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The Effect of Online Collaborative Writing Practice on Students' Writing Autonomy and Skill Development: A Sociocultural Perspective

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Abstract: This study investigated the effect of online collaborative and peer-mediated writing practice on students' writing autonomy and skill development. Forty-five students from two high schools in Sowme'eh Sara, Guilan took part in this study. To obtain the required data, four instruments were utilized including a writing test, an autonomous writing questionnaire, a writing rubric, and WhatsApp social media software. There were two groups in this study i.e., an experimental group (Abbaspour High School=24) and a control group (Toulouee High School=24). Experimental group participants were divided into four sub-groups each having six homogenized and balanced members. Before the instructional phase, the researchers assigned a topic and asked them all to write an essay. Also, the autonomous writing questionnaire was run to measure learners' autonomy levels. During eight online sessions, the researchers taught them all how to write. They were asked to complete three writing tasks. The experimental group members were asked to do their assigned tasks through collaborative work. The control group members were asked to do their assigned tasks individually. At the end of the instructional phase, again, a parallel writing test and the same but reshuffled autonomous writing questionnaire was administered. The data analysis of this study revealed that implementing online collaborative writing practice has a statistically significant effect on students' writing autonomy and skill development. This study has some pedagogical implications for EFL teachers, EFL students, teacher educators, and teacher training program designers.

Key words: Collaboration, Collaborative Writing, Students' Writing Autonomy, Skill Development, and Sociocultural Theory.

1. Introduction

Embedded in the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky, the collaborative learning approach concerns the construction of meaning in a form of cooperative group problem-solving activities and idea-sharing practices among learners (Watanabe, 2008; Watanabe & Swain, 2007). Collaborative writing has the potential to improve learners' language skills generally and their writing skills particularly. Moreover, it can optimize learners' motivational status, negotiation effectiveness, practical communication ability, and critical thinking capability (Abdulaziz Alkhalaf, 2020).

Aiming to eliminate frustration and inject joy into the writing process for learners, teachers seek a more effective and applicable methodology for teaching writing. This frustration is rooted in the fact that writing skill is mistakenly conceptualized as a solitary learning activity and task and learners are supposed to do their job individually. The individualistic approach toward teaching and learning writing brings lots of blocking problems such as lacking ideas to write, the absence of enough pleasure for writing, and the unavailability of corrective feedback. It seems that as a socialistic practice, collaborative writing can relieve these problems (Oke, 2019).

Regarding the remarkable role of critical thinking ability in the occurrence of effective learning, the embedded discursive capability of group work in the collaborative writing process triggers learners' problem-solving ability and critical thinking prowess respectively. However, it can be said that collaborative writing practice has a noticeable potential to enhance learners' critical thinking ability (Veramuthu & Shah, 2020). Encouraging learners towards taking their learning responsibility i.e. becoming an autonomous language learner is an ideal and desired goal in language learning. Almost there is no doubt about the effectiveness of autonomous practice on language skills (Llaven-Nucamendi, 2014). Writing skill is not an exception. Thus, it can be constructive to consider autonomous writing practice in language teaching practice and

implementation.

Writing as an academic skill should be of great concern to Iranian teachers of English (Hamidi, Babajani Azizi, & Kazemian, 2022). Regarding the matter of writing skill in the Iranian EFL context, the most troublesome difficulty is students' unwillingness to write. In most cases, they are not ready to write whether psychologically or linguistically. They are not motivated enough to spend their time and effort on writing tasks especially when it is assigned out-of-class tasks or homework. Unfortunately, they usually plagiarized on internet-based resources to do their writing assignment. Another problematic issue is the dominant classroom practice in the Iranian EFL context in teaching writing skill where the product-oriented approaches are at work. The common problems that Iranian EFL learners deal with include difficulty in articulation and production of novel ideas, inappropriate use of vocabulary, unfamiliarity with appropriate collocations and phrasal verbs, and ignoring the use of punctuation and capitalization. In addition to these problems, the individualistic and competitive classroom culture of the majority of language teaching communities (i.e. public schools, language institutes, and centers) hinders students and learners to show their real potentiality and capabilities.

