

Collaborative Writing in Higher Education: Investigating the Implementation of CSCL Tools and the Role of Prior Individual Experiences and Preferences

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Abstract: This research project aims to contribute to the understanding of the complex process of collaborative writing by taking into account the different individual, collaborative, and contextual variables and the interaction between them. The use of Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) tools such as collaboration scripts and group awareness tools to scaffold students during collaborative writing are investigated.

Vision

Collaborative writing (CW), an omnipresent activity in higher education settings, is known as a highly complex process. It is frequently unstructured and tends to involve multiple roles, subtasks, and activities which all can be performed iteratively (Lowry, Curtis, & Lowry, 2004). Moreover, there are individual, collaborative, and contextual components at work, as well as interactions between all these components and factors (Van Steendam, 2016). On the one hand, various studies have shown that the way groups tackle this complex task differ and have pointed at the difficulty of developing truly CW (e.g. Lowry, Curtis, & Lowry, 2004; Onrubia & Engel, 2009). Next to this text construction process, process regulation is also indicated as an important, related collaborative process during CW (Van Steendam, 2016). On the other hand, individuals may have different ideas on how to write a text. First, there are different individual approaches towards writing (e.g. writing beliefs, White & Bruning, 2005) which can be related to CW processes and outcomes (e.g. Cuevas et al., 2016). Secondly, the way students act in CW activities and conceive CW differs (see e.g. Noël & Robert, 2004; Marttunen & Laurinen, 2012). Thirdly, the Script Theory of Guidance (Fisher et al., 2013) highlighted the important role of learners' internal scripts to understand their actions in the collaboration.

Despite this complexity, there is a lack of profound research on these CW processes and their relation with product quality. In addition, the relation with individual factors has been underexposed and no previous study has investigated internal CW scripts. Therefore, this research project has two main goals. First, to unravel the complex process of CW and the role of individual prior experiences and preferences within the scope of CW tasks. Second, to investigate the opportunities of CW technologies and the use of CSCL tools such as collaboration scripts and group awareness tools to scaffold students during CW.

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