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An Investigation into the Use of Online Peer Collaboration in Creative Writing Activities: Qualitative Exploratory Intervention Study in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Context

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Abstract

The purpose of using Creative Writing (CW) activities in English as a Foreign (EFL) context is generally to increase learners' self-esteem and self-confidence, reduce their stress in writing and make the process more enjoyable. At the same time, with regard to learning English, it provides an opportunity for learners to explore the target language by themselves. Nevertheless, when it comes to deploying CW seen as a tool for expressing oneself and personal feelings, this can be difficult to implement in EFL at times for both teachers and learners since this type of writing effectively reduces the teacher's control and guidance and gives considerable more autonomy and self-learning to the learners. Even though EFL learners acquire these skills exponentially, they may still need an element of scaffolding while engaging in CW. Therefore, this study emerges from this tension.

There are few studies conducted on CW in EFL and these have investigated either the outcomes or the impact of motivation through CW. Hence, there is a gap in research on how CW could be implemented in EFL. Reasoning on the basis of Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory, I decided to employ online peer collaboration processes with CW. Moreover, considering the advent of online technologies and popularity towards learning through Social Networking (SN), I have chosen one of the popular SN sites, Facebook (FB), as the setting of the study.

This current study centres on EFL learners' online peer experiences with online collaborative CW activity. Specifically, it intended to explore whether and how EFL learners in groups of three produce a piece of creative writing (i.e. a short story, a series of poems/song lyrics in a context, a synopsis of a movie/play) collaboratively in a FB group within a series of informal sessions.

To explore whether online peer collaboration in creative writing is feasible and to refine design and methodology, a six-week of pilot study was conducted with the involvement of two groups of three, in total six high school (10th grade) EFL learners (Elementary level English) from one of the high schools in Izmir, Turkey. These two groups of three EFL learners participated in the study outside of school hours in a FB group. I, the researcher participated in the study as a facilitator.

The study was designed as a qualitative exploratory intervention study and the data were gathered from participants were semi-structured focus group interviews and online weekly diary. During the study these research questions below were formulated to shed light on the main study

- 1) What circumstances are necessary for six of EFL learners in groups to produce creative writing through online peer collaboration?

- 2) How do six of EFL learners in groups collaboratively produce creative writing online?
- 3) In what ways does the use of online peer collaboration in creative writing benefit six EFL learners in groups?

In the doctoral consortium, I would like to have feedback on the process of online peer collaboration in creative writing activities and the fitness for purpose of the methodology.

Keywords

EFL Writing, online peer collaboration, online collaborative creative writing

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Biography



Hasan Selcuk is a PhD candidate in Social Science and Public Policy Department at King's College London. He is from Izmir, Turkey. His research interests focus on creative writing in EFL, collaborative writing in L2, Online learning, learning foreign languages through social networking sites especially on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Apart from these, in his MA degree, he was specialised in contemporary Irish Literature.

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