Benefits and Drawbacks of Collaborative Writing for Young Foreign Language Learners: A Case Study on Teachers' Perspective

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List of Abbreviations

ALs   Adult Learners

CW   Collaborative Writing

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

ESL   English as a Second Language

FL   Foreign Language

ibid.   ibídem ("in the same source")

i.e.   id est ("that is")

L1   First Language

L2   Foreign or Second Language

LRE   Language-Related Episode

YLs   Young Learners

ZPD   Zone of Proximal Development

Abstract

Collaborative Writing (CW) and its benefits and drawbacks for language learning have been studied by many scholars, mainly concerning adult learners (ALs). Nevertheless, its potential applications to young learners (YLs) of a foreign language (FL) are yet to be examined in depth. The collaborative method is based on such theories as Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) which emphasizes that learning is a social process, Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) which explains that language learning is achieved via comprehensible input obtained from other learners, Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996) that underlines the significance of the interaction and negotiation of meaning among learners that makes the input more comprehensible and Swain's Output Hypothesis (1995) which highlights the importance of the production of L2 (output) from which students are conscious of their own knowledge. It is also nurtured by the claims made by Swain (2000), who considers that Languaging, and especially Collaborative Dialogue, may help students to solve their problems by means of interaction. It is important to take into account that writing is considered an arduous skill to acquire, a skill that becomes more challenging when dealing with a FL (Williams, 2012, p. 322; Sheerin, 2008, p. 345; Verspoor & Smiskova, 2012, p. 41). For this reason, working collaboratively on a writing task may help YLs to acquire FL writing skills. Nevertheless, regarding classroom practices with YLs, teachers' beliefs concerning collaborative work come into play, since their point of view on whether a FL teaching approach or method results beneficial for their pupils is crucial. This dissertation aims to explore teachers' perspective on whether CW is beneficial also for YLs by means of a case study, in which three teachers of diverse stages of a Primary school took part. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers, audio-recorded and transcribed. Then, the data was examined in search of recurrent themes mentioned by the three teachers. The results of this case study show that CW is generally considered favorable for young FL learners, which is in line with the theoretical underpinnings of collaborative learning and the existing body of research. However, more investigation is needed in this field. Overall, the present study supports claims in favor of CW's benefits for YLs, which enables us to advocate for its more widespread implementation in FL Primary classrooms.

Keywords: Collaborative Writing, foreign language, young learners, language learning, teachers' perspective

1. Introduction

In a world dominated by ever-developing communication technologies that aim to gain global diffusion, as Hart-Davidson (2001, pp. 147-148) observes, writing has become an extremely frequently used, if not the most, form of worldwide communication, to a point where writing is even weaponized as a tool to negotiate power (Winsor, 2003, pp. 5-12). This might seem striking to some since writing has been reported to be the most challenging skill to acquire, especially in Foreign or Second Language (L2) contexts (Williams, 2012, p. 322; Sheerin, 2008, p. 345; Verspoor & Smiskova, 2012, p. 41). This degree of difficulty is mainly due to the fact that proficiency in writing is, for the most part, dependent on mastery of other linguistic skills like listening, reading, and speaking (Frydrychova Klimova, 2014, p. 239). Therefore, discovering new, more effective ways to facilitate the acquisition of writing has been a major concern in a growing body of literature which intersects the study of language teaching and language acquisition. One possible solution to this problem has come in the form of CW, which has shown great potential to both promote language skills and help in the overall learning process[1] (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007, pp. 157-158; Manchón, 2011, p. 61; Azkarai & García Mayo, 2015, p. 552) despite technically being "not very different from individual writing" due to "compris[ing] similar sub-tasks, such as planning, translating . . . and reviewing" (Limbu & Markauskaite, 2015, p. 395).

Yet, as Williams (2012, pp. 321-322) points out, the implementation of CW-based tasks is still scarce in the language classroom, and speaking seems to be a preferable target for collaborative methods. But several studies (Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008; Chen, 2019, pp. 567-568) demonstrate that producing writings collaboratively, though shorter than single-authored ones, has considerable advantages such as higher accuracy scores in a variety of learners.

When it comes to YLs, however, traditional applications of CW have received little support because what Lasagabaster and Doiz term "maturational constraints" (2003, p. 136) appear to be functional in the acquisition of writing. The more cognitively advanced a learner is, they explain (p. 154), the more likely they are to benefit from learning exercises, in particular writing practice, which may call for a reformulation of CW approaches to the teaching of writing in Primary education. Additionally, in accordance with Maeso (2016, p. 23), the

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[1] This is in line with more recent developments in the literature which support the function of writing as a tool conducive to learning, not just as a result of a learning process (see, for example, Manchón (2011) for a more detailed view on the differences between Learning-to-Write and Writing-to-Learn approaches). However, as it extends beyond the scope of this study and following recommendations from my supervisor, I have decided to focus more in depth on the research gap relating to CW and YLs.

absence of studies conducted on YLs prevents us from arriving at more conclusive results despite indication that it is at these stages that L2 acquisition is most efficient[2] (Singleton, 1995, pp. 2-4; Singleton & Ryan, 2004, p. 76).

As a result, the aim of this paper is threefold: 1) to situate CW within a comparative framework that allows for an assessment of the benefits and drawbacks of studies carried out with both ALs and YLs; 2) to acknowledge, in line with Frydrychova Klimova (2014, p. 239) and Vethamaiccam and Ganapathy (2017, pp. 23-24), the role of the teacher as the Primary coordinator of the acquisition of writing through CW; and 3) to advance our understanding of CW methodologies especially as applied to YLs. In order to do so, I will first address the main theoretical claims underlying CW by contrasting one core theory, namely Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, with four other trends in the study of CW.

Next, I will discuss the most relevant aspects of CW and its implication for language teaching. In reviewing the existing literature on CW, I will also attempt to determine whether any patterns can be established between CW models that are concerned with YLs as well as ALs in terms of the socio-cognitive and linguistic benefits and drawbacks of CW, with an emphasis particularly on learners' attitudes towards it. I will then present my case study of the presence of CW teaching methods in a Primary school in Navarre (Spain), which will focus on the experiences and perspectives of three different English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. My findings, then, may reveal where exactly studies on YLs might sit within the field of CW.

After that, a discussion will be offered that will examine the responses given by the three teachers and compare them to current trends in the literature. An overall summary of the conclusions will follow for the purpose of further reinforcing the need to implement CW methods in Primary education due to the benefits that it may have for YLs. Finally, I will finish by giving a critical evaluation of the limitations of my study in consideration of the findings that have been reached so far in the literature, especially looking at future directions on the subject.

2. Theoretical Framework

One of the most significant theories which inspired the collaborative method is Vygotsky's

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[2] Please note that the validity of the idea of a critical period is as yet contested in the literature. However, for the sake of argument I here take a posture that supports at least some sort of correlation between age and ease of writing acquisition. For a contrastive view on the conclusiveness of age-related factors that determine the acquisition of writing in an L2, see Shin (1999).

Sociocultural Theory, which puts forward that learning is principally a social procedure (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 131). Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory focuses on children's learning faculty and on their memory capacity and indicates that in order to achieve the most appropriate learning, it is unavoidable to take into consideration the collaboration and the interaction between the teacher and their students. Also central to this theory is the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is defined as follows (ibid., p. 86):

"the distance between the actual developmental level as
   determined by independent problem solving and the
   level of potential development as determined through
   problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration
   with more capable peers."

ZPD emphasizes the role of collaboration, as ZPD serves to measure the degree in which students' knowledge increases while interacting with their peers. This stands in opposition to the knowledge that students would gain individually (Donato, 1994; Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 481; Nassaji & Swain, 2000, p. 49). Another component in Vygotsky's theory is "scaffolding", which is mediated by the language (Donato, 1994). This language makes possible the communication between the teacher and the student and enables the construction of the student's learning too (ibid.).

Another theory which emphasizes the importance of interaction for L2 acquisition is Long's Interaction Hypothesis. In this model, Long (1996) showed that grouping students may contribute to a better L2 learning process in that peer negotiations are promoted. Therefore, Long declared:

"I would like to suggest that negotiation for meaning,
   and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional
   adjustments by the NS[3] or more competent interlocutor,
   facilitates acquisition because it connects input,
   internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention,
   and output in productive ways" (1996, pp. 451-452).

