

## USING COLLABORATIVE WRITING IN TEACHING WRITING

Sukirman

Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching Science, IAIN Palopo

[sukirmanmarshan.sm@gmail.com](mailto:sukirmanmarshan.sm@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Collaborative writing strategy is a kind of writing that involves a number of persons. This strategy has a number of advantages as well disadvantages. For the advantages; promotes; 1) social skills development; 2) stress reduction and time-saving benefits; 3) motivational effects; 4) improvement in the content of their writing; and 5) gains in grammatical and structural proficiency. Then, the disadvantages deal with; 1) increases stress; 2) logistical problems; 3) target language usage; 4) a conflict with personal learning style; and 5) issues of fairness. This writing also provides an example how to use collaborative writing in teaching cause/effect essay by presenting the teaching procedures starting from pre-writing until post-writing. Finally, the writer also provides rubrics that can be used by the teachers in assessing their students writing.

**Keywords:** *Collaborative Writing Strategy*

### ABSTRAK

Collaborative Writing Strategy adalah salah satu jenis kegiatan menulis yang melibatkan sejumlah orang. Strategi ini memiliki sejumlah keunggulan dan kelemahan. Keunggulan strategi ini meliputi; 1) mengembangkan keterampilan sosial; 2) mengurangi stres dan menghemat waktu; 3) mempengaruhi motivasi siswa; 4) meningkatkan isi tulisan siswa; dan 5) meningkatkan kemampuan tata bahasa dan struktur. Kemudian, kelemahan strategi ini meliputi; 1) meningkatkan stres; 2) menimbulkan masalah logistik; 3) menggunakan bahasa target; 4) menimbulkan konflik gaya belajar individu; dan 5) munculnya isu-isu ketidakadilan. Tulisan ini juga memberikan sebuah contoh bagaimana mengimplementasikan strategi ini dalam menulis teks sebab akibat. Dalam hal ini, penulis menghadirkan langkah-langkah pembelajaran menulis mulai dari pre-writing sampai pada post-writing. Terakhir, penulis juga menghadirkan rubrik yang dapat digunakan oleh guru dalam menilai tulisan siswa mereka.

**Kata Kunci:** *Collaborative Writing Strategy*

### INTRODUCTION

Collaborative writing strategy is a teaching writing strategy in which students are asked to work together in pair or group in order to produce a good writing. This strategy facilitates students to write a certain text with

their peers. In other words, the students will work together to produce a good writing. It is generally considered as two or more persons writing. The term "**collaborative writing**" refers to projects where written works are created by multiple people together (*collaboratively*) rather than individually. It is supported by Bosley (1989) in which he states that collaborative writing deals with two or more people working together to produce a document with group responsibility for the end product. In other words, collaborative writing offers opportunities not only to practice literature review, academic reading and writing, but also to stimulate reflection, knowledge sharing, and critical thinking (Hadjerrouit, 2011: 431). Furthermore, Reid (1993) suggests that collaborative writing efforts can increase motivation, risk-taking and tolerance among learners.

Additionally, collaborative writing tasks require that students utilize a range of social skills that can help foster a sense of accountability, cooperation and community (Murray, 1992; Savova&Donato, 1991; Villamil& De Guerrero, 1996). Then, Graham and Perin (2007: 16) point out that collaborative writing involves developing instructional arrangements whereby adolescents work together to plan, draft, revise, and edit their composition. From these statements, it can be seen that collaborative writing allows students to do the writing stages starting from the first until the end; prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Finally, Foster (1998) notes that these tasks can maximize students' interaction in the target language.

To sum up, collaborative writing strategy can defined as one of appropriate teaching writing strategies to improve students' writing ability as well as enhance their motivation, confident, critical thinking, and so forth in pair or group discussion. As a result, students can produce a good composition with their cooperation with their peers.

#### *Types of Collaborative Writing Task*

Referring to the types of collaborative writing task, Lunsford (1991: 6) proposes three types of collaborative tasks that should be included in group projects. The following are the types of collaborative writing task;

a. Higher Order Thinking

Group members must define, discuss, and debate to solve complex problems.

b. Division of Labor

Very large jobs that cannot be completed by an individual within a limited time frame must be divided.

