



Attitudes Towards Collaborative Writing Among English Majors in Hebron University

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Abstract

This study investigates students' attitudes towards enhancing the writing skills of Palestinian English Majors by using collaborative learning. The study was conducted at the English Department at Hebron University in the second and the summer semesters of the academic year 2010-2011. The study participants were taking Writing and the Integrated Language Skills courses. The population comprised 95 students. A 32-item questionnaire was used to assess the attitudes of the students toward collaborative learning. Moreover, the researcher investigated whether there was a significant difference in the attitudes of the students pertaining to gender, proficiency (GPA) and year of study or academic level and one aspect of their learning styles (introverts vs. extroverts). The results indicate that the students had positive attitudes towards collaborative learning. Moreover, the results showed that female students favored collaborative activities more than male students. Statistically significant differences were also revealed

regarding level of the students and their proficiency showing that low achievers and less advanced learners favored the collaborative activities. Similarly, statistically significant evidence showed that extrovert students favored collaborative activities. The researcher concluded by offering some practical recommendations on using collaborative activities to enhance English language skills of English major at Hebron University, Palestine.

Keywords: collaborative learning, learning preferences, gender, proficiency, academic level

Collaborative learning refers to a number of processes where students are divided into groups and interact together to achieve a certain objective or find a solution to a specific learning problem. It is distinguished from traditional teaching approaches because learners are encouraged to work together and share ideas rather than to work alone and compete with each other individually. Research shows that group work and pair work activities are motivating and enlightening to students and teachers. Learners discover points of weakness and receive instant response from group members and their teachers. Astin, (1993) asserts that collaborative learning provides a social context for learning where interaction among learners is increased and therefore leads to successful learning experiences.

This is in contrast to the traditional method where students work individually or competitively. According to Kagan (1994), learners' capabilities should be channeled into positive and more meaningful directions. Kagan (1994) points out that cooperative learning would encourage learners to have higher achievement than competitive or individualistic learning. He adds that cooperative learning offers learners opportunities that enable them to increase their self-esteem and to become more intrinsically motivated. Johns (1997) indicates that one of the important criticisms of traditional theories is that "individual readers and writers, their meanings, their motivations, and their voices have been ignored" (p. 8). According to her, there is a need to shift the concentration on grammar to the motivations of individual readers and writers. This shift paves the way for the learner-centered approach where learners choose topics that are relevant to them and their lives and work together on topics of their own choice. Moreover, they lend a hand to one another so that all can reach mutual success.

Theoretical Framework

Collaborative learning is deeply rooted in a number of learning theories such as those of cognitivism, constructivism, and those concerning motivation. Dewey (1938) emphasizes the social nature of learning where learners both work in groups and have individual responsibility for their work. He believes that group learning experiences have the potential to promote

meaningful learning and learning is most effective when learners are actively engaged with the content thus increasing their motivation. This is in line with the motivational and cognitive theorists (Swortzel, 1997; Slavin, 1987) who deem that the inherent organization of collaborative learning forms an atmosphere which is conducive to learning and motivating. The learners become ready to discuss and negotiate the meaning and thus become collaborative. In this approach to language learning, learners are viewed as problem solvers where cognitive skills are stressed. This type of learning is advocated by Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner (Bigge & Shermis, 1999) where learners study together and negotiate meaning to develop a shared knowledge of the world. Collaborative work enables them to think at higher intellectual levels than when they work individually. The students' different background in terms of level, language proficiency and learning style and experience contributes positively to the learning process and improves their problem-solving strategies as they are confronted with various interpretations for a problem-solving activity (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1985).

Collaborative learning is also based on psycholinguistic-cognitive views (Johns, 1997). In psycholinguistic-cognitive classrooms, learners plan, organize, revise, rethink, and edit. Johns (1997) contends that literacy "is acquired as students seek meaning and process texts that are relevant to them" (p. 8). She advocates cooperation among learners in the classroom by "workshopping in groups and peer editing of student drafts" (p.12). Throne (2000) believes that second language learning is a process involving the co-presence of intra- and inter-psychological activity, environments with histories, and an ongoing negotiation of social identity. He explains that the activity of foreign and second language learning occurs within material and social conditions that researchers need to take into consideration.

This is also in agreement with the socio-literate views about language which are based on the work of Halliday (1978), Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), and Swales (1990). They indicate that for knowledge to be internalised and a framework established, social communication must first take place. According to Halliday, language is important to a social context. According to Johns (1997), from a socio-literate perspective, reading and writing and all types of literacy "are, in fact, social, intertextual and historical" (p.16). She explains that "successful text processing and production involve understanding the terms of this contract, terms that include text content, form, register, quality of paper, context and many other factors" (p.17). Learning is viewed as experiencing and it is essentially social in nature. Accordingly, learning to write is basically a social activity, particularly when learners write in groups. Teachers create a context where learners are encouraged to learn, interact, discover, explore and expand their learning and shape their knowledge. According to Kolb (1984), "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). As pointed out by Griffiths (2007), when sharing experiences, learning will be a pleasant activity.

To sum up, collaborative learning can present opportunities that enable learners to improve their learning and allow them to be involved in a meaningful dialogue.

Literature Review

This section provides a brief definition of what is meant by collaborative learning, its advantages, limitations and challenges and a literature review of some of the studies that used it.

What Is Collaborative Learning?

Collaborative Learning is used to describe a situation when learners are organized in groups to discuss issues and work on problem-solving activities. This term is used interchangeably with cooperative learning with slight differences but cooperative learning is usually more structurally defined than collaborative learning (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). Smith and MacGregor (1992) define Collaborative learning as:

... an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. Usually, students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. Collaborative learning activities vary widely, but most center on students' exploration or application of the course material, not simply the teacher's presentation or explication of it. (p.1)

In this study, the researcher is going to use "collaborative learning" to refer to any activity that is done in groups.

