

The Effects of Collaborative Writing to Learners' Text in terms of Writing Accuracy from Sociocultural Theory Perspective

Le Minh Trung^{1*}

¹Faculty of Foreign Languages, Dong Nai Technology University, Vietnam

*Corresponding author's email: trungminhle.lmt@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte2202014>

Received: 22/09/2021

Revision: 01/12/2021

Accepted: 07/12/2021

Online: 13/12/2021

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

collaborative writing, individual writing, writing accuracy

Collaborative Writing (CW) has stimulated scholars for years in order to shed light on the effects of this kind of activity, and in terms of writing fluency, some researchers succeeded in stating that writing in groups affects the quality of learners' texts. Nevertheless, the previous studies have not provided fully spotlight on the field of utilizing grammar and vocabulary correctly when students compose text with peers. The purpose of this study was to review the effects of CW to the learners' work in terms of accuracy from the perspective of Sociocultural Theory (SCT).

Introduction

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) (Vygotsky, 1978 as cited in Marginson & Dang, 2017) plays an important role in learning language generally and especially in the form of collaborative writing (CW) due to the constructs of this theory. Indeed, from the perspective of language instruction (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001), together with VanPattern & Williams (2014), advocated that the application of SCT in classroom communicative activities greatly supports teachers and learners in general. In greater detail, according to Storch (2012), from a "sociocultural theoretical perspective," interaction gives learners opportunities to enhance their language under the setting of feedback and communication. Moreover, Pham (2021) stated that the notion of "communicative language teaching" was introduced the first time in the 1970s, and since then, this term has been applied in pedagogy with the form of pairs and later in groups-setting of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Accordingly, there apparently appears the need to apply the SCT in the process of instructing and learning languages.

Although CW has been researched for years until now, scholars have still been stimulated by this approach's accuracy effectiveness. Previous studies on the effects of CW on student writers' text indicated that this kind of learning activity greatly affects positively interaction (feedback) between mentors and students as well as among learners and writing fluency (Storch, 2018;

Pham, 2021), whereas, the other researchers implied that CW leads to the result of being better at accuracy alternatively grammar and vocabulary (McDonough et al., 2019; Kim & Emeliyanova, 2021). Therefore, this study focuses on the accuracy of CW simultaneously grammar and vocabulary.

Researching and applying SCT in the form of CW led to some certain achievements. In fact, Shehadeh (2011) conducted a study and concluded that CW greatly affects the content and organization of learners' text. Moreover, Yan(2019)'s study proved that CW provided learners opportunities to better their critical thinking and writing efficiency, as well. All things considered, SCT in form of CW has been considered to be effective. The aim of this paper is to shed a light on the effectiveness of CW to the students' writing quality in terms of accuracy by reviewing the relatedly previous articles. In addition, under the circumstance of the covid-19 pandemic, discussion on the awareness and suggestions for further research in fields are stated to be necessary.

Literature reviews

The sociocultural theory has been applied in the form of collaborative writing due to the communicative features of interaction in numerous classes for years since this tool has really helped learners enhance their capabilities in some fields such as writing fluency (Storch, 2018), learners participation (Jelodar & Farvardin, 2019) and text organization (Shehadeh, 2011). From the perspective view of SCT, that writing in groups better students' texts can be explained due to the ZPD and scaffolding, which are constructs of this theory. Although there were few studies that proved the effective impact of CW, the accuracy aspect of writing still needs to provide opportunities to be revealed.

Some scholars have reviewed the notion, principles, and constructs of SCT for a long time. Lantolf, Thorne and Poehner (2006, pp.207-226 as cited in VanPattern & Williams, 2014) reported that SCT developed by the well-known psychologist Vygotsky and his colleagues was a "new way of thinking about human" at that time; the authors indicated that Vygotsky argued that mental system of the human comprises "lower-level neurobiological base" whilst the "higher cultural tools" combine with the lower base to mediate between the person and the environment, more importantly, between each person and the "social-material world"; and language is an artifact for the human to contact with others of human, which children subordinating matured persons learn from community to regulate their behaviors. Besides, Marginson & Dang (2017) also implied from the SCT. Any child's oral language was created to communicate with other people, which is significant for human development. The authors also emphasized the importance of society's impact on individual thinking. In addition, VanPattern & Williams (2014) reported that Vygotsky concluded the notion of internalization, which means through the artifacts, the child's cultural development appears firstly between people (inter-psychological) and secondly within the child (intra-psychological). Briefly, SCT discusses the mental functions of humans as mediation through the context of utilizing the artifacts, including

languages, to self-regulate.