Long (1996) explains that if the negotiation is promoted by more advanced learners, the L2

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[3] Long refers to native speakers using the acronym NS.

learning will be more productive. Furthermore, negotiation enables the input to be comprehensible and it also helps the students to produce output in a FL (Swain, 2000, pp. 98-99).

Closely linked to Vygotsky's and Long's conceptualisations is Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Krashen (1985, p. 2) expressed that people learn language by means of the apprehension of the ideas that they obtain from other learners, or via the comprehensible input. Input plays an important role, in order to acquire the L2; but also really meaningful is the affective filter (p. 3). The fact that the affective filter is "up" (i.e. when the learner is anxious) results in a substantial lack of motivation that may hinder the learning process. However, when the affective filter is "down", on the contrary, the student is likely not to be distracted by any errors that they might commit, and therefore, the learning of the target language will be facilitated (Krashen, 1981). The input that learners receive should be slightly above their current L2 knowledge level ("i+1"), so that, as Krashen (1985, p. 2) suggests, the learning activity is maintained at a challenging level while it remains within students' reach determined by ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Furthermore, Swain (1995) proposed the Output Hypothesis, which holds that output entails more intellectual effort, in comparison with input, in order to learn the L2. The students should produce the L2 (output) to realize what they know or do not know. In collaborative exercises carried out in the L2, they construct output and they resolve their problems with the aid of their classmates, thereby facilitating their L2 learning (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain, 2005). This idea has been further developed by Swain who proposed a theory on Collaborative Dialogue and Languaging. She explains that Languaging is a way of learning the L2, and defines it as a "process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (Swain, 2006, p. 98).

Two types of Languaging can be distinguished (Swain & Watanabe, 2013): the first one is called Collaborative Dialogue, which is the instrument utilized by two or more students in order to resolve their problems, when it comes to conducting a collaborative written or spoken task (Swain, 2000, p. 102). The second one is the Private Speech, which is the tool used by learners for the purpose of solving their own difficulties out loud and in an individual manner (Swain & Watanabe, 2013). Therefore, Collaborative Dialogue helps students to resolve their problems collaboratively, supporting and encouraging each other (Swain & Lapkin, 2002; Watanabe & Swain, 2007; Brooks & Swain, 2009).

3. Literature Review

3.1. Collaborative Writing

In language teaching, CW refers to "the production of a text by two or more writers" (Storch, 2016, p. 387), where the authors interact, co-own and co-author the text. In a collaborative text, the parts created by each of the authors are not identifiable, since ideas and responsibilities are shared in order to compose a single unit (ibid.). In fact, in line with such authors as Sukirman, collaborativeness rather than individuality emerges as a distinctive feature of CW (2016, p. 34). Additionally, for a CW activity to be effective, as Storch (2016, p. 391) explains, it needs to be borne in mind that task modality is instrumental in determining the amount of languaging in CW. Therefore, it is necessary to first define the different task types that are relevant to the language-related outcomes that can be achieved through CW.

Following Storch (2016, p. 391), tasks can be classified into two groups: meaning-focused and grammar-focused. The former, which include activities like jigsaws, data commentary reports, and compositions, put an emphasis on the semantic content of the message that needs communicating, and by extension, work deeply on the acquisition of task-specific vocabulary. In addition, these activities tend to involve learners writing their compositions on the basis of a prompt. On the other hand, grammar-focused tasks such as dictoglosses are characterized by attention to form and particular aspects of the morpho-syntax of the target language. Also important to take into account, however, is the implementation of these task types from both a pedagogical and language-acquisition perspective. Lowry, Curtis, and Lowry (2004, pp. 76-80) suggest the following strategies:

1. Group single-author writing: the composition is created by one member of a group only, who acts as a representative of the whole group (as illustrated in Figure 1 below). However, this type of strategy can only be used in CWs which are not very complicated.
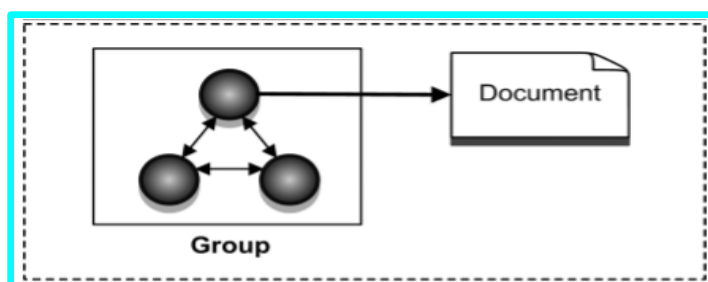

Figure 1. Group Single-Author Writing. (Lowry, Curtis, & Lowry, 2004, p. 76).

2. Sequential single writing: relying on turn-taking, each member of the group authors a part of the text, which upon completion is passed onto another so that they can continue to finish in a chain (see Figure 2). Sequential single writing is extremely beneficial when adopting, for instance, activities like "rotating sheets"[4].
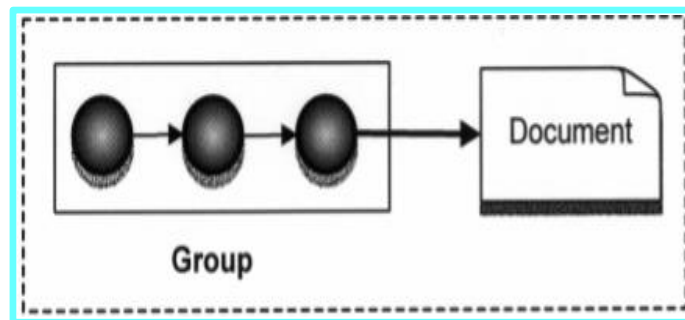

Figure 2. Sequential Single Writing. (Lowry, Curtis, & Lowry, 2004, p. 76).

3. Parallel writing: the workload is distributed among the group members in two possible ways: horizontal and stratified. While horizontal division consists of assigning each member a section to take care of, stratified division allocates functions instead, namely writing, group-leading, proofreading, etc. (as seen in Figure 3). As we will observe in section 4 below, stratified division parallel writing is very widely used by several teachers.
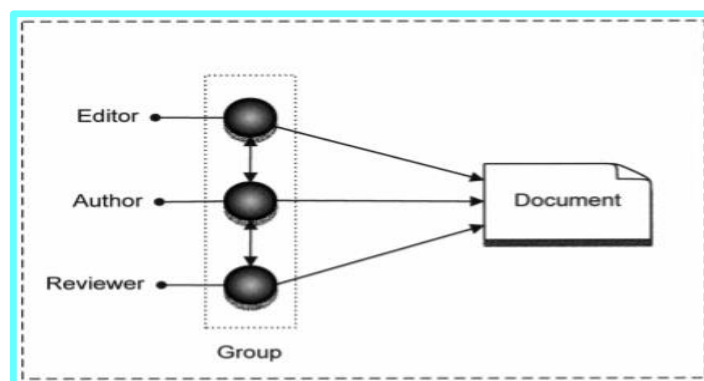

Figure 3. Stratified Division Parallel Writing. (Lowry, Curtis, & Lowry, 2004, p. 79).

4. Reactive writing: learners are required to work in conjunction with one another simultaneously, as shown in Figure 4 below. The students interact with each other and they could modify or accept their peers' suggestions.

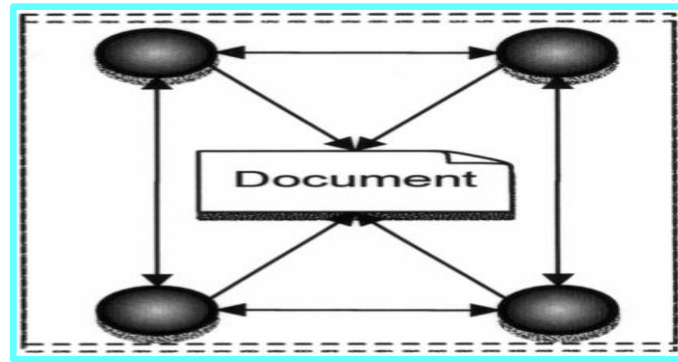[4] For a more detailed explanation of "rotating sheets", see section 4.

