In the Name of God

Razi University

Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Department of English Language and Literature

M.A. Thesis

Title of the Thesis:

The Viewpoints of Iranian MA TEFL Students and Researchers about Collaborative Paper Writing

Supervisor:

Dr. Nouroddin Yousofi

Advisor:

Dr. Ferdos Jamali

By:

Nayere Neemati

September 2013

Acknowledgement

My Thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people.

First and foremost, I would like to thank to my supervisor, Dr. Yousofi for his valuable guidance, useful comments, remarks, and engagement through the whole process of this master thesis. Despite the occupational involvement, his insightful feedback on my work has never been delayed.

Besides, I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor, dear Dr. Jamali, who helped me narrow the topics of my thesis and edit my research questions before starting the project. Also she replied to my email at once.

Furthermore, I wish to extend my regards to other members of my thesis committee for their effective and wise suggestions.

I also take this opportunity to express a deep sense of gratitude to the participants of this study who have willingly shared their precious time during the process of filling out such a time-consuming questionnaire. Moreover, their wise and comprehensive responses gave the study some valuable information and guidance, which helped me in completing this task through various stages.

In addition, I would like to thank my beloved, who have supported me throughout entire process, both by keeping me harmonious and helping me putting pieces together. I will be grateful forever for his love.

Here I express my special thanks also to my friends, Miss Hooshangi, Vakili, Shurideh, Esmaili, Asadi and Mr. Hesami for invaluable assistance.

Last but not least, I mostly grateful to my beloved family for their endless love and encouragement, without which this thesis would not be possible.

Dedicated to:

My Family

Abstract

Writing academically has been introduced as a norm or discipline in postgraduate education. To know how to write an academic document, especially a paper, special competencies are required. Knowing this importance, in addition to the fewest studies which had been carried out on collaborative paper writing in the field of TEFL, especially in the context of Iran, this study attempted to offer collaborative paper writing as a solution to MA students and researchers academic writing problem. Introducing co-authoring as a solution, the researcher investigates the MA students and researchers' viewpoints on collaborative paper writing first. Then, the researcher compared their viewpoints with each other in order to find out the differences that might be existed between both groups' viewpoints. Moreover, she examined whether a significant correlation is existed between participants' increasing experiences and expertise and their viewpoints or not. Afterwards, the nature of participants' experiences that they have obtained during their collaboration has been identified.

A descriptive quantitative study was designed to fulfill the aims of this study. In this regard, seventy TEFL MA students (35) and researchers (35), filled out a three-part questionnaire adopted from Noel, & Robert, (2004) and Mei Fung, (2006). Twenty filled questionnaires were obtained via the Email and fifty from the hard copies, which were exclusively distributed among the academics and MA students of Razi University, Shiraz University, Azad University of Shiraz and Fars University of Science and Technology.

To analyze the data obtained from participants, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Moreover, some detailed information about the participants' experiences were extracted from their responses to the open-ended questions in part two of the questionnaire. The results of data analysis then showed that both groups had positive viewpoints on collaborative paper writing or co-authoring. Also no differences were displayed between groups' viewpoint towards the issue. This led the study to conclude that there was also no correlation between participants' increasing experiences and expertise and their viewpoints towards co-authoring. In addition, some key issues, including socio-affective environment, brainstorming ideas, conflicts, role assigning, group learning, final goal, and authorship as advantages and disadvantages of co-authoring were identified after analyzing the participants' experiences during collaborative paper writing.

Using collaborative paper writing as a strategy to upgrade students' writing skill is a suggestion to material developers, curriculum designers, instructors, university

administers, concerning about educational output of postgraduate university students. This is also introduced as an offer of help and support for MA students and researchers. That is, they could take advantage of group writing, including members' different competency, talent, knowledge, skills, and experiences to produce a high quality manuscript.

Key words: Collaborative writing, Paper writing, MA TEFL students

Table of Contents

Title **Page** No.