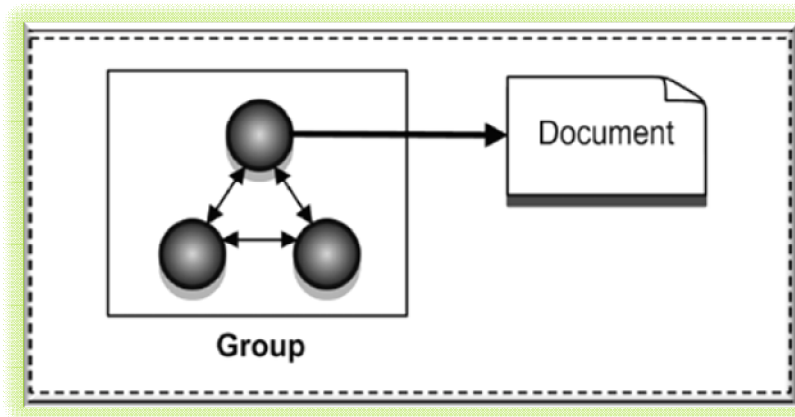
c. Specialist or Expertise-Based Tasks

Each collaborator has a different area of expertise to contribute.

#### *Types of Collaborative Writing Strategy*

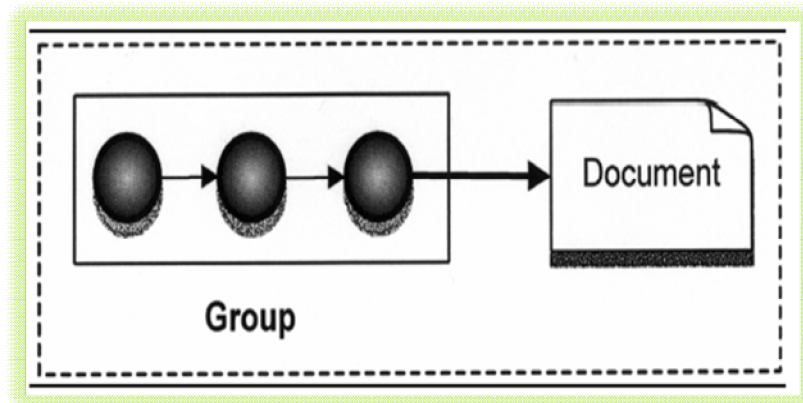
A number of teachers have implemented collaborative writing in their writing class. In implementing this strategy, they tend to use a number of types of collaborative writing strategies. In other words, they have different points of views dealing with the strategies of collaborative writing. The following are the types of collaborative writing strategies proposed by some experts.

Lowry et al. (2004: 74 – 81) proposes five types of collaborative writing strategies. First, **group single-author writing**; it is a kind of writings conducted by one individual that involves planning, drafting, and reviewing. It is still a kind of collaborative writing even it is conducted by one individual because it involves a team that works toward coordinated consensus that is reflected in a document that is written by one of the team members. It occurs when one of team member writes as a representative for the entire team. This kind of writing can be implemented if the writing task is simple. The following figure presents the form of group single-author writing.



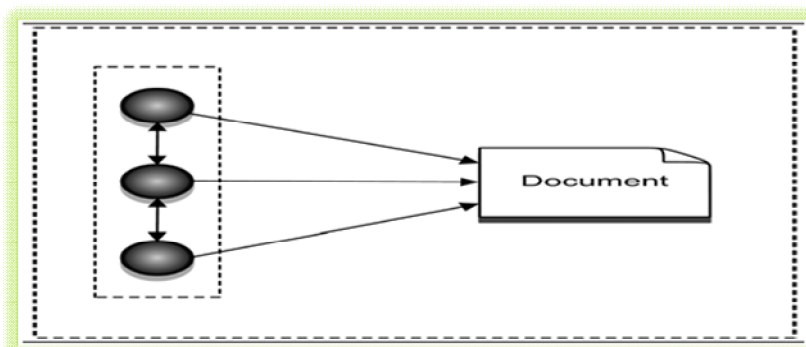
**Figure 1. Group Single-Author Writing** (Adopted from Lowrey et al., 2004: 76)

Second, **sequential single writing**; in sequential single-author writing, one group member writes at a time. Each group member is assigned a portion of the document, writes his or her portion and then passes the document onto the next group member. For more detailed information of sequential single writing form, see the following figure.

