



## **Web 2.0 online collaboration tools as environments for task-based writing instruction**

**Jarosław KRAJKA \***

**ABSTRACT.** The paper presents an overview of a pilot study aiming at developing university students' writing competence with the use of a selected Web 2.0 collaboration tool as authoring environment for Task-Based Language Teaching. Online word processors were used to design a pre-task, task and post-task sequence which was implemented in varied modes of work when teaching English to students at the Department of German Studies, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland.

The specific aim of the study was to investigate the applicability of one particular online collaborative environment, namely an online word processor such as Google Docs (<http://docs.google.com>), to implement form-focused language teaching at a tertiary level. The study was conducted in an action research fashion, with two parallel groups of students using two different collaborative environments (wikis and online word processors).

As it was found out, the idea of learning writing in collaboration mediated by online resources was new to students and the awareness of how to make the best use of peer editing and peer feedback had to be established among students first. Once it was done, however, collaborative learning online proved to be a powerful vehicle for language instruction. The emergence of new Web 2.0 tools facilitating collaboration and publishing such as online word processors has helped to redefine the process of teaching language skills, and specifically writing, in the TBLT framework.

**Keywords:** Task-based Teaching, Web 2.0, writing instruction.

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\*\* Assist. Prof. Dr., Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Division of Applied Linguistics, Lublin, Poland.  
E-mail: [jarek.krajka@wp.pl](mailto:jarek.krajka@wp.pl).

## INTRODUCTION

Task-Based Language Teaching as an approach which offers students opportunities for becoming engaged in the processing of material in order to achieve a goal or complete a task has become sufficiently established in ELT methodology. Quite recently, the Web 2.0 movement emerged as a new way of perceiving the Internet which increases the role of the individual in creating, uploading, sharing and promoting data of various kinds. The emergence of such Web 2.0 collaboration tools as wikis and online word processors has opened up interesting opportunities for foreign language instruction.

It is especially the teaching of writing that can significantly benefit from the task-based instruction implemented in the computer-mediated environment. The blend of face-to-face and distance, off-line and online, in-class and out-of-class tasks will result in increased student awareness of the Web 2.0 publishing tools and their greater maturity as writers. In particular, the present study makes use of the framework established by Skehan (2003), in which the new language that arises through computer interaction leads learners to extend and complexify their interlanguage system. Evaluating the claims of Al Bulushi (2005), that using CMC synchronously or asynchronously in TBLT appears to have potentials for language learning and teaching, and Smith (2005), that a negotiation routine influences language acquisition through a synchronous computer-mediated environment, is another focus of the study. Following Byrnes (2007), the study employs collaborative genre-based tasks for L2 writing to provide a favourable environment for integrating language and content knowledge.

The aim of the present paper is to discuss the applicability of task-based writing instruction mediated via online word processors. To meet that aim, task-based lesson sequences were designed for two separate groups of university students of English. The paper opens up with a brief synthesis of the background of Task-Based Language Teaching for teaching writing. The major part of the present work is constituted by the presentation of the research study into the use of a selected Web 2.0 collaboration tool as authoring environment for task-based writing instruction.

### **Computer-mediated Writing Instruction in the Task-based Framework**

Collaborative writing has already been employed in a number of studies pertaining to the Task-Based Language Teaching framework, such as Colpin & Van Gorp (2007) or Tinker Sachs (2007). Johnson et al. (1991, after

Jacobs and Ball, 1996) mention the two most widely accepted criteria for defining an activity as co-operative are 'positive interdependence' and 'individual accountability', and writing tasks (both real-world tasks and pedagogical tasks – Nunan, 1989) are to be characterized by these elements.

Bruton (2005) puts forward the argument that process writing and communicative-task-based instruction both implement productive tasks that prompt self-expression to motivate students as the principal stimulus for developing L2 proficiency in the language classroom. As Dyer (1996) notes, the traditional dichotomy into 'process' and 'product' writing is no longer fully valid in TBLT, which is also the view of Raimes (1991), who calls for equal attention to all four elements involved in writing: form (product), writer (process), content, and reader. Instead, task-based writing instruction merges seemingly opposing approaches in the concept of the communicative 'task'. Prabhu's (1987) task as an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought is followed by Nunan's (1989) idea of a task as a piece of classroom work involving learners in working on the target language yet keeping their attention primarily focused on meaning rather than form. Skehan (1996) adds that success in tasks is evaluated in terms of the achievement of an outcome, and tasks generally bear some resemblance to real-life language use (Willis, 1996b, Willis and Willis, 2007). Long and Crookes (1992) stress that tasks provide a vehicle for the presentation of appropriate target language samples to learners, which are authenticated not solely by the genuineness of the text, but also by giving tasks a genuine purpose, a real-world target, classroom interaction or engagement (Guariento and Morley, 2001).