Advantages of Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is an efficient learning process as it helps students to learn by discovery. It encourages them to take a more dynamic role in their own learning, develop their interpersonal skills and collaborate with other learners to accomplish certain tasks. This type of learning enables students to be engaged in new learning styles as it provides them with a myriad of opportunities to interact while sharing their views, values and interests. Furthermore, collaborative learning has the potential to increase comprehension, promote critical thinking,

maximize motivation, foster the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences, and create an interactive and relaxed atmosphere where students have an additional responsibility for their own learning (Astin, 1993; Gokhale, 1995; Slavin, 1987; Ellison & Boykin, 1994; Elola & Oskoz, 2010). According to Barkley et al. (2005), collaborative learning became very popular because it can help in solving a number of problems related to teaching and learning. They clarify that learners are encouraged to actively involve themselves in the learning process and consequently improve their learning. Learners are encouraged to listen carefully and think critically and they work to address problems. Similarly, Kolodner and Guzdial (1996) assert that in collaborative activities, learners learn from each other, form groups, communicate effectively, and understand and observe perspectives of other group members, thus expanding each one's own perspective. When learners think, reflect, and are involved in a reasoning process and a problem-solving activity, this leads to the growth of their higher-order thinking skills (Gokhale, 1995, Bonk and Reynolds, 1997, Millis, B. J., & Cottell, P. G., 1998, Barkley et al., 2005; Nor & Abd. Samad, 2003).

Proponents of collaborative learning anticipate a number of benefits for this type of learning. Collaborative learning can help learners with writing compositions. Several studies pointed to a number of academic benefits for collaborative learning. For example, it gives opportunities for learners to explain and to learn from each other as more competent learners give extra information and the less competent learners receive help without feeling embarrassed (Dunne and Bennet, 1990). Besides, it can lead to better learning, revitalised teaching methods and improved interpersonal skills (Johnson, Johnson & Stanne, 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 1998). Budd (2004) reported that in an active and collaborative learning exercise, a deeper analysis of the topic is strengthened among learners in small groups. He added that "varying the nature of instructional materials for a single individual over time has biological, cognitive, and motivational underpinnings" (p.8). Similarly, White and Caminero (1995) contend that collaborative learning offer learners "valuable opportunities to learn from each other" (p.323).

Limitations and Challenges of Collaborative Learning

Despite its perceived benefits, not all learners like to work in groups. The reluctance to work in groups may be due to egocenteredness among some students who will not acknowledge other learners' ideas as they believe that they are much more competent. Oakley, Felder, Brent and Elhajj (2004) warn against some limitations of this type of learning:

Cooperative learning has been repeatedly shown to have strong positive effects on almost every conceivable learning outcome. Simply putting students in groups to work on assignments is not a

sufficient condition for achieving these benefits, however. Unless the instructor takes steps to assure that the groups develop the attributes associated with high-performance teams, the group learning experience is likely to be ineffective and may be disastrous. (p. 21)

According to Nor and Abd. Samad (2003), working in groups requires participants to have pleasant and friendly interactions. Unfortunately, “most group writing fails because students do not know how to maintain effective social skills” (p.1). According to Smith and MacGregor (1992), “a collaborative classroom can be a wonderfully rewarding opportunity but it is also full of challenges and dilemmas” (p.8). According to them, we need changes in the teachers’ role and the syllabus. They believe that it is difficult for some instructors to move from the teacher-centered to a learner-centered classroom where they find that “engaging students in group activity is a hard work” (p.8). An additional problem is the syllabus. They deem that “group work requires a demanding yet important rethinking of our syllabus, in terms of course content and time allocation” (p.9). They conclude that in collaborative learning “designing and guiding group work takes time to learn and practice” (p.9).

Practical studies that are related to collaborative learning

Several studies have investigated the use of collaborative learning as a tool to increase comprehension, motivation and maximize interaction. In a quantitative study by Brown (2008), she investigated the effects of collaborative learning on first year ESL students at the University of Botswana. The aim was to provide a deep and detailed analysis of students’ perceptions of collaborative learning. She wanted to examine the benefits and see what areas should be modified or changed. Her respondents reported gaining “academic benefits such as better comprehension and improved performance, and acquired generic skills – enhanced communication and problem-solving skills” (p.1). Moreover, her respondents indicated that they expanded their own social skills and found collaborative learning enjoyable as it enabled them to have new friends. The majority of the students indicated that collaborative activities should be encouraged and continued. Brown concluded that students’ perception of collaborative learning is in line with what is stated in the literature. She recommended paying attention to the academic benefits of collaborative learning as well as its social aspects.

Wong et al. (2009) examined the effect of collaborative learning in a process oriented writing class on developing linguistic-related micro-skills for the writing of EFL Chinese students in Singapore. The learners were asked to work collaboratively and carry out “word/phrase pooling”, “sentence making”, “paragraph writing” and “outlining” on wiki. Then, they were asked to write their essays individually. The aim, according to the researchers, was:

... to fill up the gap between the current-traditional product-oriented approach and the more cognitively demanding process-oriented approach; that is, juvenile L2 learners' limited linguistic and cognitive skills that would hinder them from writing proper essays, not to mention carrying out process writing. (p.1)

The study revealed an "improvement in pupils' micro-skills for writing and motivation in essay writing" (p.5). The researchers opined that, through collaborative activities, "the perceived challenge of pupils' individual differences in linguistic proficiency could be turned into an advantage for motivating pupils' collaboration in learning" (p.1).

Elola and Oskoz (2010) examined the effect of social tools and collaborative writing on enhancing learners' writing abilities. They analyzed learners' individual and collaborative writing to explore their approaches to the writing task. Moreover, they examined "learners' collaborative synchronous interactions when discussing content, structure and other aspects related to the elaboration of the writing task" (p.1). The study did not reveal statistically significant differences in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. However, the authors noted some new trends that show differences among learners' interaction with the text when they work individually or collaboratively.

Finally, Zariski (1997) investigated the impact of collaborative learning. His respondents reported "positive impacts of learning in groups although some students' attitudes seem to have been negatively affected". He observes that there is a need to examine why group based learning has a negative impact on some students which should not be ignored.

The following section reviews some studies that addressed some factors that may affect the learners' attitudes toward collaborative learning.