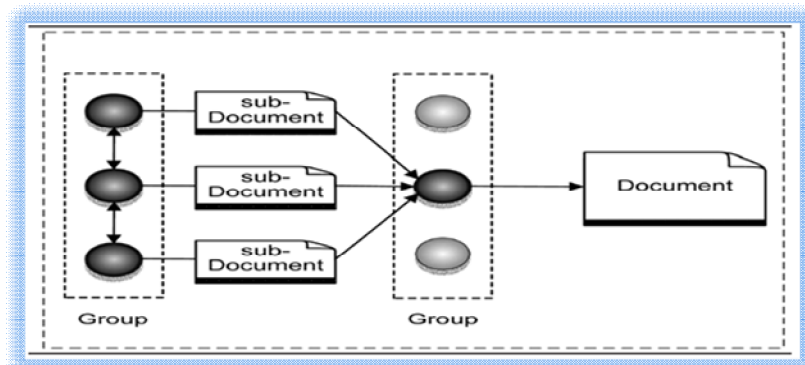


**Figure 2. Sequential Single Writing** (Adopted from Lowrey et al., 2004: 76)

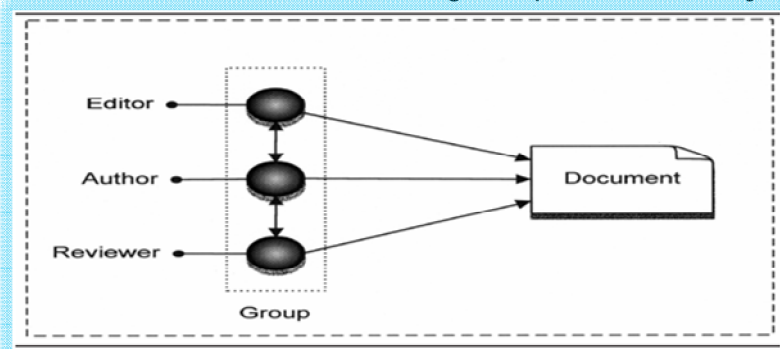
Third, **parallel writing**; it occurs when a group divides the assignment or document into separate parts and all members work on their assigned part at the same time (see **Figure 3**). There are two types of parallel writing: *horizontal division parallel writing* can be implemented if group members divide the task into sections, each member being responsible for the development of his or her assigned section (see **Figure 4**); and *stratified division parallel writing* is implemented if group members divide responsibility of the creation of the product by assigning different members with different roles. Some examples of roles that a member could be assigned are: author, editor, facilitator, or team leader (see **Figure 5**).



**Figure 3. Parallel Writing** (Adopted from Lowrey et al, 2004: 77)

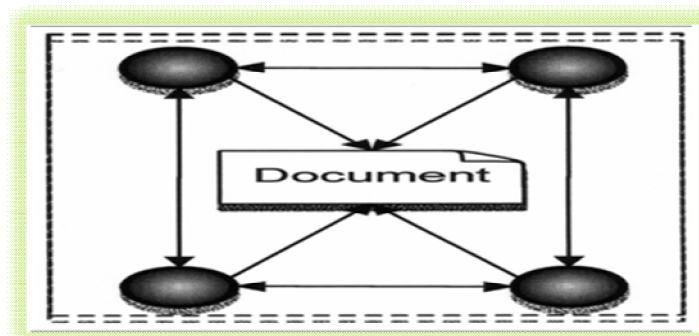


**Figure 4. Horizontal Division Parallel Writing** (Adopted from Lowrey et al.,



**Figure 5. Stratified Division Parallel Writing** (Adopted from Lowrey et al., 2004: 79)

Fourth, **reactive writing**; it occurs when team members collaborate synchronously to develop their product. Team members react to and adjust each other's contributions as they are made (see **Figure 6**). Finally, **mixed mode**; it deals with the combination of two or more of the collaborative writing strategies described previously.