As for writing instruction in the TBLT framework, rather than focusing purely on the communicative purpose, there needs to be a trade-off between cognitive processing and focus on form in writing tasks, so that learners can develop both fluency and awareness of language form (Skehan, 1998). Applying a needs-based approach to writing content selection and introducing authentic texts as stimulus for learner writing production are crucial for writing instruction effectiveness (Nunan, 2006), especially when coupled with an enhancement of a learner's own personal experiences finding their outlet in the writing task.

Lastly, clearly defined writing tasks with specific objectives result in the most significant gains in student writing: these tasks are sequenced from personal response (note-taking, response journals) to precise comprehension (summary, paraphrase) to critical synthesis, analysis, comparison, and evaluation of 'data', leading to improvement of writing quality through necessary focus on form (Long, 1991).

When reflecting on the implementation of technology in the TBLT writing instruction, it is useful to focus first on the role of technology in the process. Skehan (2003) analyses the three major approaches of using computers as orchestrator, tool and source. He criticizes the first two as the ones in which the computer would lack the intelligence of the classroom teacher to make adaptations and appropriate pedagogic decisions. Instead, Skehan promotes considering the use of technology as a source of language learning materials and input, especially in the pre-task activity, to enhance planning and guarantee better quality output. Smith (2005), on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of synchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC), which stimulates complexity of negotiation routines. Collentine and Collentine (2007), finally, observe increased discursive and lexico-grammatical complexity requiring within-task planning via the application of Flash-based interviews with virtual people, problem-solving tasks, interrupted writing tasks, post-writing tasks and chat interaction.

### **Online Word Processors as Web 2.0 Collaborative Environments**

There exists a significant body of research into the use of a word processor as an instructional tool (e.g., Chadwick and Bruce, 1989; Haas, 1989; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Cochran-Smith, Paris and Kahn, 1991; Pennington, 1991; Pennington, 1993; Bangert-Drowns, 1993; Akyel and Kamisli, 1999; Li and Cumming, 2001, to quote just a few). The studies stress the value of word processors for their capacity to ease the mechanical processes of generating text; revising text by deletions, additions, substitutions, and block moves; and producing clear and attractive finished copy (for an extensive discussion of benefits of word-processing in second language learning, see Pennington, 2004).

The Web 2.0 movement made online word processors available as collaborative environments that allow several users to work together on a file using different computers, either in real-time (synchronous editors) or with delay (asynchronous editor – Krajka, 2006). Online applications of this kind (e.g., AjaxWrite, ThinkFree, Google Docs and Spreadsheets, or ZohoWriter do not overlap with wikis – while the former operate using a hypertext-based conception, Office 2.0 applications are linear documents with links (Bartolome, 2008).

When reflecting on the applicability of real-time collaborative Office 2.0 environments for writing practice, such features need to be noted as flexibility and usefulness in learning groups and educational settings (VanderMolen, 2008a) and teacher's control over collaborative publication

and production (Bartolomé, 2008). With traceability (Lamy and Hampel, 2007), defined as tracing contributions and identifying authors by student recasts appearing in progress on screen tagged with individual contributors' names, enhanced awareness of authorship can be exploited in product assessment of CMC.

In pedagogical terms, language activities enabled by the implementation of this kind of learning environment might include: asynchronous writing, groupwork for distributed members, peer editing (Alexander, 2006); providing feedback on student assignments, making suggestions and comments on projects and highlighting required changes to a member of the project (VanderMolen, 2008b); generating text exercises, research reports and writing assignments in a collaborative mode (VanderMolen, 2008a); collaborative group activities using video and voice, student presentations or online office hours (Hargis and Wilcox, 2008).