Given the significance of the writing skill and autonomous learning in TEFL and especially in the Iranian EFL context, this study aims to investigate the accountability of online collaborative writing and peer-mediated writing practice on students' writing autonomy and skill development. In the current study, the following research questions were raised.

RQ1: Does implementing online collaborative writing practice have any statistically significant effect on students' writing autonomy?

RQ2: Does implementing online collaborative writing practice have any statistically significant effect on students' writing skill development?

2. Review of the Related Literature

In the field of English language learning, student autonomy is broadly recognized as an important element of success. Autonomy means the learners' ability and desire to create and control their learning environment and take appropriate decisions in pursuing the goals of the learning process and keep them in progress. Accordingly, autonomous learners should be independent and in charge of all aspects of learning including the way of learning, the time of learning, and the amount of material to be learned in a specific period. However, autonomy does not mean self-study or self-access learning. Reasonably, it refers to the type of self-directed learning where the learners take charge of their learning, keep it on track, and evaluate its outcomes (Lee, 2016; Shehata, 2019).

Learner autonomy has the following three important characteristics. Firstly, learner autonomy refers to a language learner's attitude and motivation for learning. Language learner is willing to take an active attitude and motivation towards his/her language study and takes the initiative to be responsible for the study. Secondly, learner autonomy is viewed as capable of learning. Through learner training and teacher support, language learners can develop the capacity and learning strategies to learn independently. Last but not least, the development of learner autonomy cannot be accomplished without a supportive environment or context. Here environment includes the teacher's guidance, teaching and learning facilities, and learning materials and resources (Han, 2013, 2014; Shu & Zhuang, 2008).

The sociocultural theory of Vygotsky affects many educational disciplines in recent years. It causes a paradigm shift in teaching and learning by signifying the role and influence of the social context and environmental factors. There is no escape for the TEFL field from this investable change. Now, the social aspect of learning is undeniable. Theoretically, collaborative writing is grounded on the sociocultural theory which seeks to change the nature of the writing process from individualistic to social activity.

Online collaborative writing promotes cooperation among students and decreases the stress that they might feel as a result of individual exposure to teachers' criticism and judgment. Additionally, it encourages students to engage in peer revision and peer assessment in a democratic setting, with each one, feeling equally responsible for jointly producing a final product. Moreover, despite the seemingly limited role the teacher plays in this context, online collaborative writing gives the teacher an unparalleled chance to keep students' whole writing process under students' scrutiny (Warnock, 2015), and so it can act as a sound pedagogical device that assists in developing students' written proficiency in an indirect manner (Yang, 2017).

As an effective way to overcome the inherent difficulty in writing skill, collaborative writing practice can enhance the quality of students' work in a form of pair or group activities to construct the text. Group-work enjoyment and satisfaction allow the learners to generate and articulate new ideas, thoughts, and understandings. Also, it can facilitate students' learning through the provision of an anxiety-free learning environment where students are pleased to work collaboratively towards their shared objective i.e. qualitative piece of writing (Supiani, 2017). Collaborative writing brings learners the opportunity to participate in a meaningful exchange of knowledge and understanding. Consequently, the learners become confident enough to overcome their learning difficulties and problems (Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea, 2020). By working in groups, students enjoy more opportunities to see how their peers think and create new ideas. Moreover, discussion in a group can provide a less anxiety-producing context in which learners are likely to feel free to try out new ideas.

According to Supiani (2017), there are some elements of social and interactional conventions in the collaborative writing process. First, learners follow the idea of an in-group hierarchy of ordering for their learning goals where the higher-order goal precedes the lower-rank learning goal. Second, the existence of an information gap among the members forces them to negotiate their perceived meaning. Third, the nature of the cyclical transferring of thought, feeling, ideas, and beliefs among members empower their negotiation and in-group settlement abilities. Forth, the members have the opportunity to revise and modify their work many times and it enables them to apply various perspectives on the work under practice.

Collaborative learning, as Hsieh (2020) puts it, enables learners to interact mutually and intellectually on the sherd knowledge and meaning when they confront learning intact information. In constructing such an intellectual transport among learners some main societal elements are at work. These elements are including turn-taking on presenting ideas, equal responsibility for completion of task, error correction requirement, indentation representation about the work under practice, idea extension, and integration of knowledge and understanding towards a better solution for resolving learning problems. The purpose of collaborative writing does not only to produce the final product but also to construct meaning in collaboration to achieve a higher quality of the product. The revising and editing processes are a mutual relationship to the learning process. The most practical way teachers provide feedback on students' errors and monitoring them in working in a group (Shin, 2014).