Collaborative learning and gender, year of study, proficiency and learning style

Research revealed contradicting findings regarding collaborative learning and gender, GPA (high achievers vs. low achievers), level of study (freshman, sophomore), and learning style (introvert vs. extrovert). Duxbury and Tsai (2010) found that there were no significant differences between males versus females, true versus false-beginners, and extroverts in relation to cooperative learning attitudes. Mulalic et al. (2009) investigated the learning styles of the students, and the differences in learning styles of the students according to their gender. Results revealed that the students' preferred learning style was kinesthetic. They expressed minor preference for visual, auditory and group learning. This means that some students do not prefer collaborative learning activities. Awad and Naqeeb (2011) found that there were no significant differences in the

learning styles of the Arab American University students studying English as a foreign language due to gender. This means that gender is not the only factor that governs learners' preference to certain collaborative activities.

Rodger et al. (2007) investigated the differences in achievement for 80 female and 80 male university students who were assigned competitive and cooperative tasks that required them to complete "a mini-assignment either individually in the competitive condition or with a same-sex partner in the cooperative condition" (p.157). They also completed individually a multiple-choice test to assess achievement. They did not find differences on the multiple-choice test. However, on the mini-assignment females scored significantly higher in the cooperative than in the competitive learning environment, whereas males performed about equally in both conditions. Blum (1999) explains that "female students place emphasis on relationships, are empathetic in nature, and prefer to learn in an environment where cooperation is stressed rather than competition" (p. 51). Shwalb et al. (1995) examined the attitudes of Japanese students toward cooperative and competitive school activities. Their participants rated 24 competitive and cooperative items in terms of personal importance during three consecutive academic years. Factor analyses of the ratings revealed that females had higher scores than males on the Cooperation Composite Index. This means that the female students scored higher in the cooperative activities.

Graves and Graves reported their participants' attitudes toward cooperation and competition. They found that males express more liking for competition than do females, whereas females express more liking for cooperation than do males. They added that preferences for competitive learning increase with age for both genders (as cited in Shwalb, 1995, p. 3).

Gunasagaran (2006) reported that there was a significant difference between male and female students on cooperative learning. Female learners tend to use more social learning strategies (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989). Ehrman and Oxford (1989, p. 8) highlighted the "female superiority in verbal aptitude and social orientation, as well as possible sex differences in integrative (socially-based) motivation" and in psychological type. Ehrman and Oxford (1989) found that female learners used more of the following four types of strategies: (a) general study strategies, (b) functional practice strategies, (c) searching for and communicating meaning strategies, and (d) self-management strategies.

Rodger et al. (2007) postulate that if women have more positive attitudes than men toward cooperation, then it follows those learning methods that allow for the development of trusting and interdependent relationships among students and between students and teachers should be more effective for women than for men" (p. 4). They concluded that most effective learning environments for women would not be possible through competitive teaching methods.

They cited research by Inglehart, Brown, and Vida (1994) to support this belief as they found that the more competitive the environment for females, the less well they achieved, and the more

competitive was the environment for males, the better they performed (Inglehart, Brown, and Vida, 1994 as cited in Rodger et al., 2007, p. 4). Similarly, Ellison and Boykin (1994) reported that female students achieved better following cooperative learning than individualistic learning. They explained that more time assigned to the tasks and the positive attitudes toward the learning experiences made cooperative learning more preferable.

Abu Radwan (2011) investigated the relationship between language proficiency and use of language learning strategies. “The students were grouped into two groups: proficient students averaging B and above, which is relatively speaking close to 80%, less proficient students, averaging C and below” (p.1). The findings revealed statistically significant differences between proficient students and less proficient students in the overall use of strategies. He also investigated whether duration of study at the English Department had any effect on use of language learning strategies. The findings revealed that the freshmen group consistently used more strategies than any other group. However, data analysis revealed a significant difference among the four groups only in the use of affective strategies. The test showed that the freshmen group used significantly more affective strategies than both the sophomore and senior groups. Awad and Naqeeb (2011) found that there were significant differences in the styles of learning used by the students due to academic level. The researchers pointed out that each academic level has its own properties and learning preferences which the lecturer should consider while teaching.

Statement of the problem

When it comes to the skill of writing, most university student who are learning English as a foreign language face a lot of problems. This is partly because of the lack of audience, or purpose and partly because of the lack of motivation. Some traditional approaches to writing gave focus to accuracy and ignored process giving the wrong impression that the process of writing is straightforward and linear. Such problems can be solved if writing is taught in a collaborative environment. Group writing discussions help student writers to write with a purpose in mind and to an audience. Students can identify their readers’ identity and develop their interpersonal skills. Moreover, the steps of writing in the process approach are emphasized as students compose, plan, organize, revise, and edit. Hence, there is a need to investigate the impact of collaborative activities during a writing exercise. This is principally applicable in the group work that students do in their classes and which is a requirement of any up-to-date curriculum for English that emphasizes the communicative approach. In addition, it is the requirement of the process writing that emphasizes the importance of collaborative activities as one of the most important components in writing. Thus, this study aims to examine the students’ attitude during group writing, specifically, whether group writing can support them in writing while working with

others. Consequently, there is a need to examine if collaborative writing can improve both students' writing and their attitude.

Objectives of the study

This paper aims at examining the attitudes of Hebron University students towards collaborative writing activities. It also aims at exploring whether it enhances their communication and critical thinking skills. It further aims to explore if there are differences in students' attitudes due to gender, level of proficiency, and learning styles.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are:

1. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents based on their gender, level, and GPA towards collaborative learning?
2. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents towards collaborative learning and their learning styles?
3. What is the general attitude of the respondents towards collaborative learning?

Methodology

The present section discusses the population, research instrument, procedure, developing the questionnaire and its reliability.

Population

The sample for the study consisted of 95 male and female students (72 females and 23 males) from four sections of undergraduate Writing and Integrated Language Skills courses taught by the same instructor and the data was collected during the second semester and the summer semester of the academic year 2010-2011.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire (See Appendix A) was developed based on the literature review conducted by the researcher. Some of the items were adopted from Brown's study (2008) and adapted to suit

the current study. The researcher developed an appropriate questionnaire that is suitable for examining attitudes towards collaborative learning. The questionnaire consisted of 32 statements with a 5 point Likert scale, (strongly agree, tend to agree, neutral, tend to disagree and strongly disagree).

The 32-item questionnaire was distributed at the end of the spring semester and summer semesters of the academic year 2010/2011. The questionnaire was used to elicit the respondents' views about their collaborative learning experiences. Quantitative data was analyzed statistically by using the SPSS program.

