

1. Introduction

The main reason for doing CALL (computer-assisted language learning) research is to get a better understanding of how computers can assist language learning. Computers play various roles in language learning, as a tutor, as a tool and as a medium. In recent years the Internet had played an ever-increasing role as a medium of communication. Although research has been done on the role of computer-mediated communication (CMC)—e.g. email, text conferencing and bulletin boards—there have not been many formal studies on how the Internet can provide an environment for collaborative writing.

The wiki software facilitates online publishing and offers a space anyone can add to and edit. Many organisations use wikis to collaborate on and there are several successful public wikis, e.g. the online encyclopaedia— wikipedia. Would a wiki be a useful tool for teaching collaborative writing to L2 learners?

This study attempts to explore the use of this tool by students in writing workshops in a language school in Edinburgh, through a case study approach. It is important to distinguish potential from reality. This study is an attempt to start that process, does the potential of wikis, translate into something useful in reality?

Since the ultimate aim of CALL research is to find out whether computers assist language learning, many CALL researchers (Egbert, 2005, Chapelle, 2005, Kern, 2006)) emphasize the need for CALL research to be grounded in second language acquisition (SLA) theories. Therefore, in this investigation, first of all, literature about SLA theories is examined in order to establish a conceptual framework that justifies the use of collaborative writing tasks in this environment. Secondly, literature on the composing processes of L1 and L2 learners is reviewed in order to establish the principles and rationale for the design of collaborative writing tasks in this environment. Thirdly, literature on the effects of computer-mediated communication is looked at in order to find out the differences between face-to-face and online communication, as this would have an effect on collaborative writing that it is done at a distance online.

2. Literature Review

2.1 SLA theories—interactionist and social cultural

In the last thirty years a vast amount of research has been done on the role of interaction on the development of a learner's interlanguage. Krashen (1985) argued that comprehensible input was required for language acquisition to occur. Long (1980, 1981 in Ellis, 1994: 273) expanded this concept with the notion that for input to become intake, comprehensible input on its own was not sufficient, what was also required was interaction. A learner's interlanguage developed through face-to-face interaction with other speakers of the target language, as they negotiated meaning with their interlocutor when problems of understanding occurred (Mitchell and Myles, 1998: 160). Swain and Lapkin (1998: 320) explain how this is an extension of the comprehensible input hypothesis, as it is through the negotiation of meaning that the input becomes comprehensible. Pica explains this clearly:

As they negotiate, they work linguistically to achieve the needed comprehensibility, whether repeating a message verbatim, adjusting its syntax, changing its words, or modifying its form and meaning in a host of other ways.

(Pica, 1994: 494 in Swain and Lapkin, 1998: 320)

More recently, Long, Inagaki and Ortega (1998) corroborated the idea that interaction was more effective than input on its own, in a study that found that recasts—repeating and correcting a learner's incorrect utterance—were more effective than simply providing correct pre-emptive models.

Other researchers, for example Lyster and Ranta (1997) have looked into what is the most effective type of interaction between the teacher and the learner, investigating different types of feedback and their effect on promoting second language development.

Research has also shown the importance of learners noticing aspects of form not only from input but also when producing output. It has been argued that interaction (particularly output) is important as it can provide opportunities for learners to notice the gap between their own interlanguage and the target language (Swain, 1995).

Swain hypothesises that spoken output promotes noticing. She explains that when producing the target language, learners may notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can actually say, leading them to consciously notice a linguistic problem. This she argues could lead them to acquire new language forms (Swain, 1995 : 125 – 126).

This observation on a possible role of output as a consciousness raising function is a further development of the ideas of Schimdt (1990) who hypothesized that for new language forms to be acquired learners had to consciously notice them in the input. Swain argues that one way of helping learners to notice form is through their production of output.

But interaction is not only important to allow for the negotiation of meaning resulting in comprehensible input or for the opportunities production of output provides for noticing form. In the last ten years, inspired by the work of the psychologist Vygotsky (1986), researchers whose work into SLA has been grounded in social-cultural theory have hypothesised that interaction is essential for language learning as like other forms of learning it is socially mediated and occurs through joint activities such as problem solving and discussion (Wells 1999: 319 – 20; in Mitchell and Myles 1998: 195). According to socio-cultural theory, the occasions where learning can most effectively take place is when although a learner is not capable of doing something new by themselves, they are capable of doing it with the appropriate help. This point in the learning process, where the learner is close to being able to do something, but requires help to do it has been called the “Zone of Proximal Development” by Vygotsky (1978, in Mitchell and Myles 1998: 195 –96) and the help that is provided to them to achieve a successful outcome has been termed “scaffolding”.

From a social-cultural perspective language is not just a means of communication but also a tool which facilitates learning, and therefore a tool which also facilitates the learning of language. Swain and Lapkin (1998) examine the dialogue between two teenage French immersion students as they write a short narrative for evidence of language being used as a tool to help L2 learning. One of their goals was to see what linguistic changes occur when two learners engage in collaborative dialogue. Their hypothesis was that collaborative dialogue provides the context and conditions for L2 learning. They support this with evidence from research by Donato, (1994) and LaPierre (1994) who provide some evidence that in collaborative dialogues learners

both consolidate existing knowledge and learn new knowledge about the L2. The findings of Swain and Lapkin (1998: 321) provide some evidence of language use “as both an enactment of mental processes and as an occasion for L2 learning.”

2.11 Implications for teaching

If we accept that there is not one single SLA theory that underpins L2 teaching, and that interaction is important for language learning to allow for negotiation of meaning, noticing the gap, for scaffolded help, and as an occasion to coconstruct language knowledge; what are the implications of these different SLA theories for the teaching of writing? Research has made a strong case for providing opportunities for oral interaction, but how about teaching writing skills? Should we provide opportunities for interaction? Lynch (1996) in his book on how interactive activities can be used in the L2 classroom, describes how to create an interactive framework for writing. He suggests that one way of doing this is to make sure that the writing activity is geared towards a specific reader. The view that writing is an interactive process between the reader and writer has a lot of support in the literature. Zamel (1983:165) talks about the need for a “dynamic teaching/learning relationship between writers and their readers”.

A second point Lynch makes is how pre-writing discussions can help writers to assess their audience’s knowledge, and this help them in the content and structure of their document.

He also strongly states that learners should receive feedback and advice from the teacher during the writing process.

The doubts and problems that arise during the activity of writing are good opportunities for learning from someone else how to overcome them.

(Lynch 1996:152)

One way of providing for interaction is by giving feedback during the writing activity. The need for feedback at different stages in the writing process is supported by many teachers and researchers. Tribble (1996: 125) describes how the teacher or a fellow student can help the writer make the text as clear and effective as possible. Tribble also describes the process of conferencing, whereby the teacher moves around the classroom and has individual discussions with the students. Byrne (1979) also

mentions how pair and group work need to be examined in the context of writing, and he says there is no reason why in the classroom, writing need be a solitary activity. Ferris (2003) also reports that most L2 researchers and teachers agree that feedback should be given during the writing process, so students can respond to it and use it to make their writing more effective (Ferris, 1995; Krashen, 1984; Leki 1990; Zamel, 1985).

In socio-cultural terms, when learning writing skills, scaffolding needs to be provided, i.e. help given as and when required. How can we apply socio-cultural theory to the teaching of writing? From research done by Swain and Lapkin (1998), Donato (1994), LaPierre (1994), Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) we see how socio-cultural theory sees learning as grounded in collaborative activities. The same general learning mechanisms apply to learning language as to the learning of other skills (Mitchell and Myles, 1998: 221). The L2 learner will learn new ways of creating meaning through collaborative activities in the target language.

Writing, therefore, should not be a solitary activity as there is a need for social interaction during the writing process. What can we do to provide as many opportunities as possible for interaction between learners and between learners and the teacher? Could collaborative writing provide tasks that encourage interaction and peer support?

2.12 Why introduce collaborative writing projects?

What are the underlying pedagogical principles for collaborative writing? Research (Donato, 1994; LaPierre, 1994; Swain and Lapkin, 1998; Aljaafreh and Lantolf, 1994) has suggested that collaborative language activities provide occasions for language learning to take place. Most of the research on collaborative activities has looked at spoken activities. How about collaborative writing activities?

Storch (2005), who has conducted extensive research into collaborative writing, states that report findings on collaborative writing have largely been positive. She reports that research done in L1 settings (Higgins, Flower, & Petraglia, 1992; in Storch 2005: 154) found that collaborative writing is a way to foster reflective thinking, especially if the learners have to explain and defend their ideas to their peers. She (2005: 154)) also reports that research done with L2 learners by Donato, (1988); DiCamilla &

Anton, (1997); Storch, (2002); Swain& Lapkin, (1998) has shown that collaborative writing learners focus not only grammatical accuracy but also on discourse.

She mentions how although pair and group work are commonly used in language classrooms, there have been few studies investigating the written work produced collaboratively. Her own study investigated written work produced collaboratively in pairs. She found that pairs produced shorter but better texts in terms of task fulfilment, grammatical accuracy, and complexity. She found that collaboration gave students the opportunity to pool ideas and give each other feedback. Collaborative writing also gave students the opportunity to give and receive immediate feedback on language. Some studies have shown that students do not give much attention to peer feedback (Nelson and Murphy, 1993 in Storch 2005: 168), Storch suggests that in collaborative writing, as both students are responsible for the text, they may be more receptive to peer suggestions and feedback comments.

Her interviews with students after the collaborative writing activity found that most students viewed the experience positively. They could share ideas, learn from other students and some said it helped to improve grammatical accuracy.

Her earlier study (2001) had found some evidence that collaboration produced scaffolded assistance. But her evidence about accuracy was inconclusive; not all dyads in her investigation collaborated, those who did produced more accurate text, but she suggests that this could have been because the text was less complex.

Ellis argues that the benefits of collaborating on written text, as opposed to oral interaction is that:

When constructing a written text, students are able to focus on an ‘improvable object’ and, importantly, have the time and space to treat language itself as an object, thus achieving the focus on form considered crucial for acquisition.
(Ellis 2003: 270)

If writing is a difficult messy process, collaborative writing is an even more complex process, involving discussion and negotiation—explaining and sharing ideas, and taking into account other people’s arguments (Groundwater-Smith, 1993: 10). I would argue strongly that it is the “messiness” of this socially mediated process, offering plenty of opportunity for negotiation of meaning, and for peers to help each other with issues that arise from composing that makes it such a good language learning task.

A study by Glendinning and Howard (2003) on collaborative writing which used specialised computer software for capturing a video of their screen, so that the process of writing could be recorded, (every word typed, deleted, edited was recorded). Their interaction with the group was also audio recorded as they worked together to compose and edit a text. This study demonstrated that in well-designed collaborative activities learners do talk spontaneously about language. Their findings showed that the collaborative composition phase of the task produced more accurate text than the individual writing phase; this corroborated with other research on collaborative writing. However they found that lower intermediate and intermediate groups introduced more errors in the editing phase of the task. In this study groups worked together at the screen and dominant members succeeded in getting their suggested edits done. It would be interesting to see if editing were done online whether the group dynamics were different.