As prior mentioned, the theory is associated with the symbolic system that humans can generate and utilize named language; this tool is a mediation for each person to connect with the world and regulate human behaviors. It does happen thanks to ZPD- the construct of the theory, which could be delivered as there exists a gap between the actual development stage which was defined as the capability of individually solving problems, and potential one that was stated as problem-solving with adults' guidance or through the communication with abler peers. (Vygotsky, 1978 as cited in VanPattern & Williams, 2014). With the spotlight from the study, then appears the term scaffolding. In fact, this notion refers to some strategies like hints, modeling, or graphic organizer in order to support the learners. In fact, there is a correlation between scaffolding and ZPD. Indeed, the students can be helped by the instructor as well as peers with some techniques like above in the context of communication. Through the language humans use for interaction, the individual regulates himself or herself to extend his/her capability to the potential zone, which is exactly the ZPD; and the process of transferring the information from other members to a certain learner is internalization. Shortly, ZPD and scaffolding are associated with each other together with the SCT of Vygotsky. These also are the features that pedagogues have applied years with a form of groups work or pairs work with the name collaborative, especially writing.

Collaborative writing has widely been employed in classes by instructors with the activity of pairs work, and most groups work. A group might include three or more students who can generate a diversity of creative ideas. Davis (1993) suggested that the number of members in a group should be four or five whilst Csernica et al. (2002) offered the number of three or four. Working in a group, in this case, is that students work together to compose text through the processes of brainstorming, ideas discussion, composing, reviewing, and rewriting. Under no circumstance have group work activities shown as a good way to maintain and organize classes efficiently (Burke, 2011). Moreover, Wright & Lawson (2005) concluded that working in a group, students spend more time preparing for class and making conversation with the same team members and varied group members outside class. It can be revealed that students regulate behaviors of pre-writing, writing, and post-writing. Briefly, writing with group members encourages all students to develop skills, and deep learning makes this type of classroom activity the most significant. Accordingly, these features are stated to exist in collaborative writing due to the communication of individuals with group members.

It is that collaborative writing has been used on a wide scale because of the advantages, which are closely related to the SCT. Firstly, this activity may enable students to be more critical of argument and debate within this kind of community. In fact, Pham (2021) indicated the fact that some group-working students sometimes were not consensus due to various outlooks and responses. In addition, Ansarimoghaddam et al. (2017) withdrew that the disagreement regularly appears among members. Thereby, learners, through the setting of collaborative writing, try to prove their ideas and gradually become more confident and independent. These ideas show that the communication in language acquisition which was proved to be a process

of development by Vygotsky, helps students regulate their ideas and also behaviors; the individuals can enhance or develop the critical thinking ability- a sort of extending ZPD. Besides, learners' writing skills are bettered. Indeed, findings showed that written products of students working group could be improved (Shehadeh, 2011). Elola & Oskoz (2010) assumed "structure and organization improved" thanks to the discussion among members. Moreover, through members' comments (feedback), the author independently regulates the work (L. T. Nguyen & Pham, 2021), leading to improvement. Accordingly, these studies implied the process of transferring from inter-person to intra-person; besides, the tools that members support others can be the feedback or discussion that create the setting for scaffolding appearance, in another way writing in a group is one of SCT applications.

Researchers have studied the CW in an array of terms and aspects so that CW could be applied effectively for pedagogy; utilizing grammar and vocabulary (word choice inappropriate context and spelling) correctly requires students some certain skills and knowledge. In terms of bettering grammar, Shehadeh (2011) stated that through the text composed by the participants before and after the study, the grammar in the posttest writing was better compared with the pre-test products. The big picture for this circumstance is that through the discussion, the learners learned from their group members and regulated their work, which means rereading their own text and correcting some potential grammatical mistakes. Besides, in order to give corrective feedback, the viewers had to meet the standard of being efficient adequately to write informative feedback. Hence, this motivates the self-autonomy of every individual to do research on his or her own about the problem and then figure out solutions. Similarly, writers and reviewers from each group support bilaterally and simultaneously in terms of vocabulary. After the pre-writing process of brainstorming and outlining, the writers begin composing the products. In this phase, he/ she might have difficulty utilizing the correct word for appropriate collocation, sense, and context. That at this stage, the writer individually solves this problem, which possibly leads to the mistake of being misunderstood under a certain context. With the discussion about the work occurring during and after composing text process of CW, peers contribute the accuracy of using suitable words together with the correct spelling of colleagues' text. the idea that CW under setting of mobile assisted language learning (MALL) was considered an enhancing vocabulary tool was raised by Mohammed Hassan Al-Ahdal (2021). In short, CW shows the potential ability of affecting positively the accuracy of grammar and vocabulary of students' work.