However, it needs to be remembered that online word processors such as GoogleDocs do not always work very well with synchronous editing, sometimes producing error messages when users try to make the same edit at the same time, or delays, which may influence the effectiveness of the collaboration process.

### **The Aim of the Research**

The major sphere of interest in the present study was the exploration of Web 2.0 collaborative environments in implementing task-based writing instruction. Teaching writing as a collaborative experience has been well-established in the foreign language methodology, and computer technology might provide suitable learning environments to enable this mode of teaching productive skills.

The major purpose of the present work was to investigate the use of collaborative writing when designed in an online environment. Since writing as one of the four skills is fundamental to language proficiency, new ways, techniques and frameworks are to be sought to make writing instruction even more effective than it can be. It seems especially important to merge concepts from the realm of foreign language methodology with current advancements in Information and Communication technologies. Online word processors, as a more advanced yet much less researched counterpart of wikis, deserve attention due to their potential for online work by multiple authors.

Therefore, the specific research questions in the study were as follows:

*1. Will focus-on-form writing tasks get added value from the application of a selected Web 2.0 collaborative tool?*

As the importance of focus-on-form tasks is well-established in the literature on Task-based Language Teaching, it is essential to examine whether such grammar-oriented activities find their application in the writing instruction. At the same time, it is crucial to see whether, and to what extent, focus-on-form writing can be enhanced by the use of online collaborative environments.

2. *What are students' attitudes to learning writing in collaboration?*

With writing as a collaborative activity being one of the contemporary paradigms for teaching writing, it is essential that learners exhibit appropriate attitudes towards it. A shift from writing as a solitary experience to writing as a shared social process is not an easy one, especially in some cultures. Thus, the second research question aimed at eliciting students' preferences and fears towards this form of teaching.

3. *To what extent are online word processors conducive for collaborative writing?*

As online word processors can be regarded as the embodiment of the Web 2.0 movement due to their inherent capacities, the pilot study aimed at considering the value of this particular online environment for the language classroom.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

The study encompassed two groups of intermediate students, 15 and 18 students respectively, at the Department of German Studies, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland. Both groups were roughly parallel in terms of language proficiency, and followed the same coursebook (Macmillan's *Inside Out Intermediate*, Kay and Jones, 2000), receiving English instruction for two hours a week, 60 hours a year in total.

The students were in their second, final, year of English instruction, ending in an exam. The study took place at the very end of the academic year, for six weeks from mid-April till the end of May. Each week, a 20-minute slot was allotted exclusively to writing instruction, while the remaining part of the class was conducted by the regular teacher and focused on the remaining language skills.

The sample was selected based on the availability of the participants to the researcher. As such, it is a clear example of non-probability convenience sampling (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007), which "involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be

available and accessible at the time” (p. 113-114). It was important that the very researcher would be the teacher in the experimental programme himself, and that the whole process would take place in as natural a surrounding as possible. Thus, the research sample had to be confined to the classes that the researcher had access to on a regular basis.

Due to its initial selection bias, the strategy of convenience sampling as applied in the present study makes the generalisability of findings a particularly sensitive issue. As the present research context does not aspire to represent any group apart from itself, we do not seek to generalize about the wider population. However, if this study were to be replicated in controlled experimental settings, the results could be universally applicable among language learners.

### **Research Context**

The study took place in the Internet lab of the Faculty of Humanities, which was equipped with 18 state-of-the-art workstations, a networked printer, a teacher computer connected to the LCD projector and broadband Internet connection. A dedicated Moodle space at the Virtual Campus of MCSU Applied Linguistics was used to publish sample materials as input for in-class analysis, as well as practical tasks for collaborative work.

Students were set up dedicated email accounts connected with the Moodle accounts, provided with all login IDs and passwords on the first meeting. This was done in order to minimise the amount of time wasted on establishing accounts, linking student accounts with their Google or Yahoo accounts, retrieving passwords, verifying new users, etc. Time consuming as it was, it made orienteering much quicker and smoother for students.

Another reason for organising the online setup for the students was that in this way the control over the placement of collaborative teams was in the hands of the researcher. Rather than let students group themselves, usually into their favourite teams in which roles and responsibilities might be clearly shared in advance, grouping by ability (streaming) was done based on the results of the pre-test to make sure that all groups would have a roughly similar proficiency profile as a mixture of more able and less able students.