3. Method

3.1. Participants

A convenience sampling methodology was used in this study. Forty-five students from two conventional public high schools (Abbaspour High School=24 and Toulouee High School=24) in Sowme'eh Sara, Guilan took part in this study. All the participants were studying Vision 2 book as an obligatory English course book in the second grade of high school. Regarding the ethical consideration, all of them were assured about their biographical information and research-driven data.

3.2. Instruments

Writing Test: It was used as pre and post-tests of the study. The researchers asked students to write a complete essay about an assigned topic with some technical requirements. Regarding the reliability of this test, the researchers piloted this test before the study administration. Twenty out-of-study samples were selected and asked to take the test. Then, the researchers calculated the reliability of the test data through the Cronbach Alpha formula and it was about 0.92.

Autonomous Writing Questionnaire: It was used as pre and post-tests of the study. Developed by Yeung (2016), it has 39 five-point Likert scale items intended to discover students' autonomy in learning writing based on the nine factors of learner autonomy in writing including self-directedness, motivation, degree of dependence on the teacher, seeking peer help, and feedback, revision, planning, direct strategies for learning writing, meta-cognitive strategies and knowledge, and social strategy use. Regarding the reliability of this test, the researchers piloted this test before the study administration. Twenty out-of-study samples were selected and asked to take the test. Then, the researchers calculated the reliability of the test data through the Cronbach Alpha formula and it was about 0.91.

Writing Rubric: It was used for rating students' writing tests for both pre and post-tests administration. It is a writing rating scale developed by the language assessment department of Michigan University (2019) that compiles six rating levels (0-5) with three main criteria for the test's requirements i.e., rhetoric, grammar, and vocabulary. Each element has some sub-criteria explaining the test quality.

WhatsApp Social Media Software: Launched in 2009, WhatsApp is one of the most popular social media apps. It's free to use, and the user can send messages, makes voice calls, and hosts video chats on both desktop and mobile devices. Also, it is very prevalent and user-friendly in Iran. Regarding these advantages, the researchers used it as a medium of instruction.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

There were two groups in this study i.e., an experimental group (Abbaspour High School=24) and a control group (Toulouee High School=24). Experimental group participants were divided into four sub-groups each having six homogenized and balanced members. Before the instructional phase, the researchers assigned a topic and asked them all to write an essay. Also, the autonomous writing questionnaire was run to measure learners' writing proficiency and autonomy level. During eight online sessions each last for one hour, the researchers taught them all how to write and gave them the required information about the intended topics. In addition, all the participants were asked to complete three writing tasks. In the first task, they received a picture sequencing task. They were expected to write a descriptive essay of about 100 words on the information provided. They should organize their writing around the sequences that the pictures present. The second task is

more demanding. They were supposed to write an argumentative essay on a given task. In this step, the unscrambled sequence of the pictures was presented to them and they have to write an essay with 150 words. Finally, the cognitive demand of the last task was higher than the previous task. They have just received a single picture about one part of the writing theme and some incomplete paragraphs. They should first complete the paragraphs, then, write critical writing about it. They should write other necessary paragraphs to meet the cohesion and coherence of the essay. The essay should have about 200 words. The experimental group members were asked to do their assigned tasks through collaborative work. They were expected to do their writing tasks as a group where all team members contributed to the content and the decisions about how the group will function. They should put their group-based efforts along with three-phase of writing including planning, drafting, and revising. The control group members were exposed to the conventional teaching practice of writing and asked to do their assigned tasks individually. At the end of the instructional phase, again, a parallel writing test and the same but reshuffled autonomous writing questionnaire was administered to measure learners' writing proficiency and autonomy level. The obtained data through administration of pre and post-tests of this study were analyzed with SPSS software to answer the research questions of this study.

4. Results

4.1. Analysis of the First Research Question

RQ_1: Does implementing online collaborative writing practice have any statistically significant effect on students' writing autonomy?