The CW, which was mentioned, has been proliferated in numerous studies as the researcher has investigated the effectiveness of this method for years (Ranjbar & Ghonsooly, 2017; Kim & Emeliyanova, 2021; Pham, 2021). Researchers have proved the positive effect of CW on learners' text as when the students engage in composing, revising text together, the CW provides learners chances to interact and support all under context of discussion and feedback. Thereby, all members benefit from others' knowledge and skills.

Related to the SCT, Ranjbar & Ghonsooly (2017) investigated the effect of metaphor scaffolding constructs in research under the setting of collaborative writing. Twenty-four

students learning English at the intermediate level who were Persian native speakers contributed to the data of the study. It was compulsory for all the writers who were randomly assigned to the course to have passed the paragraph writing test prior to the course. Besides, the writers also obtained the standard score according to the researchers' intention through TOEFL test. All the participants were divided into two classes with different treatments. The experimental class was instructed with peer-scaffolding randomly, while the control class was lectured traditionally during 16 sessions. The data was also collected pre-test and posttest. The study was employed with two male students whose mother tongue is Persian. They were learning English translation at a university in Iran. Two participants played the role of reader and writer to review the composition randomly and unintendedly. They read the composition which was written by one of them without knowing about that and review together with some written comments. The method of reviewing is dialogue, and then the recorded transcript was grouped into a unit for discourse analysis. The findings showed that the learners took part in reviewing the text at the end of the session actively. Accordingly, this process-reviewing of writing with the feedback from peers is one portion of CW that can support learners regulate the work in order to better the quality of the product. Remarkably, the authors stated that the collaborative writing setting contributes to improving the quality of students' text. By showing the effects of one phase of CW on the quality of students' text, the researchers indicated that the CW generally enhances writing aspects, including unity, coherence, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary- the easily coming across a mistake, which requires further study to shed light on.

In addition, Kim & Emel'yanova (2021) studied the behaviors of collaborative and individual revision students after an 8-week session. During the course, thirty-six English intermediate level learners who were taking an intensive program in America, of course, named finished "four timed essay" (Kim & Emel'yanova, 2021). With the division of eighteen students in each group- the experiment and the control group from four full-time English as the second language (ESL) classes, the learners in the experimental group learned with the dynamic method of peers' feedback while the control group students studied with the path of individual correction. The pre-test record showed that most of the participants had taken the TOEFL or IELTS examination and they had to maintain GPA over 2.5 to enroll the course. The researchers presented the error system code to learners for sequence data analysis, moreover, the instructors also explained the error correction to the learners. All the students coming from both groups had to compose four or five-paragraph essay, which was designed by IETLS standard and orientation in fifty minutes at class. The students in experimental group would receive the product the following week with the written comments and writers were asked to make revision over the mistake. The instructor explained rubric of errors in terms of coherences, unity and cohesion. The products were marked with the comment function in Microsoft word to show the errors of lexical, grammar and syntactic. Meanwhile, the learners in traditional group were given 10 or 15 minutes to individually revise. In contrary, the experiment students had 20 to 25 minutes to discuss in pairs and revise the work mutually. From the products collected, the data was analyzed and the findings showed that peer feedback activities of CW group helped the students correct errors like part of speech, fragment, word choice, and sentence structure. The result of mean from the

data analysis indicated that the students in experimental group improved the writing skills gradually. Moreover, according to the latest products, these students did not make mistake as they had had. However, the study should have been better if further the researchers had had mentioned the attention of learners in group of experiment toward the feedback as well as the combination of grammar and vocabulary accuracy enhancement. Briefly, written collaborative feedback- one of the factors of collaborative writing contribute to the improvement of students' text quality.