List of Figures ……..……E
List of Graph……..F
List of Tables ……G

Chapter 1:
Introduction…….……...1
1.1. Overview…….…..2
1.2 .Statement of Problem…….…….…….....2
1.3. Purpose of the Study…….……....4
1.4. Research Questions and Null Hypotheses.……...…….4
1.5. Participants…….…….....5
1.6 Significance of the Study ….…….....……..……....5
1.7. Data Collection Procedure…….……...…....6
1.8. Data Analysis…….……..…....6
1.9. Key Words…….…..…….…....7
1.9.1. Collaborative Writing……..……..7
1.9.2. Coauthoring……7
1.10. The Organization of the Study ……..…….....7

Chapter 2:
Review of Literature……..8
2.1. Overview……...……...…....9
2.2. Definition of Collaborative Writing…….....9
2.2.1. Definitions of Coauthoring…….……...…11
2.2.2. Strategies and Organizational Patterns of Coauthoring….……..13
2.2.3. Common Activities and Roles of CW…….…….16
2.2.4. Features of CW…….18
2.2.4.1. Mutual Interaction……..…..…….19

2.2.4.2. Negotiation…….....19
2.2.4.3. Cognitive Conflicts……..…….……20
2.2.4.4. Sharing of Expertise…….……20
2.2.4.5. Affective Factors……..……21
2.2.4.6. Use of L1……..……21
2.2.4.7. Backtracking…….……21
2.2.4.8. Humor……..…….……21
2.3. Individual Writing vs. CW…….…….....……..….....22
2.4. Theoretical Background of CW…….……..24
2.4.1. Socio-Cultural and Social Constructivism……..…….…….25
2.4.2. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)…….26
2.5. The Role of English in Academic Paper Writing…….……...27
2.6. MA Students and Academic Paper Writing…….……...28
2.7. The Experimental Research Studies of CW……..….……30
2.7.1. Research Studies on Interaction…….…….…..…….....31
2.7.2. Research Studies on Conflicts and Disagreement……..……...33
2.7.3. Research Studies on Idea Development…..……..….34
2.7.4. Research Studies on ZPD……..35
2.7.5. Research Studies on Grammatical Accuracy and Quality of Writing…..37
2.7.6. Research Studies on Attitudes towards CW……...…….....38
2.7.7. Research Studies on Usage of CW System…….……...39
2.7.8. Research Studies on CW in the Context of Iran……..…..41

Chapter 3:
Methodology……..…….…….…….....43
3.1. Overview……...…….…….…….....44
3.2. Research Question……..…….……44
3.3. Research Design……..……...…….…….....45
3.4. Instruments…….……..……..…….....45
3.4.1. Part One……..46

3.4.2. Part Two……..…….……..……..46
3.4.2.1. Modification…….……....48
3.4.3. Part Three……..…….……...……49
3.4.4. Limitation of the Instrument……..……...52
3.5. Participants……..…….…….…..……52
3.6. Data collection Procedures……..….…….……..53
3.7. Data analysis……..….…….....53

Chapter 4:
Data Analysis and Result…….…….……..…..……....54
4.1. Overview…….…….…….…….....55
4.2. Research Questions and Null hypothesis……...…….……..……..…....55
4.2.1. Research Question 1….……..……..……..56
4.2.2. Research Question 2……..…….....61
4.2.3. Research Question 3…….……..…….……..…....65
4.2.3.1. Investigating the First Null Hypothesis….…….…....65
4.2.3.2. Investigating the Second Null Hypothesis……..…67
4.2.3.3. Investigating the Third Research Question…….…..…..…68
4.2.4. Research Question 4…….…….…….…...……68
4.2.4.1. Demographic Information……68
4.2.4.2. Short Answer Question……..…….....70
4.2.4.3. Binary Question…….……....72
4.2.4.4. Multiple-Choices Answer…….……....73
4.2.4.5. Seven Likert Scale Question……...74
4.2.4.6. Open- ended Question……...76
4.2.4.6.1. Reasons for Participating in a Project……....76
4.2.4.6.2. Problem during the Project……....76
4.2.4.6.3. Advantages and Disadvantages of CW……..…77
4.2.4.6.4. Productive Stage…….…….…….…..78
4.2.4.6.5. Sense of Ownership…….…….……78
4.2.4.6.6. Advice to Others…….……..……..78