### **Research Process**

The present study aimed at developing university students’ language competence with the use of selected Web 2.0 collaboration tools as authoring environments for Task-Based Language Teaching. Out of the whole array of Web 2.0 collaboration tools, Google Docs online word

processor (<http://docs.google.com>) had been selected to design a pre-task, task and language focus sequence (Willis, 1996a; Ellis, 2006) that would be implemented in varied modes of work (face-to-face in-class, groupwork out-of-class, self-study out-of-class).

The study was executed within the framework of action research (Wallace, 2002), a systematic collection and analysis of data relating to the improvements of some aspects of professional practice. The parameters of generalizability in this type of study, due to the use of a convenience sampling strategy, are negligible. The use of this research framework allowed the researcher to focus on the problems of a particular group of students and try to deal with them in a cyclical fashion, observing, analysing, acting, reflecting, and so on. The framework of action research is generally recommendable for practical research undertakings by teachers due to its less rigorous organisation and implementation.

The research process started with diagnosing learners' needs from multifold perspectives, taking into account target language wants, lacks and necessities (Hutchinson and Waters, 1989). On the one hand, careful scrutiny of the coursebook (*Inside Out Intermediate*, Kay and Jones, 2000) was executed, in order to get the awareness of the approximated target language level of the texts and prior knowledge of learners. Learners' target lacks and necessities were diagnosed by marking and collating errors from the letters written in the diagnostic writing test. The particular errors were used as guidelines for which structures should be exploited in focus-on-form tasks. Finally, learners' wants were diagnosed in an attitude survey, administered prior to the class using SurveyMonkey online survey tool (<http://www.surveymonkey.com>).

Based on all these, as well as informal interviews with the regular class teacher, it was decided that the backbone of the teaching module would be the genre of a letter (both formal and informal), around which each 20-minute teaching unit would be designed. Apart from the genre, the common theme was adopted, such as a university summer school (applying for, enquiring, complaining about, clarifying details – after Norris *et al.*, 1998). For consecutive lessons, different variations of letters were provided (a letter of application for a course enrolment, an informal letter requesting further information, a letter telling a story, a letter of application) and matched with language tasks providing necessary focus on form (Long, 1997; Ellis, 2003).

The teaching unit would start with a model answer which was to be worked on for reading comprehension, grammar and vocabulary extraction. Following this, students were put into pairs and assigned focus-on-form tasks in their online environments. Some of the particular tasks were the following:



1. Read the letter and replace the underlined phrases with the following phrases;
2. Read the letter and try to correct the errors in the underlined phrases;
3. Read beginnings and endings and complete the letter fitting the role given;
4. Read the letter and try to complete the gaps using L1/L2 suggestions given;
5. Read the story skeleton and complete the letter.

### **Data Collection Instruments and Methods**

Within each teaching unit, the pre-task, task and language focus sequence was implemented in collaborative work, both in-class and out-of-class, varying types of interaction and types of task to offer a different degree of cognitive challenge (Willis, 2000). During the process, students were subject to participating observation by the teacher, and their attitude to learning writing in Web-based collaboration was tapped into by means of a final questionnaire administered at the end of the teaching module. Thus, the data collection instruments involved a diagnostic writing test, informal interviews investigating learners' needs, coursebook analysis, in-class observation and student attitude questionnaires.

The purpose of the diagnostic pre-test, structured in the form of a free letter writing task, was to spot the types of errors that students most frequently make as well as diagnose their problems in writing. In order to increase the reliability of the pre-test and to prevent rater bias which could arise while coding errors, both the researcher and the regular teacher would highlight and classify errors separately.

These findings, when generalised to the level of the group, guided the design of focus-on-form tasks, so that they would reinforce particular problem points. On the level of the sentence, these proved to be subject-verb agreement, articles with countable and uncountable nouns as well as tenses in conditional clauses. On the paragraph level, the problems with referencing, paragraph cohesion and register demanded attention.

Informal group interviews conducted prior to the commencement of the experimental programme were designed to measure students' willingness to participate in computer-assisted writing instruction. Structured as a speaking task in English, the participants were supposed to prioritise most and least favourite and most and least effective ways of learning writing in a foreign language. The whole-class discussion that followed afterwards helped the researcher gain insight into learners' worries and fears towards this mode of learning.