**Figure 6. Reactive Writing** (Adopted from Lowrey et al., 2004: 80)

One of the most important things that should be done by teachers before choosing one of the collaborative writing strategies stated previously

is considering the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy. In order to help teachers consider them, the writer presents the following table which discusses the advantages as well as disadvantages of collaborative writing strategies proposed by Lowrey et al. (2004: 81).

### ***Learning Materials***

The learning materials being discussed in this section are the teaching of cause/effect essay through collaborative writing. The materials are in the forms of definition, organization, language features of cause/effect essay, and so on. The writer will also provide an example of argumentative essay in this section. The learning materials as follows;

#### *1. Definition of Cause/Effect Essay*

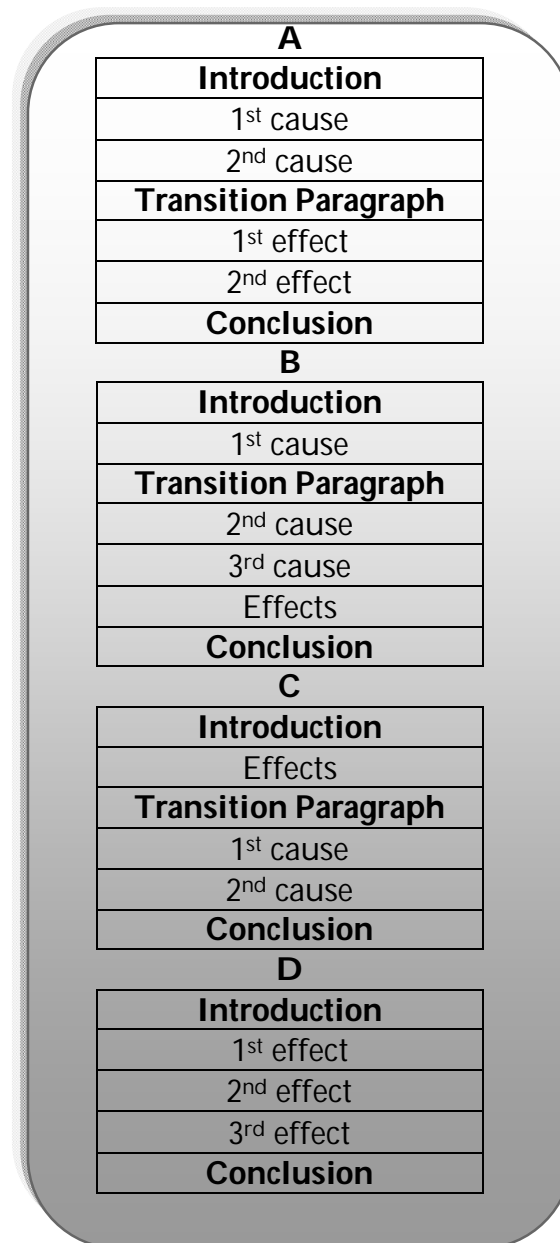
Cause – effect essay is concerned with why things happen (causes) and what happen as a result (effects). In this case, the writer will discuss the reasons why something happens, and what the results of the action.

#### *2. Organization of Cause/Effect Essay*

Dealing with the organization of cause and effect essay, there are two ways that the writers can use to organize their writing; **block organization** and **chain organization** (Oshimaand Hogue, 2004: 95). In writing cause and effect essay, the writer may either the causes or effects, or only one of them; only causes or only effects. The explanation as follows;