Chapter 5:
Discussion and Conclusion.…….…….……..…….....80

5.1. Overview……...…….…….…..……...……..…....81
5.2. General Summary……81
5.3. Discussion of the First Question…….…….……..…….....82
5.4. Discussion of the Second Question….…….…….....84
5.5. Discussion of the Third Question……..……..86
5.6. Discussion of the Fourth Question……..……..…….….87
5.7. Key Issues……..……....……..90
5.7.1. Socio-Affective Environment…….……..…..……..…..90
5.7.2. Brainstorming Ideas……..…...91
5.7.3. Conflicts…….……..…..….…….92
5.7.4. Role Assigning…….……..…….…….93
5.7.5. Group Learning……..…….……..…….....94
5.7.6. Final goal……..…….....95
5.7.7. Authorship……..…….....96
5.8. Theoretical Implications……..…….…..….97
5.9. Pedagogical Implications……..…….…….97
5.10. Limitations…….……....99
5.11. Suggestions for Further Research…….…….….……...99

References ……..…….……..…….……...101
Appendices……..…….…..……108

List of figures

Title **Page No.**

Figure 2.1. Single Author Writing…….....13
Figure 2.2. Sequential Writing…….……..…..…….……..14
Figure 2.3. Parallel Writing…….……..….....14
Figure 2.4. Reactive Writing……..…..…….…...15
Figure 4.1. Hypothesis Test Summary……...…..……..…….……...67
Figure 5.1. ZPD……..…….....94

List of Graph

Title **Page No.**

Graph 4.1. General Attitudes of MA Students…….……60
Graph 4.2. General Attitudes of Researchers…….……...64
Graph 4.3. Comparison of both Groups General viewpoints…….……..66

List of Tables

Title **Page No.**

Table 2.1. Key Collaborative Writing..... 12
Table 2.2. The Common Activities of CW……..……...…....17
Table 2.3. Collaborative Writing Roles…….…….…….…….18
Table 3.1. Omitted Questions……..…….…….…….……...49
Table 3.2. Modification of Original Questionnaire by Mei Fung (2006)……..……...51
Table 4.1. MA Students' Collaborative Paper Writing Attitudes…….…….…...57
Table 4.2. General Attitudes of MA Students towards CW……...……..60
Table 4.3. Researchers' Collaborative Paper Writing Attitudes……..……..…...61
Table 4.4. General Attitudes of Researchers towards CW…….…..……...……..64
Table 4.5. General Attitudes of MA Students and Researchers……...……65
Table 4.6. T-Test for Equality of Mean Score……..……...67
Table 4.7. General Mean Score of Job, Number of Paper, and Age……....69
Table 4.8. Job Mean Score…….……..…….....69
Table 4.9. Number of Papers' Mean Score…….……..…….....69
Table 4.10. Age Mean Score…….……..…….....69
Table 4.11. Methods of Communicating during Collaboration……..……..……..71
Table 4.12. Reasons for Using each Method of Communicating…….……...72
Table 4.13. Participants' Satisfaction towards each Aspects of CW……..……..74
Table 4.14. Spearman rho for Showing the Correlation Different Aspects of CW' Satisfaction……..…….75

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Overview

This chapter presents the statement of the problem why the researcher chose this topic for investigation. After identifying the reasons and the purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses are determined. Then, a brief description about the significance of the study, the participants, methodology of the study, instruments, and data analysis procedures are stated. Finally, the key words and the organization of the study are represented.

1.2. Statement of Problem

Writing an article and publishing, in higher education is a norm or a kind of literacy for higher education students. This important fact leads learners to improve their writing skills and styles. The learners during their academic education learn how to write academically and how to improve their writing style. Moreover, they attempt to create a perfect work by using the knowledge they have acquired in the related courses. Irvin (2010) argues, "As a new college student, you may have a lot of anxiety and questions about the writing you'll do in college" (p. 3). He believes that writing is hard, and writing in college may be similar to playing a familiar game by completely new rules. In addition, most people as they start college, they have vague or no clear idea at all.