The coursebook analysis was the final step in the preparation of the experimental programme. The contents were scrutinised for writing sections, then, major and supporting themes were isolated to later confront them with some other data sources. The instrument for that was a table with criteria to be completed.

In-class observation during the experimental programme was conducted with the use of a dedicated observation worksheet (see Appendix 1). The tool aimed at recording categories of student behaviour during the lesson and reflecting upon these afterwards. The categories were widely discussed in the literature, but to increase its validity, also other modes of work, hypothetically possible, were introduced to exhaust the range of possible options to mark.

The final data collection instrument was a close-ended student opinionnaire, administered online via SurveyMonkey after the process was completed (see Appendix 2). The tool contained fifteen close-ended questions, mixed single-answer and multiple-choice ones, concerning students' preferences towards writing as a collaborative activity and the use of online word processors to mediate that process. The opinionnaire was validated by its piloting on a small sample with subsequent discussion of any misunderstandings or confusions.

**Table 1.** *Research design summary*

<b>Research method</b>	Action research
<b>Data collection methods</b>	product analysis observation questionnaire
<b>Data collection instruments</b>	coursebook analysis worksheet observation schedule online student questionnaire
<b>Data analysis methods</b>	content analysis qualitative data analysis

The data analysis was conducted according to the principles of content analysis, which, according to Cohen *et al.* (2007: 476), “takes texts and analyses, reduces and interrogates them into summary form through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes in order to generate or test a theory. It uses systematic, replicable, observable and rule-governed forms of analysis in a theory dependent system for the application of those categories.”

## **FINDINGS**

The study commenced with investigating students' technical conditions, computer skills, attitude towards the Internet, use of the Web, as well as awareness of online word processors as collaboration tools.

### **Demographic Findings**

Students' familiarity with some of the online tools selected for the study varied: instant messaging and Wikipedia consultation proved most widespread, while creating and storing documents online was reported very rarely. Students reported wide reading of Wikipedia articles while never commenting nor changing them, as well as using Microsoft Word to create documents while never composing documents online.

### **Findings about Focus-on-Form Writing Tasks**

The major focus of the present study was to try to investigate whether focus-on-form writing tasks would get added value from the application of selected Web 2.0 collaborative tools, here wikis and online word processors. Authoring focus-on-form tasks in both of these environments allowed to move the instruction beyond the confines of the classroom, extending learners' exposure to the target language.

This was evidenced by the analysis of Moodle and GoogleDocs logs indicating the use of the resources by particular students, and for that reason applying such a blended learning approach to task-based writing is quite plausible. The analysis of logs could be used only as a supplementary data analysis technique, as both Moodle and GoogleDocs are limited in that they give information on who accessed a particular resource and at what time, however, they do not record how much time was spent on working with the material. Thus, in the present study we only observed student access, with all students accessing all the materials at least once, however, the majority viewing the pages a couple of times. Because the very access does not give indication on the work done, we will not develop this point further. However, in the future studies it might be possible to supplement log analysis as a data collection procedure with keystroke recording software installed on computers in the school lab, to make sure a more reliable picture of students' activities is portrayed.

On the level of task design, the units of the study employed a process writing methodology (Bruton, 2005), building the awareness of students as writers of all the stages that a piece of writing goes through, starting with

understanding the writing task and finishing with the final edits. What proved quite noteworthy was the emphasis on structural noticing, first conducted on a model answer and monitored by the teacher, next done individually on the collaborators' output. In this way, activating learners' metacognitive strategies of self-monitoring, self-evaluation and self-reinforcement (Wenden and Rubin, 1987) constituted a step not only towards the improvement of the writing competence, but also learner autonomy.

### **Findings about Students' Attitudes**

The post-study questionnaire aimed also at gathering data to answer research question 2, namely the students' attitudes to writing in collaboration. Even though in general students had not written in collaboration before, but only participated in error correction tasks and peer editing, they felt writing was highly useful as a supplement to other skills and expressed their overwhelmingly positive attitude to task-based collaborative learning, liking the fact that a part of the job is done by a collaborator (77.8%) and that they can learn from their peers (11.1%).

