Chapter 81: The Teaching/Learning Cycle: Developing Autonomy through the Collaborative Writing Process

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Abstract: Using the Teaching/Learning Cycle that includes Collaborative Writing Process in teaching writing can be highly effective and more engaging for students rather than other traditional writing teaching methods. Collaborative writing as a writing teaching approach associated with tech tool (Google Docs) can enhance students' abilities in English language writing and increase their autonomy. In this approach, students can reach higher levels of accuracy, fluency and complexity in writing. They can practice critical thinking in writing tasks. The proposal will take place in the First Middle School at the beginning of the first semester in September 2020. The students will study English language writing through the Teaching/Learning Cycle stages that include the collaborative writing. Then, at the beginning of second semester, January 2021 there will be a workshop about the proposal to the others English language teachers. After that, there will be a writing community via WhatsApp consisting of the teachers interested in implementing collaborative writing approach in their classes. Two overarching outcomes of this proposal are the adaptation of the teaching/learning cycle and collaborative writing in teaching writing, will lead to improvement in students' abilities and autonomy in writing.

1 Introduction

Many students in Saudi middle schools think they are not able to write a paragraph in English, which is why they merely resort to memorizing a paragraph or a template that teacher wrote in class, in a desperate attempt to cope with the required writing assignments. As a Khbrat recipient who has had the chance to further her education and learning in a foreign country while still remembering the challenges my students face, I believe teaching writing requires the implementation of new methods fostering students' abilities in the writing process. Therefore, this paper will address the students' struggle with English writing and its proposed solution of collaborative writing.

Background

As a middle school teacher of English, I also notice that many of my students have difficulties in writing. One related challenge is that students tend to recall the sentences rather than to form new ones, which is similar to the paragraph-template memorization practices. Also, students are not encouraged enough to produce a new writing product by themselves depending on the genre they have learned.

Therefore, it is high time educational stakeholders, including teachers, began considering major changes to help students accept the language challenges while still learning and working hard to improve their English proficiency with a positive attitude. Nowadays collaboration has become easier and more available through Web 2.0 tools, such as Google

Docs and wikis. Likewise, I truly believe the disposition of collaboration that has been developed and instilled in technology users could be easily transferred to schools.

One of the approaches that language experts trust and find useful is collaborative writing. Researchers have invariably spoken highly of collaborative writing as an approach promoting collaboration among students and helping them hone their writing skills. Hyler (2018), for instance, emphasized that utilizing collaborative writing in the classroom can

"build student confidence, especially among the students who are lower-level writers"

(para.6). After researching collaborative writing and examining other practitioners' related studies, I now have no doubt the writing-related challenges my students face in Saudi Arabia will be minimal after using this approach.

Moreover, there are additional benefits of collaborative writing. The use of collaborative writing in the English language classroom can be a useful strategy to enhance students' accuracy, fluency, and complexity in writing. Moreover, this approach can increase student autonomy in writing. Furthermore, teachers can benefit from this technique in writing to encourage students to collaborate with each other on the writing assignments, which will hopefully engender autonomous writing. In addition, by following the collaborative writing approach, teachers can save time by letting students share documents on Google; students can then confidently work together on writing tasks whenever they want to do so, including after school. Therefore, I propose the implementation of collaborative writing because it will improve the writing skills and autonomy of my students.

Rationale

The following rationale presents definitions of key terms related to the collaborative writing approach. The rationale also highlights the fundamental theories of collaborative writing. Finally, in addition to highlighting the benefits of collaborative writing, related challenges are included.

Definitions

To begin with, it is worth defining the term collaborative learning. Dillenbourg (1999) described collaborative learning as a situation in which specific forms of interaction among learners are supposed to occur. In the same context, it is believed that one form of collaborative learning is collaborative writing, a method of collaborative working in which students collaborate as a team on completing a writing task (Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, 2016).

