving evaluating alternatives and reasoning through vocabulary, spelling, and grammar choices. Rather than simply choosing a word, learners collaboratively evaluated alternatives, justified decisions, and co-constructed form-meaning connections, leading to a high number of correct resolutions. This finding is consistent with the cognitive value of collaborative negotiation (Swain & Lapkin, 1998).

In terms of social engagement, Pair A demonstrated a supportive interactional pattern consistent with Storch's (2002) collaborative pattern. Both learners actively proposed and accepted suggestions, engaged in active listening, and provided mutual confirmations (e.g., 'Yes, right!', 'Sounds better!'). The pair exhibited high levels of equality and mutuality, as both initiated discussions, responded to each other's questions and ideas, and elaborated not only on their own contributions but also on those of their partner. This behavior reflects collaborative text reconstruction. Their dialogue was predominantly exploratory in nature (Mercer, 2004), characterized by building on each other's suggestions, confirming, and extending peer contributions.

Disagreements were constructive and typically framed as suggestions that promoted further noticing (e.g., 'Is it every month?', 'But it says constantly'), fostering a sense of shared task ownership. Their interaction supported reciprocal learning and feedback through questioning, clarification, and elaboration. This aligns with socio-cognitive perspectives that emphasize the relational and affective dimensions of cognition, recognizing learning as not solely an individual activity but a socially distributed and emotionally invested process (Moranski & Toth, 2016). Overall, their discourse reflected mutual scaffolding (Donato, 1994), free from dominance or withdrawal, and enabled mutual meaning-making.

In terms of affective engagement, positive emotions were evident in both the interactional tone during the task and the responses to the post-task questionnaires. The learners' affective tone

and verbal expressions during collaboration were clearly positive (e.g., ‘Perfect!’, ‘Yes, yes!’), reinforcing their enthusiasm and sustaining cognitive engagement. Additionally, in the open-ended questionnaire, learners described the collaboration as ‘fun’ and ‘helpful’, highlighting the enjoyment they experienced while working with their peer. Reported emotions included satisfaction, enthusiasm, and enjoyment. Notably, effective collaboration not only facilitated task completion but also helped mitigate language-related difficulties through peer discussion (e.g., ‘We had some difficulties because we could not remember two verbs, but we discussed this together and tried to guess’). Such affective positivity is crucial, as enjoyment and emotional security have been linked to greater willingness to take risks, deeper cognitive investment, and improved language outcomes (Busse et al., 2020).

#### 4.2 Pair B (Klevis – Noel)

Conversely, affective disengagement was evident in Pair B. In Excerpt 3, Noel proposed the target aspectual form (‘were singing’), but the dominant peer, Klevis, dismissed it without negotiation (Turn 44).

Excerpt 3			
Turn	Who	Utterance	social response, emotion
42	Klevis	Στο τέλος χορεύουν έναν χορό. At the end, they dance a dance.	((assertive, dismissive))
43	Noel	Εεε... Μήπως χόρεψαν; (?) Uhh... might it be ‘danced’?	((appealing, hesitant))
44	Klevis	Όχι, δεν έχει σημασία. Γράψε «χορεύουν». ( ) No, it doesn’t matter. Write ‘(they) dance’.	((overruling, disinterested))
45	Noel	Μα δεν είναι τώρα.. Στο τέλος χόρεψαν (?) But this is not now. At the end ‘(they) danced’.	((insisting, frustrated))
46	Klevis	Όχι, είναι λάθος. Άστο «χορεύουν» σου είπα. (!) No, this is wrong. I told you leave it like that.	((silencing, irritated))
((Noel writes what Klevis told him to write.))			

Cognitive engagement during this exchange was limited (Storch, 2002). Although an LRE was initiated concerning the perfective/imperfective distinction, it was abandoned without exploration, and no alternative suggestions or elaboration followed. This behavior aligns with prior research showing that dominance within pairs can limit opportunities for deep cognitive processing, especially when one partner consistently overrides the other’s contributions (Philip & Duchesne, 2016; Storch, 2002).

Similarly, in Excerpt 4, a disagreement arose over whether to use ‘wet’ or ‘happy’, but again, the dominant learner rejected discussion. Despite Noel’s attempt to draw attention to the aspectual form, Klevis dismissed the issue, resulting in no metalinguistic reasoning and the use of an incorrect form. This pattern demonstrates how dominant behavior can restrict collaborative dialogue, leading to surface-level processing and frequent misresolution or non-resolution of LREs.