Many teachers have found that students are not keen on collaborative writing activities. Murray (1992) found that it is important that thought is put into the design of these collaborative tasks. He showed that the design of the task had considerable impact on whether or not collaboration was successful. He mentioned the problem of “ownership of text” and found that tasks that involved the students in collecting ideas from other people through interviews etc, were more successful than tasks where students generated their own ideas as the students felt less ownership of the information and were this more willing to negotiate the text (Murray, 1992: 116).

Another technique was to get the students to each write on one aspect of a topic and then to work collaboratively to integrate the information to produce an overall report.

The evidence is mixed, but there is some evidence to suggest that collaborative writing helps to produce longer and more accurate text, but not necessarily more complex text. To replicate these benefits in an online environment, it would be important to provide an environment that allowed for negotiation of meaning, for peers to help each other, for the teacher to oversee the process and for well-designed collaborative tasks.

2.2 ESL writing instruction

In deciding whether or not to use technology in teaching collaborative writing skills and when deciding how to use it most effectively it is important to have a clear idea as

to what is involved in L2 writing. What do we currently know about how L2 writers compose? According to Silva (1990) most of the initial research done in L2 writing theory has been influenced by work done in the US on L1 writers, so this will be looked at first.

2.21 Controlled composition

In the 1960s the widely held view was that writing was best taught through the imitation and manipulation of model texts (Silva 1990 : 12). Pincas believed that writing skills were developed through imitating fixed patterns of language:

People find it difficult to accept the fact that the use of language is the manipulation of fixed patterns; that these patterns are learned by imitation; and that not until they have been learned can originality occur in the manipulation of patterns or in the choice of variables within the patterns.

(Pincas, 1962: 186 in Silva 1990 :12)

This type of writing was termed controlled composition and focussed on accuracy and correctness.

Raimes succinctly described this method of teaching writing:

Until recently, teaching procedures for ESL writers were clear: They were moved in lockstep fashion from the sentence to the paragraph, from controlled composition to guided essays, and only when they had achieved near-native proficiency were they allowed to really compose.

(Raimes, 1985: 322.)

The underlying principles of this teaching methodology was the idea that language learning was based on forming the correct habits, in line with the thinking of behaviourist psychology (Silva 1990).

2.22 Process driven composition—review of studies

In the 1970s, teachers and researchers became interested in what second language writers actually do when they write, with the idea that if we know what they do, we can influence the way that they do it (Hedge, 2000: 303).

Much of the work done was influenced by research into L1 composing processes, done in colleges in the US. The first major study that looked at the process of

composition and did not just analyse the product, was a study by Emig (1971, in Emig 1983). Emig used a case study approach to look at the composing processes of 8 high school senior students (above average) in the US. She found that the composing process of L1 writers is non-linear and complex. Another seminal work on L1 composing processes was a paper by Flower and Hayes (1981) examining the cognitive processes involved in composing. Their study looked at how the different thinking processes which influence us as we write interact while we are composing. They agreed that the consensus is that many factors influence us as we write, e.g.: purpose, audience, subject, relationship with audience, and our knowledge of lexis and syntax. But what was not clear was how these different forces interacted. They concluded that the composing process consisted of many distinct processes and subprocesses organised hierarchically. The three major writing processes were: planning (generating ideas, organising and goal setting), translating (putting ideas into visible language), and reviewing (evaluating and revising). They stressed the non-linear but recursive model of composing. Composing was not a linear process, made up a linear sequence of stages separated in time. Processes were not structured sequentially but were hierarchically organised, not in a fixed order but recursive with processes embedded in each other. The model of writing proposed by Flower and Hayes supported the findings of Emig (1971).

A view of writing that caught the imagination of many teachers was that writing was an act of discovery. This is mentioned by many researchers (Emig, 1977; Flower and Hayes 1981; Zamel, 1983; Raimes, 1985). When we start to write we do not know exactly what we will put down on paper. We have a goal, but it is in the act of writing that our ideas develop. Perl (1980) like Flower and Hayes found *unskilled* as well as *skilled* writers discover their ideas in the process of composing. Writing is not just a means of showing our learning it is a tool for learning.

Do writers writing in an L2 use similar recursive composing processes? Do they also develop ideas as they write? Zamel investigated this in 1983 and her influential work influenced L2 writing instruction. Using a case study approach she investigated the composing processes of six advanced ESL students. The students were observed while composing a piece of expository writing, data was collected during the writing/observation sessions, they were interviewed at the end of the study and their essays were recorded. She set out to find some answers to the following questions:

How do writers write? How do their ideas seem to get generated? What happens to these ideas after they are recorded? To what extent do these writers attend to the development and clarification of these ideas? To what extent and at what point during the process do they deal with more mechanical matters?

(Zamel, 1983: 169)

Her findings revealed, that for L2 writers, composing is also a non-linear, exploratory and generative process. She found, for example, that thinking, brainstorming, and note taking took place after the writing began, showing that planning is not something that only occurs before writing starts but that it something that writers do over and over and again while they are composing (Zamel 1983 :172). She also found that students edit their writing as they were writing. She concludes that “ESL advanced writers understood that composing involves the constant interplay of thinking, writing and rewriting.” (1983:172). Her conclusions were that composing in an L2 is similar to composing in a L1.

Where she did find differences was between skilled and unskilled L2 writers. In the students she observed she found that the least skilled writer paused so often, after having written such short bits of text that the writing was disjointed. She hypothesised that the writer was caught up with issues of grammatical accuracy before they had actually expressed what they were trying to say. She observed that the more skilled writers dealt with surface level features towards the end of the process. The more skilled writers developed strategies for coping when they had lexical or syntactic problems, so that these types of problems did not impede the composing process. For example, they might use their L1, circle a word or phrase that was problematic or leave a blank space. This corroborated with Flower and Hayes (1981) descriptions of skilled and unskilled L1 writers.

Her interviews with the students revealed that students started off with some overall general idea of their goal but did not know in particular what they were going to say. They also said that the writing itself helped them to discover their ideas. Some of the writers understood the importance of anticipating what the reader needed to know.

2.23 Needs of L2 writers—differences between L1 and L2 writers

While Zamel (1983) found differences between skilled and unskilled L2 writers, Raimes (1985) was looking to see if there were any differences between unskilled L1 and L2 writers. Her examination of the literature found that unskilled L1 writers:

- took less time to plan (Pianko, 1979)
- their plans are less flexible (Rose 1980)
- they rescan their work less frequently and when they do they concentrate on surface level errors rather than on content (Perl 1979, Sommers 1980, Faigley and Witte (1981)
- there is little difference between the first draft and the final draft (Perl 1979)
- they do not consider the reader (Flower 1979)

These findings had been used as a basis for new methods in teaching writing to L1 writers. Raimes wanted to find out to what extent we can treat L2 writers like native speakers of the language. Can the same methods be used? She was doubtful as she pointed out that any one who has tried to write something in a second language realises that the process of writing in an L2 is very different from writing in our L1 (Raimes, 1985 : 232).

Raimes (1985) studied 8 unskilled writers (their writing proficiency was based on a holistically scored university-wide writing test). She used a case study approach, collecting data via think aloud protocols, observations, questionnaires and interviews. She found differences between her subjects and the L1 subjects of Pianko (1979) and Perl (1978). She found that her subjects wrote more and were more committed to the task. They were not as a group preoccupied with error and editing, they were more concerned with getting ideas down on paper. Raimes found that no clear profile of an unskilled ESL writer emerged from her study.

Raimes (1985) concluded that although there are some similarities between unskilled L1 and L2 writers, e.g. both compose recursively, there are also many differences.

The think-aloud tapes and the transcriptions showed that composing was laborious and painful. She recommended that we need to give students more time, time for attention to vocabulary, as this is needed to generate, develop and present ideas. In

fact less proficient L2 writers compared with more proficient L2 writers and compared with unskilled L1 writers need more of everything:

more time, more opportunity to talk, listen, read and write in order to marshal the vocabulary they need to make their own background knowledge accessible to them in their L2; more instruction and practice in generating, organizing, and revising ideas; more attention to the rhetorical options available to them; and more emphasis on editing for linguistic form and style. Attention to process is thus necessary but not sufficient.

(Raimes, 1985: 250)

Raimes believed that although it is important to teach strategies for writing as a process this is not sufficient, we need to also focus on other skills when giving writing instruction. We cannot treat ESL writers as if they were unskilled L1 writers.

This idea that a process approach is not sufficient is also voiced by Silva (1993) and Hinkel (2006). They stress that it is not enough to teach strategies for writing.

Silva (1993) who looked at 72 research reports comparing L1 and L2 writing products and processes concluded that although L1 and L2 writing is similar in their broad outlines—both employ a recursive composing process, involving planning, writing and revising, to develop their ideas and find the appropriate rhetorical and linguistic means to express them—there are significant difference between the two. Crucially, L2 composing was clearly more difficult and less effective; and a closer look reveals important differences in the processes of planning, transcribing and reviewing. Some differences in the writing process he mentions from the literature are that:

- L2 writers did less planning at the global and local levels.
- They devote more attention to generating material, but his generation was more difficult and less successful
- Transcribing (producing written texts) was more laborious, less fluent and less productive.
- Spent more time referring back to an outline or a prompt.
- Exhibited more concern and difficulty with vocabulary.
- Pauses were longer and more frequent.

- L2 writers wrote at a slower pace.
- Produced fewer words of written text.
- Involved less reviewing

(Silva, 1993: 661 - 662)

He also mentioned differences that were found in written text features:

- Fluency—there is strong evidence to suggest, that L2 writing is a less fluent process.
- Accuracy—L2 writers make more errors overall. More morphosyntactic errors, more lexicosemantic errors, more errors with verbs, prepositions, articles and nouns.
- Quality—A number of studies showed that L2 texts were less effective (achieved lower holistic scores).
- Structure—there are distinct organizational patterns in the different texts of different languages.

(Silva, 1993: 662 – 663)

Hinkel (2006) found that many teachers and researchers advocated the integration of grammar and vocabulary with L2 writing instruction to enable writers to communicate meaningfully and appropriately. She noted how L2 writing pedagogy is putting more emphasis on the need to integrate bottom-up and top-down skills. This corresponds with the current trend for teaching integrated skills.

2.24 Implications for teaching

L2 writers are similar to L1 writers in that they write recursively, but they need considerably more support and more time. We must not just teach the process of composing; within writing instruction there also needs to be a focus on other language skills—grammar, vocabulary, genre. Tasks designed for L2 writing classes need to take this into consideration.

How has an interactive framework—an environment where students get feedback, can ask for help, can discuss topics and share ideas— for writing been created in a traditional classroom? How can we teach the strategies for planning, revising and editing? How do we help them develop a sense of audience? How do we provide

timely and appropriate support to students so that they do not get too frustrated with the complex messy process of writing?