##### *a. Block Organization*

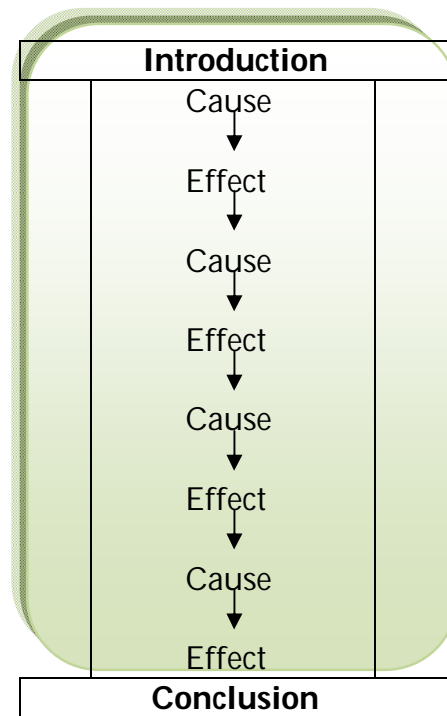
In this organization, all the causes are directly presented by the writer. The number of causeparagraph can be one, two, three, or more paragraphs. It depends on the complexity of the discussion of causes. After discussing all the causes, the writer then presents all the effects together as a block. The other way, the writer may also write the effects first, and then discuss the causes. To ease the readers to understand the patterns of block organization, Oshime& Hogue (2004: 95) propose the following patterns.



**Figure 7.** Patterns of Block Organization (Adopted from Oshime & Hogue, 2004: 95)

*b. Chain Organization*

Another organization pattern that can be utilized in writing cause and effect essay is chain organization. In this case, the writer links both the causes and effect. He/she discusses the causes followed by effects, and so on. For more detailed pattern, see the following figure adopted from Oshime & Hogue (2004: 95).



**Figure 8. Pattern of Chain Organization** (Adopted from Oshima & Hogue, 2004: 99)

3. *Language Features of Cause/Effect Essay*

Language features of cause and effect essay can be in the forms of signal words and phrases to signal cause and effect relationships. They are used in order to show time order and logical division. The language features as follows;

a. *Cause Signal Words*

The following figure presents a list of cause signal words used in writing cause and effect essay.

<b>Coordinators</b>	<i>For</i>
<b>Subordinators</b>	<i>Because, since, and as</i>
<b>Others</b>	<i>the result from, to be the result of, due to, because of, the effect of, the consequence of, as a result of, and as a consequence of</i>

**Figure 4. Cause Signal Words**

b. *Effect Signal Words*

The following figure shows examples of effects signal words used in writing cause and effect essay.



<b>Transition Words and Phrases</b>	<i>as a result, therefore, thus, consequently, and hence</i>
<b>Coordinators</b>	<i>So</i>
<b>Others</b>	<i>to result in, to have an effect on, to effect, the cause of, the reason for, and thereby</i>

**Figure 5.** *Effect Signal Words*

### **Teaching Procedures**

The teaching procedures of collaborative writing strategy being discussed in this section are adapted from Mulligan and Garofalo (2011: 6 – 7). The teaching procedures as follows;

1. *Pre-writing Activities*
  - a. Greet students and check the presence list.
  - b. Motivate students to join the writing class by giving a writing quiz.
  - c. Explain to students the structure as well as the language features of cause-effect essay
  - d. Introduce to students the concept of the use of collaborative writing strategy in teaching a cause-effect essay.
  - e. Explain to students how to utilize collaborative writing strategy in writing a cause-effect essay.
2. *Whilst-writing Activities*
  - a. Assign students to small and heterogeneous groups of four or five and ask them to exchange contact information to facilitate meeting outside of class;
  - b. In class, the group members brainstorm ideas about the target topic and organized the information into coherent groupings;
  - c. Ask students to have meeting outside of class to do research and information-gathering to support their paper;
  - d. In class, pairs did outlining, planning, and crafting of the first draft. Students were required to hand in a detailed outline before submitting the first draft;
  - e. The instructor handed back the outlines with pertinent comments;
  - f. Work on the first draft commenced. Student A typed the first draft and completed a detailed checklist provided by the instructor. After that, the draft was sent as an email attachment to Student B, who

was then responsible for editing the draft. The editing had to be done with different colored ink to highlight the revisions. After finishing this, Student B completed another checklist to make sure the work was proofread carefully. The detailed checklists were provided to help students in the writing and proofreading process. They helped students to eliminate simple grammar mistakes, spelling and typographical errors, as well as to ensure correct format, organization of ideas within each paragraph, and sound essay structure. The first draft was then submitted in class along with both checklists;

