

The Influence of Collaboration on Individual Writing Quality: The Case of Iranian vs. Malaysian Freshers

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Abstract : This study purported to comparatively investigate the influence of collaborative writing on the quality of individual writing of four female Iranian and four female Malaysian students. The first semester students at a private university in Malaysia, who were homogeneous in terms of age, gender, study discipline, and language proficiency, were divided into two Iranian and two Malaysian dyads. The dyads performed collaborative writing tasks for 15 sessions; after three consecutive collaborative writing sessions, each participant was asked to individually attempt a writing task. Both collaborative and individual writing tasks comprised isomorphic graphic prompts (IELTS Academic Module task 1). Writing quality of the five individually-produced texts during the study was scored in terms of task achievement (TA), cohesion/coherence (C/C), grammatical range/accuracy (GR/A), and lexical resources (LR). The findings indicated a hierarchy of development in TA and C/C among all the students, while LR showed minor improvement only among three of Malaysian students, and GR/A barely exhibited any progress among all the participants. Intermittent progressions and regressions were also discerned in the trajectory of their writing development. The findings are discussed in the light of the socio-cultural and emergentist perspectives, the typology of tasks used as well as the role of the participants' level of language proficiency.

Keywords : collaborative writing, writing quality, individual writing, collaboration

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