Recently, Pham (2021) conducted a study to explore the effectiveness of the CW on learners' writing fluency, and he also investigated the framework for students to write an argumentative essay with group members. Sixty-two sophomore English majors at a university from Ho Chi Minh City took part in the study. The students were divided into two groups: the experiment and the control. The learners had to enroll in two prior subjects writing one and writing two, as an oblige before taking part in this course of writing three. The study was carried out with a similar lecturer, the materials, the teaching method, and the treatment. While twenty-seven students from the control group composed argumentative essays individually after making up the outline in a group, thirty-five learners in the experimental group wrote essays collaboratively. Through the data collected by pre-test, posttest, and interview, the authors drew the conclusion that collaborative writing helps students improve their writing fluency in terms of the length of the essay in fixed time with both collaborative and individual writers. Besides, the researcher also added that students joined in the writing process activity such as brainstorming, discussion, outlining, composing, and reviewing, which helped the lecturer organize the class. This finding was an invention for teachers of a framework to conduct classroom activity.

Moreover, the research argued that the learners had a positive attitude to CW, which motivated students in study as this method provides them opportunities to better the text and writing skills. Nevertheless, the study did not mention the group working skills that play an important role in collaborative writing. Moreover, the author pointed out that the disagreement in the group gave a chance to create a forum to argue and better critical thinking, yet the negative side or side effects still need further studying. Briefly, the study showed that CW affects writing fluency effectively, and it is a framework for lecturers to motivate students both in the classroom and outside academic institutions.

Discussion

The preceding mentioned articles imply the positive impact of CW on students' texts' quality in terms of accuracy, which is in line with the SCT (as cited in Peregoy & Boyle, 2001; VanPattern & Williams, 2014; Ranjbar & Ghonsooly, 2017) through the process of interaction. Nonetheless, the elementary grammar and vocabulary, which contribute to the accuracy hypothesis, remain unveiled. Even some studies stated CW greatly helps students improve grammar in writing (Shehadeh, 2011), others claimed that the component vocabulary of

students was enhanced by CW (Mohammed Hassan Al-Ahdal, 2021); the previous studies (Ranjbar & Ghonsooly, 2017; Kim & Emeliyanova, 2021; Pham, 2021) still did not fill the gap of whether the CW improve both vocabulary and grammar.

In the circumstance of the covid-19 pandemic, the interaction process among students and instructors in meeting class is affected because the speech of each individual has to be made alternatively for order guarantee. Nguyen et al. (2021) conducted a study to explore the factors having an impact on the quality of online learning. The authors advocated that the quality of this learning process is under the influence of internet connection as well as interrupted interaction. On the other hand, the effectiveness of online learning for collaborative studying was revealed negatively (Bui et al., 2021). However, the low computer skills and low internet connection led to the teammates' controversial issues. Nonetheless, the notion of integrating the technology suggested by Nguyen (2021) indicates that the framework of utilizing computer-based and other devices enhances learners' English competence outside the meeting class. This research is in line with the perspective of Tran (2021) that working in a group with social websites supports the interaction of students outside the classroom. For the mentioned research in this part, the writer considers the big picture of CW in online learning in the era of covid-19. Accordingly, further research should be considered to make things clear from thin air.

Conclusion

All things considered, by reviewing the theme theory SCT and its constructs in combination with other related articles, this paper tries to figure out whether CW affects writing accuracy. Although the precede mentioned papers revealed that CW had had an impact on the writing element related to writing accuracy, this paper's author suggests that further experimental research needs conducting in order that spotlight should be provided in the thin air. Nonetheless, CW under the setting of E-learning currently raises concern for scholars due to the fact that the communicative features, as well as patterns in this method, remain unveiled.

References

- Ansarimoghaddam, S., Tan, B. H., & Yong, M. F. (2017). Collaboratively Composing an Argumentative Essay : Wiki versus Face-to-face Interactions. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*, 17(2), 33–53. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17576/gema-2017-1702-03>
- Bui, T. X. T., Ha, Y. N., Nguyen, T. B. U., Nguyen, V. U. T., & Ngo, T. C. T. (2021). A Study on Collaborative Online Learning among EFL Students in Van Lang University (VLU). *AsiaCALL Online Journal*, 12(3), 9-21. Retrieved from <https://asiacall.info/acoj/index.php/journal/article/view/32>
- Burke, A. (2011). Group Work : How to Use Groups Effectively. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 11(2), 87–95.