Figure 4. Reactive Writing. (Lowry, Curtis, & Lowry, 2004, p. 80).

These strategies are all in line, though to varying degrees, with Sukirman's (2016, p. 34) claim that CW (or any collaborative task for that matter) strengthens linguistic and communicative competences and promotes the use of a multiplicity of social skills like critical thinking for practical purposes as well as contributing to the furtherance of "a sense of accountability, cooperation and community".

In addition, the strategies listed above need to be accompanied by some teaching procedures, as the efficiency of these is potentiated when combined with careful planning on the instructor's part at three stages: pre-writing, during, and post-writing (Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011, pp. 6-7). Firstly, pre-writing strategies, highly recommended by experts such as Sheerin (2008, pp. 353-354), aim to avoid possible misunderstandings of learners when it comes to the instructions and focus of the task in addition to motivating them to participate in the activity. Secondly, during the CW task regular monitoring of heterogeneously divided groups of around 4-5 students is necessary, as Mulligan and Garofalo (2011) assert, so as to provide guidance in linguistic issues that may not be targeted by the CW task in question. And thirdly, post-writing exercises are also useful in a variety of respects: they help strengthen the newly acquired knowledge through peer feedback and provide the instructor with a preliminary and gradual informal assessment measurement (Storch, 2011, p. 277; Manchón, 2011, p. 77).

3.2. Benefits of Collaborative Writing

3.2.1. Adult Learners

Hitherto, research has concentrated on CW applications with ALs, typically secondary and tertiary students. There is a considerable structural difference between focusing on ALs and

YLs in that the former have fully acquired at least First Language (L1) writing techniques[5] (van Lier, 2005, p. 199; Gomez, 2013, pp. 20-21). Pointing out the (dis)similarities between the way in which ALs and YLs may benefit through CW may give rise to more studies on YLs in an attempt to confirm or refute whether findings from ALs are comparable to YLs. What follows is a review of the principal positive results from experimental work on ALs and CW.

Firstly, the study carried out by Storch (2005, p. 156) explained that intermediate English as a Second Language (ESL) ALs filled out a data commentary task collaboratively or in an individual manner. To analyze this kind of texts, qualitative and quantitative measures were utilized. Qualitative measures comprised structure, completion of the required task and content, while quantitative ones took into consideration accuracy, complexity and fluency. In this research, individuals and pairs were compared, and the results showed that pairs needed more time than individuals to finish the task. Storch (2005, pp. 160-163) concluded that pairs produced more accurate writings, the language used was more complex and the structure of the writings was greater than the texts written by individual writers. But the texts created by individuals were longer than the ones produced by pairs, due to the time devoted by pairs in their interaction.

In a study conducted by Fernández Dobao (2012), intermediate ALs of Spanish as a FL at a university in the USA, produced writings individually, in pairs or in small groups of four people. The instruments used were stories (CWs) based on pictures with previous instruction, and all the students were allowed the same quantity of time (30') in order to finish the text. Quantitative measures were taken into account. The results of this research showed that the writings produced by small groups were the most accurate ones in comparison with pairs and individuals. But still, pairs outperformed individuals in accuracy, although pairs and small groups were almost identical concerning the measures of complexity and fluency. However, individuals produced longer texts than the ones created by pairs or small groups. In general, small groups seemed the most effective ones because apart from what it is mentioned before, they produced a bigger amount of Language-Related Episodes[6] (LREs) and they resolved correctly the problems encountered in the text. This is important, since, as suggested by

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[5] Here, I am concerned with the ability to write in itself, not with writing for specific purposes like academic writing. See Gomez (2013) for a discussion on the acquisition of academic writing skills by ALs, both as L1 and L2 speakers of English.

[6] According to Swain and Lapkin (1998), "a language-related episode (LRE) is any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language [that] they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others" (p. 326).

Swain (1998), the students who appropriately resolve the LREs during their interaction, remember them more easily than the students who work individually.

Furthermore, in a study carried out by Shehadeh (2011), low-intermediate EFL students of a university in the United Arab Emirates wrote texts in pairs or individually. This study lasted sixteen weeks and it employed qualitative measures (organization, grammar, content, mechanics and vocabulary). The results showed that in terms of organization, content and vocabulary, CW had a positive impact, but it was not the case in mechanics and grammar. Besides, the participants gained more self-assurance when it comes to writing a composition.

Additionally, in a study carried out by Chen (2019), two groups of intermediate EFL students at a university in China were involved. In the first group, ALs composed essays in pairs, whereas in the second one, students wrote these essays in an individual manner (p. 565). For this study, quantitative and qualitative measures were taken into consideration. The results of this research demonstrated that students in the first group produced more accurate and fluent texts than the ALs of the second group (pp. 567-568) and that the ones involved in CW also outperformed the students from the second group concerning grammar and vocabulary, but it was not the case for content, organization and mechanics (pp. 569-570).

Concerning the language learning, Weissberg (2006) stated that tasks integrating oral and writing competences (like CW does), facilitate language learning. In addition, he explained that L2 learners can play different roles in order to produce an appropriate and organized CW in their target language.

3.2.2. Young Learners

As has been explained in the previous section (3.2.1), most studies have been carried out with secondary and university students, but research with Primary learners (6 to 12 years old) is limited. Stakanova and Tolstikhina (2014) note that children who study an initial FL in Primary school develop greater capacity to learn other FLs in Secondary school, and studying new languages helps students cultivate their reasoning, their imaginativeness and their memory (p. 457). Furthermore, research showed that children have a favorable attitude towards FL learning (Szpotowicz, Mihaljevic Djigunovic, & Enever, 2009, p. 120). However, it is important to take into account that writing is a complicated linguistic skill for children (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). In addition, there is a noteworthy preoccupation

that children do not develop this ability in school correctly (Rogers & Graham, 2008, p. 879). Further to this, writing is often considered an individual task, in which there is no interaction among students (Yarrow & Topping, 2001, p. 262). Furthermore, the lack of efficient strategies could obstruct students' writing capacity when producing texts.

As we have seen in the preceding section, the studies that concern CW in ALs mainly focus on the cognitive aspects of learners. However, research into the benefits for YLs is mostly limited to their emotional characteristics. CW has proven to be beneficial from a maturational and social perspective (Yarrow & Topping, 2001, p. 272). In fact, learners are put in situations in which they develop role-assigning and -fulfilling skills, as they cooperate with each other, co-author a text, and even function as critical readers. Besides, this can be seen as an opportunity for students to play diverse roles in the language classroom, taking specific responsibilities and not only focusing on themselves, but thinking about their interlocutors' needs. Such use of diverse roles makes children to be more interested and concentrated in the collaborative task they are doing, that is why this kind of method may be beneficial for them (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014, p. 458). This does not happen in individual writing, as the writer stands alone, and instead of receiving help from their peers, they only obtain the assistance of the teacher.

Another beneficial aspect of CW tasks are the effects of peer tutoring, because learners correct each other in the process (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982). Children's mistakes are prone to reduce eventually provided that students have appropriate input and they are engaged in an interaction in which there is scaffolding (Nikolov & Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2019, p. 581). In a study conducted by Pinter (2007), for instance, 10-year-olds were reported to notice and comment on diverse errors in their production during peer interaction.

On the other hand, the feedback that children are used to receiving when using oral language is not encountered in the individual writing; and because of this, peer feedback has been found to be really advantageous in language learning (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). In this way, studies have discovered the different benefits of both pair and teamwork among children, giving them the opportunity to display their individual talents while working as a group (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014, p. 459). In the same manner, CW enhances the students' writing skills and stimulates their critical capacity, motivation (Sukirman, 2016, p. 34), their aptitude to perform as decision makers (Christensen & James, 2008; as cited in Pinter & Mathew, 2017, p. 145) and strengthen their self-assurance, giving rise to a productive teamwork (Sukirman, 2016, p. 34). Additionally, CW texts were found to improve

the quality of writings in comparison with solitary compositions (Sutherland & Topping, 1999).