- g. The instructor checked the drafts, pointing out structural and organization errors, and providing comments and suggestions;
  - h. Work on the second draft commenced. Student A and B switched roles for this part. That is, this time Student B had to type the revision and Student A had to edit it. The second draft was then submitted;
  - i. Students received a single grade based on their overall effort and the quality of their essay;
  - j. For the next writing assignment, if a student had been assigned the role of A, they then assumed the role of B and vice versa, to ensure fairness.
3. *Post-writing Activities*
- a. Ask the students to comment or to provide feedback on their friends' writing on the *comment feature* in the facebook group by using a peer rubric as shown in **Appendix 2**
  - b. Provide reinforcements for students in order to remind them what they have learned at the meeting.
  - c. Assess the students writing by utilizing a rubric as shown in **Appendix 3**.

## **DISCUSSION**

Collaborative writing has a lot of advantages that should be considered by teachers if they want to be implemented this strategy in the writing class. These advantages will bring significant impact toward students' improvement in writing a composition. The following are the advantages of collaborative writing proposed by some experts in the field of the teaching of writing.

*First*, collaborative writing is a useful to form of group work because of its many potential benefits, such as maximum input, varying viewpoints, checks and balances, experience, joint knowledge, writing expertise, accuracy, more understandable documents (Ede & Lunsford, 1990); learning (Trimbur, 1985); socialization, new ideas (LeFevre, 1987); and higher document quality (Beck, 1993). Then, collaborative writing assignments can enhance student interaction in the EFL classroom, lower the anxiety associated with completing tasks alone and raise students' self-confidence (Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Raimes, 1998; Reid & Powers, 1993; Rollinson, 2005).

*Second*, this strategy can enhance a positive interpersonal relationship among the members of the pair or group writing discussion (Rice & Huguley, 1994). It means that it will be beneficial to write a composition in a group than writing alone. It is in line with Elbow (2000: 372) in which he explains that this strategy will reduce the loneliness in writing. Additionally, Murray in Nunan (1992: 114) points out that collaborative writing strategy can involve a number of social and interactional rules such as agreeing the goals of writing, contributing differential knowledge, and interacting in a group. Finally, the interaction occurred in the group discussion allows students to learn from each other (Harmer, 2004: 73). This interaction will create an affective writing atmosphere among the members.

*Third*, collaborative writing strategy allows students to solve their own problems in writing when they write a complex writing. It means that all the members will work together to solve every single problem occurred in their group. Fourth, this strategy can guide students to be a creative as well as professional writer in academic writing (Stewart, 1986: 63).

In accordance with the advantages proposed previously, the writer concludes that collaborative writing is beneficial to help students to be a creative writer by collaborating with their peers. Collaborative writing functions as a means to develop the linguistic and writing conventions of a second language. It can also improve students' self-confidence to write an appropriate composition. Through this strategy, they will work hard with their group members to organize well their writing. Finally, it can enhance students' critical thinking as well as their motivation.

In other hands, collaborative writing also has some disadvantages (see **Table 1**). The teachers who want to apply this strategy should pay more attention to them in order to achieve their teaching goals. Also, they are challenges for the teachers in applying it in their writing class. In short, the

following are the advantages of collaborative writing in teaching writing; 1) increases stress; 2) logistical problems; 3) target language usage; 4) a conflict with personal learning style; and 5) issues of fairness.

**Table 1.** *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Collaborative Writing Strategies*  
*(Adopted from Lowry et al., 2004: 81)*

<b>Writing Strategy</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Single-author writing	Efficient and style consistency	May not clearly represent group's intentions and less consensus produced
Sequential single writing	Easy to organize and simplifies planning	Lose sense of group, subsequent writers may invalidate previous work, lack of consensus, version control problems, inefficient, and one person bottlenecks
Parallel writing – horizontal division	Efficient and high volume of output	Writers can be blind to each other's work, redundant work can be produced if poorly planned, stylistic differences, potential information overload, and does not recognize individual talent differences well
Parallel writing stratification	Efficient, high volume of quality output, less redundancy, and better use of individual talent	Writers can be blind to each other's work, redundant work can be produced if poorly planned, stylistic differences, and potential information overload
Reactive writing	Can build creativity and consensus	Extremely difficult to coordinate, problems with version control, and most software does not effectively support this strategy