Excerpt 4			
Turn	Who	Utterance	social response, emotion
55	Noel	Να γράψουμε «βρεγμένος» ή μήπως «χαρούμενος»; (?) Shall we write ‘wet’ or maybe ‘happy’?	((appealing, cautious))

56	Klevis	Έλα τώρα! ... «Βρεγμένος»! (!) Come on now! 'Wet'!	((commanding, irritated))
57	Noel	Εε... αλλά χαρούμενος γιατί έπαιζε με το νερό είπε. But (the dog was) happy because it was playing with the water.	((justifying, hesitant))
58	Klevis	Όχι, αυτό που λέω εγώ είναι το σωστό. Γράψε βρεγμένος. No, what I'm saying is correct. Write wet!	((silencing, aggressive))
59	Noel	(...) Καλά. (..) Ok..	((withdrawing, resigned))
((Noel writes what Klevis told him to write without speaking again.))			

In terms of social engagement, the interactional pattern displayed by this pair aligns with the dominant–passive dynamic described by Storch (2008). In Excerpts 3 and 4, Klevis exerted control over the task without seeking consensus, while Noel attempted to engage in negotiation but was unsuccessful. Klevis monopolized decision-making, frequently issuing commands and dismissals, which led to Noel's gradual withdrawal. The talk type observed in this pair was predominantly disputational (Mercer, 2004), marked by a dismissive tone that suppressed meaningful interaction and collaborative text construction. In both excerpts, Noel's contributions were ignored, and the discourse was dominated by imperatives (e.g., 'Write wet'), creating a clear interactional asymmetry. This lack of mutuality and equality undermined the potential for collaboration, consistent with findings by Watanabe and Swain (2007). Rather than shared reasoning, the interaction was characterized by control moves, with Noel's attempts to challenge or refine decisions consistently minimized. As a result, the absence of mutual engagement not only reduced opportunities for language-related episodes but also diminished Noel's willingness to participate meaningfully (Philip & Duchesne, 2016).

In terms of affective engagement, the emotional tone in Pair B deteriorated quickly. Noel's proposals were repeatedly ignored or rejected (e.g., 'No, it doesn't matter. Write 'dance', 'Come on!', 'No, what I am saying is correct.'). The absence of positive reinforcement or encouragement contributed to a negative affective climate. In the post-task questionnaire, Noel noted, 'My team was not listening to me, if only he was!', which is a clear indication of affective disengagement. In Excerpt 4, the dismissive and at times aggressive tone (e.g., 'No, what I am saying is correct. Write 'wet'!') further discouraged participation and fostered Noel's withdrawal. Noel expressed feelings of frustration and exclusion in the open-ended questionnaire: 'I was not sure what I had to do to help my partner. He was not listening to me, and I could not do much anymore'. This reflects both the emotional impact of Klevis's interactional dominance and Noel's eventual resignation and passive compliance. These findings illustrate that negative social dynamics can lead to affective disengagement and reduced cognitive and emotional investment (Busse et al., 2020; Mercer, 2004; Swain & Miccoli, 1994).

Looking across all three levels of engagement, the findings support the view of their dynamic interdependence. Positive social dynamics, as observed in Pair A, facilitated elaboration within LREs, encouraged attention to language problems, and supported noticing, even when resolution was not always successful, while also fostering emotional satisfaction. In contrast, negative social dynamics, as in Pair B, suppressed cognitive processing and induced affective withdrawal. At the turn level, pair A exhibited moves such as praise, suggestions, and collaborative responses, while Pair B's interaction was marked by dismissals and imperatives. These results align with socio-cognitive perspectives, which view learning not merely as an

individual cognitive activity but as a socially distributed and affectively mediated process (Firth & Wagner, 2007; Svalberg, 2018; Zhang, 2021).

## 5. DISCUSSION

The present study investigated migrant learners' engagement during collaborative writing (CW) activities by means of dictogloss in a reception class through the lens of cognitive, social, and affective dimensions. The results revealed that engagement across these dimensions is deeply intertwined and crucial for shaping learners' language development, interactional experiences, and emotional well-being in formal education settings.