In order to answer this question, first, the descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' writing autonomy pre-test scores are presented in the following table.

Table 1

The Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Autonomy Pre-Test Scores

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Var	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Cntl	24	81	42	123	77.75	21.642	468.370	.292	.472	-.779	.918
Exp	24	58	44	102	66.63	17.759	315.375	.586	.472	-.842	.918

As can be seen in Table 1, the means of the control and experimental groups' pre-test scores are 77.75 and 66.63, respectively. Here, the mean for the experimental group is less than the control group but it needs to check whether this difference is significant or not? To do so, the calculation of the normality of datasets was required at first. In order to check the normality of the pre-test scores, the Shapiro-Wilk test was run by the researchers. The normality statistics for the pre-test scores are presented below.

Table 2

The Normality Statistics for the Writing Autonomy Pre-Test Scores

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Control	.973	24	.730
Experimental	.920	24	.059

As can be seen in Table 2, the sig value of the pre-test scores are 0.730 and 0.059 and both are more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that the scores are normally distributed. Since the pre-test scores are normally distributed, the researchers used a parametric test i.e., Independent Sample T-test (because two sets of scores belonged to two different groups). Before presenting inferential statistics, it needs to be checked the homogeneity of variances through the Levene test in order to find which row of the sig value should take into account. The following table presents the Levene test's statistics.

Table 3

Levene Test's Statistics for the Writing Autonomy Pre-Test Scores

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.403	1	46	.529

As can be seen in Table 3, the sig value is 0.529 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that two variances are supposed to be equal. However, the sig value in the first row of the inferential statistics table appropriates for interpretation of the result. In Table 4 below, the inferential statistics for the writing autonomy pre-test scores are presented.

Table 4
The Inferential Statistics for the Writing Autonomy Pre-Test's Scores

Writing Autonomy Pre-Test	t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.981	46	.332	6.583	6.713	-6.930	20.097
Equal variances not assumed	.981	45.189	.332	6.583	6.713	-6.936	20.103

As can be seen in Table 4, the sig value is 0.332 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that the means difference is not statistically significant. To continue the analysis of the first research question, next, the descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' writing autonomy post-test scores are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5
The Descriptive Statistics for the Writing Autonomy Post-Test Scores

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Var	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Cntl	24	69	51	120	85.13	21.243	451.245	.133	.472	-1.125	.918
Exp	24	54	42	96	65.46	15.773	248.781	.575	.472	-.829	.918

As can be seen in Table 5, the means of the control and experimental groups' post-test scores are 85.13 and 65.46, respectively. Here, the mean for the experimental group is less than the control group but it needs to check whether this difference is significant or not? To do so, the calculation of the normality of datasets was required. To check the normality of the post-test scores, the Shapiro-Wilk test was run by the researchers. The normality statistics for the post-test scores are presented in table 6 below.

Table 6
The Normality Statistics for the Writing Autonomy Post-Test Scores

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Control	.956	24	.361
Experimental	.920	24	.060

As can be seen in Table 6, the sig value of the post-test scores are 0.361 and 0.060 and both are more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that the scores are normally distributed. Since the pre-test scores are normally distributed, the researchers used a parametric test i.e., Independent Sample T-test. Before presenting inferential statistics, we need to check the homogeneity of variances through the Levene test to specify which row of the sig value should take into account. The following table presents the Levene test's statistics.

Table 7
Levene Test's Statistics for the Writing Autonomy Post-Test Scores

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.017	1	46	.898

As can be seen in Table 7, the sig value is 0.898 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that two variances are supposed to be equal. So, the sig value in the first row of the inferential statistics is taken into account for interpretation. The following table presents the inferential statistics for the writing autonomy post-test scores.

Table 8
The Inferential Statistics for the Writing Autonomy Post-Test Scores

Writing Autonomy Post-Test	t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	2.350	46	.023	14.875	6.329	2.136	27.614
Equal variances not assumed	2.350	45.829	.023	14.875	6.329	2.135	27.615

Regarding Table 4, the sig value is 0.023 and it is less than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that the means difference is statistically significant. Thus, it can be said that implementing online collaborative writing practice has a statistically significant effect on students' writing autonomy development.

