| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

A Review Study on the Impact of Online Collaborative Learning on EFL Students' Writing Skills

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| **ABSTRACT**

This review study endeavors to review the literature on the impact of online collaborative learning on EFL students' writing skills. It also adds to the ongoing discussion about the way in which online collaboration might support writing and the extent to which online collaborative learning can facilitate mutual scaffolding among EFL students. In addition, it views the students' perception and understanding of online collaboration as factors that need to be investigated to explore the impact of such an approach. The study utilized a qualitative method, which particularly relies on gathering materials and conclusions from existing literature such as books, papers, and articles. Based on the existing literature, online collaborative learning had a beneficial impact on the students' writing performance. The findings indicated that the implementation of online collaborative learning effectively facilitates the instructional and educational endeavors of both educators and learners. The observed results indicated significantly greater levels of accomplishment in comparison to those who did not use the same. This is achieved via the provision of feedback, explanations, and suggestions related to students' errors, as well as by promoting more opportunities for participation and collaboration. The evident advantage of online collaborative learning becomes clear when considering the impact of technology on improving students' writing abilities and knowledge. In a general sense, online collaborative learning may be seen as a potential substitute for traditional methods in teaching writing skills to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) students.

1. Introduction

The use of online collaboration serves as a valuable tool in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classes. The integration of an online collaborative learning mode is hypothesized to facilitate the attainment of favorable writing results among students. According to research results, it is recommended that learners engage in online collaboration as a means to explore novel dimensions of collaborative learning and facilitate the generation of new knowledge. The scholarly discourse around online collaboration has emphasized the significance of peer feedback and revision strategies in enabling English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to become proficient writers.

Collaborative learning has emerged as a significant concept within the realm of language education. Therefore, students at the tertiary level are being encouraged by their institutions to work and learn collaboratively (Dearden, 2018). According to Vygotsky (1986), there are distinct developmental differences between individual learners who work alone and those who engage in collaborative learning. This observation provides evidence in favor of the perspective that collaborative learning entails both the collective development of common meanings and the negotiation of individual interpretations. The process of creating meaning is not seen as just a reflection of the mental representations held by individual individuals; rather, it is viewed as a collaborative accomplishment within the context of interaction (Stahl et al., 2006). This is because different students bring a wide variety of

expertise and experiences to the task. The sharing of expertise comes together and helps the learners achieve much more than when working individually, which results in a better-quality essay. Fung (2010) confirmed this standpoint by stating that "the pooling of diverse abilities provides interdependence for learners to co-construct knowledge and improve their writing skills to a greater extent than what they could achieve individually" (p. 23).

Even though more and more research is being done on different aspects of online collaboration in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), not much research has been done on the educational benefits of using online collaboration to teach writing and the processes that go along with it. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive examination regarding the potential influence of online collaboration as a collaborative learning strategy within EFL writing classes on students' writing proficiency and practices.

This review study aims to critically examine the existing evidence pertaining to the impact of online collaborative learning on the development of writing abilities. Furthermore, it contributes to the continuing discourse around the potential of online collaboration in enhancing writing skills as well as the degree to which online collaborative learning might foster reciprocal support among EFL students. Furthermore, it is important to examine the students' perception and comprehension of online cooperation in order to delve into the implications of this strategy. To do this, the study used a qualitative methodology, which mostly focuses on the collection of data and insights from existing research sources, including books, papers, and articles.

2. Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is founded on the fundamental ideas of sociocultural theory, which posits that the process of learning takes place via the active engagement and interaction of learners within an environment that fosters cooperation and social interaction. In this regard, the process of learning manifests itself as the exchange of knowledge and the assumption of responsibilities within collaborative endeavors (Vygotsky, 1978). The process of meaning sharing and negotiation is predicated on the assumption that students engage in the construction of their own knowledge. This construction is facilitated through active participation in activities alongside their peers, fostering a social connection that enables the development of personal understanding. It is essential to note that collaborative learning is often seen as the process of individuals working together towards a shared objective, such as the resolution of a problem (Roschelle & Teasley, 1995). Within the realm of education, collaborative learning has emerged as a very promising pedagogical approach that fosters a conducive learning environment by facilitating student interaction and cooperation in the pursuit of assigned tasks (Coelho et al., 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to get a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations that support collaborative initiatives, as this will facilitate a more profound appreciation of this particular kind of discourse. The foundation of collaborative learning lies in sociocultural theory, which suggests that students participate in collaborative endeavors such as exchanging ideas, formulating inquiries, exploring solutions, completing assignments, and reflecting on their cognitive processes and personal encounters (Storch, 2017). Luna Scott (2015) asserts that this pedagogical approach fosters the development of collaborative learning techniques among students, emphasizes learner-centered approaches such as peer learning, and offers support for students' initiatives that often need joint efforts. Moreover, Johnson and Johnson (1999) proposed that the inclusion of positive social interdependence might potentially augment learners' performance in contrast to competitive and individualistic contexts.