One of the ways teachers have provided for support and interaction is through conferencing and writing workshops. Conferencing can take several forms, in can be done through writing workshops, Hedge (2000) describes a procedure of the teacher going round talking with individual students about their work as they write. Hyland (2003) sees conferences as one-to-one discussions outside class time.

Another technique for increasing interaction and feedback is through peer feedback. The concept of giving feedback to writing is associated with the idea of audience and reader. In the real world, we write with a purpose, e.g., it could be to inform, entertain or persuade; our general purpose is to interact with a reader or readers. In the classroom, often the only reader is the teacher and their reason for reading a student's writing is to correct and evaluate it. Most teachers agree that to become successful writers, students need to be able to develop a sense of who they are writing for. One way of providing an authentic audience is by getting students to read and respond to each other's writing. Feedback at the drafting stage is useful as it helps to point out any aspects of the text which are not clear. White and Arndt (1991: 117) explain how this interaction with a potential reader is beneficial as it helps students to develop critical skills and become more observant readers of their own work. However, many teachers and writers point out that students need to be taught strategies for responding to other students' texts. Tribble (1996) mentions how many students recognise that it is easier to see errors in other students' texts than in your own.

2.3 How can technology help to create a learning environment that supports collaborative writing?

Writing is complicated and a slow process and one of the problems with conferencing and peer feedback is the time that it takes. Most teachers would agree that L2 writers need to write in a supported environment, but there is often not the time to do all the related writing activities: discussion, planning, writing, reviewing, conferencing and peer feedback in the classroom. Would it not be useful if some of these activities could be done outside the classroom, without them being unsupported, solitary activities? How has technology helped?

First of all, I will look at how computer-mediated communication technology has helped interaction in the language classroom.

2.31 Social Web

There are a variety of software tools that people use to communicate using computers. Some of these tools, e.g. instant messaging, are synchronous—when you send a message you expect to get a reply immediately. But most of them are asynchronous, you would expect some delay before getting a reply, e.g. e-mail, text conferences, bulleting boards, and weblogs. Communication in the forms of CMC discussed below are in written form via the keyboard. How can computer-mediated communication contribute to language teaching and learning?

2.32 Differences between face-to-face and CMC

Many teachers and researchers report that CMC helps learners to reflect and plan on their contributions to discussions.

For example, Kern (2006) studied a class of university students studying French and found that one of the advantages of CMC (email) was that it gave the learners ample opportunity to focus on form and content. Other researchers have also found that contributions made via CMC were more complex than contributions done in face-to-face discussion. Crystal pointed out that the asynchronous nature of the communication:

gives the students time to read, understand, and respond, without the pressures of real time communication

(Crystal, 2001: 234).

Warschauer (1997) found that the language used was more lexically and syntactically correct than face-to-face discussion, probably due to the written nature of CMC which allowed for more planning.

Warschauer (1996) reported that another benefit was that online discussions were more balanced than face-to-face discussions, there was less dominance by vocal students or by the teacher. He found that everybody, even the shy learners, expressed themselves. A possible explanation is that since everyone can contribute at once and you do not have to negotiate turn taking, it gives everyone an equal chance to contribute. I would like to suggest that it is possible that these differences may also

apply to writing collaboratively online. Because the students are not negotiating face-to-face, it may have the effect that the construction and editing of text is done in a more balanced way, i.e. not being dominated by the most vocal member of the group, or by the person perceived to have greater status.

Another reported benefit of CMC is that it provides opportunities for students to write for a real audience. Kern (2000) makes the interesting point that synchronous conferencing develops an interactive perspective to writing, students read other students contributions in order to be able to respond and write with the view of being read by others, they are writing for a clearly defined audience. When they write they are thinking about how someone might respond to what they have written and are already thinking up a counter argument.

Synchronous conferencing supports ‘readerly’ writing: participants not only ‘read to write’ (by paying close attention to other points in order to respond) but also ‘write in order to be read’ by others.

(Kern, 2000: 242)

This could also be a possible benefit when writing collaboratively and publishing on a wiki.

2.33 Collaborative writing on computers

When collaborative writing is done via paper, even if the writing was originally composed on a computer, the reader cannot easily edit the paper and interact with the other writer (Warschauer 1997). While when writing online, Warschauer points out all writers and editors can access the same document, without being confined by time or space. A further advantage of a text-based mode is that it allows for reflection while working in an interactive framework (Warschauer 1997).

Another benefit of working on computers, since it provides a variety of tools, is it allows for multi-tasking. Jones (2004: 27; in Kern 2006: 189 – 190) describes how younger computer users have been observed to rarely use computers to do only one thing at a time and he coined the term “polyfocality” to mean simultaneously following multiple attentional tracks. Could collaborative writing online exploit this capability? Could students be composing, discussing topics and using an online dictionary all at the same time?

2.4 New web tool for publishing on the web—wikis

This study is investigating the use of wikis, for collaborative writing in the L2 writing class. It is important to clarify what exactly this software allows you to do.

2.41 What is a wiki?

Wikis are websites that allow you to edit and add information to their web pages. The wiki software used on these sites allows you to create and edit pages using a browser—e.g. Internet Explorer or Safari—, and you do not need any specialist skills or software to create web pages or maintain a wiki website. (Wikipedia June 2006).

An example of a wiki is the Wikipedia encyclopaedia at www.wikipedia.com. In August 2006 Wikipedia had more than one million entries in English and according to a report by Gary Younge in the Guardian (9 August 2006) is the 17th most popular site on the Internet. It is an open-access encyclopaedia, with thousands of contributors.

Wiki tools are easy to use, Lamb looking at how wikis have been used in educational organisations, reports that “technical support and training was minimal: at most one hour of instruction was needed.” and more importantly “Even confirmed technophobes have grasped and mastered the system quickly.” (Lamb 2004: 40).

One of the core features of a wiki is that it stores chronologically every version of a document that has been saved. So if someone has vandalised an article it is easy to return it to its previous state. Not all wikis use the same levels of security, some wikis are totally open and allow anyone to add and makes changes to documents on the site. You can also set up a wiki so that access is restricted to only certain groups or individuals. (Lamb, 2004)

The structure of information on a wiki is generally different from other websites. It does not have a hierarchical structure, although the front page of the site normally shows links to all the other pages on the site, the main form of navigation is through the search box. Each page also has a list of recent changes made to the site. (Lamb, 2004).

The basic philosophy of a wiki website is that the information on the site is produced collaboratively by people whose only connection is frequently just a common interest. A piece of writing in a wiki is never a finished product as it can be altered by anybody

at any time. According to the “understanding wikis page” (at <http://writingwiki.org>) wikis oblige writers to view their writing in a different way from other online or printed publications. The difference between a wiki and other web pages is that wikis require that authors see their writing as part of a fluid, dynamic and collaborative process rather than as a stable, finished product (Lamb 2004).

Wikis have been used in education to support writing instruction (Lamb, 2004: 44) and there is a wiki site at —<http://teachingwiki.org>— which provides ideas, help and support for using wikis for teaching writing in higher education. Although wikis have been used to share information between teachers, according to Freedman (2006) there is not much documented about their use in education.

What are the benefits of introducing wiki technology into the L2 classroom? What aspects of wikis make them a useful tool in the writing classroom?

2.42 Examples of wikis in education

To get a better understanding of how they could be used in the L2 classroom two uses of wikis in education were examined. Unfortunately, no use of a wiki in second language teaching was found.

The High School Online Collaborative Writing wiki

Paul Allison, a high school teacher at the East Side Community School in Manhattan, US, has created a wiki for his writing classes. Each pupil has their own publishing space where they can write and publish individual work and they also work collaboratively on articles. (Allison, 2005). The article Latino Pride (See Appendix A) was written collaboratively by four students. A Dominican and a Puerto Rican student had been making fun of each other in class, and decided they wanted to write about what it meant to each them to be Dominican and Puerto Rican. Allison describes how the two boys P and A started the article from different computers in the computer room. Both boys writing about jokes and culture and what it means to be Puerto Rican and Dominican. Further sections were written by two other students.

Benkler describes the High School Online Collaborative Writing wiki:

Its outputs, in turn are not treated as exclusive property. They are instead subject to an increasingly robust ethic of open sharing, open for all others to build on, extend and make their own.

(Benkler, 2006)

St Ives Primary School VLE

Miles Berry is a Maths teacher at St Ives Primary school in Haslemere, Surrey, UK, and he set up a virtual learning environment (VLE) which combined: discussion forums, collaborative wordspaces and online assessment in order to find out if they were effective tools in Primary Schools. (Berry, 2005). Writing about the wiki in the VLE (Moodle) he wrote:

“Moodle also enables my class to work collaboratively at home. There’s a built-in wiki tool, so a group can work together on a mini website. My pupils used this for research homework, so that over the course of the weekend they put together a shared file about a bit of the subject, each contributing something and then refining the work of their peers. This has a great social impact, as they came to trust their classmates with their work, and learn as much from one another as other sources.”

(Berry, 2006)

Another use of the wiki was in English classes. One example of its use at St Ives, is where a class was asked to find the meaning of a list of words. The list was posted in the Moodle wiki page and each student had several words to research. They did this work from home writing up their definitions on the wiki. They then edited each other’s work, adding information and changing spelling and grammar. (McClellan, Guardian May 16 2006)

2.43 How can wikis act as an interactive environment that supports and encourage collaborative writing?

Teachers who have used wikis for the teaching of writing skills claim they are useful for the following reasons (from the Writing wiki: <http://writingwiki.org>):

- a real audience
- anonymity
- authentic communicative tasks
- allow for process driven composition—writing over a sustained period of time
- allow for a chance to reflect on what they are writing

- facilitate peer and teacher comments
- provide a collaborative environment for sharing information—each document can have multiple authors

2.5 Research questions and rationale

The description of wikis and their uses by teachers and writers in different areas of education would suggest that they have potential benefits for the teaching of collaborative writing to L2 students at Intermediate level. It provides an interactive framework for writing as it allows students to discuss ideas and comment on each other's writing. It provides a supportive framework as students can discuss problems with other students or with the teacher. Writing out of the classroom is no longer a solitary activity, as students can communicate with each other and the teacher. This is important as research has shown that L2 writing is a laborious and painful process.

Teachers have mentioned that writing collaboratively on a wiki changes students' attitude to writing; since the piece of writing is never finished and it can always be edited and improved (Allison, 2005). This could help students realise that writing is a complex, recursive process. The logistics of writing classes make it tempting to attempt to make the process of composing a linear one. First, we generate ideas, by for example, discussing the topic; then, we may draft a plan or an outline; then the students write and then it is corrected and changes made. Writing on a wiki, allows for discussion at any stage of the composing process. So even if the students are sitting at a computer, writing in the computer lab or from home, they could also be involved in an online discussion with other students. Many teachers have also mentioned that it does seem to motivate students to write. (Lamb, 2004)

But in order to use wikis to write collaboratively, students need to become familiar with new procedures and conventions. In terms of procedures they need to become familiar with how to navigate through the site, how to add and save text and how to edit and format it. They also need to know how to use the comments function and how to view the history of the document, to be able to see who contributed to the document and to know how to return a document to a previous version of the text. It adds a further complexity to an already complex activity. It is important to know if these added difficulties outweigh the potential benefits of the tool.