4.2. Analysis of the Second Research Question

RQ2: Does implementing online collaborative writing practice have any statistically significant effect on students' writing skill development?

In order to answer this question, first, the descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' essay pre-test scores are presented in the following table.

Table 9

The Descriptive Statistics for the Essay Pre-Test Scores

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Var	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Cntl	24	9	3	12	6.25	2.541	6.457	.544	.472	-.588	.918
Exp	24	8	3	11	6.50	2.265	5.130	.294	.472	-.772	.918

As can be seen in Table 9, the means of the control and experimental groups' pre-test scores are 6.25 and 6.50, respectively. Here, the mean for the experimental group is more than the control group but it needs to check whether this difference is significant or not? To do so, the calculation of the normality of datasets was required at first. In order to check the normality of the pre-test scores, the Shapiro-Wilk test was run by the researchers. The normality statistics for the pre-test scores are presented below.

Table 10

The Normality Statistics for the Essay Pre-Test Scores

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Control	.933	24	.115
Experimental	.960	24	.429

As can be seen in Table 10, the sig value of the pre-test scores are 0.115 and 0.429 and both are more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that the scores are normally distributed. Since the pre-test scores are normally distributed, the researchers used a parametric test i.e., Independent Sample T-test. Before presenting inferential statistics, we need to check the homogeneity of variances through the Levene test in order to find which row of the sig value should take into account. The following table presents the Levene test's statistics.

Table 11

Levene Test's Statistics for the Essay Pre-Test Scores

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.468	1	46	.497

As can be seen in Table 11, the sig value is 0.497 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that two variances are supposed to be equal. However, the sig value in the first row of the inferential statistics table appropriates for interpretation of the result. In Table 12 below, the inferential statistics for the pre-test scores are presented.

Table 12

The Inferential Statistics for the Essay Pre-Test's Scores

Essay Pre-Test	t-test for Equality of Means						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	-.360	46	.721	-.250	.695	-1.649	1.149
Equal variances not assumed	-.360	45.405	.721	-.250	.695	-1.649	1.149

The sig value is 0.721, and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that the means difference is not statistically significant. To continue the analysis of the second research question, next, the descriptive statistics for the control and experimental groups' essay post-test scores are presented in Table 13 below.

Table 13
The Descriptive Statistics for the Essay Post-Test Scores

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Var	Skewness		Kurtosis	
Cntl	24	8	5	13	9.17	2.334	5.449	-.197	.472	-.681	.918
Exp	24	6	4	10	6.33	1.736	3.014	.578	.472	-.599	.918

As can be seen in Table 13, the means of the control and experimental groups' post-test scores are 9.17 and 6.33, respectively. Here, the mean for the experimental group is less than the control group, but it needs to be checked whether this difference is significant or not? To do so, the calculation of the normality of datasets was required. To check the normality of the post-test scores, the Shapiro-Wilk test was run by the researchers. The normality statistics for the post-test scores are presented in the following table.

Table 14
The Normality Statistics for the Essay Post-Test Scores

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Control	.959	24	.416
Experimental	.918	24	.053

As can be seen in Table 14, the sig value of the post-test scores are 0416 and 0.053 and both are more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that the scores are normally distributed. Since the pre-test scores are normally distributed, the researchers used a parametric test i.e., Independent Sample T-test. Before presenting inferential statistics, we need to check the homogeneity of variances through the Levene test to specify which row of the sig value should take into account. The following table presents the Levene test's statistics.

Table 15
Levene Test's Statistics for the Essay Post-Test Scores

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.118	1	46	.733

As can be seen in Table 15, the sig value is 0.733 and it is more than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that two variances are supposed to be equal. So, the sig value in the first row of the inferential statistics is taken into account for interpretation. The following table presents the inferential statistics for the essay post-test scores.