The assumption is made that the fast progression of technology has the potential to alter the methods by which writing is instructed by enabling and offering a collaborative learning environment for learners. The use of this educational method has increasingly received support within the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as a result of the collaborative features provided by Web 2.0 technologies (Kessler et al., 2012). The idea of computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL), which explores the collaborative behaviors of students while using computer technology, is considered an important educational application of learning theories in this specific domain (Stahl et al., 2006). CSCL is often recognized as a field that places significant emphasis on the interpretation and generation of meaning within the context of collaborative undertakings, as well as the ways in which these activities are assisted by deliberately designed artifacts or instruments (Koschmann, 2002). Computer-mediated social interactions may serve as a means for individuals to acquire information. The software platform provides a virtual environment that promotes active participation and supports educational activities. According to Salmon (2013), collaborative e-learning activities have the capacity to facilitate the cultivation of innovative abilities, creative knowledge, and solutions. During these activities, learners actively participate in the process of acquiring new knowledge while collaborating with their colleagues and peers. This approach argues that technology has the capacity to assist students in extending their collaborative endeavors beyond the limitations of the traditional classroom setting and into many other contexts. In this context, several researchers propose the implementation of a collaborative writing methodology, which has generated considerable attention in the field of second language acquisition over the last three decades. Collaborative writing entails the collective endeavor of several authors in order to generate a written composition (Li, 2017). Several researchers (Jones, 2007; Sun & Chang, 2012) have emphasized the significance of student participation throughout the writing process. The researchers have established the reciprocal obligation of every student in the process of producing written content. The works of Boch (2007), Keys (1994), Storch (2012), and Yang (2014) provide evidence that a sizable body of academic research has demonstrated favorable results in relation to collaborative writing.

This approach facilitates the development of critical thinking abilities among students through their active engagement in the exchange of ideas and opinions with their peers.

Upon analysis of this phenomenon from a sociocultural perspective and within the framework of computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL), it becomes apparent that collaborative writing has significant cognitive and social benefits within the educational setting. Within this particular framework, students collaborate in order to jointly produce knowledge via the provision of reciprocal assistance and direction, a phenomenon often known as scaffolding (Wells et al., 1990). In addition, collaborative writing plays a crucial role in enhancing students' consciousness (Storch, 2012), nurturing and enhancing their capacity for critical thinking (Keys, 1994), and encouraging a heightened emphasis on language structures and discourse (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Regarding this issue, Ede and Lunsford (1990) have highlighted three distinct characteristics of collaborative writing: consistent active involvement throughout the writing process, collective accountability for the creation of the written text, and the attainment of a cohesive final written outcome. The collaborative learning technique discussed in this context involves a unified effort among individuals to collectively achieve a task throughout the whole of the writing process (Storch, 2013). Technology facilitates connection and allows for novel collaborative learning environments. The subsequent discourse will focus on the use of technology in the realm of writing.

