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## A SURVEY OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD GROUP WORK

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### **Abstract**

Research has shown that collaborative learning has positive effects on students' attitudes toward both themselves and subjects studied. Working collaboratively can motivate students to learn and achieve common goals. The present study was classroom-based research which aimed to investigate students' attitudes toward group work and other activities in class. The subjects were 29 students who took the English Writing for Economics, a required course for second-year Faculty of Economics students at Chulalongkorn University. Collaborative work was used in several activities during the second half of the semester. The survey revealed that students had positive attitudes toward group work. They enjoyed the class and preferred this kind of learning and teaching method to a traditional one used during the first half of the semester. Better yet, more than half of the students had higher confidence in writing an essay in English.

### **Introduction**

#### ***Collaborative learning and its elements***

The concept of working together as a team has been accepted and widely used in education and English teaching. According to *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and*

*Applied Linguistics*, two terms can be used interchangeably: **cooperative learning** and **collaborative learning**. According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996), collaborative learning is an effective approach to teaching and learning in which students work in groups towards a joint goal. However, this approach must be carefully and appropriately structured so that all students are responsible for the group's achievements. Besides, Sills (1988) defines collaborative learning as "a deliberate attempt to take advantage of differing perspectives through the interaction of individuals and their ideas in a reciprocal or alternating action" (p. 21).

Johnson and Johnson (1987) point out that collaborative learning is not just putting students into groups. They propose four basic elements of truly collaborative learning: *positive interdependence*, *mutual interaction*, *individual accountability*, and *interpersonal and small-group skills*. According to them, *positive interdependence* has students work together to achieve the same goals, and that positive interdependence brings about peer encouragement and support for learning. In addition, *interaction* is the heart of collaborative learning, whether it is student-student or teacher-student interaction, and all students in the same group should interact face-to-face and verbally to process the learning. The third element, *individual accountability*, means that each student in the group is responsible for the group assignment and its success, and must clearly understand his/her own responsibility and the group's shared responsibility. Finally, *interpersonal and small-group skills* are required to create a collaborative situation. This means that students should be taught social skills needed for collaboration and the teacher should encourage them to use such skills.

Researchers and theorists have used and discussed collaboration of various structures. For instance, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) identify five main types of collaborative learning: *the Group Investigative Method* in which each subgroup works on a part of a large project, *the Learning Together Method* focusing on team building activities, discussions and teacher support, *Jigsaw* which promotes group collaboration and cross-group interaction, *the Structural Approach* in which students are taught a variety of

means for organizing and presenting information to others, and *Student Team Learning* which emphasizes individual accountability, team rewards, and opportunities for success.

Lunsford and Ede (1994, cited in Howard, 2000) describe two types of collaboration: *dialogic* and *hierarchical* collaboration. In dialogic collaboration, all members of the group work together at every step until the completion of the project. In contrast, in hierarchical collaboration, the project is divided into several parts and each part is assigned to a different group member.

### ***Roles of teachers and students***

In contrast with competitive learning, collaborative learning requires and promotes more interaction between teachers and students. Both need to work together to create positive interactive environments (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Compared to the traditional teaching and learning method in which teachers speak and students listen, the collaborative learning demands that teachers' and students' roles be maximized and different from the past. Students will get more involved with the learning process. Put into groups, students need to be responsible for the groups' outcomes by working on their own assignments and encouraging one another to participate. In brief, each can be "a major resource for assistance, feedback, reinforcement, and support" (Johnson and Johnson, 1987, p. 45).

Teachers are not considered a primary source for ideas and solutions to group problems. Instead, their roles are to decide how to place students into groups, observe how group members interact, facilitate group interaction, monitor the functioning and the progress of the groups, encourage each student's participation, and intervene to provide assistance after considering that the students really need it. To ensure a collaborative situation, the teacher needs to have a carefully structured plan for the whole course and students need to be informed of it so that they know what they are expected from the teacher and the course.

### ***Collaborative writing***

Writing is considered by most researchers and educators the most difficult skill, and students' writing ability is often not good. In his survey, Neill (1982, cited in Cotton, 1988) found that student writing was considered to be a problem of 90% of the respondents. A variety of teaching and learning methods have been used to improve this skill. One of these is to have students write together, whether in pairs or groups, hoping at least that some individual students' anxiety can be reduced.

Murray (1992) mentions that in real life, "*writing is not a solitary enterprise; it is a social act ...the result of the interaction among people, contexts and texts*" (p.100). As it is the teacher's responsibility to prepare students for the life outside the classroom, we need to give them opportunities to practice both writing and collaborative skills in the classroom. With collaborative learning, students can interact with one another and through interaction they can learn how to write. If teachers have this assumption, they should provide their students with a chance to achieve by working together.