Table 16
The Inferential Statistics for the Essay Post-Test's Scores

Writing Autonomy Post-Test	t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	4.036	46	.000	2.542	.630	1.274	3.809
Equal variances not assumed	4.036	45.055	.000	2.542	.630	1.273	3.810

Regarding Table 16, the sig value is 0.000 and it is less than the critical value i.e., 0.05. It means that the means difference is statistically significant. Thus, it can be said that implementing online collaborative writing practice has a statistically significant effect on students' writing skill development.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The data analysis of this study revealed that implementing online collaborative writing practice has a statistically significant effect on students' writing autonomy and skill development. The first finding of this study was that online collaborative writing practice had a constructive effect on students' writing autonomy development. Regarding the first finding of the study, it can be said that students' self-esteem and self-confidence are considered determining factors to construct autonomous performance. Having the same result of this study, Wang's (2010) investigation of the cooperative learning effect on students' autonomy highlights the role of psychological readiness of students in their attempts to be autonomous learners. The study confirms the idea that cooperative learning enhances self-esteem and self-confidence, increases motivation, encourages students' responsibility for learning, enhances self-management skills, and supports language students to move from interdependence to independence. In addition, students' motivational readiness could be another element to build stu-

dents' autonomous learning performance.

Considering the writing skill, students' engagement in group dialogues is motivating because students not only share their loads with colleagues but also make their own decisions in groups. Therefore, being both a member of a group and a separate identity at the same time increased students' motivation during all writing stages throughout the modules (Shakra, 2013). During dialogues with peers, students gain awareness of weaknesses and correct their own mistakes. Because of gaining self-correction and awareness, students become motivated in writing (Murray, 2014). This motivation can magnify students' desire to construct their own meaning about a given task or activity and gradually increases their responsibility for learning. Thus, it enables them to be more autonomous in their writing performance. On the other hand, students' engagement in collaborative writing practice provides an opportunity for them to write as part of a community whereby support and guidance can be obtained from one another. Here, dialogic collaborative feedback is also at work to enable students to respect their own generated meaning (Sun & Chang, 2012). It increased their self-reliance and self-confidence in learning and it generates more autonomous writing performance and outcomes respectively.

Regarding the second finding of this study, collaborative practice places students at the center of the learning process and promotes their genuine involvement helping them to foster interaction and knowledge co-construction (Fujiwara & Sato, 2015). It also offers ample opportunities for genuine negotiation of meaning among students in a constructive and qualitative manner (Swain & Watanabe, 2012). This negotiated meaning enables students to show their higher level of potential in writing with more confidence. Therefore, this increasing confidence motivates them to put more effort and willingness to write and it allows them to release their own unique writing style. Thus, it can be said that practicing collaborative writing reconstructs students' writing identity helping them to write in a more rigorous and qualitative way. This idea reflects in Villarreal and Gil-Sarratea's (2020) point of view on collaborative writing effectiveness. According to Villarreal and Gil-Sarratea (2020), "collaboration resulted in texts which were more accurate and of better quality on holistic measures of content, structure, and organization of ideas, although limited or no gains were observed for complexity and fluency" (p. 17).

This study focused on students' writing autonomy and skill development through implementing online collaborative writing practice. As writing is an information-sharing process employing which learners can shape their opinions based on the comments of others (Chu & Kennedy, 2011), online collaborative writing can provide an opportunity for students to exchange their ideas and views in a friendlier and less anxious way (Bikowski & Vithanage, 2016).

The chance to write in a group or pairs will motivate students and make students joyful to learn how to write well (Supiani, 2017). So, it is really helpful and useful to be implemented by teachers to develop students' thoughts and arguments. Through practicing collaborative writing, students feel more self-confident to learn autonomously by expressing their ideas freely (Yang, 2017). It encourages them to compose an essay in which they may initially be afraid to make errors. Furthermore, this technique can also be set to increase the students' motivation in writing (Hsieh, 2020).

The concepts of autonomy and independence play an increasingly important role in language education. The major concerns here are issues such as learners' responsibility for their own learning, their right to determine the direction of their own learning, the skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning, and the capacity for independent learning (Llaven-Nucamendi, 2014). Students may attain a higher level of autonomy when they are engaged in collaborative learning practice (Lee, 2016).

The researchers recommended that language students need to be encouraged to work together to achieve higher levels of autonomy in writing. Also, it is obvious that language teachers need to become more familiar with the collaborative writing process and practice to maximize their students' writing autonomy and performance quality. It is worth saying that the first step toward such a teaching reform is the familiarity with autonomous teaching/learning practice among language teachers themselves.

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