Besides, CW tasks may promote interaction in the class, and they can reduce anxiety rates that are typically associated with producing individual writings (Raimes, 1998; Rollinson, 2005). Yarrow and Topping (2001, pp. 267 & 275) have demonstrated that learners who work in pairs develop favorable self-esteem as writers and that their anxiety is reduced. This may lead to learners feeling more confident to express themselves. In fact, YLs working with CW have been observed to express their emotions more naturally, which stimulates their imagination; and therefore, they are encouraged to reveal their own experiences (Vass, 2007, p. 112). Furthermore, it is claimed that CW assignments also develop students' creativity significantly (Stewart, 1986; as cited in Sukirman, 2016, p. 43).

Moreover, students can learn from one another through interaction (Harmer, 2004; as cited in Sukirman, 2016, p. 43). Thus, the members of the team can resolve any difficulty that could appear during their interaction, as they work on the task collaboratively, and they interact with each other supplying scaffolding (Gagne & Parks, 2013; as cited in Pinter, 2015, p. 116). This is of great importance in that, as Halliwell (1992, p. 8) observes, "without talking they [learners] cannot become good at talking" and "the only way to learn to *use* it [a FL] *is* to use it." (italics in the original).

Overall, collaborative texts stimulate children to work together, putting their ideas together to create a comprehensible composition (Rojas-Drummond, Albarrán & Littleton, 2008, p. 183). Writing is, thus, considered a social exercise, in which students need to participate collaboratively supported by teacher orientation in order to seek optimal completion of the task at hand (Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2006). Moreover, creating collaborative tasks makes possible the development of the students' social aptitudes, and encourages students to be responsible (Murray, 1992; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996). Involvement in these social activities is crucial because suitable assistance is advised so that children are more effectively guided to achieve the designated goals (Pinter, 2015, p. 120).

In a study carried out by Yarrow and Topping (2001), five pieces of personal CWs by twenty-eight 10-11-year-olds from Scotland were collected using Paired Writing[7]. In this study, pairs

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[7] Paired Writing is a CW system first implemented by Yarrow and Topping that consists in grouping two students together to compose a writing while "incorporat[ing] metacognitive prompting and scaffolding" (2001, p. 261).

and individual writers were compared, and researchers found that pair-authored texts were more precise and comprehensible than the ones written individually. Taken together, these findings rather clearly indicate that peer interaction and Paired Writing are beneficial in the development of writing skills in Primary schoolers.

Rojas-Drummond, Albarrán and Littleton (2008) conducted a study with fifty-six 9-10-year-old children from Mexico City (Mexico). The participants were involved in a new educational program called '*Learning Together*'. The instruments used were stories (CWs) and the participants were organized in groups of three. The results were very satisfactory, because they demonstrated that using this method, the learners notably improved their creativity.

Further experimental evidence that YLs benefit from peer collaboration was provided by conclusions drawn by Vass, Littleton, Miell and Jones (2008), as they found that 7-to-9-year-old English children working on creative stories and poetry in pairs showed their emotions, leading to an increase in productivity and creativity.

Herder, Berenst, Glopper and Koole (2018) conducted a study with seventy-four 8-12-year-olds from six different Primary schools in The Netherlands. The instruments used were informative texts and letters (CWs) and children were divided in pairs or small groups of three or four. The results of this research are illustrative of the general findings in this field: reflective practices through peer negotiations were beneficial in the process of CW.

3.3. Potential Drawbacks of Collaborative Writing

Despite all the studies mentioned throughout this paper supporting the benefits of CW, some studies have reported slightly contradictory evidence. Therefore, in order to have a more comprehensive picture to look at, the potential drawbacks of CW will be explained in this section. It should be borne in mind that, as has been discussed earlier, the majority of studies on CW address ALs and there is scant research conducted with YLs. As a consequence of that, many disadvantages of CW dealt with here will result from aspects pertaining, albeit not exclusively, to findings from ALs.

Carless (2002, p. 389) mentions three main drawbacks that he encountered in the CW class: noise or the absence of discipline, excessive L1 use and a lack of student participation (see

also Carless, 2001). Concerning discipline, Carless (2002, p. 391) informs that the Primary school educators in his interviews admitted that it was not easy for them to establish an equilibrium between the fulfillment of collaborative activities and the maintenance of children's appropriate conduct. For this reason, according to Villarreal and Gil-Sarratea (2019, p. 6), there are some teachers that may act too passively when faced with collaborative group management. More precisely, while many decide to be the only source of feedback, others completely refuse to let students work in groups due to the noise.

Besides that, Yarrow and Topping (2001, p. 272) found that student interactions were not satisfactory on many occasions: several students did not behave correctly in class and they did not socialize with their fellow team members adequately, so their academic progress was unremarkable. Thus, their interaction resulted in various disruptive episodes. In addition, some students may even refuse to work with others, which may be related to the teacher's grouping criteria. In accordance with Malmqvist (2005), not all groups work efficiently together. If learners are reluctant to make contributions and are not receptive to their peers' suggestions, this can affect the product in a very negative way, as the feedback exchanged will not be as effective as it should.

This reluctance shown by some learners is, according to Watanabe (2008, pp. 621-622), directly linked to students' former negative experiences of groupwork. For this reason, some students feel hesitant towards the idea of working as a team. In line with this, the study carried out by Vass, Littleton, Miell and Jones (2008) mentions that there are sometimes pairs or small groups that do not listen to their peers' comments during their interactions, focusing only on their own ideas. This is a reflection of the competitiveness among students and of their lack of self-control when it comes to respecting their turn-taking (p. 199).

Other reasons for the lack of discipline or the presence of noise in class may be that children do not understand what they have to do in the task or that the activity itself is too easy or too complicated for them (Carless, 2002, p. 391). So, one solution to this may lie in the fact that the teacher should clarify the difficulties and answer the children's questions about the task. Another resolution to avoid the immoderate noise in class is that the teacher should remind the students before starting the activity how much noise they can make (pp. 391-392). Furthermore, there are educators that appoint one leader on each team in order to control the noise produced in class; and this may be reinforced by rewarding those students who had the best conduct during lessons.

With respect to the second drawback (the excessive use of L1), the educators should speak in the FL in class and when it comes to interacting with their students, for the purpose of motivating the children to talk in the target language (Carless, 2002, p. 393). However, the instructors should allow their students to utilize their L1 for a limited amount of time, providing that their aim is to promote the L2. According to McDonough, Crawford and De Vleeschauwer (2016, p. 200), many students only use the L1 to interact with one another, while using the L2 only to produce their final text. This may be justified by the lack of confidence which learners may feel when using their L2, and so they prefer to feel confident during the discussion and take no risks when it comes to being assessed afterwards. The frequent use of the L1 can be directly linked to the students' low proficiency level (p. 201). By the same token, Storch (2013, p. 101) contends that there is a general tendency for FL students to feel strange when they speak in their L2 with their classmates. In another study carried out by Kang (2005) in which the participants were EFL ALs from Korea, one student revealed their discomfort when talking in English to their peers: "I feel like I'm wearing a mask" (p. 284). On the other hand, it is important to take into consideration the teacher's pedagogical purpose (McDonough, Crawford, & De Vleeschauwer, 2016, p. 201). If they intend to promote students' target language use, assessment criteria and some clearer instructions may be needed before starting a CW task. If, on the other side, their objective is to produce the most accurate and grammatically correct text in the target language, this instruction may not be as relevant, because as long as the final product is appropriate, the discussions may be executed in the L1, which the learners feel more comfortable with.

Regarding the third drawback (the lack of students' participation in class), the teacher should motivate their students and promote their self-confidence, in order to inspire their participation (Carless, 2002, p. 394). In addition, the educator needs to change the teams and the roles of each member of the group for creating equal opportunities for all children.