## CONCLUSION

Collaborative writing strategy is a kind of writing that involves a number of persons. This strategy has a number of advantages as well disadvantages. For the advantages; promotes; 1) social skills development; 2) stress reduction and time-saving benefits; 3) motivational effects; 4) improvement in the content of their writing; and 5) gains in grammatical and structural proficiency. Then, the disadvantages deal with; 1) increases stress; 2) logistical problems; 3) target language usage; 4) a conflict with personal learning style; and 5) issues of fairness.

Further, collaborative writing strategy has three types of tasks that can be designed for students. They are; 1) *higher order thinking tasks*, 2) *division of labor tasks*, and 3) *specialist or expertise-based tasks*. Additionally, it also has a number of strategies that can be utilized in teaching writing; 1) *group single-author writing*; 2) *sequential single writing*; 3) *parallel writing* (divided into two types; *horizontal division parallel writing* and *stratified division parallel writing*); 4) *reactive writing*; and 5) *mixed mode writing*.

## REFERENCES

- Beck, E. (Ed.). 1993. *A Survey of Experiences of Collaborative Writing*. Berlin: Springer Verlag.
- Bosley, D. S. (1989). *A national Study of the Uses of Collaborative Writing in Business Communication Courses among Members of the ABC*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation Illinois: Illinois State University.
- Ede, L., & Lunsford, A. (1990). *Singular Texts/Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University.
- Foster, P. (1998). A Classroom Perspective on the Negotiation of Meaning. *Applied Linguistics* Vol. 1, 1-23.
- Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). *Writing Text: Effective Strategies to Improve writing of Adolescents in Middle and High School – A report to Carneige Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- Hadjerrouit, S. (2011). A Collaborative Writing Approach to Wikis: Design, Implementation, and Evaluation. *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology*. Vol. 8, 431 – 449.
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R.T. (1998). *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

- LeFevre, K. B. (1987). *Invention as a Social Act*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University.
- Murray, D. E. (1992). Collaborative Learning as Literacy Event: Implications for ESL instruction. In D. Nunan (Ed.), *Collaborative Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 100-117). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Raimes, A. (1998). Teaching Writing. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 18, 142-167.
- Reid, J. M. (1993). *Teaching ESL writing*. NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Reid, J., & Powers, J. (1993). Extending the Benefits of Small-group Collaboration to the ESL Writer. *TESOL Journal*, 2(4), 25-32.
- Rice, R. P., & Huguley, J. T., Jr. (1994). Describing Collaborative Forms: A profile of the Team Writing Process. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 37(3), 163-170.
- Rollinson, P. (2005). Using Peer Feedback in the ESL Writing Class. *ELT Journal*, 59(1), 23-30.
- Savova, L., & Donato, R. (1991). Group Activities in the Language Classroom. *English Teaching Forum*, 29(2), 12-15, 26.
- Trimbur, J. (1985). Collaborative Learning and Teaching Writing. In B. W. McClelland & T. R. Donovan (Eds.), *Perspectives on Research and Scholarship in Composition* (87-109). NY, NY: Modern Language Association.
- Villamil, O. S., & De Guerrero, M. C. M. (1996). Peer Revision in the L2 Classroom: Socialcognitive Activities, Mediating Strategies, and Aspects of Social Behavior. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 5(1), 51-75.
- Lunsford, A. (1991). Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a Writing Center. *The Writing Center Journal* 12, no. 1: 3-10.
- Lowry, P. B., Curtis, A., & Lowry, M. R. (2004). Building a Taxonomy and Nomenclature of Collaborative Writing to Improve Interdisciplinary Research and Practice. *Journal of Business Communication* 41: 66. Retrieved on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from <http://ows.edb.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/users/jl35525/Taxonomy%20of%20Collaborative%20Writing.pdf>