With respect to cognitive engagement, the present findings align with previous research highlighting the importance of language-related episodes (LREs) as sites of negotiation and learning (Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Storch, 2007). Specifically, learners who elaborated on linguistic forms (i.e., explaining, questioning, and justifying choices) demonstrated deeper cognitive engagement with more interactional episodes discussing language issues, along with higher numbers of successful resolutions and lower numbers of unresolved episodes. Thus, this elaborate engagement reflects that the quality of engagement, and not merely its occurrence, determines learning potential in line with Zhang (2025).

With respect to social engagement, the study extends prior findings by showing that social engagement patterns, particularly the degree of equality and mutuality (Storch, 2002), played a foundational role in enabling or constraining cognitive opportunities. Pairs operating collaboratively, engaging in exploratory talk (Mercer, 2004), co-constructed meaning, scaffolded each other's reasoning, and built linguistic knowledge through shared ownership of the task. By contrast, pairs exhibiting dominant-passive dynamics demonstrated reduced negotiation, higher conflict, and limited cognitive investment, supporting earlier findings that power asymmetries inhibit peer learning (Li & Zhu, 2017; Watanabe & Swain, 2007), and mostly engaged in disputational talk (Knight & Mercer, 2015).

With respect to affective engagement, which remains relatively underexplored in CW research (Busse et al., 2020; Philp & Duchesne, 2016), it was found that learners' emotional experiences during collaboration mirrored the quality of their interactions. Thus, positive emotions coincided with mutuality and cognitive elaboration, while negative emotions coincided with dominance and cognitive disengagement. This confirms theoretical perspectives arguing that emotion, cognition, and social interaction are dynamically interdependent in language learning (Firth & Wagner, 2007; Svalberg, 2018).

### 5.1 Pedagogical implications

The present findings highlight that simply designing collaborative tasks is insufficient without also fostering an emotionally supportive and socially equitable environment, particularly for vulnerable groups such as migrant learners. Without this, collaboration risks reinforcing silence and withdrawal. These results have significant implications for language education policy, pedagogy, and assessment. Educators must go beyond evaluating linguistic outcomes to also consider interactional quality and emotional safety. Scaffolding exploratory talk and validating peer contributions are essential to maximizing the benefits of collaborative writing (Mercer, 2004; Storch, 2013). Moreover, unaddressed power imbalances can exacerbate the disadvantages faced by migrant learners (Ferguson-Patrick, 2020; Franck & Papadopoulou, 2024; Paspali & Papadopoulou, 2025).

Thus, a multidimensional engagement approach, combining cognitive, social, and affective dimensions, is crucial for language learning, inclusion, and long-term educational equity. At the cognitive level, tasks should promote attention to language form and its meaning and invite discussion and reasoning. Teachers can support this by encouraging metalinguistic talk and providing scaffolds. At the social level, collaboration must be taught through intentional pairing, norms of mutuality and equality. At the affective level, learners need to feel safe to take risks; this can be supported through partner-building activities, post-task reflections, and a classroom culture that views disagreement as constructive. Together, these strategies make collaborative writing not only effective for language development but also inclusive and empowering.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The present study explored how migrant learners engaged cognitively, socially, and affectively during collaborative writing tasks in a Greek reception class. By analyzing peer interactions during text reconstruction, this study offered a multidimensional understanding of learners' experiences, revealing that successful collaboration, deep linguistic engagement, and positive emotions were closely interconnected in line with previous studies (e.g., Zhang, 2025; Paspali & Papadopoulou, 2025). The results showed that when learners engaged collaboratively, they exhibited high cognitive engagement, elaborate LREs, and mostly successful co-construction of meaning, along with positive emotional responses. In contrast, when peer interactions were dominated by asymmetrical power relations, with one learner controlling and dismissing the other's contributions, cognitive engagement was limited, social dynamics were disputational, and affective responses were negative, often resulting in emotional withdrawal and lowered learning opportunities. Learners' cognitive work on language, e.g., noticing, negotiating, and resolving linguistic problems, was deeply dependent on the social quality of their collaboration and their emotional investment in the task (Zhang, 2025).

The present study demonstrates that migrant learners' engagement cannot be understood solely through final language outcomes/performance. The dynamic processes of cognitive effort, social collaboration, and emotional experience during (collaborative) learning tasks should also be considered. For migrant learners, who often navigate additional barriers of language and inclusion, ensuring equitable, supportive/collaborative opportunities is not just beneficial but essential.

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