3. Technology and L2 Writing Practice

In a period marked by rapid technical progress, a wide range of technologies have developed as effective instruments for both the study and teaching of languages. There has been a notable transition in the field of educational technology from the use of computer-assisted language learning to the acceptance and implementation of technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) (Li, 2017; Walker & White, 2013). The field of technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) encompasses the examination and exploration of the many ways in which technology is used in the teaching and learning of language, as stated by Golshana and Tafazolib (2014). In essence, it refers to the amalgamation of technological tools that facilitate the instructional and educational endeavors of both educators and learners. The phrase "Computer-Assisted Language Learning" (CALL) encompasses a wider range of instruments, such as mobile phones and iPads, in addition to PCs. The use of technology has expanded to include emerging technologies such as interactive whiteboards and tablets, in addition to traditional PCs (Jack & Higgins, 2019). The objective of this study is to identify effective strategies for integrating technology into language instruction to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. One of the fundamental differences between CALL (computer-assisted language learning) and TELL (technology-enhanced language learning) is the understanding of technology. While CALL perceives technology as a means to support language learning platforms, TELL considers technology an integral component of the language environment, facilitating language acquisition and use (Walker & White, 2013). TELL offers a novel framework with innovative resources for language acquisition and pedagogy. The progress has occurred in parallel with the development of technological advancements in various facilities. Li (2017) emphasized the relevance of new technologies in education, particularly in the context of language learning and teaching. Within this framework, academics universally agree that TELL does not constitute a technique in its own right but rather serves as a valuable instrument within the realm of second-language instruction and acquisition (Warschauer, 2005). Despite the ongoing discourse about the appropriateness of using the term computer-assisted language learning (CALL), I have chosen to utilize this nomenclature in the present investigation. This decision is based on the fact that CALL continues to be widely recognized and employed in prominent scholarly publications within this domain (Motteram, 2013).

The accelerated rate at which online language instruction and acquisition occur has presented novel requirements for both educators and learners, posing difficulties in determining the essential components to include in the training of instructors and students in using educational technology inside the classroom (Hampel & Stickler, 2005). Furthermore, Reinders (2009) expressed many issues about the roles of both educators and learners within the technological context. Proficient use of technology necessitates the possession of both pedagogical and comprehensive technical competencies. The evolving role of students has become more intricate, necessitating a range of skills and talents that may not be inherently present within them. Hence, it is essential for students to undergo training programs in order to acquire proficiency in the use of emerging technologies. This focus is not just placed on the mastery of the technical instrument itself but rather on the facilitation of contact and cooperation via the medium of technology.
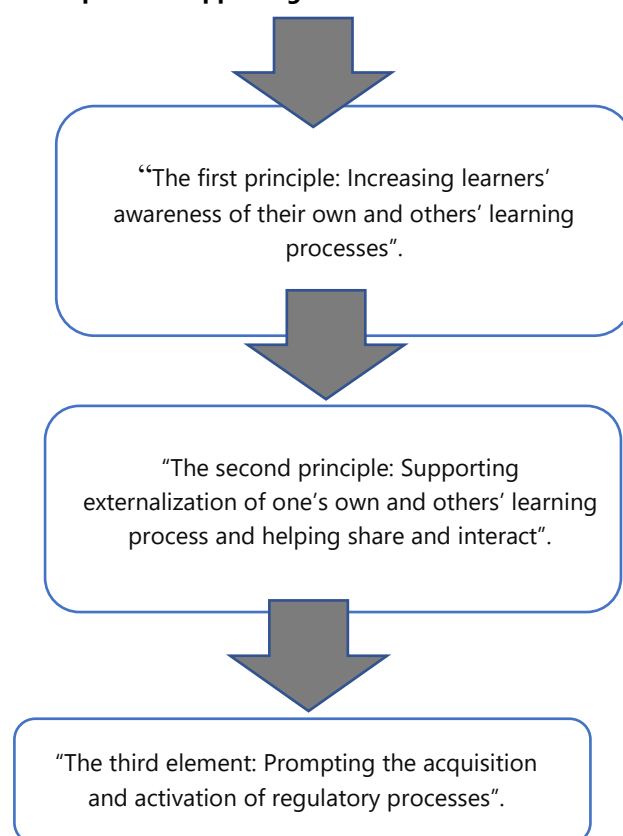
Numerous empirical investigations examining the efficacy of incorporating technology in educational settings have consistently demonstrated its favorable effects on students' writing abilities, both in terms of quantity and quality (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2012; Borokhovski et al., 2016; Fidaoui et al., 2010; Wollscheid et al., 2016; Zheng & Warschauer, 2017). Fidaoui et al. (2010) demonstrated that the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) created an interactive environment that facilitated the production of exemplary academic output by students. Furthermore, Al-Mansour and Al-Shorman (2012) conducted a research study that investigated the impact of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) on the writing skills of Saudi students. The findings of this study revealed that incorporating computer-assisted English language instruction in conjunction with traditional teaching methods had a beneficial effect on the students' writing proficiency.