In sum, it is convenient to take into consideration that, although there are drawbacks of CW concerning the appropriate grouping of the students, it is the role of the teachers to try to reduce these drawbacks by being their students' model and motivating them to behave and participate correctly in the tasks during the sessions. For this reason, the educators are instrumental in the learning process (Frydrychova Klimova, 2014, p. 239; Vethamaiccam & Ganapathy, 2017, pp. 23-24) and that is why a case study on the teachers' point of view on the benefits and drawbacks of CW for YLs has been conducted (see section 4). Apart from this, the learners' perspective towards CW is also an extremely significant element to take into account, as we will see in the next section (see section 3.4.).

3.4. Learners' Perspectives

To start with, apart from the benefits and drawbacks of CW, students' perspective on CW is worth taking into consideration. Cicalese (2003) carried out a study with 6-8-year-old Primary schoolers in New Jersey (USA). These students were Portuguese, African-American and Hispanic, with English as their L2. The instruments utilized in this study were stories based on a picture, as well as a survey in which the children needed to explain their point of view. They were divided into two groups, in the first one, they had to write a text individually and in the second one, they had to compose a writing in a collaborative manner. After filling the survey and writing the text, the children who had worked collaboratively seemed to be more motivated and more encouraged than those who worked individually (p. 36). The cause of this was that the students who worked in a collaborative way could share their experiences with their peers. Furthermore, the children were not embarrassed when it comes to making errors in their writings; and they were conscious of their progress in the texts (p. 37).

Likewise, Shehadeh (2011) found out that although learners did not work with CW previously, they were excited utilizing this method for their written productions. In the aforementioned study carried out by Storch (2005), the learners who composed a joint text, explained that they preferred to create a CW rather than one on their own, because they had the opportunity to learn from their peers (p. 166). This could be seen in the following quote by a student who participated in the study:

> "I see him writing and I ...in this situation oh writing in this way is good. I learn, I learn much so ...I learn from him and maybe he learn from me." (p. 166).

The students also thought that in CW they could correct their peers' mistakes, whereas in individual writings it is more complicated to correct your own statements, as explained by another participant in the following quotation (p. 167):

> "...and you can't hear your mistakes. But you can hear other people's mistakes so I think it's very helpful."

Besides, the learners considered that CW tasks were entertaining and this is another reason why the majority of the learners expressed positive attitude towards CW. With respect to the negative posture of some students towards CW, it is meaningful to say that they expressed

that the collaborative method should only be used for oral exercises, rejecting the written production (Storch, 2005, p. 166). Additionally, other learners said that they were not comfortable when it comes to participating in a CW task, due to their low L2 proficiency (p. 167).

Storch (2013, p. 94) noted that students' prior perceptions about teamwork, may affect their attitudes when it comes to composing their texts. In general, it can be said that the students prefer the activities based on fluency, instead of the exercises that focus on grammar (p. 99). On the other hand, the study conducted by Kim and McDonough (2008) showed that the intermediate L2 students felt more confident when working with the learners who had higher proficiency than with other students who had similar L2 level. The main reason for this was, as students reported, that they felt like they benefit more from richer and wider grammatical structures and more precise vocabulary produced by higher-proficiency students, which would result in a considerable improvement in their writing skills.

4. A Case Study on Teachers' View on Benefits and Drawbacks of Collaborative Writing Tasks in Primary School

In this part I am going to explain the case study that I have conducted in a Primary school in Pamplona (Navarre, Spain). Firstly, I will explain the program "*Teaching to Learn as a Team: Collaborate to Learn/ Learn to Collaborate*" (Pujolàs & Lago, 2011) that is implemented in the school. Then, I will describe the participants and the instrument utilized in my case study. Finally, I will indicate the results that I have obtained.

4.1. The Program "Teaching to Learn as a Team: Collaborate to Learn/ Learn to Collaborate" (Pujolàs & Lago, 2011)

Despite the scarcity of studies carried out on the actual applications of CW in Primary schools, there seems to be a specific case which supports the main hypothesis of this paper in terms of how collaboration may be beneficial for young FL learners. One of the mainstream public schools in Pamplona (Navarre, Spain) has implemented a new program to increase the academic performance and contribute to the social development of the students through the collaborative approach. Collaboration is being used on every subject, including the EFL class.

The program, called "CA/AC para enseñar a aprender en equipo*: Cooperar para Aprender/ Aprender a Cooperar"* ("*Teaching to Learn as a Team: Collaborate to Learn/ Learn to Collaborate"*), gives teachers very specific instructions on how to apply collaborative tasks in their classroom (Pujolàs & Lago, 2011). It specifies the competences to be developed in the collaborative process, and it also explains which should be the appropriate evaluation criteria and how the activity should be elaborated. Figure 5 below distinguishes the three ways of learning (individual, competitive and collaborative), which helps teachers to realize how beneficial collaboration may potentially be.

Collaborative methodology

Estructura de la actividad individualista	Estructura de la actividad competitiva	Estructura de la actividad cooperativa
Cada estudiante trabaja solo, sin fijarse en lo que hacen los demás	Cada estudiante trabaja solo, rivalizando con sus compañeros	Los estudiantes forman pequeños equipos de trabajo, para ayudarse y animarse a la hora de aprender
Se espera de él que aprenda lo que el profesorado le enseña	Se espera de él que aprenda, más que los demás, o antes que nadie, lo que el profesorado le enseña	Se espera de cada estudiante que aprenda lo que se le enseña y que contribuya a que lo aprendan sus compañeros
Consigue este objetivo independientemente de que los demás también lo consigan (**NO HAY interdependencia de finalidades**)	Consigue este objetivo si, y sólo si, los demás NO lo consiguen (**Interdependencia de finalidades NEGATIVA**)	Consigue este objetivo si, y sólo si, los demás TAMBIÉN lo consiguen (**Interdependencia de finalidades POSITIVA**)

Figure 5. Three ways of learning. (Pujolàs & Lago, 2011, p. 14).

The left column displays the characteristics of individual tasks, where each student focuses on their own activity, not paying attention to their peers' needs, and it shows how a sense of interdependence is entirely missing because their peers' results cannot affect the other members in the group. The middle column shows the features of competitive task, making each student feel competitive towards their peers. This may lead to them developing what is considered to be negative interdependence, as each one of the students needs the rest of the learners to score lower to be successful. The right column illustrates the benefits of collaborative activities, where working as a team encourages learners to help and support each other, as the interdependence found here is positive: each learner's own triumph depends on their teammates' success. This approach encourages learners to work as a unit.

The results of the program have so far been positive enough to state that a real implementation of collaboration is possible and favorable for Primary school learners (Pujolàs & Lago, 2011). Taking this into consideration, it was interesting to interview teachers from this particular

school because of the importance of first-hand information and the opportunity to observe the application of CW in Primary school classrooms.

4.2. Participants and Instrument

The participants of this case study were three English teachers from the school in Pamplona. The main difference among them is that each educator teaches students of different grades. The first teacher I will mention will be named as Teacher A, the second teacher in this study will be called Teacher B, and the third one Teacher C. The names and ages of the teachers and the name of the school will be kept confidential. Teacher A teaches English to 6-to-7-year-olds (i.e. first and second graders). She has been teaching English to Primary school students for twenty-five years and before that she was a tutor. Teacher B teaches English to students who are 8 and 9 years old, therefore they are in third and fourth grades of Primary school. She has an approximately eight-year-long working experience. Teacher C works with students in the fifth and sixth grades (aged 11 and 12). She has been teaching English to students this age for eighteen years now.

The instrument I utilized was a guided interview which contained diverse questions about the collaborative method, and its use in the EFL classroom with YLs. As there are not sufficient studies that examine Primary school teachers' perspectives towards CW, in this study, I wanted to analyze specifically the three teachers' attitudes towards the benefits and drawbacks of CW. The interviews I conducted were similar but some questions were different, depending on the utilization of the CW of the teachers (see Appendix A). The teachers were interviewed individually and the interviews, which were digitally recorded, lasted 30 minutes on average. The data obtained from teachers was transcribed and organized by question thoroughly for later comparison. I chose to interview these educators because they teach English to Primary students of different grades (each teacher teaches one stage of Primary school, so my sample would be relatively comprehensive). Following Frydrychova Klimova (2014, p. 239) and Vethamaiccam and Ganapathy (2017, pp. 23-24), my intention was to learn from their perspectives about CW and the usefulness of the collaborative method, since EFL teachers' opinion is extremely meaningful and is yet to be investigated in depth.