Collaborative writing can be processed in many forms. One possible way to structure collaborative writing is *the Paired Writing method* proposed by Topping (2001) in his article, "Paired Collaborative Writing," describing the method as providing:

[a] structured framework to support interactive collaborative behaviors through all stages of the writing process. There is clear role division of labor at every stage, to modulate information processing, promote flow and reduce anxiety. The emphasis is on thinking, planning, intelligent questioning, self-disclosure and discussion, reorganization and restructuring—to counterbalance the traditional focus on mechanics and the final tangible product (p. 2).

Collaboration can be adapted in several stages of a composition class. Teachers can use it particularly in some steps or from the beginning to the end of the course. Generally, students can work in groups during all four main steps of essay writing:

brainstorming, writing, editing and evaluating, and revising. This teaching and learning method will certainly benefit the students if they wholeheartedly participate in the activities.

## **The Study**

### ***Background***

This study originated from the disappointment with the researcher's teaching and students' lessened motivation to learn in class during the first half of the semester, during which the more traditional method was used. She noticed that the students did not enjoy the class and had little opportunity to do activities together. They just came to class, sat facing her, and listened to what was said. The researcher could never know if they had learnt anything at all. Another thing is that students did not have chances to do all the four main steps of essay writing. Thus, hoping that students' motivation and the learning atmosphere could be improved, the teacher-researcher decided to experiment with the collaborative learning method in her writing class in which students were to have more interaction among themselves during the second half of the semester.

### ***Objectives***

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To study students' attitudes toward the collaborative method of teaching and learning used in a writing class; and,
2. To find out if collaborative writing could lead to students' more confidence in English writing.

### ***Subjects***

The subjects of this study was 29 Thai students studying the *English Writing for Economics* course, a required course for sophomore students of the Faculty of Economics at Chulalongkorn University, during the second semester of the 2004 academic year. The objective of the course was for students to be able to effectively write academic essays concerning economics.

There were four units in the course book in which students were to study the basic component of an essay as well as how to write different types of essays including exemplification, cause and effect, definitions, classification, description, and argumentation. The first two units were taught before the mid-term examination and the last two before the final exam. However, for Unit Three, a separate handout on Description was provided to students for self-study, and the topic was not taught in class. All the subjects were in the same group taught by the researcher herself. They were required to attend two two-hour classes a week for six weeks after the mid-term examination.

### ***Method***

#### *- Grouping*

In this study, the subjects were asked to work in groups of three students. Research by Murray (1992) shows that odd-numbered groups work more efficiently than even-numbered groups and to ensure collaboration, the number of participants in each group should not be too large. Johnson and Johnson (1987) suggest that beginning teachers should start with groups of two or three students. The researcher thought that in writing class groups of three students were the optimal number to involve all students in participating in all activities. It was also more convenient and easier for the students to discuss, exchange ideas and opinions, have eye contact, and work together. However, there were two four-student groups as there were 29 students in the section.

At first, the students were asked to sit in groups of three, choosing their own partners but trying not to stick to their friends. As the researcher was not satisfied with some new groups, she asked some students to change their groups in order to have students of mixed abilities in each group. (Half of the semester had passed, so the researcher at this point knew all the students' abilities quite well.) This must be done carefully. The researcher had to ask if the students minded being asked to work with a new group and at the same time explain to them that it was for their own benefit.

In this study, students were informed right after they sat in their newly set groups that they would work together until the last class. However, if not all students showed up in the first class, the researcher could set new groups in the next class.

While doing group work, all groups were asked to sit far enough apart so that the researcher could have easy access to every group, and group discussions would not disturb or interfere with one another.

*- Assignment*

Each student was assigned to write four pieces of work, two individual pieces and the other two group work. (The draft version for each piece was not counted.) Assignments one and two were to be essays of definition and classification, while assignments three and four were argumentation essays.