Zaini and Mazdayasna (2015) did a noteworthy study that investigated the use and impact of technology in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classrooms among learners in Iran. The findings indicated that students who included computer use in their writing had superior performance compared to their peers who adhered to the conventional method of composing articles, including appropriate verb tenses, plural forms, and accurate spelling. Furthermore, the pupils generated paragraphs of superior quality. The obtained result aligns with the previous research conducted by Jafarian et al. (2012), whereby it was shown that computer users at an Iranian institution exhibited considerably higher levels of achievement compared to non-users. The significant disparity in favor of computer users is apparent via the influence of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) on enhancing students' knowledge and proficiency. In a broad sense, it can be seen that technology has presented an alternative instrument to conventional approaches in the instruction of second-language writing. This tool has the potential to address some limitations associated with traditional approaches to teaching writing. It does this by offering feedback, explanations, and ideas pertaining to students' errors while also facilitating enhanced chances for engagement and cooperation.

4. Online Collaboration

The emergence of online collaboration has coincided with the advent of information technology (IT) and the transformative impact it has had on education, particularly with the integration of the Internet into school classrooms. According to several academics, collaborative activity entails the collective engagement of students as they interact with one another to accomplish the objectives of a given work. Within educational settings, the use of writing classrooms as a pedagogical approach serves the purpose of enhancing students' acquisition of knowledge and proficiency in the domain of writing. In relation to this matter, it seems vital to comprehend the definition of the term 'collaboration' as used in this research. According to Hathorn and Ingram (2002), collaboration may be characterized as the mutual reliance and interconnectedness among members of a group as they actively exchange distinct ideas and draw upon their own experiences (p. 33). In the context of this research, the term "online collaboration" was operationally defined as the collective engagement of learners using online collaborative platforms to mutually enhance their writing skills. Collaborative learning activities encompass a range of objectives, such as fostering a sense of belonging and engagement among students to enhance their collective productivity. Additionally, these activities aim to cultivate a sense of shared responsibility among learners, wherein they demonstrate concern for both their own achievements and the successes of their peers. Moreover, collaborative learning endeavors strive to establish a supportive social environment, as highlighted by Masika and Jones (2016). Collectively, these objectives contribute to the enhancement of learners' self-esteem and self-confidence, resulting in a discernible improvement in academic performance. The efficient use of online collaborative affordances by learners is crucial to attaining these objectives, with technology playing a prominent role. In order to accomplish this objective, Järvelä et al. (2015) presented three design concepts aimed at facilitating online collaborative learning, as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Principles for Supporting Online Collaborative Learning (Source: Järvelä et al., 2015).

"The first principle: Increasing learners' awareness of their own and others' learning processes".

"The second principle: Supporting externalization of one's own and others' learning process and helping share and interact".

"The third element: Prompting the acquisition and activation of regulatory processes".

Online collaboration is closely linked to sociocultural theory, which is based on the belief that learning occurs through the interaction of learners. The use of this instructional technique in writing courses has the potential to augment overall student learning and specifically improve their writing abilities. Undoubtedly, the use of this approach facilitates the creation of a virtual learning environment that fosters collaboration among learners, enabling them to collectively accomplish the assigned tasks. Online cooperation is inherently crucial due to its inherent aim of connecting language matters to the wider sociocultural context and recognizing social interactions as problematic in connection to language-related concerns. The student-centered approach is given significant importance, requiring students to assume more responsibility for their learning. To effectively support all elements of the learning process, precise instructions and guidance must be offered (Zheng & Warschauer, 2015). The emergence of this strategy may be attributed to a response against the conventional teacher-centered approach, whereby instructors have exclusive power inside the classroom. This approach has been associated with diminished student motivation and inadequate communication skills (Owens et al., 2017). Online collaboration is widely believed to provide significant opportunities for fostering peer connection, nurturing learners' initiative, and facilitating the development of writing abilities.