On one hand, this may happen when students have not been taught how to write academic papers accurately and stylistically, and their writing obstacles have never been eliminated during the BA level of study. Singleton, Jackson and Lumsden (2009) have noted a "marked paucity in the research literature" on the writing proficiency of graduate students. It appears that master's-level instructors assume that graduate students already possess writing skills (Singleton-Jackson & Lumsden 2009) and that if they do not, it is their own fault, or it is somebody else's responsibility to teach them these skills (Gunn, Hearne & Sibthorpe 2011).

On the other hand, because of the nature of writing and its complexity, students need more help to do their writing project accurately and coherently, e.g. Al Fadda (2011) argues that academic writing in English at advanced levels is a challenge even for most native English speakers. According to Trady, (2010) "academic writing often requires students to write from an expert position, even when they do not consider themselves experts on their topics" (p. 13, cited in Al Fadda, 2011). In this way, they can seek help from their peers, professors, and some available guidelines to fulfill their shortcomings. In addition, actually, collaborative writing may be a solution for students who need help more than their knowledge and use the others' knowledge to accomplish their own task. Ohta, (2001) states that because no two learners have the same strengths and weaknesses, when working together, they can provide scaffolded [1]assistance to each other and, by pooling their different resources, achieve a level of performance that is beyond their individual level of competence (cited in Dobao, 2012).

The above-mentioned problem also happened for me, as I started my MA studies—I felt a difficulty in writing. In addition, the instructors asked us to write articles professionally from get-go. Who was responsible for MA students' writing difficulty, university instructor or learners? It is hard to explain. Nevertheless, I truly can assert that no one taught me writing in a proper style during BA degree and no one undertook the responsibility. This problem was not limited to me but all of my classmates. Ask for writing academic articles, motivated us to improve our writing anyway. We tried hard; worked with each other, asked for help, proofread our writing, followed the instructors' guideline, etc. At last, our writing to some extent has improved. Moreover, I find out that writing is a group task but not an individual one. That is, you need a hand in writing. This was a temptation for me to choose writing paper collaboratively as my thesis subject.

To suggest collaborative paper writing or co-authoring [2]as a solution for eliminating writing problems and shortcomings, different research studies have been carried out to investigate the issue from each dimension. In other words, to understand the nature of such a complex task, different qualitative and quantitative research studies have been done on different aspects of collaborative writing such as cognitive, communicative, role of technology, and discoursal aspects in different contexts (Brile & Durso, 2002; Dobao,

1 A Supporting framework
2 it is a collaborative process whereby multiple authors create the content of a written work

2012; Kan, et.al., 2001; Noel & Robert, 2004; Olinger, 2011; Rada, et.al., 1992; Shehadeh 2011; Vass, et al., 2008).

In Iran, , also different research studies were carried out on the issue of collaborative writing (Baradaran & Sarafraz, 2012; Fahim, et al., 2010; Heidari & Akef, 2011; Jafari & Nejad Ansari, 2012; Mirzaiee, 2012; Nikzad, et al., 2011).

In fact, most of the work on co-authoring was conducted in western countries and a few studies were found in the Asia, especially the context of Iran and TEFL discipline. Most of the previous studies attempted to analyze the text or writing documents produced by collaborators, and then the interaction among members during the writing process were observed and recorded. However, little if any attention has been paid to investigate the attitudes of university students on collaborative paper writing in TEFL contexts of Iran. It indicates that a few studies attempted to investigate participants' attitudes and if any, no comparison was done to find the differences and correlations between attitudes and increasing expertise and experience. In addition, Iranian researchers may not examine the nature of co-authoring.

1.3. Purposes of the Study

The present study was conducted to examine the viewpoints of Iranian M.A. TEFL students and Researchers (PhD students, instructors, associate professors, assistance professors, professors, generally academics) who had written articles collaboratively towards co-authoring or collaborative paper writing. This study evaluated their needs and interests in writing an academic paper. It was designed hoping that the students' attitudes provided some helpful evidence of their experience in collaborative paper writing that help the researcher to identify the members' needs and interest. Their collaboration details also would tell us how different ideas and thoughts were put together to make the same project with a joint goal. That is, their explanations about their experience of collaborative writing could provide us with an overview of the collaborative process. Based on these, the study intended to uncover that why some of the learners participate in a collaborative research study and whether the development of participants' experience and expertise can make a change in their attitudes towards collaborative paper writing or not.