The main motivation for this study was because there are so many potential benefits and yet there has been little research into the use of wikis in L2. A subsidiary motivation was that this tool would allow a teacher to analyse the collaborative composing processes of a group of students.

Generally this study is an exploratory, heuristic one and was designed to explore the following:

- Does this motivate students to write or is a disincentive?
- What are students' attitudes to writing in this environment?
- What are the main problems for students writing in this environment?
- How do students respond to feedback from peers?
- What is the quality—level, style, complexity—and quantity of the writing?

Findings from this study might have implications for how wikis are used in the L2 classroom.

3. The investigation

3.1 Overview

This study is an attempt to explore the use of wikis for collaborative writing in L2 writing workshops. It is based on the assumption that it is only by studying how students interact with the technology: their attitudes to it, the way they compose; and analysing the results of their writing in this environment can we begin to effectively and appropriately use the technology for the teaching of collaborative writing.

3.2 Research approach

In order to answer these questions a case study approach was undertaken. This approach was selected as it allowed for an indepth study of the use of wikis to teach and support collaborative writing. Case studies are thought to be a useful research approach when one aspect of language learning is to be studied in depth (Bell, 2005: 10).

The investigation was done through a qualitative perspective: to obtain some insight into the use of this technology in the writing classroom and to explore whether or not

it was a useful tool for collaborative writing. The objective was to collect as rich data as possible, in different forms and from different perspectives—from both a teacher’s and students’ points of view and from the perspective of language learning, e.g. how accurate and complex is the text created.

In terms of taxonomy this was seen as an exploratory study, an initial investigation, a pilot study that would be followed by a more detailed one. The aim was not to test out theories and hypotheses but to observe how the technology was used in practice, and find out what kind of information could be obtained that would give some insight into how technology could be used effectively to teach and support collaborative writing. It was not trying to simply establish a cause and effect relationship in the use of technology but to gain some insight into how students and teachers react with this technology. It was hoped that the results of this study could help teachers:

- to design and structure tasks for this environment
- establish, guide and monitor interaction

In this case study a variety of methods were used in order to collect a rich source of data. The following data collection methods were employed:

- Pre-study questionnaires (Appendix B)
- Post-study questionnaires (Appendix C)
- Researcher diary/observation notes
- Interviews with both structured and unstructured elements (transcripts in Appendix D and E)
- Students written work
- Students comments and responses to comments
- History logs of edits to written work obtained from the wiki software

3.3 Limitations of case study approach

The results obtained from case studies are generally specific to the particular group studied, and the results are not generalisable to all L2 learners (Wallace, 1998: 168). Although the results will be limited and specific to this group of learners it is possible that the results may show some evidence that wikis are a useful tool in the L2 writing

classroom for collaborative work or evidence that shows the opposite. It may also be a useful approach for generating a hypothesis about how wikis support collaborative writing.

The case study approach has been used successfully by many researchers investigating L2 students writing processes and this study was influenced by the methods used by Zamel (1983) and Raimes (1985).

3.4 Research methods

3.41 Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were designed, one administered at the start and the other at the end of the study.

The pre-study questionnaire was distributed at the first session after the participants had been briefed on the purpose of the study, and had had the opportunity to ask questions about what was involved. They were informed about:

- the purpose of the study
- the type of data that was being collected
- how the data collected would be reported anonymously

The purpose of the briefing was to give participants some background information about the study; it was also done to solicit their cooperation. It was hoped that this would help set up a relationship of trust between the researcher and the participants before the study began.

Aims

The aim of the pre-study questionnaire was to obtain a better understanding of the participants background and language experience. It collected information about the type of writing they did in their L1 and L2, their familiarity with the use of computers and the Internet and it also collected some background information about the participants: age, nationality, number of years they had been studying English.

This information was used to help in the design of the writing tasks done in the workshops and to gauge how much computing help they would need.

The purpose of the post-workshop questionnaire was to supplement data obtained in the post-workshop interviews, to check that the data obtained by the two methods corroborated. The aim was to collect information about the students' experience of using the wiki environment.

Design

The questionnaire was designed to be as user friendly as possible, this was particularly important as the respondents would be responding in their L2.

In the pre-study questionnaire the majority of questions were multiple choice type questions, checking text boxes. There were also some Yes/No type questions and there were a couple of open questions to cover any issues that had not been covered in the closed questions.

In the post-workshop questionnaire the questions were of two types: Likert scale questions and a few open-ended questions. Likert scale questions were used as they allowed for different possible responses and gave some indication of strength of feeling. Although it is important to bear in mind that one person's "strongly agree" is not the same strength of feeling as another person's. A few open-ended questions, positioned at the end of the questionnaire were also used to obtain the students own personal opinions.

Questions on a similar topic were grouped together. The questionnaire was designed so that the layout has lots of white space with no dense areas of text.

Testing

Both questionnaires were tested out on a colleague and a non-native speaker to help identify questions which were ambiguous or difficult to interpret. And to ensure the questionnaire was user friendly.

3.42 Interviews

Questionnaires are useful for collecting, factual information. For example, whether students liked or disliked a particular task. They are not so useful for collecting more detailed information, e.g. why they liked or disliked the task. In this study it was important to collect data that was rich in detail. So interviews were the main data collection tool. Because this study is investigative and interpretive, some questions

would only emerge through the study itself, it was therefore decided that a semi-structured format—some topics and themes decided on beforehand but and not to stick to a rigid set of questions.

The aim was that some broad themes would be covered with all respondents but they would be encouraged to develop their own ideas.

The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed so attention could be given to the interview schedule and there would be no need to manually record responses. Notes of salient aspects of the interview were also made retrospectively after the interview.

The students were fully briefed on the purpose of the interview and informed about the the time it would take and its general format.

The agenda for the interview follows the advice of Stake for the qualitative interviewer (1995, in McDonough 1997: 184)

The qualitative interviewer should arrive with a short list of issue-oriented questions... The purpose for the most part is not to get simple yes and no answers but descriptions of an episode, a linkage, an explanation.

(Stake, 1995: 65 in McDonough 1997: 184)

Analysis

The transcripts were analysed qualitatively by looking for any emerging themes, and for any salient issues.

3.43 Researcher diary/observation notes

Since this was an exploratory study, with many unknown factors, for example, I had never set up a wiki or contributed to a wiki before. I wanted to record my feelings and reactions to working in this way and to record what I found useful and what the main problems were as they occurred. Elliott (1991:71 in McDonough 1997: 121) suggests that a diary should contain: anecdotes, introspective accounts of feelings, attitudes and motives and Bailey (1990: 215 in McDonough 1997: 122) describes a diary as a first person account of a language learning and teaching experience and then analysed for recurring patterns and salient events. This is what I attempted, as I thought it would be useful to have a written record of the experience that I could later reflect on.

Also in order to keep an account of salient features that occurred in the writing workshops, I made observation notes and notes of conversations with students at the end of each workshop and added these to the diary.

The diary and observation notes were written retrospectively so that it is more than likely that some things were forgotten and there were inaccuracies in the descriptions. I bore this in mind when reading through the accounts made.

3.5 Participants and setting

Six students were recruited for this study, four women and two men aged between 20 and 33, two were from Korea and four from Taiwan. They were all at Intermediate level and enrolled on Academic English classes at the Institute for Applied Language Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Five of them had studied English at school, and they were all highly motivated and were studying English in order to go on to study at a university in the UK. One of the students Chia-Hung said he had only been learning English for 5 months.

They all had competent ICT skills and all used the Internet on a regular basis, for communication and information. They all wrote regularly in their L1: letters, emails and reports. Two of the students kept a blog and a diary. All the students except for Chia-Hung also wrote regularly in English.

Attendance at the writing workshops was as follows:

Week 1: 2 students

Week 2: 5 students

Week 3: 3 students

The names of the students have been changed to protect their identity and to ensure anonymity. Two students Jia-xin and Sandra who attended three out of the four writing workshops were interviewed.

Jia-xin is a 33 year old researcher in the History of Architecture from Taiwan who plans to do a PhD in the History of Architecture at the University of Edinburgh. She learned English at school starting in Junior school. She started learning English again two years ago. She works as a researcher and does a lot of writing in Chinese, her first language. She occasionally writes letters and emails in English.

Sandra is a 25 year old kindergarten teacher from Taiwan who plans to do a Masters in TESOL at the University of Edinburgh. She has been learning English for eight years. She writes regularly in Chinese, her first language: letters, emails, essays and keeps a diary. She also writes regularly in English: letters, emails, essays, and short stories. She uses the Internet everyday to search for information, email, instant messaging and to listen to the BBC news.

3.6 Workshop and task design

The plan was to run four writing workshops in the computer labs in IALS. Each workshop would last an hour. The initial idea was that students would:

- write and publish collaboratively on the wiki
- keep a weblog, where they could record and reflect on their experience, and where teachers and learners could respond to each other.

After the first workshop it was decided to abandon the idea of keeping a weblog. It seemed too much for the students to learn to use two different online communication tools at the same time.

Activities would cover:

- pre-writing activities—finding ideas, discussion of the topic, brainstorming
- collaborative composing
- editing and redrafting
- reading and commenting on other participants writing

These activities would not be done in a linear sequence, for example, while composing students may decide to discuss ideas, or they may edit a previous paragraph.

Some of these activities would be done in the workshop and others would be done out of class in the students' own time. The types of activity done in the workshop and in the students' own time would vary from week to week.

The writing tasks would gradually require greater collaboration between the participants. I was interested to see how they interacted while composing collaboratively.

In the first workshop, the aim was to get the students used to reading and writing online. They read an article on the British Council Learn English Central website titled “Consumer Society”. They then read through other people’s online responses to this article. Later they discussed the topic and prepared a response of their own. They had the choice of doing this individually or together.

In the second and third workshops the aim was to get the students familiar with writing with the wiki tool and also introduced them to commenting to other people’s writing and responding to comments using the wiki comment feature. Students were encouraged to read and comment on each other’s work. Tribble (1996) and Storch (2005) mentioned how students found it easier to see errors in other people’s work than in their own. Feedback would help draw attention to incorrect language forms. I was also interested to see if students incorporated other students’ linguistic chunks—phrases, collocations—in their work and comments. When they noticed a gap in their knowledge did they borrow from their peers? (as reported by Warschauer , 1999) and did their writing become more fluent, accurate or complex as a result of comments?

In the final workshop the aim was for the students to write a short collaborative piece of writing in pairs. Students were asked to think about their own language learning experience and to write some words of advice for someone who is starting to learn English. Guidelines on how to go about it were provided. The wiki made it possible for the students to write in their own time from separate locations. The software would alert me when anyone contributed and I could offer help if needed and it would allow me to analyse the collaborative process.