Online collaboration often occurs when students engage in interactions that stimulate learning processes. However, it is not always certain that the desired interactions will occur initially. One of the main considerations in the development of such activities is the use of strategies to enhance the likelihood of certain forms of engagement. According to Murphy (2004), a framework comprising six steps has been proposed to facilitate collaboration and interaction within an online learning environment, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Stages to Promote Collaboration in an Online Learning Environment (Source: Murphy, 2004).
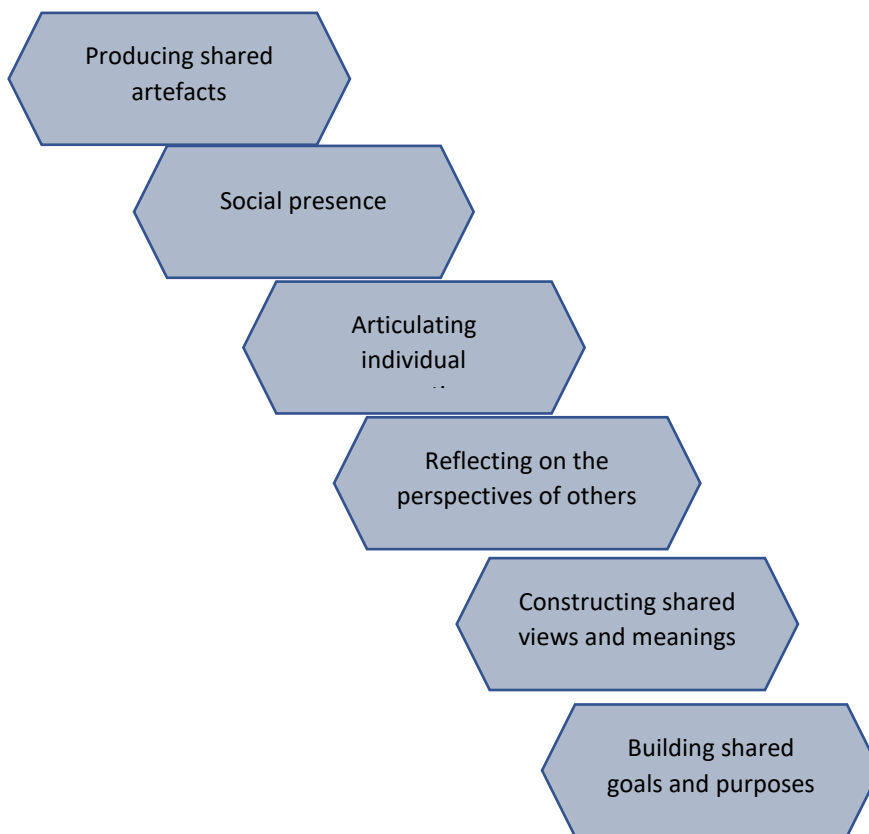
One notable aspect of Murphy's (2004) approach is the transition from interaction to collaboration when students collectively establish a shared objective and collaborate in their efforts to attain that objective. The achievement of this objective is facilitated through the exchange of personal experiences and the dissemination of information.

In recent times, there has been a notable surge in the recognition and interest around asynchronous text-based talks owing to their several discernible benefits (Saeed & Ghazali, 2017). For instance, students are afforded more possibilities for interpersonal engagement, enabling them to engage in meaningful interactions with their peers. Additionally, they are provided with adequate time for introspection, contemplation, and independent research, allowing them to augment their contributions to the discourse.

Furthermore, the communication components are documented in written or recorded form, providing the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of the collaborative process. This is facilitated by the availability of transcripts of these communications, which may be used to assess both individual and group dynamics in the context of cooperation (De Wever et al., 2006). According to De Wever et al. (2006), the discussion transcripts retain all instances of information exchange among students. These transcripts may be used by students for the purpose of reflection, or they can be employed as data for study. Nevertheless, educators should be mindful of the structure of social interactions and its impact on the quality of both the interaction spaces and the outcomes they yield (Wegerif, 2013). It is postulated that engagement and cooperation among students will assist in the process of language acquisition. In order to assess the suitability of using online collaboration in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, it is crucial to comprehend the possible benefits it offers to learners. Henceforth, the following discourse presents a selection of significant advantages offered by online cooperation within the framework of L2 writing.

5. Affordances of Online Collaboration

Defining the concept of affordance is a challenge due to the many perspectives used by scholars in their examination of this phenomenon. Gibson, for instance, was the pioneering scholar who introduced this concept within the domain of ecological psychology (Thoms & Poole, 2017). The individual in question proposed the affordance hypothesis, which posits that this word pertains to the potential behaviors that may be undertaken inside a given context, contingent upon our perception of that environment. According to Gibson (1979), it has been posited that individuals' interactions with the environment are contingent upon their subjective views of the affordances it offers them. It is of great importance to clarify that there are affordances that may be known or unknown and are latent in the environment. Additionally, there are "perceived" affordances that are more closely related to perceptual capacities since these capabilities ultimately influence the usefulness of an object or system (Norman, 1999). The concept being referred to is affordance, which pertains to the perceived potential actions that an object may facilitate. For instance, a door equipped with a handle indicates the possibility of pulling it open, whereas a plate says that one should push the door. (Gaver, 1991). The effectiveness of online collaborative platforms for learning is contingent upon the perspectives and interpretations of learners. The understanding of the potential applications of technologies in the learning setting may differ between learners and educators (Lee & McLoughlin, 2008). The consideration of this aspect is crucial in the context of research since the range of potential affordances is extensive and might vary significantly for individual learners.