4.3. Results

Concerning the question about how many years the teachers used the collaborative program, Teachers A and B answered that they have used this program for four years. But Teacher C said that she went half way, she did collaborative tasks but that it was not an everyday methodology for her, because she only had received one year of training about the collaborative method. She explained that she usually used it for speaking activities and also for writing exercises, although on fewer occasions, because doing CW was more complicated than doing a collaborative speaking activity.

With respect to their students' work on CW and how they got their students organized, the three teachers expressed that they made small groups of four students, which were generally heterogeneous so that students helped each other. These groups had different levels, and each child took on different roles and tasks. For example, one of them was in charge of explaining the activities to their peers, another child took care of the materials and handouts, a third one was responsible for keeping everything tidy and the fourth one was in charge of writing the text.

Regarding the question about what types of writings their students produce, Teacher A stated that working with children of this age, we must bear in mind that teaching is highly teacher-led, so when it comes to descriptions (see Appendix B), she provided them with a template and the only thing the students had to do was change key words depending on the topic. Another example of written activities was to complete a series of words with drawings or with other words, such as the so-called "zig-zag books" that were created by the teacher (see Appendix B). They could also produce short stories, but always based on a template. Another example of CW was the "rotating sheet" which consisted in passing on a sheet which would be completed with words or sentences written by each of the children. During this activity, children could correct themselves and others. What is more, they agreed on what to write, or upon completion, they all corrected it. She also did "running dictations" based on earning points through completing sentences with a word given by her. Nevertheless, Teacher B said that generally, students did short descriptions, of people, landscapes, holidays, bedrooms, pictures, although occasionally, they wrote single sentences or letters. The first step was to work on a template, she gave them pointers about what to do, and when they had learnt the vocabulary and the structure of each writing, they worked together and without the template, they did the writing collectively. In this case, the CW tasks were longer and more difficult than the ones performed by Teacher A's students, because the students were older and their

level of English was higher. In this way, as Teacher C had the oldest students, she requested them to produce several types of writing, ranging from letters and comics to essays. Sometimes, they used a collaborative style but they also did some tasks independently. When it comes to CWs, there was one exercise that they usually did, which they called 'the rotating sheet', as Teacher A mentioned before. In this activity students were given the beginning of a story and each one of them had to continue the story with a sentence, the next one needed to keep going where the previous one left off, and they went like this until the story was over. Another example would be a comic with empty speech bubbles which students had to fill in. Regardless of the type of writing they were going to do, students tended to need an example and some instructions to follow. This is a way to see through writing what the students had learnt with the collaborative method.

Referring to the benefits of the collaborative method for young FL learners, Teacher A explained that children could help each other, they learned from one another, and that this was extremely beneficial. Their creativity was also boosted by this method and by correcting themselves, they also learned. They usually had no problem accepting their peers' corrections. In addition to this, Teacher B commented that students learned to respect each other and to adapt to one another's working pace, strengthening their patience. Besides, children noticed how well they could solve their problems as a group without external assistance, which had a positive impact on their motivation. Furthermore, Teacher C agreed with the other two educators, and she remarked:

> "I would say that this method helps them to be aware of how
> different we are and how important it is to understand each other
> and work together towards a common goal."

Concerning the drawbacks of this teaching method, Teacher A revealed that one of the main problems was the level of English that children needed to have to succeed in CW tasks. However, teachers could always adjust the difficulty of the exercises to the students' level. Additionally, within a group there were always children whose commitment to the activity differed in intensity, which could affect the outcome of the group, because while a percentage of the children was open to working collectively, some reluctantly joined in and others preferred to work on their own. Bringing together these different attitudes to work was a real challenge. Peers tended to motivate each other into engaging in the task and the teacher was always there to guide and assist them. Children of this age did not generally present too much opposition, the problem was that there were individualistic members in the group, and

Teacher A tended to let them do the exercise on their own if they repeatedly refused to work collaboratively. In connection with this, Teacher B believed that the most important drawback of the collaborative method was that students did not talk to each other in the target language, English. Nevertheless, Teacher C reported that she did not find CW useful on a daily basis in that those students who struggled with writing might have negative feelings about working on it collaboratively; consequently, she thought of CW as more of an occasional method. Thus, she preferred to employ it as a complement to other methods, because if overused, the children who did not contribute as much may feel different, stranded from the rest.

With regard to the question whether this method improves students' learning capacity when producing a piece of writing, the teachers answered that this method improved the learning skills of the students, since they learned and benefited from what others had said. They viewed CW as an enriching method, one that makes it easier for students to work as a team.

Regarding the importance for the teachers and their students to create CWs, Teacher A and Teacher C explained that for them it was very important to do this kind of activities, first orally, then using gestures and finally in writing. They added that teamwork was instrumental in showing the students how they would possibly have to work in their professional future. CW was also positive for the children's independence and self-confidence because they taught each other, and of course, the role of the teacher was not so present in that CW caters for diversity and it allows teachers to pay more attention to those children who are a bit slower in the intake. In addition to this, Teacher B underlined that she did not know if her students were fully aware of that, but they did like working as a team. For her it was important, because that helped students to socialize and connect with their peers.

Concerning the relationship problems within groups and the way the teachers resolve them, Teachers A and C responded that some frictions in the groups were quite common. The main complaint was generally about a child who worked less than the rest. Solving that situation was not an easy matter, because they had to talk to them, get to the reasons why that happened, and find a solution. Moreover, Teacher B mentioned that the roles students adopted allowed them to solve these situations. Hence, children who stood idly at one point would have to make up for that lack of effort later in the process.

In relation to the questions about the way in which the teachers evaluate these writings and their students' interaction while working on the task and what kind of assessment criteria they

use, Teacher A responded that if the task was done as a group and all the children took part in it, as members of the group, the assessment would be applied to the whole group. Furthermore, through observation, she could see if the group worked well, if the children were participating and that was what she valued the most. The general assessment was based on how many points or tokens children got right on successful completion of a given task. Apart from this, she said competitiveness played a meaningful role because by nature every child wanted to win and to do their best to get their hands on the prize. Encouraging a slight sense of competition, though not to be overused, worked very well in her class. What she also paid attention to was the way students worked, learned, cooperated, listened to and respected each other and solved their own problems. However, Teacher B expressed that she did not evaluate her students' writings in a collaborative way, instead she did it individually, because the students did not correct each other, but it was her who did it later. They could also correct it out loud and one student from each group explained what they had done to the rest of the class. Besides, Teacher C also evaluated children's texts in an individual manner, as she considered that the collaboration teaching system was an occasional method and a complement to other approaches.

With respect to the results that the teachers obtain from CW and how they measure them qualitatively and quantitatively, Teachers A, B and C acknowledged that aiming for that would be too ambitious considering the children's age. The main objectives that they could achieve were the development of listening skills when it comes to understanding children with a different point of view as well as laying the foundation for the acquisition of a teamwork-oriented mindset. The teachers appreciated it if they managed to bring students to complete the task successfully, but the three educators were fundamentally focused on developing children's collaborative attitudes.

Concerning teachers' impressions about the relationship among students and whether they can notice if children are respectful, empathetic or anxious, Teachers A and C mentioned that some children could suffer from anxiety but it depended very much on their personality. Regarding the improvement of the children's relationships, the real aim of CW was for the group to improve and, individually, for the children to listen to each other and learn to take turns respectfully. When working with this method, they thought the children showed empathy and respect and those feelings were reinforced when they were part of the group, because they felt significant and an essential part of the team by carrying out different tasks and roles. Teacher B mentioned that the relationships did improve. Nevertheless, some children might think they know everything and until they realize that they are wrong,

teamwork could be affected. But, with time, they learn and bond thanks to the collaborative method. Respect and empathy are also promoted and anxiety is blocked out.