3.7 Design of the wiki

A free wiki tool —PBWiki—was used and the wiki site was designed so that the students could easily access the following:

- the activities for each week
- their own personal writing space
- areas of collaborative writing space
- a link to wiki etiquette

- a link to help pages

As well as collaborative writing areas on specific writing topics, each student also had their own personal writing space.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Computer based studies make it easy to collect text data written by the students; the students were asked for their permission for their writing to be used in this study.

4. Findings—results, analysis and discussion

This study was an attempt to explore the use of wikis in L2 academic writing workshops.

4.1 Learning to use the software

Teachers and researchers agree that writing is the most difficult L2 skill to acquire, writing in one's L1 is complex, and writing in an L2 has the added complexities of the learner not having the language competence and being unfamiliar with the genres and styles of the written L2. To add to this mix, a yet a further complication in the form of technology, does this create problems for the students? What are their attitudes to writing in this environment? Was having to learn to use a computing tool in order to write an additional burden that made the whole process of writing too difficult? Was it a disincentive to write?

I had anticipated that the students would have difficulty learning to use the wiki software. I found from my observations of them using it for the first time in the workshops that they had no major problems using the software. When using the wiki for the first time, five of the students looked quite relaxed about it and mastered the basics in half an hour. They had some initial difficulties with creating links but were happy to ask me or a fellow student for help. One of the students found the whole experience very frustrating. I noticed that she did not ask for help and preferred to work it out for herself.

The pre-study questionnaires indicated that five students were competent users of the Internet (one student did not fill in the pre-study questionnaire). Observation of their use of computers in the workshops showed that they were adept at searching for

information on the Internet, had no problems reading online and were able to switch from one application to the next with ease. They all exhibited the ability to simultaneously do several tasks at the computer, what Jones (2004) calls “polyfocality”. For example, in a pre-writing activity where they were asked to read a passage on the Internet and take notes, four of the students started Word and while reading would cut and paste sections into a Word document. Many of them would also have a mail program open and would be checking their mail, in their L1. Chia-Hung the student with the lowest language proficiency (he had only been learning English for 5 months) was the most adept at using the wiki, language proficiency did not seem to be a barrier to using technology in the L2.

Students made use of other Internet based tools while doing the writing activities. One of the students, Jia-Xin, while reading an article which was hypertexted (clicking on a word would open up the relevant word in the online Cambridge Dictionaries) also had an online Chinese-English dictionary open which she used to check vocabulary. These students were all highly computer literate and were all competent users of the Internet. They were able to transfer the skills they had learnt from other applications.

In the interview with Jia-xin she mentions that most homes in Taiwan have an Internet connection. It is possible that, other students not so familiar with computers may have more problems with the software.

Jia-Xin was very slow at typing, and took much longer to do the tasks. She mentioned in the interview that she finds using a keyboard frustrating, and she is very slow at writing on a computer.

J: In English hmm I think both ok, because I type
English word is slowly and for example, when I 35
want to type “you” — Y O U— but I always put —U
O Y,— so, so sometimes make me when I use
computer to type English word out, very slowly yea
and when I use handwriting maybe I can hmm maybe
I can become writing quickly, hmm but I think the
exam question if I use computer I can make the paper
beautiful yea .. 40

G: Right, right.

S: You don't know where are them but maybe, maybe 40
because of that, you think hmmm maybe I need to do
more because if I do more I get more feedback.

This backs-up the findings of other research into the effects of CMC, for example the work of Kern (2000), who found that synchronous conferencing supports “readerly” writing—writing with the expectation of a response. Sandra thinks that writing on a wiki motivates one to write as there is the possibility of getting a real response.

Another student, Jia-xin, a researcher in Architecture in Taiwan, planning to do a PhD in the UK had a different view about online publication. She thought it would restrict what she wrote, she would not write about personal matters. It would seem that writing for a public audience and not just the teacher would make her more inhibited about what she wrote.

J: Hmm for me I think it depends on the situation, if I
have to write a piece of writing on wiki hmm I just
do writing because that is the rule but maybe I don't
write about myself more things, much things I just
write normal things. Because I think now, a lot of 95
people like to write something, in web site, blog, but
I don't write, because I feel it's about myself, it's
private, so for em I don't write. But if in the class the
teacher says I have to do that, I think I will do that,
the writing maybe just be about common things or
maybe I write about hmm how can I say, ah! for 100
example, I write something like argument. In Taiwan
if I write about argument ok.

As would be expected, students have different views about writing for a public audience, some feel inhibited while others are encouraged to write.

4.3 Interaction—feedback

The wiki has a feature that allows students to comment on other students work. In the workshops the students did an activity where they commented on two other students writing. This study explored students' attitudes to giving and receiving feedback in this way.

When asked whether they thought this was useful or not, Sandra saw this as a useful feature as she thought having difficulties pointed out could help students to make their work clearer.

S: Even more because you can't expect the person will
make some mistake which, which you'll expect or 80
something, or even, even when you find something
which is really strange but which you can't correct it.
You'll try to find a way to resolve the problem and
you'll ask your teacher or someone else, so I think you
will learn more 85

When asked how she would react to someone commenting on her work.

G: How would you feel about someone commenting on
yours, say if someone said "Oh I don't quite
understand this or they might say I think this is a very
good idea, but I'm not quite clear about that. Would
you be ok about that? 90

S: Yea, I will try to find the way to tell them what I mean

Jia-xin on the other hand saw potential problems, especially if the person whose work you were commenting on was a friend. She thought that it would be difficult to say that you disagreed with them on a particular topic.

J: Hmmm, it's difficult to say. For example I mean if in the classroom we are classmates, I can't write really my feelings, because sometimes maybe aah.. hmm.. I disagree with some students argument .. 165

G: Yes..

J: Maybe I can't use strong words to say something.

This attitude to giving peer feedback supports the findings of Carson and Nelson (1996) who found that Chinese students tried to maintain group harmony and avoided criticism of peer's work.

Wilhelm (1996) stresses the importance of developing trust and interpersonal relationships before embarking on collaborative learning and the need to give students guidelines on how to give peer feedback.

Jia-xin thought it would depend a lot on the topic, if it was a subject she did not have strong feelings about it would be ok. She seemed to see it as a potential for conflict which she would prefer to avoid. In the transcript below, G is the investigator and J is the student.

G: So if you disagreed strongly with something they had written you would feel uncomfortable about saying so..? 170

J: I think it depends on the situation so it is difficult to say. Maybe if hmm how can I say that.. if the argument is not really important, I just feel I disagree with that so maybe I couldn't say something but 175

maybe the argument, how to say..., hmm I have really stronger something maybe I will, maybe I will write something. So it depends on the situation and it's difficult to say.

She also felt uncomfortable about receiving comments, she thought that any negative comments would inhibit her writing and she suggests that she might delete anything that any one criticised. The tone in which the comment was made would have a significant effect on how she responded to it.

J: I think about that if the word is not very strong maybe I can explain my idea, if the student use stronger words to comment maybe I don't want to say something with them. Maybe I just delete.

4.4 Interaction—Discussion

Another feature of the wiki that was explored was how useful it would be for computer-mediated communication, for example, to use it for pre-writing discussions and exploration of ideas. What were the problems or advantages of writing in this way?

Sandra thought that there were advantages to having discussions online rather than face-to-face. She thought that this would help shy students and people would be less inhibited about giving their ideas.

G: You know how normally in the classroom, you could have a classroom discussion about a topic to get some ideas and so on. Do you think it would be useful in that way for exchanging ideas, hmm between different students instead of doing it face to face?

55

S: Yep maybe because sometimes, sometimes if we do something face to face maybe some of the students is shy to give them their opinion

60

G: Right, right..

S: Maybe if it's on the internet they will feel more free to do something and they will give you some idea which you didn't think about it but it's wonderful.

This supports the research done by Kern (2006), Warschauer (2006), Crystal (2001) who found that when face-to-face and online discussions are compared, the participation in a group of students is greater in the latter. The fact that the discussion is in a written form, instead of a spoken form may help more reticent students to participate.

But Jia-xin, thought that online discussions were difficult since you didn't get any paralinguistic clues.

J: I think face-to-face is more easier, because if I have some question, I can ask someone directly. If I use Internet, online maybe we need to type the words, yea, slowly, sometimes we need to think which word is more polite.

Maybe we don't have that meaning, maybe, for 245
example, maybe someone in the piece of writing or
email, maybe they think the student is impolite but
they don't have the meaning. Maybe, for example,
English, is not my first language so maybe I don't 250
know how to use ... is polite.

G: I see what your saying.

J: So, I can face-to-face to discuss maybe, it's no problem because I can see the people's face, I know the meaning, their meaning is not impolite.

255

Kern (2006) and Crystal (2001) mention the difficulties of writing without getting paralinguistic clues. In Jia-xin's case she is also aware of the fact that there are differences between the polite forms of spoken and written English.

4.5 Technology as a motivating influence

None of the students used the wiki in their own time. So there is no evidence that writing on a wiki is incentive in itself to write.

There is a range of possible reasons why they did not, for example, the 'homework' was set by a researcher and not their teacher, so they had not extrinsic motivation to do it; or they might have found it too difficult to work in that environment, with only 'virtual' support.

4.6 Collaborative writing

The aim of the workshops had been for the students to do a piece of sustained collaborative writing, but time and circumstances limited the amount of collaborative writing that was done.

Therefore, in will be in subsequent research, that the written work done on the wiki will be analysed for fluency, accuracy and complexity. The history logs, archived on the wiki will be analysed to see what kind of edits have been made. To find out whether the edits were on surface level errors, on content or on organisation. The wiki software should show how collaborative the writing had been, who had written which sections and who had edited what.

In the interviews the two students were asked their opinion about writing collaboratively. Sandra, thought that one problem was to ensure that all the students in the group were at the same level. Otherwise it would be too difficult to do. If students were are more or less the same level, she thought it would make writing easier as you could share ideas and share the work.

S: Hmm, .. I think for me if you want to put some students in groups then the first thing is the level. 100
Sometimes if you can have different level, you can't discuss something really clearly, they will be hmm I don't know, hmm something like that, you will be a struggle. You can't really, find, you can't really aim to something that you want to do. It's a kind of difficulty. 105

G: Right, so it has to be same level..

S: More or less..

G: More or less the same level

S: If the, the gap between two levels are too big, it will be too difficult. 110

G: It will be too difficult to do, ok, ok. So If it were that you were of a similar level, you would be quite happy to do that kind of assignment?

S: Yes, because you can always share your ideas with the other people, you don't need to think about the whole context or something, by your own, it will be easier to finish some work 115

Jia-xin on the other hand thought that it would very difficult to do a joint piece of writing as it is difficult to come to an agreement and that someone would have to compromise. It would be possible to do it in a language class because you would not be writing about your own academic subject, and so you would not feel so strongly about your own contribution.

J: But I think very difficult to, I mean hmm, two or three people to do a piece of writing, is very difficult because sometime, our argument are different, 200

G: Yea..