Within the realm of education, Norman (1999) provided a comprehensive explanation whereby he posited that affordances include both the perceived and tangible characteristics of an object, particularly those essential attributes that dictate its potential uses (p. 9). He is credited with introducing the word in the domains of graphic design and human-computer interaction. In order to enhance the efficacy of technology in the realm of education, it is essential to have a clear and concise delineation of its affordances (Conole & Dyke, 2004). Nevertheless, according to Turner (2005), the comprehension of affordance is a more intricate concept than Gibson's initial description, particularly when considering the implications of the Internet era on action options. The focus is mostly on the correlation between the user and the item (Doering et al., 2008). The concept proposed by Lai et al. (2007) suggests that the potential for improved learning lies not just in the technology itself but rather in the interplay between technology and pedagogical practice. This assertion seems to have merit (Lai et al., 2007, p. 335). The focus, then, should be directed at the applications of technology rather than the technology itself.

Hence, the contribution of students has a significant role in shaping the affordances they see. The significance of this element is underscored since some students may lack enough knowledge of the advantages offered by new instruments in the realm of language acquisition. The limited level of consciousness seen in individuals may be attributed to the training programs they undergo, whereby they acquire proficiency in using various instruments without comprehending the underlying rationale for their use. Hence, it is important for users to enhance their proficiency in both technical and pedagogical domains in order to effectively integrate technology into their instructional practices (Stickler & Hampel, 2015). On the other hand, it is of utmost significance to carefully choose appropriate instruments for the purpose of achieving educational objectives (Johnson & Golombek, 2016). Hence, the identification of the affordances of various tools is an essential aspect of broadening our comprehension of their functionality and their potential for easy use within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The argument posits that fostering the learners' own understanding of technology would enable them to provide novel perspectives to the educational experience.
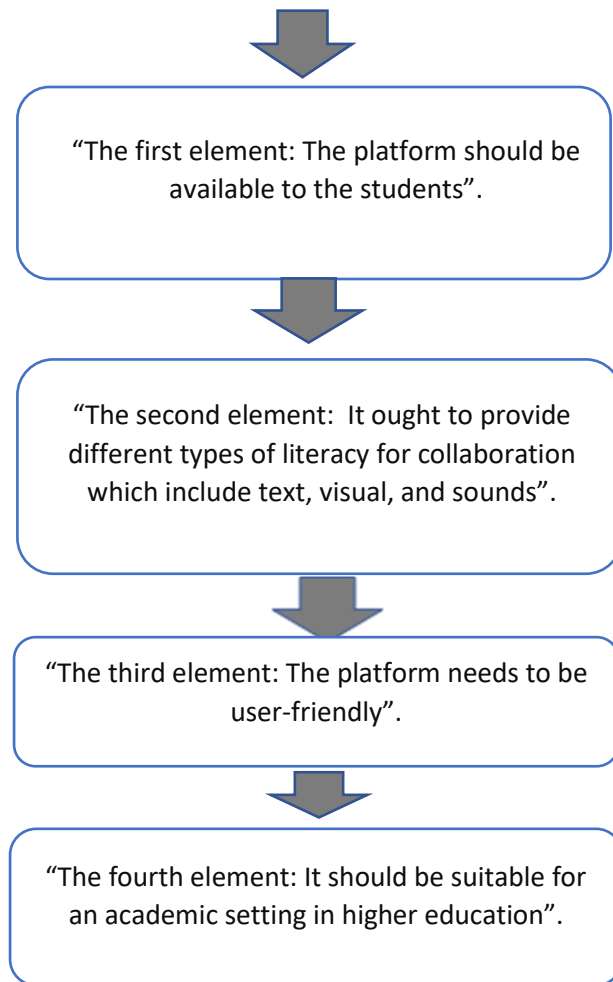
Numerous studies in the existing body of literature have shown the educational benefits associated with online cooperation among learners. The majority of this research has shown many positive effects associated with the use of online collaboration in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. Strobl (2014) performed research aimed at investigating the impact of online collaboration on academic writing within the context of foreign language acquisition. The research further examined the distinctions between collaborative and individual writing processes and outputs using a mixed-methods methodology. The results of the study indicate that the act of collaborating has resulted in an increased degree of correctness in written texts. In addition, it has been shown that collaborative texts exhibit a significant increase in scores pertaining to the selection and structuring of information that is deemed acceptable. The outcomes of this study were attributed by the researcher to the comprehensive deliberations conducted throughout the preparatory stage. Weller et al. (2005) conducted noteworthy research that examined the incorporation of Internet

