

A Review on Collaborative Method - A Learner-Centric Approach to Enhance Writing Skills

¹ Jefferson K, ² Ramya Sri R, ³ Prof. Radhakrishnan V

¹Assistant Professor/Research Scholar, ²Assistant Professor/ Research Scholar, ³Principal

¹Department of English,

¹Kongu Engineering College (Autonomous), Perundurai, Erode, Tamil Nadu, India 638 060.

K S Rangasamy College of Arts & Science, (Autonomous) Affiliated to Periyar University,
Tiruchengode, Tamilnadu, India.

Email – ¹jeffersonkrish@gmail.com, ²rrsri_06@yahoo.com, ³radkrish25@gmail.com

Abstract: *In the teaching of second language, the need for the hour is a shift from the traditional teaching style to a learner-centric approach to enhance the proficiency of the learners. The paper aims to explore the impacts of learner-centric approach in developing the language expertise of ELLs. Peer group activity-based learning could serve as an important factor to develop language usage. Peer learning will make the students actively participate in discussions and debate to solve a particular problem and also it will eradicate the idle learning ambience and create an active learning environment. In this learner-centric classroom teacher becomes simply a facilitator, trainer, and mentor for the learners. Active learner engagement and peer group validation are the major benefits of the learner-centered approach.*

Key Words: *English Language teaching, Communicative language Teaching, Professional development, Material Production*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Writing is one of the most challenging areas of learning a second language. It is a complex, multifaceted and purposeful act of communication that is to be achieved in different situations. Also, it is an essential tool for every individual because it's also a communicative task like speaking. Hochman (2017) says writing is "a transcription process, demonstration of knowledge, communication tool, and learning tool." In general writing can be classified into three as basic, proficient and advanced. The first one denotes the partial mastery of fundamental required skills and knowledge to become proficient, the second one is based on the academic performance of a learner and the last is advanced one shows the superior performance. In addition to that, there are some varieties of writing as argumentative, informative, narratives, and research. In any language speaking and writing come under productive skills and in which a learner's task is to turn out sentences to extend communication that is clearly replicate as "Writing is based on appropriate and strategic use of language with structural accuracy and communicative potential" Structural accuracy and communicative potential are the prime factors of strategic and appropriate use of language in Writing (Dar & Khan, 2015; Hyland, 2003; Mahboob, 2014). Moreover, the contribution of English language has become a prominent one in the selection process of various companies. In India only half of the engineers obtain a job and others don't get due to lack of communicative proficiency both in writing and speaking. This study aims at deliberating more on the ideas of promoting writing skills and it's sub-skills like mechanics of writing, organization, syntax, grammar, context and the writing process that are required for an engineer to furnish the writing skills along with the assist of collaborative learning method.

1.1. SIGNIFICANCE OF WRITING FOR ENGINEERS:

Most of the engineers need to work for some foreign companies so they require a common language like English for their official communication. Besides, an engineer has to communicate with scientists, technologists and business experts from other countries who are from different cultural and linguistic boundaries. English is indispensable to maintain good rapport and also it is an operational language for the engineers. Writing is a required skill for every engineer in a professional ambience and they are expected to write e-mails, covering letters, company profiles, reports, articles, and projects for their better professional development. The inherent acquisition is important for writing because it is a pre-requisite skill for the Engineer's profession. Professional organizations should have a good connection among other organizations, as a result, it is one of the significant skills that have to be enriched by the learners to meet up the present needs of the industries. So, English plays a prominent role both in academic life and in the professional life of engineering graduates.

2. PROBLEMS AND SUITABLE METHOD FOR WRITING:

According to Kannan (2009:2), "students learn basic grammar at the school level to pass only in the tests and in the examinations and not to face any real-life situations. Application-oriented advanced grammar is not taught in schools". Common problems faced by tertiary level students of engineering colleges are grammatical errors, spelling errors, sentence formation, lack of vocabulary knowledge, using irrelevant tense, incoherent paragraph, inappropriate word usage and lack of practice that made the students' writing knowledge to be futile and in vain. They are unable to produce proper sentences in most of the engineering colleges because of the conventional teaching method in which the English language is being taught as a subject rather than a language their school days. Because of traditional teaching, the learners are incapable of employing ideas in their writing tasks in an apt way and it also affects the cognitive learning ability. Kellogg (2001) says that writing- a cognitive process is to test memory, thinking ability and verbal command and a proficient composition is an indication of successful learning of a second language. (Geiser & Studley, 2002; Hyland, 2003; McCutchen, 1984; Nicker-son, Perkins, & Smith, 2014). These issues are to be rectified with the help of a collaborative method which can assist the learners to enhance their writing tasks with real-time contextual activities and in addition it also enhances the cognitive knowledge of the learners.

3. COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND ITS BENEFITS:

Collaborative writing refers to the process which provides the participants the opportunity to explore, discuss, cooperate and develop learning capabilities (Dobao, 2012; Heidar, 2016; Noël & Robert, 2004). Vygotsky argued that "development comes through social interaction; consciousness and cognition are the end product of socialization and social behavior" (Heidar, 2016). Learning, according to Kenneth A. Bruffee, is definitely active and interactive. The teacher is not an actor who performs as students watch, but is instead a director who creates "conditions in which learning can occur" (Bruffee 8). Similar to Bruffee's opinion, every teacher should create a learning ambience for the learners and inside the classroom by using the collaborative learning method. In this method groups of students working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product. According to Gerlach, Collaborative Learning is naturally a social act in which the participants talk among themselves (Gerlach, 1994). It is through the talk that learning occurs." From Gerlach opinion, peer group learning, interactive and active learning, fearless learning, achievable and productive learning are obviously perceived through this method. So that it becomes entirely a shift in the teaching-learning process because the collaborative learning method made a paradigm shift from conventional classroom lecture mode to an activity-based learner-centric mode of teaching.

Round table, jigsaw and concept mapping are some of the techniques of collaborative learning and that will facilitate the writing skills of heterogeneous learners. The Round Table technique will generate a good mental rapport among the learners. The learners are divided into groups and the teacher will provide each group with a topic. One of the students will start writing his/her views on the given topic and after two minutes the paper goes to the next person to write and finally, it reaches the first person who initiated the task. The learner has to summarize the whole content of the provided topic to the group. Jigsaw is another technique in which learners can practice, acquire and present new material. In this technique, learners are expected to be familiar with the given topic. Next learners are expected to teach the group mates by turn-taking and writing learners are asked to write a paragraph on the discussed topic. It automatically enhances one's writing skill because of the good practice, acquisition of the topic and leads to a perfect written presentation. The final technique is about concept mapping in which learners can understand how to write a paragraph in an organized manner with the help of mind mapping techniques. This will help the learners to understand the concept by collaborative learning method and it paves a platform to organize the ideas into a coherent paragraph. The benefits of the discussed techniques in developing the target language are tremendous which promotes the usage of error-free language in writing among the learners. Enhancement of using accurate vocabulary in an appropriate context, spelling, sentence construction, coherence, organization, and ideas are the major outcomes of the collaborative learning by using those three techniques. In addition to that, learners are free from stress to learn, able to produce correct sentences because of their peer groups support, interact and act towards the target language use in real circumstances.

4. CONCLUSION:

The objective of the study is to improve the writing skills of the engineers in a professional environment. It is ultimately achieved with the help of the various techniques of the collaborative learning method. The chosen method is suitable to enhance writing skills and that also facilitates a way to the inherent learning experience of the learners to exploit the language from different perspectives.

REFERENCES:

1. Hochman, Judith C., and Natalie Wexler. (2017) *The writing revolution: A guide to advancing thinking through writing in all subjects and grades*. John Wiley & Sons.

2. Dar, M. F., & Khan, I. (2015). Writing Anxiety among Public and Private Sectors Pakistani Undergraduate
3. University Students. *Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies*, 10 (1), 121-136. Hyland, K. (2003). Second Language Writing. Ernst Klett Sprachen.
4. Mahboob, A. (2014). Epilogue: Understanding language variation: Implications for eil Pedagogy. *Springer*, Switzerland.
5. Kannan, R. (2009). Difficulties in Learning English as a Second Language. *ESP World*, www.esp-world.info, Issue 5 (26), Volume 8.
6. Kellogg, R. T. (2001). Long-term Working Memory in Text Production. *Memory & cognition*, 29 (1), 43{52.
7. Geiser, S., & Studley, w. R. (2002). Uc and the sat: Predictive Validity and Differential impact of the SAT I and SAT II at the University of California. *Educational Assessment*, 8 (1), 1{26}.
8. McCutchen, D. (1984). Writing as a Linguistic Problem. *Educational Psychologist* , 19 (4), 226-238.
9. Nickerson, R. S., Perkins, D. N., & Smith, E. E. (2014). The Teaching of Thinking. *Rout-ledge*, United Kingdom.
10. Heidar, D. M. (2016). ZPD-assisted Intervention via Web 2.0 and Listening Comprehension Ability. *English for Specific Purposes World*, 17(4), 1–17.
11. Dobao, A. F. (2012). Collaborative writing tasks in the L2 classroom: Comparing group, pair, and individual work. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 21(1), 40–58.
12. Noël, S., & Robert, J. M. (2004). Empirical study on collaborative writing: What do co-authors do, use, and like? *Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 13(1), 63-89.
13. Bruffee, Kenneth A. *A Shorf Course in Writing*. Boston: Little Brown, 1985.
14. Gerlach, J. M. (1994). "Is this collaboration?" In Bosworth, K. and Hamilton, S. J. (Eds.), *Collaborative Learning: Underlying Processes and Effective Techniques*, New Directions for Teaching and Learning No. 59.