Procedure

The students were divided into groups consisting of five to six students per group and were asked to write essays throughout the spring semester and the summer semester of the academic year 2010/2011. The students were given guidelines for the assignment and a checklist of the major points to be covered in their essay. In some classes, the students were asked to start writing the essays individually to brainstorm ideas, and then to work in groups and compare their writing with that of the other students in the group. In other classes, the students were asked to brainstorm, organize ideas, draft, revise and edit together. They were given several topics to write about such as A place I like to visit, An event that taught me a lesson and Qualities that I look for in a friend.

The aim was to encourage the students to engage in a dialogue that allows them to generate ideas and get extra feedback from the group members. During this process, the students were asked to discuss problems in writing such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and subject-verb agreement or irrelevant sentences. Moreover, they were asked to comment on the content and organization of the essays. In order to make sure that the students work effectively on such collaborative activities, guidelines for collaborative learning taken from Texas University Writing Centre were taken into consideration (see appendix B). Thus, the instructor explained to his students what is meant by collaborative writing. Moreover, the students were encouraged to select tasks that could be done in groups. The students were given the choice to choose their own group. It was made clear to the students that they need to work individually first, then in groups. They themselves chose a leader for each group. The group leader's job was to manage the collaborative activities and to encourage the group members to submit drafts on time for further discussion. They were encouraged to use emails to make comments on each other's drafts. Finally, it was made clear to the students that a grade was to be given to them based on their group work and another one was to be given to them based on their final individual submission.

This happened once a week during the classroom and outside the classroom. Following the final completion of the writing tasks, the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire about

the assignment and the collaborative writing sessions to see whether or not the process improved their writing and their attitudes towards the collaborative activities.

Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was tabulated. The result showed that the overall Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the questionnaire is high ($r = 0.93$) indicating a very high degree of internal consistency, and therefore presenting a considerably reliable instrument.

Results and Discussion

The following section presents results of the questionnaire. It aims to answer the research questions of the current study.

1. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents based on their gender, level, and GPA towards collaborative learning?

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between the male and female students and collaborative learning, a t-test was carried out and Table 1 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.025.

Table 1.
t-test for Equality of Means

	Gender	N	M	SD	T	df	Sig.
Attitude	Female	72	3.78	.65082	-2.285	93	0.025
	Male	23	3.38	.82871			

This means that female students have better perception of collaborative writing activities. This is in line with the literature that shows the females preferences to social activities over males. As explained by Blum (1999) “female students place emphasis on relationships, are empathetic in nature, and prefer to learn in an environment where cooperation is stressed rather than competition” (p. 51). Similarly, this is also in line with the findings of Shwalb and associates (1995) who found that females had higher scores than males in the collaborative activities and Graves and Graves (1984) who found that females express more preference to cooperation than

do males. Finally, Ehrman and Oxford (1989) found that female learners used more communicating meaning strategies.

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between the high-achieving students and low-achieving students and collaborative learning, a t-test was carried out and Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.044.

Table 2.

t-test for Equality of Means

	Average	N	M	SD	T	df	Sig.
Attitude	Less than 80	65	3.77	.59511	1.948	93	.044
	More than 80	30	3.46	.89409			

This means that low achievers have better attitudes towards collaborative writing activities. This is in line with Abu Radwan (2011) who found statistically significant differences between proficient students and less proficient ones in the overall use of certain learning strategies. Likewise, Awad and Naqeeb (2011) found that there were significant differences in the styles of learning used by the students based on their academic level. It should be noted that high-achieving students could benefit from the collaborative activities as they learn while explaining ideas to others. It is known that sometimes certain issues cannot be understood until they are discussed among learners and that some learners learn better while teaching and they develop their listening skills in group discussions.

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between second year students and third year students and collaborative learning, a t-test was carried out and Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.000.

Table 3

t-test for Equality of Means

	Level	N	M	SD	T	df	Sig.
Attitude	Second	72	3.87	.60268	3.933	93	.000
	Third	23	3.30	.77030			

This means that sophomore students have better attitudes of collaborative writing activities. This is in line with Abu Radwan (2011) whose findings revealed that the freshmen group consistently used more learning strategies than any other group. Finally, it is in line with Awad and Naqeeb

(2011) who found that there were significant differences in the styles of learning used by the students based on their academic level.

2. Are there significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents towards collaborative learning and their learning styles?

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between students attitudes towards collaborative learning and learning better as they study alone, a t-test was carried out and Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.002.

Table 4.

t-test for Equality of Means

	When I study alone, I understand better and learn better	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig.
Attitude	Yes	58	3.50	.74068	-3.225	93	.002
	No	37	3.95	.56879			

In order to examine whether there is a significant difference between students attitudes towards collaborative learning and preference to writing alone, a t-test was carried out and Table 5 shows that there is a significant difference at 0.000.

Table 5:

t-test for Equality of Means

	I prefer to write alone rather than in a group	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig.
Attitude	Yes	53	3.42	.77681	-4.244	93	0.000
	No	42	4.00	.45792			

The previous two tables show that the students who prefer to work in groups and understand better and learn better while working in groups have better perception for collaborative writing activities. This is in line with Ellison and Boykin (1994) who found that learners achieved better

following cooperative learning than in individualistic learning experiences. However, it is in contrast with Duxbury and Tsai (2010) found that there were no significant differences between introverts and extroverts in relation to cooperative learning attitudes.

3. What is the general attitude of the respondents towards collaborative learning?

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated covering all questionnaire items to examine the views towards collaborative learning as perceived by Hebron University students. As mentioned above, the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire showed that the overall Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the questionnaire is high ($r = 0.93$) indicating a very high degree of internal consistency, and therefore presenting a considerably reliable instrument (See Table 6 for the calculated means of items and their standard deviation for each statement).