technology into a course offered at the Open University in the United Kingdom. The results of the study revealed that students had a favorable experience while engaging in collaborative work using various technology tools. Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed that each technological tool provided help for a certain stage of the learning process. Additionally, Kong (2003) documented that the creation of a learning environment tailored to the specific requirements of the subject matter has the potential to facilitate student engagement in complex classroom contexts.

6. Online Collaboration Tools in Writing

Due to rapid advancements in technology, different digital tools have been used to facilitate authentic social interactions and collaboration among learners. Several free collaborative online platforms are available, but selecting one is not an easy task. Therefore, it is extremely crucial to identify the pedagogical needs and evaluate the different available technological tools in terms of their affordances and constraints prior to choosing a particular tool. To do so, Coelho et al. (2016) suggested four crucial elements to be considered before selecting any tool in the educational realm, as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Elements to be Considered before Selecting any Tool in the Educational Realm (Source: Coelho et al., 2016)

"The first element: The platform should be available to the students".

"The second element: It ought to provide different types of literacy for collaboration which include text, visual, and sounds".

"The third element: The platform needs to be user-friendly".

"The fourth element: It should be suitable for an academic setting in higher education".

A comprehensive examination of the available literature has shown that both educators and learners exhibit a strong inclination towards using the Moodle platform, as they have previously recognized its importance in the realm of language acquisition (Al-Ani, 2013; Banerjee, 2011; Henderson, 2010). Furthermore, the use of Moodle facilitates the implementation of a student-centered approach since it shifts the focus of education from educators to learners. According to Al-Ani (2013), empirical evidence suggests that Moodle facilitates students' learning both inside and outside the confines of the classroom environment. Therefore, several institutions of higher education have embraced Moodle as an e-learning solution to integrate traditional classroom instruction with online techniques. The University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Salalah is also among the schools that have chosen this approach. As a CMS, Moodle is characteristically equipped with facilities and tools that promote interaction and collaboration among learners in the foreign language, such as discussion boards, blogs, and wikis. Furthermore, the use of these three digital technologies has gained significant popularity inside the Moodle platform due to their distinct approaches to fostering a conducive atmosphere for facilitating student communication. Collaborative learning is widely recognized as having significant potential for facilitating effective educational practices. Specifically, online collaboration is beneficial when integrated into the writing classroom,

as elaborated upon in subsequent sections. Moreover, it is worth noting that contemporary learners have a strong affinity for three specific online writing tools. These tools have become deeply intertwined with the daily lives of individuals, as text messages, emails, blogs, chats, and forum discussions have emerged as prevalent means of communication in today's society (Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010). The following discussion provides insight into the three primary instruments used to facilitate cooperation among learners on the Moodle platform.

7. Students' Perceptions of Online Collaboration

The exponential advancement of technology has brought about significant transformations in societal and educational frameworks. Technology not only affords students the opportunity to exert agency over their learning process but also gives them convenient access to an extensive volume of knowledge (Lam & Lawrence, 2002). The consideration of students' views and acceptance of technology is of utmost importance when it comes to the integration of new technologies into their educational experiences. According to Li (2017), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) posits that users' perception of technology's ability to improve their performance influences their attitude towards it, leading to a positive attitude that promotes technology adoption. Numerous scholarly works have shown that several aspects might potentially influence students' opinions about online collaboration settings. For instance, Lu et al. (2012) conducted a study that identified many variables influencing students' happiness in blended learning, drawing on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The parameters included in this study consist of several elements, including the characteristics of students, instructors, courses, and infrastructure, as well as the perceived utility and simplicity of use. In a similar vein, the use of the technology acceptance model (TAM) aids in the identification of elements that influence users' acceptance, specifically via the lens of two core beliefs: perceived utility and perceived ease of use.

