Has the trend of students working in groups produced real collaboration? A study based on web-related collaborative writing among second language learners

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Has the trend of students working in groups produced real collaboration? This has been a question raised over the years in second language classrooms. In fact, collaborative practices are being increasingly used in these learning settings. The rapid evolution of communication technologies has changed second language learning modes, enabling new forms of classroom interaction, and new ways to participate in learning situations. With new technologies available, learners can work more easily in groups of four or more, simultaneously. Also, new technologies allow researchers insight into the second language collaborative learning process.

This study investigates the effectiveness of web-based collaborative writing assignments. The purpose of this study is to explore the changing nature of collaborative writing, and how it is influenced by web-based writing contexts. Twenty students in the first year BAMS program of the Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute of the University of Kelaniya, and BA program of the Buddhist and Pali University, who learn English as a second language participated in this study. These subjects were asked to use a web-based word processing tool to collaboratively plan and report on a given written assignment.

Group collaborative texts produced by these students in Google Docs will be analyzed to determine different patterns emerging from students' collaborative writing behavior within web-based word processing. The contribution to the web-based word processing document by each student will be categorized based on the revision activity. Such contributions will be viewed in terms of language- based revision and content-based revision.

Keywords: Second Language, Collaborative Writing, Web-based Activities