



Using wikis for personalized participatory peer-feedback in English writing

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Future Schools 2030

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Report abstract

Receiving specific situated feedback on writing production is a vital part of development when learning another language. This study investigates the use of wikis by English teachers to provide feedback to groups of senior high school students carrying out collaborative writing tasks.

The study has a mixed-methods qualitative and quantitative pre- post-test crossover design with a core of 2-3 writing tasks. It explores students' writing development, cognitive development, students and teachers' beliefs about using wikis, their writing development, and their awareness of language, and their collaborative processes, including the use of their different languages.



Research introduction



Case analysis

PROBLEM: senior high school students need feedback on their English writing but in large classes, this is difficult...

SOLUTION (in part): to use wikis for collaborative writing tasks in English that the teacher will be able to give

- formative feedback on writing in process
- summative feedback on finished writing.

Senior high school courses of English use different course books in different parts of China, so the collaborative tasks will be designed appropriate to the teachers and students.



Wikis as writing media

An online writing tool which can be used to enable learners to collaborate out of class, in preparation time (not replace current class teaching).

Learners' online collaboration is intended to develop their problem-solving, analyzing, evaluating, and critical and creative thinking skills in addition to developing their negotiating and writing skills in English.

The ability to work online with a distributed and non-synchronous team is valuable for the work environment of the future.



Purpose: goals

To investigate the educational possibilities for using collaborative wikis in senior high school English writing development in order to

- gain a practical understanding of how the technology currently works in the Chinese context and
- how learners and teachers might respond with regard to the education of the future.

English writing skills for online media in education and professional life are likely to be even more important in 2030 than they are now.



Purpose: objectives

In this project we explore senior high school students' written collaborative wikis online with regard to their

- 1) written language development
- 2) collaborative discourse, and
- 3) attitudes to:
 - a) working online
 - b) the language activities
 - c) collaborative writing

– in order to find answers to the Research Questions.



Rationale I

Wikis are a collaborative online writing tool which enable students to work asynchronously on a writing task together.

DESIGN FEATURES

- Teachers can access the wikis at any point in the writing process to comment or encourage, through a central page.
- Each wiki keeps a record of who contributed what.
- If the authors wish to go back to a previous version, the drafts are all retrievable from the history.
- Students can discuss their work and collaboration inside their wiki – discussion is an important part of task writing.



Rationale II

Wikis are versatile and useful.

Wiki contributors do not need to be in the same place.

TO DEVELOP SKILLS

English writing skills: structuring, grammar, discourse markers, collaborative knowledge creation.

Social skills: collaboration, negotiation, how to give and take feedback, learning how to disagree and move forward, learning how to support co-authors in producing text.

Personal skills: responsibility, autonomy, co-ownership.

Information literacy skills: using wikis, wiki writing.



Research questions

- 1) To what extent do collaborative online writing tasks in English develop learners' writing proficiency in English?
- 2) To what extent is there measurable cognitive development, as shown by a cognitive test, through developing skills through collaborative online writing?
- 3) How do senior high school learners in China collaborate in fulfilling a communicative task in English?
- 4) How do learners' think their writing in English develops through the tasks?



Research questions

- 5) How do teachers' think their students' writing in English develops?
- 6) To what extent do students think the tasks and tests raise their awareness of language?
- 7) What are the functions of translanguaging, i.e., using their different languages, in the students' online collaborative writing tasks?



Translanguaging: definition

= mixing, meshing and interweaving languages.

“Translanguaging is the dynamic process whereby multilingual language users mediate complex social and cognitive activities through strategic employment of multiple semiotic resources to act, to know and to be” (Garcia & Li Wei, 2013).

One of the functions of translanguaging is as an **EFFICIENT PEDAGOGICAL TOOL IN WRITING CLASS**, benefiting students socially and linguistically (Garcia & Kano, 2014; Canagarajah, 2006, p.586-611; Canagarajah, 2011).



Translanguaging: example

EG: TRANSLANGUAGED polite request to whole class:

/plɪ:z/ give me an example

(‘please’ with phoneme /ɪ:/ third tone (=‘down-up’); creaky)

DISCOURSE: unless we feel strongly when making a request

- English normally has ‘please’ at the end.

- Mandarin has ‘please’ at the beginning.

PHONOLOGY: The third tone in Putonghua is always **creaky**.

Tone in Mandarin /tʃɪŋ/ ‘qing’ (please) is third tone (=‘down-up’): in English we do not use a tone system to distinguish minimal pairs, so tone on this ‘please’ is not meaningful.



Methods



Ethical considerations: consent required

All university procedures to be followed

- Every effort will be taken to protect the participants (students and teachers, together with the researchers).
- The aim of the study is to benefit students and to ease the pressure on teachers of marking individual writing.
- Students will be invited to form groups according to their own inclination so they are comfortable.
- The tasks will be designed to be useful for their English.
- All will have the opportunity to learn useful skills.
- Participating schools will need computing facilities (equal opportunity for all to participate in the tasks and study).
- For confidentiality and privacy, coded data will be offline.



Methods: Framework

- The research is based on linguistic and cognitive theories of online writing development (Alvermann 2009; Barton & Lee 2013; Lankshear & Knobel 2011; Myers 2009; Storch 2013)
- including process and product-theories (based on how people develop their writing, and what they write)
- stance founded on pragmatism, i.e., approaching research with a practical, functional, problem-solving philosophy.
- The study uses a mixed-methods qualitative and quantitative pre- post-test crossover design with a core of 2-3 writing tasks for students to develop their English writing.



Participants

- Senior high school students
- Teachers of senior high school students.

Materials/ instruments

- 2-3 writing tasks
 - Cognitive test (and questionnaire element)
 - Writing test
 - Qualitative protocols for evaluating text for
 - a) collaboration; b) translanguaging.
 - Semi-structured interview schedules.



Methods: Procedures

STAGE 1: Educate teachers and set up wikis.

STAGE 2: TEST ENGLISH

TEST COGNITION

STAGE 3: TASK 1

TASK 2

(TASK 3)

STAGE 4: TEST ENGLISH

TEST COGNITION

STAGE 5: QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEWS (Students and teachers)



Recent progress

- Starting to recruit teachers from China who are master's students on the MSc TESOL programme at Edinburgh who will carry out the data collection online.
- Working on:
 - information forms (dependent on where the teachers will teach)
 - consent forms for teachers, students, schools.
- Ethics approval.



Next steps...

- **DESIGN:**
 - individual topics and materials for the 2/3 tasks appropriate for participating students and teachers.
 - the teacher and student questionnaires.
- **ORGANISE RESEARCHERS** by field of interest/ area.
- **PILOT** all materials: including writing tasks.
- **COLLECT DATA**
- **ANALYSE DATA**



Planned outputs

- AICFE report
- journal article
- accessible website on wikis for English teachers in China
- AICFE conference in May
- biennial innovation conference for University of Edinburgh Moray House School of Education
- Feed into the UoE's training and research resources for teachers from China and other countries taking the master's TESOL programme or Online Language Learning.



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Xie xie!

谢谢!

Kiitos!

Thank you!