### **Findings on Collaborative Writing**

The third research question concerned the extent to which online word processors are electronic environments conducive to online collaboration. Half of the students found them easy to use, one-third thought they were not too convenient, while a small number of students were not impressed by them. The class tutorial of GoogleDocs was sufficient for half of the class, and slow loading pages and limited formatting options were perceived as greatest obstacles by a half of students each. As an online collaborative environment, GoogleDocs proved to be versatile and particularly conducive to collaborative writing due to easy sharing documents and comparing their different versions. Occasional problems such as delays and unrecorded edits made by two collaborators at the same time did happen, and they call for conscious use of the tool as an asynchronous editor, with synchronous collaboration to be implemented with some other tools (e.g., WiZiQ, <http://www.wiziq.com> or DimDim, <http://www.dimdim.com>).

The results indicate that both the previous learning experiences and the task-based writing instruction received during the study influenced the respondents' attitudes favorably towards computer-mediated collaborative learning. As students reported some of the problems in the use of the collaborative environments selected for the study, it was inevitable that they did not perceive them as fully valid for their prospective teaching endeavors.

It is quite likely that with greater training prior to the research and a prolonged exposure to the environment these negative influences would become significantly minimized.

## CONCLUSIONS

As indicated by the results of the study, the awareness of learning writing in collaboration has to be established among students, but once it is, this particular paradigm is a powerful vehicle for language instruction. On the other hand, the emergence of new Web 2.0 tools facilitating collaboration and publishing such as online word processors has helped to redefine the process of teaching language skills, and specifically writing, in the TBLT framework.

The notion of learner autonomy and task awareness is particularly important in language instruction at a tertiary level where one can reasonably expect fairly motivated adult learners, mostly driven by intrinsic motivational forces. This was the case also with the research group, which, what is more, was composed of foreign language students (Department of German), thus, their willingness to learn languages was even greater. With that in mind, the action research experience enriched the learners' repertoire of learning strategies with new procedures of working in online collaboration. It seems that in the contemporary society, where young students are 'Digital Natives' (Prensky, 2001, 2004), there is an urgent need to extend instruction beyond the classroom with the use of networking tools. The students clearly exhibited a need to stay in online contact outside the classes even despite having a lot of face-to-face interaction in all the courses of the curriculum.

The collaborative functions of the online environment, enabling such writing tasks as story completion, focused editing, peer revision, structural multiple-choice selection, have interesting potential for balancing process and product approaches (Raimes, 1991; Bruton, 2005) and provide necessary focus on form. The added value has been found to be mainly traceability, or recording student action paths and learning processes as well as enhanced text editing to enable all kinds of textual and graphic response. With conscious exploitation of collaborative features by students, namely inviting collaborators, publishing documents for viewing only, making copies and comparing versions, Web-based TBLT will inevitably gain even greater impact.

The present study, due to its pilot nature, did not yield definitive results in terms of writing improvement, thus, it was not possible to confirm the findings of Collentine and Collentine (2007) of the use of online

environment to increase lexico-syntactic complexity. As the major findings were located in the learners' affective domain, the study confirms the value of increased motivation through task-oriented awareness (Guariento and Morley, 2001) and enhanced authorship thanks to traceability (Lamy and Hampel, 2007). The study confirmed the practical value of tracing contributions and identifying authors influencing enhanced awareness of authorship (Lamy and Hampel, 2007), which can be profitably exploited both in process and product writing instruction in CMC.

However, it is important to note at this point that even though the word-processing environment may be versatile and flexible to accommodate different instructional purposes, foreign language students would need to be gradually introduced to the functionalities and procedures by being engaged in a lot of meaningful practice. As the example of the study showed, even such fundamental processes as starting new documents, inviting collaborators or comparing versions proved to be excessively difficult for quite a number of students. Limited time available for the research made it impossible to implement a more comprehensive computer tutoring, which might be improved in subsequent studies.

Given the limited scope of the present study, being largely pilot in nature, further research is needed in order to assess the effectiveness of task-based writing instruction mediated via online collaboration tools such as wikis and online word processors. Especially, longitudinal experimental design with full control of variables is needed to gain data on whether learner uptake of genre-related lexis and grammar is influenced by the use of the asynchronous CMC collaborative environment (Smith, 2005).