1.4. Research Questions and Null Hypotheses:

To address the goals of the study the following hypotheses and research questions were hypothesized:

Research questions:

1. What are the TEFL MA students' viewpoints towards collaborative academic paper writing?
2. What are the TEFL researchers' viewpoints towards collaborative academic paper writing?
3. Are there any correlation between increasing experience and expertise and the participants' viewpoints?
4. What do the collaborators do or experience during the collaboration or co-authoring?

Hypotheses:

1. There are no differences between the TEFL MA students' viewpoints and TEFL researchers' viewpoints towards collaborative paper writing.
2. There is no significant correlation between participants' viewpoints and their increasing experience and expertise.

1.5. Participants

Based on availability, a community of TEFL researchers or students who had written or published a paper collaboratively took part in this study. The participants included 70 TEFL MA students (35) and researchers (35). TEFL MA students were exclusively chosen from Razi, Shiraz, Azad Shiraz Universities, and Fars University of Science and Technology. These participants were motivated since they voluntarily took part in this study.

1.6. The Significance of Study

This study was conducted to investigate authors' viewpoints towards collaborative paper writing. Findings of this study suggests that instructors and material developers could construct and develop collaborative writing tasks for school students in order to prepare them for collaborative academic writing in their future education. This study also offers writers to get support from multiple intelligences' different skills, attitudes, and experiences during writing collaboratively. That is, the findings actually advise writers to write collaboratively in order to achieve benefits of the group's knowledge and skills. It also offers the universities' administers credits and visibility in academia by providing the learners with a supportive environment and preparing ground for their collaboration.

1.7. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected data from winter to spring of 2013. This study used email addresses of participants for sending them the questionnaire. The email addresses were gathered from an abstract book and the MA students' classes. At the first blush, this procedure seemed easy, economic, and speedy, but it was so time-consuming and disappointing. That is, a few motivated researchers took part in the study and a few TEFL MA students and researchers truly wrote a paper collaboratively. Moreover, some researchers asked for hard copies so that progress has been impeded. Besides these problems, the difficulty and length of questionnaire made the situation worse. In addition, a few researchers had time to fill the questionnaire out. In this regard, 100 copies were prepared and distributed among MA TEFL students and academics of different universities in Shiraz and Kermanshah. Nevertheless, the result was disappointing and only a few researchers accepted to collaborate in the study. Finally, 20 questionnaires were obtained from the Email addresses and 50 from hard copies. It means that, 70 participants took part in this study.

1.8. Data Analysis

This study used descriptive statistics to analyze the questionnaire in order to find the viewpoints of TEFL MA students and researchers towards collaborative paper writing. Data then were coded and analyzed and the required information was extracted via SPSS.

The experience of collaborators was determined from part two and data inferred from the content of questions analyzed according to the original study (Noel & Robert, 2004). In this way, the qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed and the experience of collaborators in collaborative paper writing was determined.

The results of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis will be presented in chapter four.

1.9. Key Words

1.9.1. Collaborative Writing

It refers to projects where written works are created by multiple people together (collaboratively) rather than individually.

1.9.2. Co-authoring

Co-authoring is a collaborative process whereby multiple authors create the content of a paper or the other written work. Co-authoring is very common in modern academic works, and in some fields is the norm.

1.10. The Organizational of the Study

Chapter one presents an overview of the whole thesis, including the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the definitions of key terms. Chapter two contains a review of relevant literature on collaborative writing, co-authoring, academic writing and MA students, and theoretical background on collaborative paper writing. Chapter three describes the research design, the instruments, the participants, and the data collection procedures. Chapter four provides the data analyses and the results and findings of data analyses. Chapter five offers the discussion of four research questions, the general summary, the theoretical and pedagogical implications, the limitations of the study, and some recommendations for future research.