J: So maybe we can try that but I think sometime for me, I think it depend on situation. If the report is very important, is about my subject, maybe I will feel my argument or my opinion, I need to use my argument or my opinion, I don't want to use other. Yea, but 205
maybe I just study language here, I think it's ok,
hmm

The difficulties pointed out by Jia-xin corroborate what teachers have found when designing collaborative tasks. Murray (1992) describes how to avoid “ownership of text” by getting students to interview other people for ideas, rather than generating their own, as in this way they are happier to negotiate over text.

Weisband (1992, in Warschauer, 1997: 473) found it was more difficult to come to an agreement in online discussion than in face-to-face discussion. Her study found that in face-to-face discussions that the second and third speaker tended to agree with the first, while this did not happen online. It is therefore important to put some thought into the design of online collaborative tasks as the group dynamics of online discussions are different from face-to-face ones.

It is important to point out that these two students were talking from a theoretical perspective and not from any practical experience of doing this type of writing on a wiki.

4.7 Problem solving and discussion

Learning to use the software provided an opportunity for discussion and an authentic situation for using language. When showing the students how to use the software I

first did a short demonstration and then gave them the opportunity to play around with it. They were given the choice to work individually or in pairs, they chose to work individually but frequently got up to discuss things with other students. The student who was the most proficient with the software was Korean so the Taiwanese students had to speak to him in English. He also happened to be the student whose English was the least proficient, he had only been learning English for five months. I also found that he was very keen to discuss with me different aspects of the software and that this resulted in a lot of interaction and negotiation of meaning. Learning to use the software, therefore, also proved to be a communicative task that generated a lot of language.

4.8 How the technology helps the teacher

I had never contributed to a wiki before and this was the first time I set one up.

From the practical experience of using the wiki, I found that the advantages to a teacher were as follows:

- a straightforward way of creating an online learning environment, which combined areas for collaborative writing and interaction
- creating a website was unproblematic, structuring the text with headings and tables and creating links was relatively straightforward
- it was useful to be able to create links to other learning materials and tools—e.g. facilitates the integration of reading and writing activities, as you can link to articles from the wiki
- gives you an archive of all the students work
- you can paste all the students work into a Word file—useful for diagnostic purposes and for seeing what topics interest them
- you can see who has contributed what section of text and what kind of edits are made
- sends you an email when anyone has contributed to the wiki

The only problem found was that the wiki site looked different in different browsers.

4.9 How the technology helps the student

The questionnaire and conversations with students in the workshops showed that most students thought that wikis were useful for the following features:

- they can write from anywhere at any time
- they can make changes to their writing
- they have an archive of their writing
- they can make and receive comments
- they have a record of comments from the teacher and from peers
- they can see the comments received by other students
- other people can read their writing
- they can read the work of other students

5. Conclusion

5.1 Implications

The exploration of the use of wikis in a collaborative writing workshop, brought up several issues which need to be considered when setting up this kind of workshop and designing collaborative writing tasks to be done in this environment.

It is important to first find out the students' level of ICT competence in order provide the appropriate help and support, otherwise it could be a frustrating experience for the students.

Observations showed that in this group of students who were experienced users of the Internet, they were able to do work on several applications at the same time and had no problems switching between different software tools. When designing tasks, for students who handle technology with ease and confidence, it would be useful to exploit their capability for using different applications at the same time and have them make use of online tools such as dictionaries, a thesaurus, search engines etc.

The exploration showed that are different views about writing for a public audience. One of the students thought she would not write about personal issues in such an environment. Many proponents of online publishing suggest that a real audience is an

incentive to write and suggest that the teacher is not a 'real' reader but an evaluator and marker, not interested in the content but just the language accuracy of the text. In many classrooms the teacher is also a valued and trusted reader; the teacher is valued both as someone with whom to share ideas and thoughts as well someone whose judgement on the quality of the writing is appreciated. A public audience may introduce inhibiting factors. It is important to bear this in mind when designing collaborative writing tasks. Writing on a wiki may be more suitable for discursive rather than personal and reflective writing.

The findings of this exploration also suggested that different individuals and cultures have different attitudes to peer feedback. One student suggested that if she got negative feedback she might delete what she had written. When introducing peer feedback in a collaborative environment it is important to prepare the students for this, the process needs to be discussed and guidelines given so that the students are not uncomfortable about giving or receiving feedback.

The findings of the investigation also suggest that it might be necessary to overcome negative views of writing collaboratively. Before starting such a project the underlying principles and the associated benefits and problems of writing collaboratively need to be discussed. It is also important that tasks are designed to minimise the effect of "ownership of text".

5.2 Problems

One of the major problems with the workshops was that there was insufficient time to cover all the activities required for doing collaborative writing. In future investigations it would be better to integrate the "wiki" writing tasks with other classroom activities.

These were not my students and they were working together as a group for the first time. Establishing trust and cohesion in the group, and confidence between the researcher and the students, took time to achieve. In any further studies, this kind of exploration could be done more easily with one's own students. Both Zamel(1983) and Raimes (1985) in their case studies worked with their own students. Zamel explains that the benefits are clearly described by Perl:

First by selecting my own students, I would know firsthand what they were studying.... and thus would be able to construct topics for the writing sessions

that legitimately reflected classroom work. Second, from working with, relating to, and getting to know my students in the daily, interactive manner that enhances teaching, I would most likely develop the rapport and trust necessary for case study, process research.

(Perl, 1980: 17 in Zamel , 1883: 171)

In this study the students were introduced to too many unfamiliar things over too short a time: researcher, tasks, technology and other students.

5.3 Future explorations

Wikis seem to have the potential for being a useful tool for facilitating collaborative writing in the L2 classroom; and the emerging roles of wikis as online collaborative tools for sharing information, make it important that we investigate their potential more systematically. There are many questions that need to be explored, for example,

- what roles peers and teachers have in learning in this environment
- how task design affects the amount and type of collaboration in this environment
- the effect of collaborative writing on the accuracy, fluency and complexity of the text produced
- to find out how to effectively integrate this tool and new emerging technology into the classroom so that Information and Communication Technology are an integral aspect of language learning use.

Finally, online communication is now an integral part of the way we communicate and share knowledge with friends, colleagues and virtual communities. As teachers we need to ensure that our students can participate effectively in these mediums—in these new and emerging electronic genres—which are both news ways and new forms of writing.

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Appendix A

(From the High School Online Collaborative writing wiki retrieved 20 August 2006 from http://schools.wikia.com/wiki/Latino_pride)

Latino pride

Pride and Prejudice

- _ Cops
- _ Latino pride
- _ Overweight Discrimination
- _ Punished for being gay
- _ Women and society

edit box

The Story behind this article

At times, Latinos fight with each other. People discriminate. But why would those of us who are Dominican ever have any problems with Puerto Ricans? Why would Puerto Ricans have to argue with other Latinos like Dominicans, Mexicans and others? Why isn't there more Latino pride?

Contents

[hide]

- 1 Joking comes back to you
- 2 My group is the best!
- 3 You have to know your history to know yourself
- 4 Differences are good
 - 4.1 Puerto Ricans on Dominicans
 - 4.2 Dominicans on Puerto Ricans

4.3 All The Same

5 Do the research

6 External Links

[edit]

Joking comes back to you

It's not nice to be joking around with other communities. Some might be serious with the topic and they wouldn't like being discriminated against because of the clothes they wear. The point is that if you don't like what they are saying about your country, why would you do the same thing back? That will make you just like them.

You know that you don't like when somebody makes fun of your race! When you there those stupid comments about you, and your people it hurts.

Especially when you want to go and insult them back. When Puerto Ricans insult Dominicans they think it's funny when Dominicans try and insult them back they get all angry because they don't like it. Well who ever does that should realize that it how a lot of other people feel when you insult them!

[edit]

My group is the best!

Being Puerto Rican is the best thing in the world. Puerto Ricans have the best Spanish food. They know how to cook! They know how to dress. Puerto Ricans have a unique way of speaking Spanish, cooking foods and talking. Being Dominican is a privilege. Being Dominican is not just saying you are Dominican. Being Dominican means to belong to a society of people that shares the same habits, language, culture and most important of all, a history. To be Dominican is to know what the word liberty means, to know that no other country can come to you and tell you what to do.

[edit]

You have to know your history to know yourself

If you don't know your own history and call yourself Dominican or Puerto Rican or whatever other race you belong to, you cannot call yourself a member of that group. You have to know your history to know yourself and then you can call yourself a Dominican. You can't let anybody put you down based on your race, when they don't know the positive side of where you come from. It shouldn't be a problem for Puerto Ricans and Dominicans to get along. A lot of Puerto Ricans have Dominican friends, and plenty of us are half and half, which allow you to choose which you, want to be.

[edit]

Differences are good

[edit]

Puerto Ricans on Dominicans

Dominicans have their ways of doing things. Sometimes Puerto Ricans wish they were Dominican, because they are considered men at a young age, and they get to do whatever they want. Puerto Ricans can do whatever, but Dominicans like to lay back and chill. Dominicans like to be hyper. They like going to clubs and starting problems but when they do fight they're dangerous and they always carry knives(like all Latinos). Dominicans, like a typical Latino are hot-blooded and full of pride. Dominicans have their own gang called D.D.P DOMINICANS-DON'T-PLAY.

On the other hand Dominicans are mad cool people to chill with. They are Latino just like Puerto Ricans, Mexico, Cuban, Honduras, Nicaragua, and all

them other Spanish speaking people. No one should be saying that someone is better than someone else because they Puerto Rican because we all crap the same why, we all cry, we all eat, we all human so no one better than someone else.

[edit]

Dominicans on Puerto Ricans

Puerto Ricans love representing their country because they fought hard -- some are still fighting -- to try to become independent. True Puerto Ricans are grateful; they are down for their "Isla" no matter what. Puerto Ricans love their people because most of them look mad good and have respect for themselves and for others. Puerto Ricans love their food and everything else that Puerto Rico has to offer. They have nothing against Dominicans but major respect.

Any talk about Dominicans and Puerto Ricans having beef is ridiculous because we're all human beings and live the same way. We bleed, starve, hurt, and cry the same way everyone else does. So any yapping about Dominicans vs. Puerto Ricans is all nonsense!

I hate when Puerto Ricans say that they are better than Dominicans and when Dominicans say that they are better than Puerto Ricans. Every one who thinks they are better than everybody else, you need a reality check! We are all they same, we are all Latinos when you talk about one race, it will lead back to you. There is no difference between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans we are the same, except you come from a different country, which is the same exact thing.

[edit]

All The Same

D.R. and P.R.

I don't like the way Puerto Ricans write and sound like they are best thing on Earth, because Dominicans are better. I think that everyone is the same. I don't see the difference between Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. We should learn how to treat people the same way. Whether they are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Mexicans, or Ecuadorians. No matter where you are from we are All The Same.

[edit]

Do the research

Some people wonder if young people are willing to do the research about their cultural background. To say that you are this or that without doing the research about your cultural heritage is wrong. P.R. or D.R.? Sure there is a pride that comes from belonging to a group/place/culture, but we can never position one group ahead or better than the other. That would be a huge waste of time.

