

REVISION OF COMPOSITIONS: COLLABORATION AND FEEDBACK IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN SARAWAK

Sandra Sim Phek Lin

Department of Language and Literacy
Faculty of Education
University of Malaya

The theoretical framework of this current study is based on Vygotsky's theory of learning. With regard to the collaborative role between the teacher, students and their peers, Vygotsky (1978) perceived that with guidance from adult or more capable peers, a child would be able to function beyond his or her current developmental level. After he or she has internalized the necessary skills in writing through collaborative effort and guidance, he or she would be able to perform at a higher level on his or her own.

Objectives

This research investigates how teacher-student and student-student interactions during peer response sessions assist the group members in revising the first drafts of their compositions. It also is aimed at identifying the types of scaffolds provided by the class teacher and peers during the teacher-student and student-student interaction sessions. Additionally, this research examines how students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the verbal and written comments of the class teacher and peers.

Research Questions

The study is aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. How do the teacher-student and student-student interactions during the peer response sessions help the group members to revise the first drafts of their compositions?
2. What are the types of scaffolds provided by the class teacher and peers during the teacher-student and student-student interaction sessions?
3. How do students revise the first drafts of their compositions based on the class teacher and peer feedback?

Methodology

This case study involves one ESL teacher and a group of six Form Four students, comprising three high-proficiency level (HP) students and three intermediate-proficiency level (IP) students. In accordance with the qualitative research methodology, data were collected through observations, interviews and documentary records. On the whole, eight group writing sessions (four pre-writing and four peer response sessions) were observed over a period of five months. The group writing sessions were carried out to discuss four writing topics in a naturalistic secondary school classroom setting. The data collected were analyzed and triangulated to answer the three research questions.

Findings and Discussion

The outcomes of the research showed that multiple patterns of interaction emerged as the students were engaged in lengthy and meaningful discussion to generate ideas during the pre-writing sessions and to provide useful feedback during the peer response sessions. The students (especially, the HP students) performed more roles as compared to the class teacher during the peer interaction sessions. The findings indicated that with the guidance from their more competent peers and the class teacher, the less capable students could perform at a higher level as they could

apply the knowledge learnt from the more capable ones to help their peers and also themselves to rectify problem areas. The findings also showed that the HP students also learnt from the class teacher and peer feedback.

Besides, the HP students were found to provide more scaffolds as compared to the IP students and the class teacher to assist the group members to generate ideas during the pre-writing sessions and to assist the group members in their revisions. Moreover, the findings revealed that the students utilized more of the peer feedback as compared to the class teacher feedback and the self-correction of errors to assist them in their revisions. Both the HP and IP students emphasized the revision of surface level errors at the sentence level rather than errors at the text-base level.

The findings in this research are significant as the peer scaffolds and class teacher scaffolds provided during the teacher-student and student-student interactions as well as through written form helped to bridge the students' current developmental progress to a higher cognitive level of thinking which enhances their writing skills. The implication of this research is that the class teacher and peer scaffolds provided during the interactive learning sessions served as the key to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness, especially in the area of writing.

References

- Applebee, A. N., & Langer, J. A. (1983). Instructional scaffolding: Reading and writing as natural language activities. *Language Arts*, 60(2), 168-175.
- Bruffee, K. A. (1984). Collaborative learning and the "conversation of mankind". *College English*, 46, 635-652.
- Bruner, J. S. (1978). The role of dialogue in language acquisition. In A. Sinclair, R. J. Jarvella, & W. J. M. Levelt (Eds.), *The child's conception of language*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.
- Carson, J. G., & Nelson, G. L. (1996, January). Chinese students' perceptions of ESL peer response group interaction. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 5(1), 1-19.
- Cazden, C. B. (2001). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Conrad, S. M., & Goldstein, L. M. (1999). ESL student revision after teacher-written comments: Text, contexts, and individuals. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8(2), 147-179.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Daiute, C., & Dalton, B. (1993). Collaboration between children learning to write: Can novices be masters? *Cognition and Instruction*, 10(4), 281-333.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Faigley, L., & Witte, S. (1981). Analyzing revision. *College Composition and Communication*, 32(4), 400-414.
- Ferris, D., & Roberts, B. (2001). Error feedback in L2 writing classes. How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 10, 161-184.
- Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1977). Problem-solving strategies and the writing process. *College English*, 39, 449-461.
- Hyland, F. (2000). ESL writers and feedback: Giving more autonomy to students. *Language Teaching Research*, 4(1), 33-54.
- Lockhart, C., & Ng, P. (1995, December). Analyzing talk in ESL peer response groups: Stances, functions, and content. *Language Learning*, 45(4), 605-655.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *An expanded sourcebook: Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sommers, N., & Saltz, L. (2004). The novice as expert: Writing the Freshman Year. *College Compositions and Communication*, 56(1), 124-149.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological process*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- _____ (1986). *Thought and language*. (A. Kozulin, Trans.) Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Original work published 1934).
- Zamel, V. (1982). Responding to student writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19, 79-95.