In the same way, Haring-Smith (1994) defined collaborative writing as involving more than one person in the contribution process of creating a text. While Storch described collaborative writing as "an activity where there is a shared and negotiated decision making process and a shared responsibility for the production of a single text" (2013, p. 3), collaborative writing can be considered a social activity involving all the members of a group in constructing and developing the ideas (Darus, Rubiee & Ab, 2016). Nigel Caplan defined collaborative writing as "producing a text that no writer could have written independently" and in this way, collaborative writing could be shown as co-construction (N. Caplan, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

Collaborative Writing: Tenets

The most fundamental educational philosophy underlying collaborative writing is learner-centered approach, which was inspired by humanistic psychology and experiential learning (Rogers, 1983). Collaborative writing stems from the constructivism theory, which states that learners make the meaning of the learning through the interaction with each other and with the objects in the surrounding environment. In addition, collaborative writing is based on the social constructivism learning theory, which indicates that learning is a social process and learning occurs when learners involve in social tasks (Kim, 2001). Therefore, the sociocultural perspective the interaction among students in the collaborative writing leads students to deliberate over the finest way to communicate the meaning.

In the writing process, students will be able to gather their knowledge and coconstruct new language. Such co-constructed knowledge can be specified and internalized by the students for their own use (Storch, 2013). Furthermore, the sociocultural theory suggests that learning transfers from the sociocultural level to individual level through collaboration and as a result, student's autonomy will be increased.

Collaborative Writing in the Teaching-Learning Cycle

The Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC) is based on scaffolding, which means assisting students to reach goals collaboratively. TLC consists of four stages of activity. The first stage is text deconstruction, which means building students' knowledge about the required writing genre by examining and discussing samples of texts together. The second stage is joint

 construction; following scaffolding students work on the targeted genre with the help of the teacher. For example, the teacher builds a text in the target genre with the learners, incorporating their propositions. The third stage is collaborative construction, which aims to achieve written texts by groups of the learners who work cooperatively in the targeted genre. This stage provides students with opportunities to discuss more language and scaffold learner writing. The last stage in the TLC is independent construction in which students write individually in the targeted genre (Caplan & Johns, 2019).

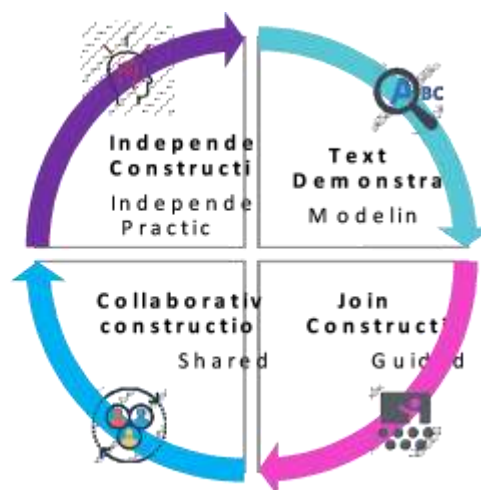The Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC)

Fig. 1: The Teaching Learning Cycle.

Collaborative Writing Benefits

Improved writing performance

Recent years have witnessed a considerable scholarly interest in collaborative writing. Many studies have emphasized the key role of collaborative writing in improving the overall quality of the learners' writing productions, which means that learners could perform better writing assignments when

they work together (Biria & Jafari, 2013; Du, 2018; Pae, 2011). In addition, students who work on writing tasks collaboratively are able to achieve higher levels of accuracy and fluency (Stell, 2018). Caplan indicated, "students who do the joint construction - all of them wrote a text that basically fit the requirement of the genre" (N.

Caplan, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

Critical thinking

Monica Farling, an instructor at the University of Delaware English Language Institute, indicated that collaborative writing leads students to experience constructive discussion allowing them to think critically and put themselves in the reader's position in order to engage students in the writing process (M. Farling, personal communication, February 13, 2020). Moreover, when collaborative writing encompasses online tools, the writing activities can also enhance students' language learning from different aspects, such as critical thinking, comprehension, and interpretation skills. These activities can offer the appropriate environment in which students can express their ideas meaningfully (Lutaaya, Cronje & Aheto, 2018; Martínez-Carrasco, 2018).

Confidence/ Autonomy

Researchers have invariably spoken highly of collaborative writing as an approach promoting collaboration among students, thereby helping them hone their writing skills.