No group is should be devalued to big up another group. There are far more similarities than difference, and that is the exact reason people of color stay divided and stuck in this nightmare called America. Other's paradise can often be our nightmare because we can't see the value of unity and support. We all should be pushing toward being the most loving humans we can be regardless of our cultural backgrounds. This is not to say that you don't study and learn as much as you can about who you are and your lineage, but there should be no hate because we are FAMILY!

[edit]

External Links

_ Briones, Janill "Don't Call Me Puerto Rican: I'm Ecuadorian."

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- _ What's in Wikipedia for "Latino pride"
- _ Wikipedia:Latino
- _ Yesenia Espaillat. "More Similar Than Different: Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Cuba." A paper written in Caribbean history and politics classes taught by Adjunct Assistant Professor, Moses Seenarine of the Black and Puerto Rican Studies department at Hunter College, City University of New York, from 1998 to 2000.

Category: East Side Community High School, NYC

(From the High School Online Collaborative writing wiki retrieved 20 August 2006 from http://schools.wikia.com/wiki/Latino_pride)

Appendix B—Questionnaire

I am investigating the use of the web software—wikis in TEFL Academic Writing classes.

The aim of this questionnaire is to find out about:

- your writing skills in both your first language and English
- your use of computers and the internet

All responses will remain anonymous. Thank you very much for your participation.

1. Nationality:

2. Age

3. Sex:

Male Female

4. What is your first language?

5. How long have you been learning English?

6. Why are you learning English?

Writing

Writing in your first language

1.a	Do you write letters?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
1.b	How often?	Every day: <input type="checkbox"/> At least: once a week <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/>

2.a	Do you write emails?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
2.b	How often?	Every day: <input type="checkbox"/> At least: once a week <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/>

3.a	Do you write essays/reports?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
3.b	How often?	Every day: <input type="checkbox"/> At least: once a week <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/>

4.a	Do you keep a blog?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
4.b	How often do you write?	Every day: <input type="checkbox"/> At least: once a week <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/>

5.	What other types of writing do you do?	
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Writing in English

1.a	Do you write letters?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
1.b	How often?	Every day: <input type="checkbox"/> At least: once a week <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/>

2.a	Do you write emails?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
2.b	How often?	Every day: <input type="checkbox"/> At least: once a week <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/>

3.a	Do you write essays/reports?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
3.b	How often?	Every day: <input type="checkbox"/> At least: once a week <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/>

4.a	Do you keep a blog?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
4.b	How often do you write?	Every day: <input type="checkbox"/> At least: once a week <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/>

5.	What other types of writing do you do?	
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Use of the Internet

6.	Do you use the Internet?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
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If yes:

7.	How often do you use the Internet?	Every day: <input type="checkbox"/> At least: once a week <input type="checkbox"/> once a month <input type="checkbox"/>
8.	What do you use it for?	Searching for information <input type="checkbox"/> Buying things <input type="checkbox"/> Booking tickets <input type="checkbox"/> Communication: email <input type="checkbox"/> msm <input type="checkbox"/> Any other uses?

If no:

Do you have access to a computer?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you use a computer?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

If you have access to a computer:

Do you use a word processor?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
What else do you use a computer for?	

Appendix C—Post-Questionnaire

I am researching the use of new web technology—wikis in the L2 English language class.

Wikis are websites that you can easily edit and add your own pages to.

I would like to ask you to help me in my research by answering the following questions about the use of wikis in English language classes. I am doing an MSc in Language Teaching and this will help me in my research.

I am interested in your personal opinion.

Thank you very much for your help.

I. Many teachers are using wikis in their classrooms. Below are listed some of the activities that they can be used for. Please could you indicate how useful you think each of the following activities would be to your language learning.

	Very useful activity	Useful activity	Not a useful activity	Not useful at all
1. Edit entries on public information wikis, e.g Wikipedia or Wikitravel.				
2. Make a collection of useful sites for language learning.				
3. Make a collection of useful sites on a topic you are discussing or writing about.				
4. Work together with other students to create a vocabulary list.				
5. Create a book club where you and other students can read and discuss the same book.				
6. Create a book review journal where you and other students review and comment on books they have read.				
7. Write about a topic you are interested in over several weeks.				
8. Do a piece of writing together with other students.				
9. Research a topic alone and write up what you find out.				
10. Research a topic with other students and write up what you find out.				

II. Do you think it would be useful if the teacher:

	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all
1. Put audio files (podcasts) of sample language from classroom lessons online				
2. Provided reading texts with comprehension exercises online				
3. Published examples of good student writing online				
4. Provided additional information about topics online				

What else would be useful?

--

III. Do you think it would be useful if the students used the wiki:

	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Not useful at all
1. To comment on class activities				
2. To comment on other students' work				
3. To ask the teacher about language questions				
4. To ask other students about language questions				

What else would be useful?

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IV. Using new web tools involves using computers and computer programmes.

Please tick whether you like or dislike the following features of wikis

	Like	Dislike	No opinion
1. It allows me to save all my written work in one place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. It makes it easy for me to re read my written work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. It allows me to read other students written work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Other students can read my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Anybody online can read my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I can contribute to it anywhere (at home, from the language school, from an internet cafe)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Other people can comment on my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I can make changes to my written work, (e.g.add to it, change vocabulary, correct grammatical mistakes, reorganize it.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I can create links to other websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I can add pictures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I can comment on other people's writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I can add audio files	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

V. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements about wikis:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither Agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. It is easy to create headings					
2. It is easy to create links to other pages					
3. It is easy to create a new page					
4. It is easy to create comments					
5. It is easy to save your work					
6. It is an easy tool to use					

VI. What are the most useful aspects of wikis and/or blogs?

VII. What are the least useful aspects of wikis and/or blogs?

VIII. If you think there are things that have been missed out, please write in the space below:

Nationality:

Age:

Sex: Male **Female**

Appendix D

Jia xin transcript

- G: I just wanted to ask you to start with not to talk about the workshops at the moment but just to talk about your own feeling about using a computer to write. 1
- J: aha 5
- G: The difference between using a computer to write and using pen and paper to write.
- J: ahmm
- G: In your own work in Chinese, do you normally write on a computer or do you normally write with pen and paper? 10
- J: Eh, I think I prefer to use hm computer because I think my work is not beautiful..
- G: Oh oh your writing?
- J: Yes, so I prefer to use computer and I think hmm if I use computer to do my homework or my report, reader can read clear how can I say I can hmm hmm sorry I forgot how to say and maybe I can make the paper beautiful and clear. 15
- G: You mean like the layout? The way that the text is laid out on the paper? Or..? 20
- J: Aaah.. hmm how can I say? For example, I can choose the word size, and maybe colour yes something like that
- G: Yes so you can use different kind of fonts and .. 25
- J: Yes and different type if I think something is important I can hmm hmm

- G: You can use bold?
- J: Yes and I can control the ... on the page, and the what can I say, the margin. 30
- G: Yes the margins, yes ok that's ..
so in chinese you would prefer to work, to do it on the computer, in English how would you prefer to do it?
- J: In English hmm I think both ok, because I type English word is slowly and for example, when I want to type "you" — Y O U— but I always put —U O Y,— so, so sometimes make me when I use computer to type English word out, very slowly yea and when I use handwriting maybe I can hmm maybe I can become writing quickly, hmm but I think the exam question if I use computer I can make the paper beautiful yea .. 35
40
- G: But you find that when you are using a computer to write English you type more slowly than when you write. You can write faster. 45
- J: But I think person, in my country, I think hmm, students in which subject is about Business they learn how to use the keyboard, and I think their work is very fast. But the students whose subject is not Business we don't learn like that how so I do the work very slowly 50
- G: That's an interesting point. To talk about the writing tool the wiki, the software tool that we used in the workshop,. Did you find any problems writing in that way? Did you find any problems? It's different from using a Word processing package, it's different from using Word, when you were typing in the wiki, 55
- J: You mean it's about grammar, or spelling, or just the

skill. You mean your question is about the use of computer skill or English.

G: First about the computer skill, let's talk about the computer skill, whether you found that was hmm whether you felt that hindered your writing? 60

J: OK , if it's about computer skill I don't think that is a difficulty. I think Taiwanese students are good at computer skills, I think it's just about computer skill, It's no problem. 65

G: Exactly the same as if you were using any other software

J: At the beginning the difficulty is about English word. Before we always use Chinese in Taiwan but now we need to change the word to English. 70

G: on, on the menus?

J: Beginning maybe we sometimes need to check the words in the dictionary but maybe when we are, when we get used to then I think it is easier. 75

G: Right, I just wanted to make sure that that wasn't a problem. Hmm right the difference between writing with the wiki and to say writing with for example Word is when you published it, when you saved it, that piece of text, that piece of writing, anybody could read it, right because it was in the Web and anyone in the class could read it or in theory anyone looking on the WWW could read it. Was that a problem for you? To think that when you are writing anyone can read it? Because normally when you write, you are the only person who can see it and then the only other person who can see it is whoever you give the text to. And normally in the classroom the only person to read your work would be the teacher and maybe some other people in the class. But in .. hmm but when you're writing on a wiki, in theory anyone can read it. 80
85
90

J: Hmm for me I think it depends on the situation, if I have to write a piece of writing on wiki hmm I just do writing because that is the rule but maybe I don't

- write about myself more things, much things I just write normal things. Because I think now, a lot of people like to write something, in web site, blog, but I don't write, because I feel it's about myself, it's private, so for em I don't write. But if in the class the teacher says I have to do that, I think I will do that, the writing maybe just be about common things or maybe I write about hmm how can I say, ah! for example, I write something like argument. In Taiwan if I write about argument ok. 95
- G: That style of essay , not something personal,
- J: It's not about my life, so it's ok. 105
- G: That's very interesting.
- J: But most important here maybe but not in Taiwan....
- G: Sorry I didn't hear because people were talking..
- J: Ok, I mean here is Britain, not in Taiwan, maybe I can write, I'm not sure in Taiwan can I do that. Yea, yea.. 110
- G: Why, what would be the difference between Britain and Taiwan?
- J: Because I think Taiwan maybe my friends, or someone knows me can read my .. sometimes I don't like..
- G: Here people don't known you, yes I can understand 115
- G: Ok so in the workshop we did some writing, not a lot, some writing on the wiki, how would you feel if say for instance it was used as part of your normal language class, and the teacher gave you homework to do, any homework you had to do , you were asked to do it in the wiki. How would you feel about that? if you had to do it at home hmm .Let me give you an example, say for instance, in the class you had had a discussion on a topic, say a discussion about private and public medicine, you had had a discussion on it in the classroom, you had started to write down ideas, hmm and then normally you would go and write something up on paper for the next day but hmm 120