These potentialities have generated much conjecture over the establishment of an educational milieu that enables students to use emerging technology in order to provide learners with novel methodologies and a combination of abilities that may enhance their learning experience. The goal of Fang's (2010) research was to ascertain how Chinese EFL college students felt about computer-assisted writing tools. The findings have shown that a significant proportion of students had favorable views towards using computers as a means of writing while expressing comparatively less enthusiasm towards their use as a tool for evaluating essays. Additionally, research has shown that the use of computer-mediated feedback has facilitated students in the process of revising their written work, resulting in a favorable impact on the enhancement of their writing abilities. In a comparable investigation, Alaidarous and Madini (2016) conducted research using mixed methods to examine the perspective of Saudi female students about English language acquisition in a blended learning setting facilitated by a learning management system. The research further examined the variables that impact students' perspectives within the context of blended learning. Despite encountering some obstacles, students usually demonstrate very favorable attitudes towards blended learning, a teaching approach that combines technology with traditional methods. The students identified many aspects that impacted their perspective, including the level of difficulty and applicability of the course material to their daily lives, the effectiveness of the teacher, and the nature of the instructional methods used. In addition, Al Zumor et al. (2013) conducted a study that examined the perspectives of Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students about the benefits and drawbacks of using the learning management system via Blackboard at King Khalid University. The numerical simulations have shown favorable attitudes towards the advantages of acquiring English skills in this particular setting. Also, research has shown that blended learning creates an environment where indirect strategies for learning a language can be used more effectively. These include meta-cognitive strategies (like planning and organizing learning), affective strategies (like building confidence), and social strategies (like working with peers). Nevertheless, many limitations were acknowledged and addressed in the study, including technical challenges, inadequate student training, and a scarcity of laboratory facilities. Ja'ashan (2015) performed a case study at a Saudi institution to investigate the perspectives and attitudes of Saudi EFL students regarding studying English in a mixed learning setting. The findings of the study have shown that students exhibited favorable attitudes towards the acquisition of English language skills via the use of blended learning methodologies. The students had a firm conviction that their learning environment played a significant role in enhancing their proficiency in the English language while also fostering an enjoyable, collaborative, and engaging learning experience.

Denman and Al-Mahrooqi (2014) performed significant research in the Omani setting, examining the beliefs and behaviors of Omani university students studying English as a foreign language (EFL) about peer criticism in their English writing workshops. The findings indicated mostly positive attitudes towards peer feedback, while some constraints were highlighted that hindered its successful execution. To tackle these concerns, the researchers have put out a proposition for the implementation of additional measures aimed at enhancing the efficacy of peer criticism inside writing classes at Omani universities.

8. Conclusion

This review study examined the literature on how online collaborative learning affects writing abilities. It also contributes to the continuing topic of how online collaboration could help writing and how much reciprocal scaffolding among EFL students can be facilitated by online collaborative learning. Additionally, it sees aspects that need to be looked at to determine the effects of such an approach, such as the students' perspective and knowledge of online collaboration. The research used a qualitative approach, which focuses mainly on collecting information and findings from previously published works like books, papers, and articles.

According to the body of research, online collaborative learning improved the students' writing abilities. The results showed that online collaborative learning successfully supports both instructors' and students' efforts to learn and educate. The findings that were seen showed that individuals who used the same method had much higher levels of achievement than those who did not. This is accomplished through offering comments, justifications, and recommendations in relation to mistakes made by students, as well as by encouraging greater possibilities for involvement and teamwork. When analyzing how technology affects students' writing skills and knowledge, the obvious benefit of online collaborative learning is made plain. In the context of teaching writing skills to students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL), online collaborative learning may be seen as a possible replacement for conventional approaches.

8.1 Future research

The current review study examined the research on how online collaborative learning affects writing skills. Additionally, it contributes to the ongoing discussion about how online collaboration may help writing and how much such learning can facilitate reciprocal scaffolding among EFL students. Additionally, it recognizes that factors like the students' viewpoint and familiarity with online cooperation need to be taken into consideration in order to assess the outcomes of such an approach. Several studies talked about the benefits of online collaboration for writing skills, and a few studies talked about other skills. Therefore, another good study that can be conducted in the future would be about how online collaborative learning affects and improves speaking, reading, or listening skills in EFL contexts.

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