Collaborative writing can increase students' independence in writing while internalizing "the language they have negotiated in the joint construction and transfer their learning to subsequent independent writing" (Caplan & Farling, 2017, p. 564). Caplan stressed that some students don't know how to start in writing and as a result they will fall back on the strategies which they used before which maybe copying a model or writing five-paragraph essay. However, joint construction helps students in not only showing students how to do writing but indeed go further to practice it together (N. Caplan, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

Engagement/ Interest

Farling mentioned that in collaborative writing the topics should relate to the students' real lives, interests, and personalities, making it a more enjoyable experience (M. Farling, personal communication, February 13, 2020). Google Docs, for instance, is a collaborative tool that allows students to work with each other at the same time but at different locations by using diverse devices (Nithya & Selvi, 2017). By the same token, collaborative writing activities which use the Google Docs converted the procedure into a fun competition (Zioga & Bikos, 2020). Caplan indicated that during the joint construction students participate

actively and tend to be quite engaged (N. Caplan, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

Other Considerations

Technology/ web2.0 – Google Docs

Collaborative writing could be performed through using technological learning tools. Nowadays, collaborative writing can be more effective and appealing via Web 2.0 learning tools,

such as Google Docs whereby students could work together online anytime and anywhere. Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014) elucidated that Google Docs can offer collaborative features to facilitate collaborative writing in English classroom. Similarly, Zioga and Bikos indicated that the web application Google Docs is a digital tool enabling students to work in a collaborative learning environment (2020).

Collaborative Writing: Challenges

Some instructors have indicated that in spite of its many benefits, collaborative writing still has limitations. For instance, learners might not always work collaboratively with their groups even if they choose their partners. However, to address this issue, teachers may need to provide more training on how to approach a collaborative writing assignment and give the students the chance to experience first-hand and reflect on the whole process. Additionally, another claim emphasizes the lack of balance in the amount of student participation in the collaborative writing activities. This problem can be solved through pre-task modeling and by determining each student's role in the collaborative writing task (Zang, 2019). Caplan mentioned that one of collaborative writing limitations is that it "doesn't always work right" particularly when students work in pairs because sometimes one student takes the dominant role while the others takes the passive one. However, collaborative writing will be better when students work in groups or when the whole class work together. Moreover, the teacher will need to train the students how to form collaborative partnership (N. Caplan, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

Implementation plan

Action item: What step needs to happen?	Completion date: When will the step be finished?	Resources: What is necessary to complete this step?	Lead: Who is in charge of this step?	Evaluation: How will the success of this step be measured?
The proposal writer will connect with English supervisor to introduce the collaborative writing and its connection to the current curriculum in order to seek the permission from authorities to implement the plan.	The beginning of first semester on September 2020 (the first week)	The action plan and /or Concept paper	The proposal writer	Verbal and written approval will be conveyed after the meeting

The proposal writer will meet the school principal to convince her about the teaching learning approach in teaching writing consisting of collaborative writing and its connection to the current curriculum. The goal is to receive permission to facilitate what this approach needs such as using the	The beginning of the first semester on September 2020 (the first week)	The action plan and Presentation.	The proposal writer	Verbal and written approval will be confirmed after the meeting

computer lab to: - Model the collaborative writing with students.				

The following table presents the implementation plan of the collaborative writing approach. It consists of action items, completion dates, resources; people involved, and suggested evaluation.

- Allow students to access over the Internet in order to work on their tasks collaboratively through google docs during their break times.				

The proposal writer will meet with her students to: - introduce for them CW and how it would improve their writing skill. -Modeling CW to students during the third week of September 2020, and show them how they can collaborate with each other effectively, and - Illustrate timeline for each mission and - Illustrate each student's role and responsibility in it. - Model assignment reflection process - Establish working groups of students in order to be engaged in the teaching learning cycle that includes the CW. - Link the current curriculum with the collaborative writing process. model CW with student	The beginning of the first semester on September 2020 the third) week) and the collaborative writing would last for the whole semester period (till the end of .(December	.Presentation .handouts - Introduce - Google Docs and its features to the .students	The proposal writer (the teacher), the students, and teacher's supervisor	The scores records of experimental group who study writing through teaching learning cycle (collaborative writing) compared with the controlled group who study writing with the traditional way. (pretest and posttest). -The students' reflection on CW assignments. - Survey. -Observation of students by teacher
Ongoing feedback - from teacher during joint construction and collaborative construction .phases The supervisor will be - invited to observe the class .during applying this approach		-		-Observation of teacher by supervisor (targeted feedback on collaborative (writing