Table 6:

Means and standard for all items in the questionnaire

No	Statement	N o.	M	SD
10	Working in groups enhanced our communication skills	95	4.13	1.024
4	Working in groups stimulated my critical thinking skills	95	4.02	1.537
23	I had the chance to express my ideas in the group	95	3.95	1.105
25	While working in groups, we spent more time generating ideas than I do when I write alone	95	3.95	1.432
8	Working in groups helped me to have a greater responsibility - for myself and the group	95	3.91	1.264
13	Working in groups is a waste of time as we keep explaining things to others (<i>Recoded</i>)	95	3.89	1.526
32	Overall, this was a worthwhile experience	95	3.87	1.315
24	While working in groups, we spent more time planning than I do when I write alone	95	3.86	1.182
2	Working in groups fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience	95	3.8	1.058
11	Working in groups improved our performance	95	3.78	1.196

21	Despite disagreement, the group was able to reach consensus	95	3.78	1.15
16	Having completed group projects, I feel I am more cooperative in my writing	95	3.77	1.046
15	Working in groups should be encouraged/continued	95	3.76	1.244
17	Having completed group projects, I feel I am more confident to work with other students	95	3.76	0.986
20	We sometimes disagreed about what to say or how to express our ideas	95	3.75	0.967
3	Working in groups made problem-solving easier	95	3.72	1.098
28	I learned new ways to support my points of view	95	3.72	1.182
6	Working in groups helped me to receive useful feedback	95	3.71	1.081
31	The group produced a better description and a story as compared to individual writing	95	3.71	1.237
26	While working in groups, we spent more time checking spelling, punctuation and grammar than I do when I write alone	95	3.65	1.27
9	Working in groups enabled us to help weaker learners in the group	95	3.61	1.401
29	I enjoy writing more than I did before due to collaborative writing	95	3.58	1.47
12	Working in groups helped us to participate actively in the teaching/learning process	95	3.57	1.058
18	Working in groups enabled us to use skills which individual assessments do not	95	3.51	1.184
30	I get more work done when I work with others	95	3.49	1.406
7	Working in groups helped me to focus on collective efforts rather than individual effort	95	3.48	1.406
27	While working in groups, we spent more time revising than I do when I write alone	95	3.48	1.193
22	I learned new ways to plan my paragraph from the group	95	3.44	1.137
1	Working in groups increased my comprehension	95	3.4	1.198
14	Working in groups makes it difficult getting members to actively participate in tasks	95	3.22	1.651
19	While working in groups, all group members contributed equally to the project	95	3.2	1.396
5	Working in groups helped me to work in a more relaxed atmosphere	95	3.19	1.142

As table 6 reveals, most of the items got high to moderate ratings with items number 10 and number 4 getting the highest rating (mean=4.13, 4.02) respectively. This indicates that collaborative learning indeed enhances communication skills among students and stimulates their critical thinking skills. This is in line with a number of studies (Millis, B. J., & Cottell, P. G., 1998, Barkley et al., 2005, Gokhale, 1995; Wong et al., 2009, Nor & Abd. Samad, 2003). For example, Gokhale (1995) reported that students who participated in collaborative learning performed significantly better on the critical thinking test than students who studied individually. Nor and Abd. Samad (2003) found that during collaborative writing interaction, “students could participate at a higher cognitive level, have the chance to interact and incorporate cognitive strategies while interacting” (p.6). The results are also in agreement with Brown (2008) who found that more than 75% of her participants reported that the collaborative learning enhanced their communication skills. Wong et al. (2009) concluded that collaborative activities improved the pupils’ linguistic proficiency.

Similarly, items 23 and 25 got a very high rating (mean=3.95). Both items address issues like expressing ideas and spending more time on generating ideas while working in groups. To some extent, item 22, got a moderate rating (m=3.44). It addresses the issue of learning new ways to plan their paragraphs from their group members. This is in line with Elola and Oskoz (2010) whose respondents regarded the process as highly beneficial for the exchange of ideas and structuring of the essay. Moreover, they “generated ideas and shared them with the intention of creating a more complete text” (p.60).

Item 8 (Working in groups helped me to have a greater responsibility - for myself and the group) got a very high rating (=3.91). This indicates that collaborative learning helps learners take on responsibility for their own language learning. Likewise, the students agreed with item 9 that working in groups enabled them to help weaker learners in the group (m=3.61) and to focus on collective efforts rather than individual effort as indicated in their ratings for item 7 (m=3.48). This is in agreement with Brown (2008) who reported that over three-quarter (76.5% and 76.2% respectively) agree that CL focused on collective efforts and gave learners greater responsibility for their learning. This is in agreement with Nor and Abd. Samad (2003) as they reported that their students “assisted each other, regardless whether they were proficient writers or the less proficient writers.” In addition to that, it is in line with Wong et al. (2009) whose participants found the activities to be useful and enjoyable as they supported each other. This is also in line with Zariski (1997) where 69% of his participants agreed that “group work helped them be more responsible for [their] own learning” (p.780).

Items 13, 32, 24, 2 and 11 got a high rating (m=3.89, 3.87, 3.86, 3.8 and 3.78) respectively. This means that student did not perceive collaborative learning as a waste of time though they spent a lot of time discussing in groups. It should be noticed that the data for this item has been recoded as it is negatively structured. Responses to negatively stated item (n = 13) were reversed so that

the highest response score was indicative of a positive rating for the statement. This is in agreement with Brown (2008) who interestingly found that 71.2% believe collaborative learning was not a waste of time explaining things to others. This belief is supported by their perception of the whole process and considered it to be a worthwhile experience ($m=3.87$) revealing a very high degree of agreement among the participants. The learners perceived it a worthwhile experience and not as a waste of time as it helped them to plan and exchange ideas as indicated in items 24 and 2. This means that in collaborative learning students spent more time planning than they do when they write alone ($m=3.86$) and the process fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience ($m=3.8$). All of this contributed to better performance as indicated by the students in the response to item number 11 ($m=3.78$) (Working in groups improved our performance). This is in agreement with Brown (2008) who reported that CL helped understanding (77.7%) and fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience (77%). This is also in line with Zariski (1997) where 60% of his participants agreed that group work helped them to learn more than they would on an individual project.

Therefore, the students gave a high rating to item 15 (Working in groups should be encouraged/continued) and recommended the continuation of the collaborative learning experience ($m=3.76$). Moreover, they felt more cooperative and more confident working with others as indicated in item 16 and 17 ($m=3.77, 3.76$) respectively. This is in agreement with Brown (2008) who reported 77% of her participants suggested that collaborative learning should be encouraged and continued and Wong et al. (2009) where 83.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they wish they “could participate in more rounds of the group composition activities” (p.7).