As for the question about the possibility of not obtaining the results that the teachers first intended and what types of exercises or measures they adopted in order to improve their students' performance, Teacher A mentioned that she worked with them, she supervised all the groups and if she detected something wrong in a group, she could pay more attention to them and help them to overcome the problem. Setting a time limit (usually a short time) was very positive for children because they started working immediately. Children needed to know what they had to do on that day, how long they had to do it for and the different steps that would be taken in pursuit of the main objective. Inter-peer correction was also very beneficial, especially when they did that by themselves; in consequence, every group would find out if they completed the task correctly or not. Moreover, Teacher B emphasized that if eventually students did not meet the expected results, she did not have them do another writing individually, as they still worked as a team. But if the time came when she needed to talk to a specific student, she would tackle the issue regardless. It was mandatory for the students to learn to work as a team. Children were not in the same group for a full term, but they moved from one to another roughly every 2 months, so that they could learn to collaborate with different peers. On the contrary, Teacher C explained that she evaluated students' writings in an individual way and she also did the same when it comes to improving their students' results.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The implementation of the program "*Teaching to Learn as a Team: Collaborate to Learn/ Learn to Collaborate*" was based on the premise that learning is a social process (Vygotsky, 1978), which also focuses on the interaction among learners (Long, 1996). And therefore, input (Krashen, 1985) and output (Swain, 1995) both become indispensable. Moreover, it is significant to take into consideration the role of Languaging, and especially, of Collaborative Dialogue (Swain, 2000), which may help students to resolve their difficulties by means of interaction.

Overall, the teachers interviewed were positive about the collaborative method as Teachers A and B have used it for four years now. However, Teacher C, who received one year of training, applies it exclusively to oral activities, because she does not find it beneficial as a regular activity.

Regarding the grouping criteria, the study carried out by Kim and McDonough (2008) agrees with the three teachers that the groups should be heterogeneous and reduced in number, because the learners can help one another. Furthermore, Teachers A and C make use of one kind of CW called "rotating sheet". This type of CW is also utilized in a research conducted by Lowry, Curtis, and Lowry (2004), defined as a strategy called sequential single writing (see Figure 2). All of them agree that it is extremely beneficial for children's FL learning.

With respect to the benefits of CW, the three teachers agree that with this method, children help each other and they learn from their peers, and this was also found in the studies carried out by Storch (2005) and Harmer (2004; as cited in Sukirman, 2016). Additionally, although Teachers B and C prefer correcting the learners' writings individually, Teacher A considers that students should correct one another and that they have no problem accepting their classmates' corrections. This is also explained by Storch (2005, p. 167) and Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik (1982) in their research. In the same way, Cicalese (2003, p. 37) supports what the other experts state, but she underlines that children are not embarrassed, when it comes to making mistakes in their texts and that they are aware of their own progress in their writings. Concerning the benefits relating to emotional intelligence, Teacher A mentions that this collaborative method stimulates students' creativity, concurring with the study conducted by Stewart (1986; as cited in Sukirman, 2016, p. 43). In fact, also consistent with Vass (2007, p. 112), Teacher A observes that expressing their emotions has a positive effect on her students' imagination. On the other hand, the three teachers agree that CW promotes respect and empathy and that, in general, anxiety is not present in CW tasks, as claimed by various studies (Raimes, 1998; Rollinson, 2005). Teacher B emphasizes that learners do like working as a team, which is in line with Shehadeh (2011), who explains that CW tasks incite students to have more self-assurance, and Sukirman (2016, p. 34), who mentions that CW also stimulates learners' motivation. Moreover, the three teachers agree that it is convenient to change groups and students' roles every two months, and this is also confirmed by Carless (2002, p. 394) and by Yarrow and Topping (2001, p. 272). What is more, the study by Stakanova and Tolstikhina (2014, p. 458) underlines that the use of different roles makes children to be more interested in the collaborative task they are producing.

With respect to the drawbacks of CW, Teacher C declares that she prefers using it for oral exercises, because it is easier for her to prepare collaborative oral activities rather than CW tasks. In line with this, Storch (2005, p. 166) contends that in her research some students who had negative attitudes towards CW noted that collaborative method should only be used for

oral activities, rejecting the written production. Another drawback is the possibility of disruptive episodes within groups, as explained by Yarrow and Topping (2001, p. 272) and by Malmqvist (2005). Teachers A and C also agree that, in order to resolve such situations, they have to talk with the students and so they can pinpoint the reasons why these problems might come up so that they can work out a solution. Furthermore, Teacher B complains about the students' excessive use of L1. The solution to this is given by Carless (2002, p. 393), expressing that in order to avoid this problem, the teachers have to talk to the students in the FL, and they should let the learners utilize their L1 for a limited amount of time, providing that their aim is to promote the FL.

Regarding the prizes given to students by teachers, according to Teacher A, the prizes are beneficial for the purpose of motivating the students and in order to improve their scores in their assessment. In contrast, Carless (2002, p. 392) uses these prizes to resolve the drawback of the disruptive episodes created by learners; in other words, the prizes are given to the learners who have the best conduct in class.

It can be said that, in general, the teachers who promote the realization of CWs consider that it is a remarkably beneficial method in order to improve students' linguistic skills in the FL. Additionally, YLs also develop their own autonomy, their social relationships, empathy and respect towards their peers. The three teachers interviewed in this study coincide to a large extent with research findings, since the teachers that do implement CW tasks consistently seem to apply the collaborative method fairly appropriately in their class.

As has been shown throughout this paper, the collaborative method and, more specifically, CW are remarkably significant for the FL learning of YLs. Although there is more research about CW concerning ALs than YLs, the studies conducted with ALs generally have a more cognitive grounding whereas the research carried out with YLs is principally based on the affective characteristics of children.

In light of the above, I have demonstrated that CW provides more benefits than drawbacks for YLs and that these drawbacks may be easily resolved by giving students accurate instructions and clarifications. Another important finding that I can derive from a review of the literature and the results of analyzing my interviews is that, for a successful completion of CW tasks, it is often crucial to be acquainted with students' perspectives towards the teaching method. Similarly, teachers' perceptions also surface as an indispensable factor to take into account since they are responsible for administering the activity and managing the

class in a way that fosters integral development of the students, as suggested by my conclusion that Primary school teachers not only aim to achieve great academic performance but also pay attention to their students' feelings and how to accommodate them into their teaching.

The improvement of children's motivation, their empathy and respect for their peers, and the increase of their participation in class activities are some of the most noticeable benefits provided by CW. In this way, YLs offer new ideas which are shared with their classmates during the interaction and because of this, all of them become protagonists of their own learning process, being the teacher the exclusive guide and role model for them. As it is more widespread use of CW in Primary classrooms, not only for the increase of children's FL learning, but also in order to give them values which could boost their empathy and teach them to be more collaborative in their adult lives.

6. Limitations and Further Research

As it has been mentioned before, most of the studies address ALs and there is little evidence concerning YLs and CW. For this reason, I conducted this small-scale study for the purpose of explaining the benefits and drawbacks of CW in YLs and providing teachers' view on the topic. But still there are a wide variety of areas to be explored in this field that need more investigation, which I will be pointing out in this section.

Although the majority of the studies concerning CW were conducted with ALs, as has been mentioned, most of the research involved cognitive aspects of learners rather than non-cognitive characteristics of adults. So, further research is needed that puts an emphasis on ALs and their emotional features. On the other hand, with respect to the YLs' studies and contradicting ALs' research, there is little evidence of cognitive aspects of children.

Furthermore, there are more studies that are focused on collaborative oral activities whereas the collaborative written production has received less scholarly attention. More investigation, then, may be helpful to analyze the potential benefits of collaboration when it comes to developing writing skills in FL learning (Murtiningsih, 2016, p. 83). Besides, the evidence found to support the actual benefits of CW is not sufficient, which calls for further research to discover whether collaboration really leads children to improve their language learning process. Concerning children's perspective on CW, further research is needed to know their opinion on CW in a classroom setting, which may assist in the customization of collaborative

methodologies as applied to how children experience CW.