- Allow students to access over the Internet in order to work on their tasks collaboratively through google docs during their break				

times.				
The proposal writer will meet with her students to: - introduce for them CW and how it would improve their writing skill. -Modeling CW to students during the third week of September 2020, and show them how they can collaborate with each other effectively, and - Illustrate timeline for each mission and - Illustrate each student's role and responsibility in it. - Model assignment reflection process - Establish working groups of students in order to be engaged in the teaching learning cycle that includes the CW. - Link the current curriculum with the collaborative writing process. - model CW with student	The beginning of the first semester on September 2020 (the third week) and the collaborative writing would last for the whole semester period (till the end of December).	Presentation. - handouts. - Introduce Google Docs and its features to the students.	The proposal writer (the teacher), the students, and teacher's supervisor	-The scores records of experimental group who study writing through teaching learning cycle (collaborative writing) compared with the controlled group who study writing with the traditional way. (pretest and posttest). -The students' reflection on CW assignments. - Survey. -Observation of students by teacher

the teachers will practice the collaborative writing after the proposal writer has modeled it. The last day will be a reflection on what they have learned during that week and there will be a round table discussion if they have any suggestions or related concerns. -The proposal writer would make a writing community with the colleagues, who want to participate in applying CW in their classroom to keep track with them on applying CW. The writing community will discuss the practices and challenges once a week for an hour.		-WhatsApp group for writing community.			

Logical model

The following table presents the logical model of the collaborative writing approach. It consists of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

			Outcomes – Impact		
Inputs	**Activities**	**Outputs**	**Short**	**Medium**	**Long**
P hase two training workshop with teachers: - presentation. -concept paper. - handouts. - worksheets. - projector. - laptops.	- Delivering teaching/ learning cycle and collaborative writing process to the trainee teachers. - Modeling the collaborative writing with teachers. - Conducting writing activiti es collaboratively. - Discussing the collaborative	- Teachers are attending the workshop. - Teachers are participating in applying collaborative writing in teaching writing. -Teachers are participating in the writing community via WhatsApp.	- Teachers become familiar with the teaching/ learning cycle and collaborative writing. - Teachers are using collaborative writing approach in teaching writing. - Teachers are able to apply collaborative writing in their classrooms appropriately.	- Teachers are aware of collaborative writing challenges and how to address them. - Teachers can adjust their application of collaborative writing according to their classes needs.	- Adopting the teaching/learning cycle and collaborative writing in teaching English language writing.

	writing implementation in the classrooms with teachers who are participating in applying this approach. - Ongoing feedback.				

the experimental group will study writing through collaborative writing while the control group will study writing with the traditional teaching method. Both groups will take a pretest and a posttest, and the results will be compared in order to assess the impact of using the collaborative writing approach on students' writing performance. During the implementation of collaborative writing, the teacher will engage in reflective practice by keeping a journal reporting students' interactions, engagements, efforts, and development and record the observation in the form of notes. In addition, there will be a survey at the end of the semester for students to reflect on their learning (or growth, if any) and experience with the collaborative writing process.

With regard to the training workshop of the teaching/learning cycle: developing autonomy through collaborative writing process, the workshop participants' attendance will be recorded. Also, a survey will be provided after the training course has been completed to collect teachers' opinions about collaborative writing. After establishing a writing community of the teachers who want to participate in applying the collaborative writing process in their classes, there will be a monthly online collaboration where teachers share their practices using this approach with their students and any success stories or best practices in handling existing challenges; this information will be collected in a report.