Items 20 and 21 address issues that may emerge in collaborative learning; agreement and disagreement. As indicated in item 20 the learners sometimes disagreed about what to say or how to express our ideas ($m=3.75$). Nevertheless, they were able to reach consensus ($=3.78$). This is in agreement with Nor and Abd. Samad (2003) as they reported that their participants “disagreed with suggested ideas, gave feedback, planned about text structures and elaborated on these ideas” (p.6).

Items 3, 28, 6, and 31 indicate that the students benefited from the collaborative learning process as the process made problem-solving easier and the students learned new ways to support their points of view ($m=3.72$). Moreover, they received useful feedback from each other and produced a better description and a story as compared to individual writing ($m=3.71$). This is in line with several studies that reported that collaborative learning encourages learners to participate constructively and work productively to solve common problems and to be involved in a reasoning process and a problem-solving activity as they are exposed to different interpretations (Bonk and Reynolds, 1997; Millis and Cottell, 1998; Barkley et al., 2005; Bruner, 1985).

Items 26 and 27 got a moderate rating (3.65, 3.48) respectively. This indicates that the students spent more time checking spelling, punctuation and grammar and revising their work than they do when they write alone. Moreover, this is an indication that writing is a recursive process and not a linear process.

Similarly, items 29, 12, 18, and 30, got a moderate rating. The ratings for these items indicate that they enjoyed writing more due to the collaborative writing activities ($m=3.58$) and to participate actively in the teaching/learning process ($m=3.57$). This is because they got more work done when they work with others ($m=3.49$) and because working in groups allows them to use skills which individual assessments do not ($m=3.57$). This is in line with Wong et al. (2009) where 94.4% of their participants agreed or strongly agreed that they “enjoyed the group composition activities” (p.7).

Likewise, Brown (2008) found in her research that just over half of the respondents found collaborative learning enjoyable. According to her, this implies that almost half of the students found the class boring. This can be explained in the current study by the findings of the first and second questions where students differed in their perception towards collaborative learning depending on the gender, level, proficiency, and learning styles.

The items that got the least agreement are items 14, 19, and 5. The least rating for item number 14 (working in groups made it difficult getting members to actively participate in tasks) can be read positively (mean=3.22) as it means that some students did not find the process very difficult to get group members to participate in the assigned tasks and others found it to be a difficult task. This is to some extent in line with Brown (2008) who found that (61.5%) of her participants agree that it is difficult getting members to actively participate in tasks.

However, most of them strongly disagreed with that all group members contributed equally to the project as indicated in their rating to item (19) ($m=3.2$). Consequently, they gave the least rating ($m=3.19$) to item number 5 which is addressing the issue of working in a more relaxed atmosphere. This is in sharp agreement with Brown (2008) who reported “the least percentages of respondents agree that the atmosphere was relaxed (52%)”. Moreover, her participants reported that one of the main negative aspects for collaborative learning is that “some students leave all the work for other group members to do” (p.12). As a solution, Brown (2008) contends that the teacher needs to counsel ‘problem’ students individually to ensure equal participation and to state clear rules “to make sure students know the consequences of not participating actively” (p.12). She concludes that it is “unfair to give group members uniform mark if it is clear that a group member defaulted” (p.12). This means that the collaborative writing process is a demanding one and if a number of factors (time, training, and equal contribution) are not taken into consideration, some students will find it to be a disappointing and frustrating process.

In their evaluation of the collaborative activities, one group summarized the pros and cons of working in groups as follows:

Work group has advantages and disadvantages at the same time. On the one hand, work group is useful in several ways. First, it makes students share their information about the topics they write about. This is a great benefit since many students lack enough background of the surrounding world. Second, it strengthens the bonds among students and makes them know each other more and more, so they get rid of shyness and hesitation of asking their colleagues for help in writing. Third, it enriches the students' vocabulary and understanding of grammar. As a result, students' level of writing will be improved in a very good way. On the other hand, work group has bad consequences. One is that students find it difficult to arrange a suitable time for their meetings, and that gets harder when they do not know each other. Another is that most of students depend on their partners in the same group in doing the whole work. They simply ignore what is supposed to be done by them, so the burden will be heavy on one student, and that is not fair at all. Furthermore, if they are writing an essay, it will be a mixture of different styles, and it will not be well-organized. Things will get worse when all the group members have bad writings; their work will be messy. Finally, sometimes members' debate becomes negative and makes them leave the group, produce a bad essay, or hate the course. Anyway, it is up to the teacher to choose the suitable ways for his students in writing or other activities.

(See Appendix C for more student evaluations of writing activities)

This means that collaborative activities have positive and negative outcomes and students may undergo different experiences. In order to enhance the positive experiences, instructors need to prepare their students well in implementing collaborative writing. In order for the instructors and their students not to have negative experiences, they need to know how to implement collaborative learning from picking the task until the final assessment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

While we are incorporating the notion of change in education, as instructors, we should cater for all our students and we need to use a variety of teaching methods that respect our students and make them active learners to improve and develop life-skill learning, including problem solving and critical thinking. Learners are viewed as constructors of meaning and knowledge. In collaborative learning, learners work collaboratively in groups to discuss interesting and challenging questions and solve real-life problems. Activities are interactive and learner-centred and the load of the instructors is reduced and learners are actively engaged (Astin, 1993; Gokhale, 1995; Slavin, Ellison & Boykin, 1994; Elola & Oskoz, 2010). As a result of implementing the collaborative activities, the current study revealed statistically significant differences between students based on their gender, level of study, proficiency, and learning style showing that females, sophomores, low achievers, and extroverts favored collaborative learning experiences.