Additionally, more studies on teachers' viewpoint on CW would be more convenient, as they are the ones who could implement the collaborative teaching method in the classroom, and as I have previously explained, their opinion is extremely important to know the benefits and drawbacks of CW for YLs. For this reason, I have conducted a case study in order to try to clarify this scarcity of information about this issue, but there is still a substantial need to conduct research focusing on the role of teachers and what they can say about the CW. More longitudinal studies that elaborate on the data presented here, with perhaps more participants as YLs and their teachers, are needed to shed more light on these issues.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1- Do you use the collaborative method? Why?/Why not? (If not, go to question 3).

2- For how many years have you used the program of collaboration?

3- Have you received training about this? If you have not and you have the chance to receive it would you still use this method? Do you think it is a good idea?

4- What is the age-range of the children? Which grade of Primary school are they studying? How many years have you been teaching English to Primary school students?

5- What is your opinion about this method?

6- Have you ever worked on collaborative writing? If so, what do you think?

7- Do your students work on collaborative writing? How do you get your students organized? In groups or in pairs? And which are the selection criteria that you use?

8- What types of writings do your students produce? Stories, argumentative essays, descriptions...?

9- How do your students produce these writings? Do they discuss the writings among all of them or do they do it in another way? Do your students correct their fellow group members' writing?

10- Which benefits can you see in this teaching method (collaboration) for young foreign language learners?

11- Which drawbacks can you see in this teaching method (collaboration) for young foreign language learners?

12- Does this method improve students' learning capacity when producing a piece of writing? How?

13- Is it important for your students to create collaborative writings? And for you as a teacher? Why?

14- Is there any relationship problem within groups? It so, how do you resolve it?

15- How do you evaluate these writings? What kind of assessment criteria do you use? Do you apply these criteria to the group, to each student (individually) or to both?

16- Do you evaluate their interaction while working on the task? And if so, how do you do that?

17- Which are the results that you obtain from collaborative writing? How do you measure the results qualitatively and quantitatively?

18- Which are the results that you get concerning the relationship among students? Does it improve or does it get worse? Can you notice if they are respectful (towards each other) empathetic, anxious…?

19- If you do not obtain the results that you intended, what types of exercises or measures do you adopt in order to improve your students' results?
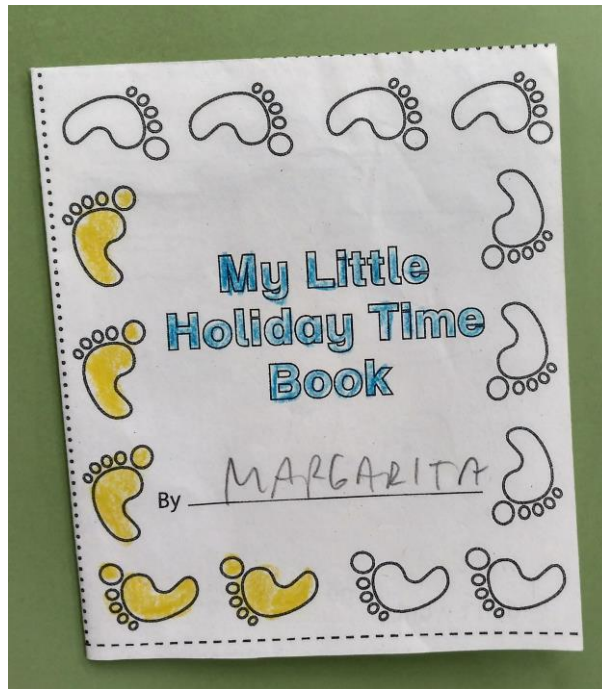
Appendix B: Four examples of collaborative writing tasks for students of first and second grades of Primary School (provided by Teacher A)
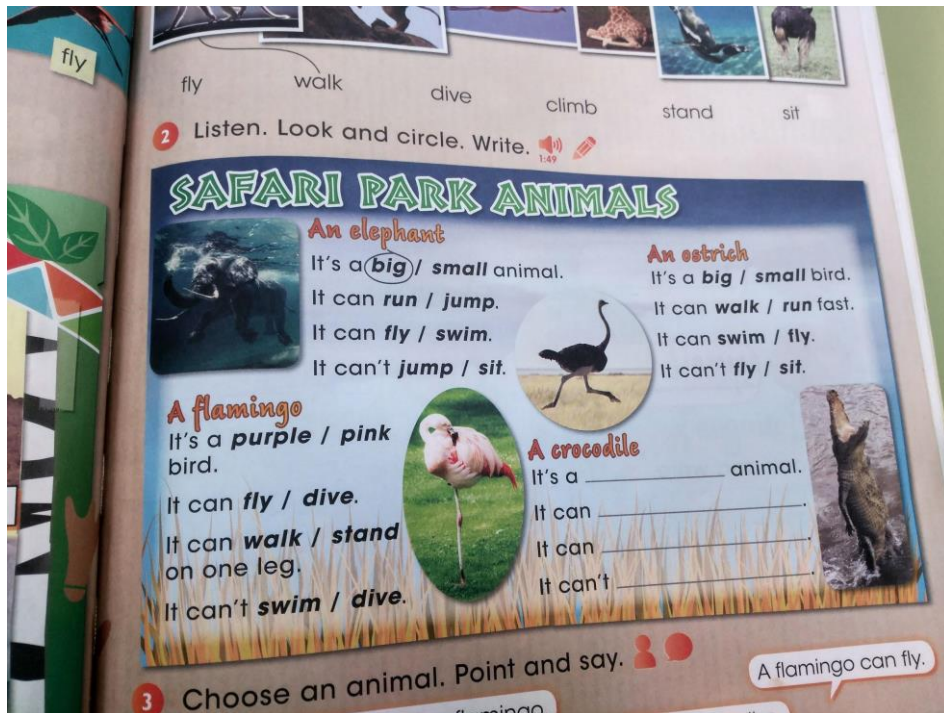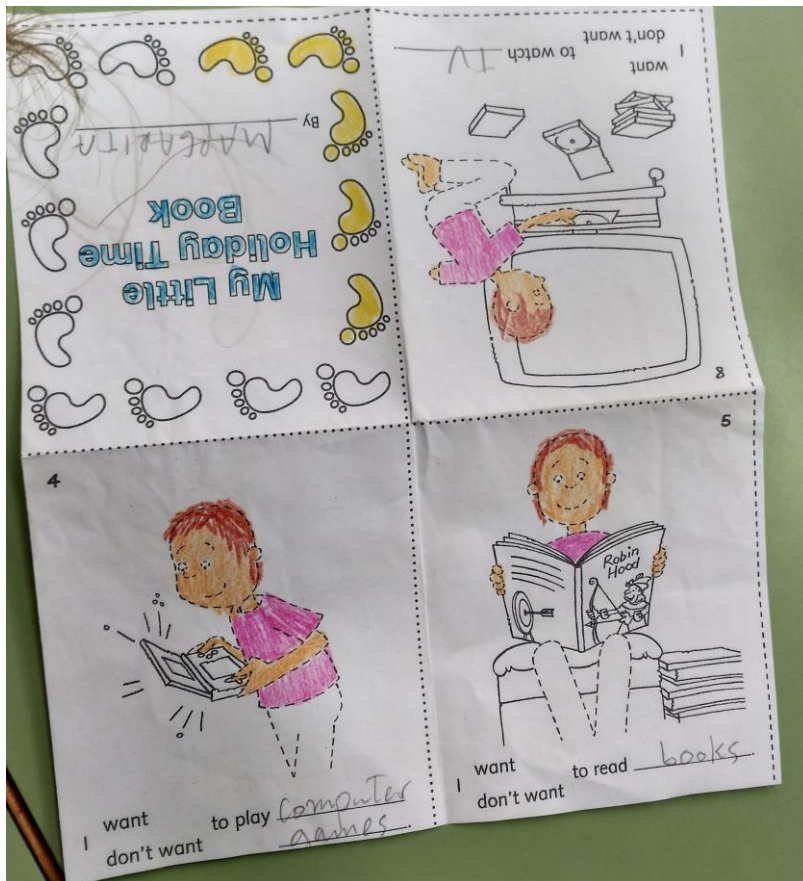

Taken from: Ormerod & Mohamed (2017).

Task created by Teacher A.

Task created by Teacher A.

Task created by Teacher A.