

Low-Proficiency L2 Learners' Dyadic Interactions in Collaborative Writing: An Exploratory Case Study

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Abstract : Recent research, supported by sociocultural theory, has shown that collaborative writing in the second language (L2) contexts afford students opportunities to interact with each other to co-construct knowledge during the co-composing process. To date, much research on pair interaction in L2 collaborative writing settings has centered on intermediate and advanced learners by using static categorization of pair interaction patterns. Little is known about the fluid nature of pair interaction during collaborative writing, especially among low-proficiency learners. This study, thus, is aimed to explore the interaction dynamics of low-proficiency L2 learners during collaborative writing via examining the interaction pattern, focus of interaction, and the language related episodes (LREs) of 5 low-proficiency L2 writers from Taiwan. Employing a micro-level functional analytical method to capture the changing nature of pair interaction dynamics, the researchers calculated the number of characters/words produced by each pair member during CW and then classified their utterances into four task related-aspects--content, organization, language use, and task management--to determine each pair member's relative contribution to different dimensions of the evolving text. The LREs were also identified and examined. The results show that, of the five pairs, three pairs changed their interaction patterns when discussing different aspects of writing. Regarding the focus of their interaction, all five pairs paid attention to content most, followed by language use, task management, and organization. They were able to successfully resolve the majority of language issues (75.2%) in LREs and use the correct forms in their writing. These findings lend support to the fluid nature of pairs' interactions and the changing roles of L2 learners in collaborative writing and highlighted the necessity of examining learners' interaction patterns from a micro-level perspective. These findings also support previous research that low-proficiency pairs are able to correctly resolve 2/3 of their produced LREs, suggesting that collaborative writing may also be suitable for L2 low-proficiency learners.

Keywords : collaborative writing, low-proficiency L2 learners, micro-level functional analysis, pair interaction pattern

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