Moreover, the general attitudes of the students revealed that collaborative learning enhances communication skills, critical thinking skills and motivation. Furthermore, it makes students responsible for their own learning, thus it makes them autonomous learners. This is in line with a number of studies that were carried out in the field of collaborative learning and which emphasized that collaborative learning facilitates the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences, and creates an interactive and relaxed atmosphere (Astin, 1993; Gokhale, 1995; Slavin, 1987; Ellison & Boykin, 1994; Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Barkley et al. 2005). Such collaborative activities allow learners to exchange fantastic ideas. These wonderful ideas are successful especially when they are shared and further developed. When there is one learner he/she usually has a partial understanding but when there are two or more learners, they have a better understanding as they think, reflect, and are busy in a problem-solving activity that is of interest to them (Gokhale, 1995, Bonk and Reynolds, 1997, Millis, B. J., & Cottell, P. G., 1998, Barkley et al., 2005; Nor & Abd. Samad, 2003). Finally, collaborative learning makes writing enjoyable, meaningful, motivating, relevant, and reduces anxiety as students interact with each other in cooperative problem-solving activities.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher recommends the following: collaborative learning should be an essential component in any university language skill course. Instructors are reflective practitioners who think systematically about their practices and learn from their experiences. As a result, they will be able to contribute effectively to a community of learners. They should offer their students opportunities for making learning stimulating and enjoyable. Instructors should provide their students with collaborative learning activities that are challenging and attractive to all of them and suit their gender and learning styles. The activities should be interesting, novel, and challenging. Finally, instructors should carefully assess both the advantages and limitations of collaborative learning in the writing process.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure the students' attitudes towards collaborative learning. Please read the statements carefully and answer PART I, PART II and PART III.

Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous.

PART I

Please, tick (✓) the appropriate box.

A-Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male			
B-Year of study:	<input type="checkbox"/> Second	<input type="checkbox"/> Third			
C-Current GPA:	<input type="checkbox"/> Below 60	<input type="checkbox"/> 60 – 69	<input type="checkbox"/> 70 – 79	<input type="checkbox"/> 80-89	<input type="checkbox"/> 90 and above
D- Major	<input type="checkbox"/> English (Education)	<input type="checkbox"/> English (Literature)	<input type="checkbox"/> English/ minor French		
E- When I study alone, I understand better and learn better					
1- Yes 2- No					
F- I prefer to write alone rather than in a group					
1. Yes 2- No					

PART II

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your views about collaborative learning by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box using the scale given below.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

1 2 3 4 5

No		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Working in groups increased my comprehension					

2.	Working in groups fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience					
3.	Working in groups made problem-solving easier					
4	Working in groups stimulated my critical thinking skills					
5	Working in groups helped me to work in a more relaxed atmosphere					
6	Working in groups helped me to receive useful feedback					
7	Working in groups helped me to focus on collective efforts rather than individual effort					
8	Working in groups helped me to have a greater responsibility – for myself and the group					
9	Working in groups enabled us to help weaker learners in the group					
10	Working in groups enhanced our communication skills					
11	Working in groups improved our performance					
12	Working in groups helped us to participate actively in the teaching/learning process					
13	Working in groups is a waste of time as we keep explaining things to others					
14	Working in groups makes it difficult getting members to actively participate in tasks					
15	Working in groups should be encouraged/continued					
16	Having completed group projects, I feel I am more cooperative in my writing					
17	Having completed group projects, I feel I have more confident working with other students					
18	Working in groups enabled us to use skills which individual assessments do not					

19	While working in groups, all group members contributed equally to the project					
20	We sometimes disagreed about what to say or how to express our ideas					
21	Despite disagreement, the group was able to reach consensus					
22	I learned new ways to plan my paragraph from the group					
23	I had the chance to express my ideas in the group					
24	While working in groups, we spent more time planning than I do when I write alone					
25	While working in groups, we spent more time generating ideas than I do when I write alone					
26	While working in groups, we spent more time checking spelling, punctuation and grammar than I do when I write alone					
27	While working in groups, we spent more time revising than I do when I write alone					
28	I learned new ways to support my points of view					
29	I enjoy writing more than I did before due to collaborative writing					
30	I get more work done when I work with others					
31	The group produced a better description and a story as compared to individual writing					
32	Overall, this was a worthwhile experience					

Part III:

1. What are the advantages of collaborative writing in class?

2. What are the disadvantages of collaborative writing in class?

Appendix B: guidelines to collaborative learning taken from Texas University Writing Centre.

Collaborative Writing

<http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/teaching-writing/instruction/collaborative-writing/>

Collaborative writing assignments transform the usually solitary work of writing and editing college papers into a group endeavor. Instructors value such assignments because of their real-world relevance. After all, in most workplaces writing is typically produced by a team or goes through multiple hands for revising. Even in academia we often collaborate on research and co-author journal articles with colleagues. Giving students the opportunities to practice writing and editing with others is a prudent step in preparing them for the world after graduation.

Collaborative assignments can significantly enhance student learning in other ways as well; specifically, they:

- allow students to learn from each other
- expose students to points of view besides their own
- foster discussion and debate
- open students' eyes to how their work compares to that of their peers, giving them a better sense of their own strengths and weaknesses as writers and thinkers
- encourage students to consider their audience, an important aspect of learning to write effectively and yet a component missing in many traditional assignments
- teach students to negotiate the issues inherent in any collaborative venture.

But collaborative work presents unique issues for an instructor. It can be difficult to assess each student's contribution to the final product, making assigning grades problematic. While group projects also mean fewer papers to grade, planning the assignment and meeting with students to discuss their progress or settle problems can be time-consuming. Likewise incorporating interim deadlines into the project, such as requiring students to submit drafts or outlines, is essential to the students' learning and crucial to warding off potential problems. Such additional steps, though, usually mean more work for instructors.

Instructors also need to be certain that students understand when collaborative work is appropriate and when "collaboration" constitutes academic dishonesty. (W course instructors should note that in a W course collaborative writing can account for no more than 50% of the portion of a student's final grade based on writing quality.)

What is collaborative writing?

“Collaborative writing” describes a full-length writing assignment completed in pairs or small groups. Here are points to keep in mind when assigning collaborative writing:

Pick a Task

When choosing an assignment, teachers who encourage collaborative work suggest that it’s best for instructors to select a task that would be difficult for students to accomplish alone, thus making group work a natural choice. Examples of such projects include a marketing plan for a new business venture or an employee manual.

Choose Teams

Decide whether you’ll assign work groups, let students choose their own, or make the selection randomly. There are advantages and disadvantages to each option, something you might want to discuss with your class.

Spell Out Expectations

Make sure requirements for the assignment are put in writing; students will want to refer back to their assignment sheet periodically. Consider setting interim deadlines for drafts or parts of the project. Talk with students about the need to accommodate the schedules of all group members and remind them that delays in group work are almost inevitable and should be factored into their timeline.