- Csernica, J., Hanyak, M., Hyde, D., Shooter, S., Toole, M., & Vigeant, M. (2002). Practical Guide to Teamwork version 1.1. *College of Engineering, Bucknell University*.
- Davis, B. G. (1993). Tools for Teaching. *Jossey-Bass Inc, San Francisco: California*, 82–91.
- Elola, I., & Oskoz, A. (2010). Collaborative writing: Fostering foreign language and writing conventions development. *Language Learning and Technology*, 14(3), 51–71.
- Jelodar, Z. Y., & Farvardin, M. T. (2019). Effects of collaborative tasks on EFL learners' writing productions. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(1), 389–406. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ijj.2019.12126a>
- Kim, Y. J., & Emelivanova, L. (2021). The effects of written corrective feedback on the accuracy of L2 writing: Comparing collaborative and individual revision behavior. *Language Teaching Research*, 25(2), 234–255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168819831406>
- Lantolf, J. P., Thorne, S. L., & Poehner, M. E. (2006). Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning. In *Theories in Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction* (2nd ed., pp. 207–226). Routledge.
- Marginson, S., & Dang, T. K. A. (2017). Vygotsky's sociocultural theory in the context of globalization. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 37(1), 116–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2016.1216827>
- McDonough, K., De Vleeschauwer, J., & Crawford, W. J. (2019). Exploring the benefits of collaborative prewriting in a Thai EFL context. *Language Teaching Research*, 23(6), 685–701. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168818773525>
- Mohammed Hassan Al-Ahdal, A. A. (2021). MALL in Collaborative Learning as a Vocabulary-Enhancing Tool for EFL Learners: A Study across Two Universities in Saudi Arabia. *SAGE Open*, 11(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.31124/advance.10053137.v1>
- Tan, L. N., & Pham, V. P. H. (2021, March). Indications of Paired-vs. Grouped-Peer Feedback on Students' Writing Activities. In *17th International Conference of the Asia Association of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (AsiaCALL 2021)* (pp. 253-261). Atlantis Press. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210226.032>
- Nguyen, T. N. M., Tra, V. D., & Nguyen, P. H. (2021). Difficulties and some suggested solutions in studying online of the students in Van Lang University during the Covid-19 pandemic. *AsiaCALL Online Journal*, 12(4), 9-17. Retrieved from <https://asiacall.info/acoj/index.php/journal/article/view/58>
- Nguyen, V. M. (2021). English language-learning environments in COVID-19 era: EFL contexts, English-language environments, technology-based approach, English language learning. *AsiaCALL Online Journal*, 12(3), 39-46. Retrieved from <https://asiacall.info/acoj/index.php/journal/article/view/21>
- Peregoy, S. F., & Boyle, O. F. (2001). *Reading, Writing and Learning in ESL A Resource Book*

- for Teaching K-12 English Learners* (D. Lorenzo (ed.); 7th ed.). Pearson.
- Pham, V. P. H. (2021). The Effects of Collaborative Writing on Students' Writing Fluency: An Efficient Framework for Collaborative Writing. *SAGE Open*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244021998363>
- Ranjbar, N., & Ghonsooly, B. (2017). Peer scaffolding behaviors emerging in revising a written task: A microgenetic analysis. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 5(2), 75–90.
- Shehadeh, A. (2011). Effects and student perceptions of collaborative writing in L2. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 20(4), 286–305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2011.05.010>
- Storch, N., & Aldosari, A. (2013). Pairing learners in pair work activity. *Language teaching research*, 17(1), 31-48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168812457530>
- Storch, N. (2018). Written corrective feedback from sociocultural theoretical perspectives: A research agenda. *Language Teaching*, 51(2), 262–277. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444818000034>
- Tran, T. Q. (2021). Social Networking: A Collaborative Open Educational Resource. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 1(2), 148–157. Retrieved from <http://i-jte.org/index.php/journal/article/view/41>
- VanPattern, B., & Williams, J. (2014). *Theories in Second Language Acquisition: An Introduction* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Wright, R. E., & Lawson, H. A. (2005). Computer Mediated Communication and Student Learning in Large Introductory Sociology Classes. *Teaching Sociology*, 33(2), 122–135. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X0503300201>.
- Yan, L. (2019). A Study on WeChat-Based Collaborative Learning in College English Writing. *English Language Teaching*, 12(6), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v12n6p1>

Biodata

The author has experiences in instructing English for over ten years, now he is in phase of studying master degree at Dong Nai Technology university, Viet Nam. So far, the topic of collaborative writing as well as the effectiveness of MALL have stimulated the writer.