The issues to be verified empirically, in particular, should be the following:

- Is there a marked improvement in writing proficiency operationalised as the number of unique mistakes as a result of the application of collaborative writing?
- Is there a statistically significant relationship between the use of an online word processor and writing improvement, undertaken under controlled settings?
- Can one observe a statistically significant increase in students' participation level in collaborative writing tasks when administered in the online environment?

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments, which helped to give the present paper its proper shape.

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**Appendix 1. Collaborative writing in action – observation worksheet**

**Aims:** to observe the pattern of interaction between the teacher and students during the lesson

to analyse students' participation in the lesson

to reflect on the selection of mode of work for activities

**Instructions**

Observe a lesson focusing on modes of work. Classify each activity and put it in the relevant part of the table. Then reflect on the lesson answering the questions below. Make sure that both in-class work and out-of-class interaction via Moodle are recorded.

T to whole class	T to S, whole class listening	T to S, class working in pairs/groups	Individual Ss speaking to T, whole class listening	Individual S speaking to another S, whole class listening (open pairs)	All learners emailing each other in a forum	Learners emailing in groups (more than 3 people)	All learners speaking and moving around the class

1. Do the aims of the lesson justify the interaction pattern used?
2. Were the activities suited to the interaction patterns? Do you think there was a need for using other interaction patterns?
3. What was the proportion of Teacher Talking Time (TTT) and Student Talking Time (STT)?
4. What was the proportion of in-class face-to-face and out-of-class virtual interaction? Was it appropriate?
5. Did the teacher favour any particular mode of work? Why was it so? Was it influenced by the class profile (e.g., a hyperactive class, learning disabilities, etc.)?

**Appendix 2. Writing as a collaborative activity in the online environment – a student opinionnaire**

**1. What is your attitude to writing in the language classroom?**

Highly positive, I feel writing is the most important skill and should be taught more

Positive, I think writing is useful as a supplement to other skills

Neutral, it doesn't matter much to me if we speak or write

Negative, I prefer speaking much more to writing

Highly negative, I feel writing is a waste of time as I don't need it in my work

**2. Have you written works collaboratively before?**

Yes

No

**3. Have you done error correction of your own works in the classroom before?**

Yes

No

**4. Have you done error correction of your colleagues' works in the classroom before?**

Yes

No

**5. What is your attitude to writing with others?**

Highly positive, I like the fact that I can learn from my colleagues

Positive, it's good that a part of my job is done by somebody else

Negative, I feel I don't get enough practice

Highly negative, I don't like somebody else writing instead of me

**6. Which of the following do you see as greatest problems of collaborative writing (you can choose more than one)?**

Learning how to cooperate

Spending a greater amount of time on the work

Not enough teacher control of the writing

Documenting the process of writing and its particular stages

**7. When presenting a writing task, which of the following do you think should be done (you can choose more than one):**

- presentation of the task to the whole class by the teacher

- presentation of the task to the whole class by a pair of students

- presentation of the task by looking at a model answer

- presentation of the task by explanation in Polish

- presentation of the task by explanation in English

**8. How would you like your writing to be assessed?**

In class, writing an essay individually

In class, writing an essay in pairs

At home, writing an essay individually

At home, writing an essay in pairs

**9. How do you like working with a word processor?**

Fine, it was easy to use.

OK, but I didn't find it too convenient.

Nothing special, I don't think it is of much value.

**10. Did you find the class explanation of how to use a word processor enough?**

Yes                      No

**11. How many of the classroom tasks did you complete?**

1                      2                      3

**12. Which of the following did you have problems with when using a word processor (you can choose more than one)?**

Too simple interface

Lack of formatting options

Loading pages

Lack of help

Logging in your account

English-language interface

**13. How much do you feel an online word processor can be a useful tool in teaching writing (1 – the least, 5 – the most useful)?**

1

2

3

4

5

**14. When teaching German in the future, would you like to use computers to help in teaching writing?**

Yes                      No                      I don't know

**15. Do you think you could use an online word processor in your future teaching?**

Yes                      No                      I don't know

**Congratulations! You have completed a survey. I hope you have learned some English at the same time. Good luck with your future teaching!**

