De La Salle University

DECISION MAKING IN A COLLABORATIVE WRITING TASK

A Dissertation Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School, College of Liberal Arts

De La Salle University-Manila

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Arts in Language and Literature

Submitted by

Merlyn Lee

July 19, 2002

19 JUN 2004

AKLATANG EMILIO AGUINALDO ARCHIVES

ABSTRACT

The observation that the bulk of research is on computer-assisted collaboration prompted the researcher to conduct this study on decision making in a collaborative writing task. Specifically, the study aimed to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What patterns of decision making can be observed during the stages of writing in the four categories:

    1.1 Immediate Agreement

    1.2. Elaboration

    1.3. Considering Alternatives

    1.4. Voicing Explicit Disagreement

2. How are these patterns arrived at?

´This study used the qualitative method in describing and analyzing decision making in a collaborative writing task.´ Six Computer Science female students enrolled at De La Salle University-Dasmariñas served as participants. The students did not belong to the researcher's class. Two groups with three members each were formed. Grouping was based on the ranking of their essays which were written before the conduct of the study. Each group consisted of one 'high', one 'average' and one low' member The participants were introduced to fundamental issues in collaboration such as participant roles, group dynamics and decision making before the data were gathered. The writing task was done in three stages: prewriting, drafting, and revising. The

participants wrote an argumentative essay about technology as a curse to mankind. Each group spent an average of 40 minutes for each session. Group A spent one session for prewriting, two for drafting, and one for revising. Group B spent one for prewriting, three for drafting and one for revising. All sessions were audio- and videotaped. After each writing session, a stimulated recall was conducted. The participants and the researcher viewed the tape. After every three minutes or when it was necessary, the tape was stopped and the participants were asked to explain what they were thinking during that particular part of the interaction or give reasons for their actions. Viewing resumed after each interview. The transcript of the interview was analyzed to help explain the patterns of interaction.

The verbal protocol of the interaction was basis for identifying topical episodes in Immediate Agreement, Elaboration, Considering Alternatives, and Voicing Explicit Disagreement. Topical episodes in each category were then coded according to Baker's (2002) communicative functions of talk and analyzed for patterns of interaction. Categories for content of talk in the topical episodes were based on Lockhart and Ng's framework (1995). Two language teachers, one in Filipino and one in English coded the transcripts. Each topical episode was analyzed to determine patterns of interaction and further described as symmetrical or asymmetrical. The purpose was to find out if collaboration was happening during the interaction based on the roles adopted by the participants in each group.

On the quality of decisions, inasmuch as the decisions made during the interaction cannot be described in isolation because they are reflected in one piece of writing, the essays produced by each group were rated on five domains (Content and Organization, Style, Sentence Formation, Usage, and Mechanics) using Engelhard, Gordon, and Gabrielson's (1991) criteria in order to describe the quality of decisions. This procedure is based on the notion that the quality of output is determined by the quality of decisions.

The researcher found out that most of the topical episodes showed lack of symmetry which means that participants did not adopt equal or almost equal roles during decision making. The patterns of interaction in Immediate Agreement and Elaboration show that the roles adopted by the participants were those of a proposer, explainer, and confirmer. In Considering Alternatives and in Voicing Explicit Disagreement, roles were those of a proposer, explainer, reactor, verifier, and confirmer. The roles of a verifier and a manager were not so evident. In resolving conflict, participants used explanations, counter-suggestions, and verifications. When content of talk focused on wording of ideas, no explanations were provided however.

There were more patterns of interaction that were identified during the drafting stage than in prewriting and revising suggesting that there were more instances of problem solving. The patterns in Immediate Agreement and Elaboration in the three stages of writing were similar but more complex ways of resolving conflicts were observed in the drafting stage.

The strength of the study is that it offers an understanding of the role of schema in a collaborative writing task. The role of schema was evident. The patterns of interaction were influenced by the participants' shared knowledge or by the differences of their schemata. As revealed in the stimulated recall, their schemata were shaped by their experiences not only in the classroom but also by their encounter with other people. The participants' schemata about writing seemed not comprehensive and held misconceptions such as vocabulary words or terms should not be used again in one composition and the belief that what one uses often is correct. Such notions, which may have resulted from experiences or training in school, led to several conflicts in the drafting stage, especially in the wording of ideas and in word choice. The decisions arrived at during the collaborative writing task were described as average only based on the quality of the written output.

The study therefore has shown that a student's schema is one factor that could determine success in collaboration and in decision making. The teaching of collaboration in writing then, should also focus on broadening the schemata of the learners.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		PAGE
TITLE PAGE		1
APPROVAL SHEET		2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		3
ABSTRACT		5
TABLE OF CONTENTS		9
LIST OF FIGURES		11
LIST OF TABLES		12
CHAPTER		
1	THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND	
	Introduction	13
	Statement of the Problem	15
	Scope and Delimitations	16
	Theoretical Framework	17
	Significance of the Study	24
	Definition of Terms	25
2	RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES	
	Related Literature	28
	Related Studies	30
	Synthesis	36
3	METHODOLOGY	

Research Design 37

Participants of the Study 37

Data Gathering Procedure 38

Statistical Treatment 47

4 PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Specific Question No. 1 48

Specific Question No. 2 87

5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary 128

Findings 128

Conclusions 130

Recommendations 131

REFERENCES 133

APPENDICES

A Final Essays..... 138

B Transcription Conventions Used in the Study 141

C Criteria for Rating by Engelhard et al. 142

D Doug Hunt's Criteria for Holistic Rating 143

E Sample Verbal and SR Protocol 145

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	Conceptual Framework	20

AKLATANG EMILIO AGUINALDO · INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER
De La Salle University-Dasmariñas • Since 1977 • Dasmariñas, Cavite, Philippines

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Distribution of Topical Episodes Showing Symmetry	49
2	Distribution of Topical Episodes (Prewriting)	50
3	Content of Topical Episodes in the Drafting Stage (Group A)	59
4	Content of Topical Episodes in the Drafting Stage (Group B)	60
5	Mean Ratings on the Five Domains of Writing	125

AKLATANG EMILIO AGUINALDO · INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER · De La Salle University-Dasmariñas · Since 1977 · Dasmariñas, Cavite, Philippines