- instead you had to do it on a wiki. How would you feel about that? 125
- G: Hmm any problems or? 130
- J: I think that I can use Internet in my home, so maybe. But I'm not sure here, but in Taiwan I think now, hmm I think every family can use Internet. I'm not sure here. Ya so for me, now it's a problem because I can't use Internet at home. So.. 135
- G: That would be a problem.
- J: Yes.
- G: If you did have Internet at home? Any other possible problems?
- J: I think maybe , I think no problem, hmm when I use handwrite or I use computer to do writing I think not very, ok, I think it's not very different. 140
- G: Not very different ok
- J: Because, before I studied English in Taiwan, some teacher ask us to, to use computer to, to do homework, ya because they feel some students handwriting is difficult to understand. 145
- G: Yea, yea they asked you do it on the computer and it wasn't a problem.
- J: So different, maybe I just put on wiki, website, yea I think if the teacher asks students to do that then I will do that. 150
- G: Right , ok, so far we have been talking about doing writing yourself. The other feature of the wiki was that you could comment ,you could read someone else's text and you could put a comment on it, you could comment on it. And someone else could comment on your text, how do you feel about that? If for instance, the teacher said, for homework tomorrow what I would like you to do is, I'd like you Chiung Fang to read hmm Augusta's text, I want you to read her discursive essay and I want you to write 155

- some comments. How would you feel about that? 160
- J: Hmm, it's difficult to say. For example I mean if in the classroom we are classmates, I can't write really my feelings, because sometimes maybe aah.. hmm.. I disagree with some students argument .. 165
- G: Yes..
- J: Maybe I can't use strong words to say something.
- G: So if you disagreed strongly with something they had written you would feel uncomfortable about saying so..? 170
- J: I think it depends on the situation so it is difficult to say. Maybe if hmm how can I say that.. if the argument is not really important, I just feel I disagree with that so maybe I couldn't say something but maybe the argument, how to say.., hmm I have really stronger something maybe I will, maybe I will write something. So it depends on the situation and it's difficult to say. 175
- G: Righ, right, how would you feel on the other side, if someone wrote comments on your work, would you be happy about that, would it be ok? Say for example of Augusta read you r work, and she wrote comments, maybe if she said, I agree with this but I'm not quite sure what you mean in this section. 180
- J: I think about that if the word is not very strong maybe I can explain my idea, if the student use stronger words to comment maybe I don't want to say something with them. Maybe I just delete. 185
- G: Ok, Ok so depending on how they put it, it might be helpful or you might just want to delete that section. 190
- G: Hmm, hmm oh that it's interesting. Right then so far we have been talking about, mostly about each person writing as an individual, writing one essay, with other people maybe commenting on it. The other way that the wiki can be used is for two or three people to work together, to do one piece of writing. You write together. 195

writing. You write together,

J: But I think very difficult to, I mean hmm, two or three people to do a piece of writing, is very difficult because sometime, our argument are different, 200

G: Yea..

J: So maybe we can try that but I think sometime for me, I think it depend on situation. If the report is very important, is about my subject, maybe I will feel my argument or my opinion, I need to use my argument or my opinion, I don't want to use other. Yea, but maybe I just study language here, I think it's ok, hmm 205

J: Ok I see what you're saying, if you're writing an essay just because you're learning English, so just about any topic, maybe you could write a joint essay with someone else, because you wouldn't mind.. 210

J: Maybe I don't care, something like that,

G: But if it was on your own subject, then you would want your own ideas to be expressed, how, in the way that you would want it to be. And you would find it more difficult to work with two or three other people. Because you might have to compromise or right. That's interesting. 215

Hmm, how about if you used the wiki before you wrote, for instance you were doing a joint piece of writing, the way you did it was that three or four of you would share ideas, and then one person would do the writing. OK and then the other people would read the writing and comment on it, whether they agreed or thought there should be changes. You would use the wiki just to get your ideas, so each person just wrote quickly, what their ideas were on this topic, do you think that could work or do you see that there could be problems with it? 220

You know how often in the class you have a discussion, instead of having a discussion face to face talking you had a discussion on the computer, so you write instead of talking. You would write my opinion about Private medicine is so and so, this is why I think it is good this is why I think it is bad and other 225

- people would do the same thing. 230
- J: I don't understand this question.
- G: I'm not making this very clear, what I'm trying to say is what do you think are the problems or the advantages of instead of having the discussion face to face, you have the discussion online by a computer, 235
- J: I think face-to-face is more easier, because if I have some question, I can ask someone directly. If I use Internet, online maybe we need to type the words, yea, slowly, sometimes we need to think which word is more polite. 240
- Maybe we don't have that meaning, maybe, for example, maybe someone in the piece of writing or email, maybe they think the student is impolite but they don't have the meaning. Maybe, for example, English, is not my first language so maybe I don't know how to use ... is polite. 245
- G: I see what your saying.
- J: So, I can face to face to discuss maybe, it's no problem because I can see the people's face, I know the meaning, their meaning is not impolite. 250
- G: Yes, yes ,yes so ..
- J: I think it is a little more difficult,
- G: more difficult..
- J: More difficult to discuss something, but just to write our my personal opinion, I think maybe it's no problem,. 255
- G: Right, but for discussion, face-to-face is easier. Because when you write you can misunderstand and sometimes it comes across as being impolite when you write. Yes that's very interesting 260

Appendix E—Sandra Transcript

- G: I also wanted to know how you would feel, if the teacher asked you to do homework in that way, so say for instance you had started and done a discussion in the classroom and hmm maybe you had started to write something in the classroom. Then the teacher asked you, “ok for homework, I want you to carry on with that piece of writing and I want you to do it on the Internet”, so you would have to use a computer to do it. Do you see any problems with that? hmm? 1
5
- S: I think the only problem is that you need to make a deadline. 10
- G: ok, ok
- S: Hmm, if you, didn't make a deadline maybe they would, nobody knows, sometimes it's, it's a kind of pressure. If, if we hand it in the homework in the class, and we can see someone didn't hand it in even if the teacher didn't say anything but you have the pressure ahh!! maybe only me or something like that, so you need a deadline. 15
- G: You need a deadline.
- S: And if it is a serious, serious course like in the school you can say ok, if you didn't hand it in in time, I'll took some points marks or something like that 20
- G: yea, yea
- S: Some marks or something like that it will be more useful
- G: Hmm, how did you find actually using that software, using that wiki to publish, did you find it.. compared to using pen and paper was it more difficult or ...? 25
- S: It's not really, maybe for me I think personally I think it's more attractive because it's a published things.

- G: Right.. 30
- S: Everybody will see it, so maybe you will make it more, more more what should I say maybe you will pay more attention on that because eveybody will see it, not only my teacher or not only in the class, something like that.
- G: Right, right, so that it's like..an incentive to write more? to write better? 35
- S: Yes, and maybe, maybe... it's because you can get some comment from other people.
- G: Right, right.
- S: You don't know where are them but maybe, maybe because of that, you think hmmm maybe I need to do more because if I do more I get more feedback. 40
- G: Right, right, oh and using the tool itself, did you have any difficulties, using the ...
- S: Not really, but, like before, before, the student started to do something, I think if the teacher, can have a good demonstrate, maybe it will be easier.. 45
- G: Right, right , ok so it needs to be a clear demonstration. The other thing, as you said the tool, you could use it for publishing, other people could use it to read and to comment and so on but you could also use it for doing like, pre-writing activities. You know how normally in the classroom, you could have a classroom discussion about a topic to get some ideas and so on. Do you think it would be useful in that way for exchanging ideas, hmm between different students instead of doing it face to face? 50
55
- A; Yep maybe because sometimes, sometimes if we do something face to face maybe some of the students is

- shy to give them their opinion 60
- G: Right, right..
- S: Maybe if it's on the internet they will feel more free to do something and they will give you some idea which you didn't think about it but it's wonderful.
- G: Right, right, ok, ok that's very interesting. 65
 Hmm the other thing was, we have been talking so far about writing like as an individual, ok just one person doing one piece of writing. The other thing that that tool could be used for is like for students to comment on other people's writing. How do you feel, how would you feel if a teacher said, right say as part of your homework hmm you've all done one piece of writing, on this subject it's all up there, for your homework, I want you to comment on another student's writing. So xxx I want you to comment on xxx's writing. xxx.. how would you feel about that? 70
 75
- S: I think it's good.
- G: Yea ?
- S: Even more because you can't expect the person will make some mistake which, which you'll expect or something, or even, even when you find something which is really strange but which you can't correct it. You'll try to find a way to resolve the problem and you'll ask your teacher or someone else, so I think you will learn more 80
 85
- G: How would you feel about someone commenting on yours, say it someone said "Oh I don't quite understand this or they might say I think this is a very good idea, but I'm not quite clear about that. Would you be ok about that? 90
- S: Yea, I will try to find the way to tell them what I mean
- G: Ok, ok, hmm, so you could use it like that, you could get people to comment, the other way you could use it, like everyone can access the same bit of text how

- would you feel as hmm, hmm an assignment, you were given an activity, to work together with one or maybe two other people to do a piece of writing together, how, how.. what are your opinions on that? 95
- S: Hmm, .. I think for me if you want to put some students in groups then the first thing is the level. Sometimes if you can have different level, you can't discuss something really clearly, they will be hmm I don't know, hmm something like that, you will be a struggle. You can't really, find, you can't really aim to something that you want to do. It's a kind of difficulty. 100
105
- G: Right, so it has to be same level..
- S: More or less..
- G: More or less the same level
- S: If the, the gap between two levels are too big, it will be too difficult. 110
- G: It will be too difficult to do, ok, ok. So If it were that you were of a similar level, you would be quite happy to do that kind of assignment?
- S: Yes, because you can always share your ideas with the other people, you don't need to think about the whole context or something, by your own, it will be easier to finish some work 115
- G: Right, right, ok that's very interesting.
- G: Yes, just as a general question then, from the point of view thinking both as a student and as a teacher, what do you think are the most useful aspects of getting a student to write in this way? You've already told me lots of ideas, you mentioned about when you're writing someone else is going to read it, not just your teacher is going to read it. Is there anything else that you think is useful about it? What is useful and also what are possible problems about it? 120
125

- S: Good..? Problems...? .The problem maybe if ah I mean like we do one piece of writing like in on the Internet, on the, on the computer, is it also best done in class or you can do everywhere you want? I mean is this kind of thing done only in class or at home? 130
- G: Yes, the idea would be to do it anywhere.
- S: Anywhere?
- G: Yea, yea, so not just that you could do some in class but also you might be set some homework to do, to do at home. So you could do it anywhere. 135
- S: That the only problem is when you did some writing, maybe you can't have some people to ask.
- G: Right, ok, yes while if you're in the classroom you could ask, other students or you could ask the teacher. Yea, yea 140
- S: So I think, its a kind of, we need to do this kind of things maybe both in the classroom or outside of the classroom.
- G: Right, right.
- S: And that ... we do for lots of times, not just a few times, we do spend some of the discussion in the class and if you need to do some writing, some work, you can do outside of the classroom. But, but the main point is if the student is more or less teenager or adult, you can have, you can have a specific time to spend some... to discuss about, the question, about what you are not sure. 145
150