Anticipate Trouble

Acknowledge that group work comes with its own set of hazards. Discuss with students how to handle problems. What will they do with a student who fails to complete tasks? What should they do if they can’t reach a consensus on a key point? What if one student dominates the process? How can students get help if their group seems to be marginalizing them because of race, gender,

or other factors? Setting up a process for handling grievances is a good lesson in how to help a group function effectively.

Consider Assessment

Students need to know how they'll be graded. Will the entire group receive the same grade? Will group members have any input, such as letting the instructor know who they feel contributed the most or least to the final product? Many students fear that the poor performance of other team members will unfairly affect their grade.

Use Technology

Encourage students to look for ways to let technology simplify their work, such as communicating via e-mail rather than in face-to-face meetings or using software to help present their final product. Conversely, ask them to think about how technology might limit them. For instance, are online discussions as useful as those conducted in person?

A good tool for collaborative writing is available at writerly.com at no cost.

Appendix C: Sample of students' evaluation for the collaborative writing activities

Group one:

(Advantages)

There are many advantages of collaborative work. First of all, we revise our papers together. If they have errors, we correct them. Another advantage is that the feeling of joy while working together. It is also a good way to be a good critical thinker. When you discuss, you think, therefore you enhance your ability of thinking in many sources of life.

(Disadvantages)

There are several disadvantages of working together. One of these drawbacks is that some students are sometimes so weak in writing, so we do not benefit from them at all. Another disadvantage is that the time we waste in order to discuss and revise a paper in a group. Sometimes we do not have enough time to and we need to meet a deadline. Consequently, we feel so frustrated and embarrassed.

Group Two:

The Advantages of Working in Groups

Working in groups could be the most effective way in solving problems and it has several advantages. First of all, it makes more productive than individuals working. For example, it allows each member to concentrate on the tasks and attempts to find the solutions. Because of the number of people involved each with different experience, knowledge, and points of view for solving a problem. Secondly, it makes the tasks easier than working alone. For instance, when we distribute the duties and responsibilities between members, we will find that the works end quickly and also in a good shape. Finally, the exchange of ideas can act as a stimulus to the imagination, encouraging individuals to explore ideas they would not otherwise consider. In conclusion, it's an interesting thing to work in a group and exchange our ideas with others.

The Disadvantages of Working in Groups

Although there are very clear advantages in working in groups, but there are also some disadvantages. Firstly, it leads to arguments between members. For example, if one of the groups'

members disagreed with others opinions, it will make him try to interrupt the ideas of those whom disagreed with him. Secondly, sometimes there are some members who work harder than others. We always see that there are one or two students who work a lot and others just see which is a very annoying thing. Finally, sometimes it's hard to contact with all the members of the group may be because you isn't know their phones number or because there's no time to contact them. To conclude, working in groups doesn't always a useful thing, it also has many disadvantages.

Group Three:

The advantages and the disadvantages of the group work

I think that group work has several advantages, such as, take advantage of the multiplicity of views, sharing our ideas with each others, benefiting of our mistakes to improve the work .By contrast, working in a group has some disadvantages, For example, different opinions create disagreement and sensitivity. Also, it needs time commitment, but not all of us have that. And some may work less than others. (Format)

Group Four:

The advantages of groupwork

The collective action has a lot of advantages for many reasons. First, it helps students to correct spelling and grammatical mistakes, choose the best vocabulary, and discuss their thought about the subject. Second, it encourages them to work and write effectively, and develops their sentence skills. The most important thing is to help some weak students by sharing useful thoughts.

The disadvantages of groupwork

The collective action has some disadvantages for two reasons. First, some students don't attend the group meeting. Second, some students can't think with other students, some students disagree with to their opinion, and some of them don't have good ideas.

Group five:

After we have experienced the collaborative learning process, we found that if we got advantages or disadvantages, that depended on the group members we worked with, because when they are responsible and competent, they are helpful and able to help you discover the mistakes in our essays, whether they were in grammar, spelling, unity, organization, or in any other characteristics of a good essay. Moreover, they gave us advice how to reduce and get rid of our problems. But when some are not committed, we got no advantages; we have just waste of our time.

Group Six:

The advantages:

Work group is very good because it develops the social communication between the students, and allows mutual learning by exchanging ideas, information and knowledge. Also, it develops the writing skills by giving new ideas for writing, and by attracting attention to the different mistakes that students may commit. In work group also, there is a chance to divide the responsibility on the students which makes writing an essay very easy. It creates the motivation for everyone to work and to stick to the required duty.

The disadvantages:

As we said the work group is very good in case there were responsible and hardworking students. But it turns to a disaster if there were indifferent students. The whole responsibility will be done by one student because no one helps or cares about what would happen. All students will depend on one student to do everything. They consider this work as something good because they will not do anything. One student suffers and the rest are so comfortable. Another problem is when the students have the same ideas, so all the ideas will be repeated. Some students are cooperative in other groups and some are indifferent that they don't come to the work or they ignore their responsibility.

Group Seven:

Working in Group

Working in groups has many advantages. First, we share more ideas, which lead to good, effective discussion. I give my opinions, the others give theirs and we exchange them. New

information is introduced among us every time we do that; therefore, this exchange benefits us more. Moreover, working in group helps discovering the errors one does because sometimes one doesn't notice his or her mistakes. In addition, this kind of working advances our performance by thinking together. Also, it is good for the revision process because simply as we said, it helps discovering mistakes. We can advance that by peer feedback among the members of the group.

However, working in group has disadvantages. For example, some students don't attend the group and this procrastinates our work. Sometimes the absence of one member disrupts the whole work, especially when it is connected directly with this member. Also, working in group leads to carelessness. In other words, the responsibility is not personal as in individual work. Therefore, some students rely on others in performing such work. Another disadvantage of group working is fanaticism. When everyone insists on his or her own ideas, what does group working have to do with that? It is hard sometimes to convince the others with our thoughts. This becomes a problem when we have such people in the group; so the exchange turns into a dispute. Another important drawback of working in group, or rather the most important one is that it doesn't reveal the actual performance for students or for one student, especially when one dominates the work. We can't know who really participated and who didn't.