Conclusions

In light of the writing related challenges many Saudi middle school students face, adopting collaborative writing in teaching English language classes has the potential to shift the traditional way of teaching writing. I believe this method will transform learning into new approaches where students leave their comfort zones and challenge themselves by delving into the world of technology (e.g., Google Docs) with credible resources for both teachers and students. It helps teachers in creating the learning scaffolding environments that motivate students to increase their knowledge of the writing process and be more able to think critically in the writing process. Furthermore, collaborative writing can lead students to achieve higher levels of new language acquisition as well as autonomy. Therefore, it seems clear that collaborative writing is a viable solution to helping students in Saudi Arabia develop their autonomy over writing, instead of merely memorizing paragraphs or desperately awaiting the teacher's template.

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Appendix 1

The Teaching/Learning Cycle:
Developing Autonomy through The
Collaborative Writing Process

Wedad Alotaibi

January 2021

A little about myself

❖ BA degree in English language.
❖ Master degree in curricula and teaching methods
❖ An English teacher of middle school

Learning Objectives
By the end of this workshop, you will be able to:
1- Define collaborative writing.
2- Summarize the teaching/learning cycle (TCL) stages.
3- Recognize the positive impact of collaborative writing on the students learning.
4- Practice the collaborative writing through Google Docs.
5- Apply collaborative writing in classrooms.
6- Discuss collaborative writing Practices, challenges, and suggested solutions.

Time to think …

❖ What are some of the goals that you have for student writing in your classroom?

❖ What are some of the issues that your students face with writing?

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There are some challenges that facing English language learners in writing such as:

1- students are merely memorizing written paragraphs.

2- students aren't encouraged enough to write by their own.

The TLC and Saudi vision 2030 in educational developments

Saudi vision 2030 in educational developments encourages developing such teaching methods, that focus on learner not on teacher, and concentrate on inculcating skills, personality development, improving confidence, and promoting spirit of creativeness.

Could the collaborative writing be a viable alternative to traditional teaching writing methods?

What does collaborative writing mean?

Dillenbourg (1999) described collaborative learning as a situation in which specific forms of interaction among learners are supposed to occur.

Storch described Collaborative Writing as "an activity where there is a shared and negotiated decision making process and a shared responsibility for the production of a single text" (2013, p. 3)

Nigel Caplan defined collaborative writing as "producing a text that no writer could have written independently" and in this way, collaborative writing could be shown as co-construction (N. Caplan, personal communication, February 20, 2020).

Collaborative writing as a teaching method can:

- Improve Students' writing performance.

Students could perform better writing assignments when they work together.

(Bijia & Jafari, 2013; Du, 2010; Pae, 2011).

students who work on writing tasks collaboratively are able to achieve higher levels of accuracy and fluency

(Stad, 2016).

Collaborative writing as a teaching method allows:

- **students practice critical thinking during writing process.**

Monica Farling, an instructor at the University of Delaware English Language Institute, indicated that collaborative writing leads students to experience constructive discussion that allowing them to think critically and put themselves in the reader's position in order to engage students in the writing process.

(M. Farling, personal communication, February 13, 2020)

Collaborative writing as a teaching method can:

- Enhance Students' engagement in writing process.

collaborative writing activities which use the Google Docs converted the procedure into a fun competition.

(Zioga & Bikos, 2020)

Collaborative writing as a teaching method can:

- **Enhance students' autonomy.**

collaborative writing can increase students' independence in writing while internalizing the language they have negotiated in the joint construction and transfer their learning to subsequent independent writing.

(Caplan & Farling, 2017, p. 564)

Feature Article

A Dozen Heads Are Better Than One: Collaborative Writing in Genre-Based Pedagogy

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The TLC: Developing Autonomy through The Collaborative Writing Process | UNIVERSITY of DELAWARE | English Language Institute | خبرات

If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write.

MARTIN LUTHER

The Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC)

The Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC) is based on the idea of **scaffolding**, which means helping students reach outcomes that would not have been possible for them to reach on their own. The TLC is made of four phrases of activity.

The Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC)

Independent Construction — Independent Practice

Text Demonstration — Modeling

Collaborative construction — Shared Practice

Joint Construction — Guided Practice

The Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC)

1- Text Deconstruction (Modeling)

which means building students' knowledge about the required writing genre by examining and discussing samples of texts together in order to effectively write within the genre and this is gained with teacher-led process.

(Caplan & Johns, 2019).