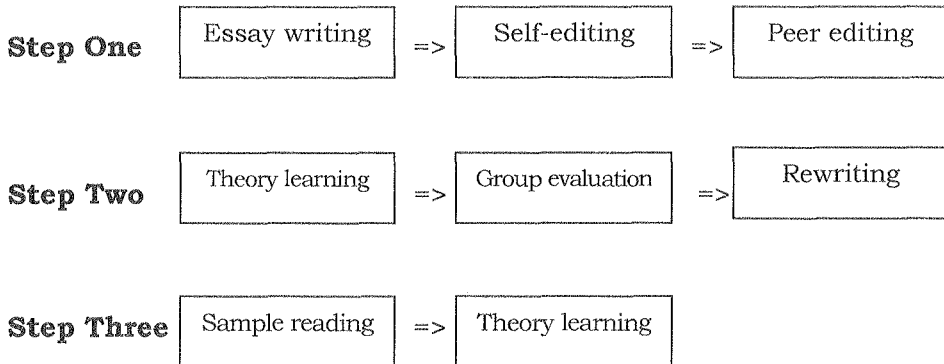
*- Schedule and activities*

The collaborative writing activities created for the students in class consisted of three main parts: writing, editing, and rewriting. Students were assigned to do all these activities in groups, except when they were writing the first and the fourth pieces of work, which were individual assignments.

Due to time constraints (only six weeks were available), the schedule needed to be well-planned and structured. The students were provided with the schedule during the first class after the mid-term exam so that they knew what they were expected to do in each class.

The whole period was divided into four sub-periods, three classes each. Each sub-period had three main steps: writing, editing, and learning theory, one step for one class. The students were assigned to write one piece of essay in each sub-period. The

three steps are structured in detail as shown below.



### **Step One (Class One)**

The first class of each sub-period started with each group of students writing one essay. All groups had to complete their essays within 50 minutes to one hour, depending on the level of difficulty of the assignment. There was no teacher interference while they were writing. The researcher's role was to ensure they stayed within time. They were not allowed to write after one hour.

To relieve students' nervousness if this was the first time they had worked in a group, the researcher gave each group a blank piece of paper and asked group members to talk about the topic to be chosen and brainstorm ideas for the essay outline first.

After one hour, they were asked to read their completed work again, and for ten minutes, check if there was anything they had missed. Finally, the researcher collected their worksheets and randomly distributed them to other students for editing. After they finished, they had to sign their names as the editors at the bottom of the worksheet. This was helpful as the students would realize that they had to participate in this activity and their participation counted. This peer editing step took about 15-20 minutes. The editors could write their corrections above the mistakes and their comments below the essay.

After class, the researcher read all essays, underlining errors made and identifying the types of errors by writing a



number like 1.1 and 1.2 according to the evaluation form (see Appendix A) to be given to the students the following class. The researcher made another copy of these worksheets for herself to write down her own comments.

### **Step Two (Class Two)**

There were three parts during the second step or the second class of each sub-period. First, the researcher gave a lecture on essay writing and had the students do some exercises in the core course book. The students could apply what they had learned to evaluate their peer work during the next activity in which students sat in groups. The researcher distributed the first drafts either randomly or deliberately, making sure that each group did not get its own work. Each group was also given an evaluation form (see Appendix A). This was the first time the students used this form so the researcher needed to explain all questions on the form and allow them to ask questions. Then students in each group read, discussed, made written corrections above the mistakes underlined by the researcher, and evaluated the work by completing an evaluation form. They were also asked to record the number of errors made by the writer. This process took about 20-30 minutes. The researcher was available in case they needed any help. After that, the researcher asked each group to prepare its presentation in Thai to the class. Each would point out good and bad points of the work and show some errors made. Each group would spend only a few minutes talking about the work to the whole class and only three or four groups were chosen to give a small presentation.

For the final part of this step, the owners would receive their work back together with the completed evaluation form. They were given about half an hour to rewrite their work. The researcher could spend the time talking with some groups which had problems with their first draft and give them some suggestions to improve it or have them defend their points. The researcher's copies of student worksheets with her comments were really helpful at this point. Finally, all rewritten worksheets were collected for the researcher to check and grade after class.

If there were still mistakes in the students' final drafts, the researcher made corrections and gave comments and grades. Two pieces of work were chosen and copies were made for all students in the next class.

### **Step Three (Class Three)**

Students were given a copy of two pieces of work. They read and evaluated the work by themselves for 10 to 15 minutes. After asking the class for their opinions on the work, the researcher explained the work to the class in terms of the content, organization, and language. She also pointed out what the students could learn from the work. The two pieces of work were like samples or models of an academic essay for them. Then the students were given back their own work. After that, the researcher gave a lecture on essay writing and had the students do exercises, either individually or collaboratively, in the core course book. At the end of the class, students were provided time to come and ask the researcher about their work and her comments.

These three steps were completed within three classes and were repeated for four times until the end of the course. However, there were some additions for the first and fourth individual pieces of writing.

During the first class before students were assigned to write an essay individually, the teacher had the students correct the errors in each item on the handout about error types (see Appendix B). The purpose of this activity was to introduce types of errors commonly made by students when writing. The teacher needed to explain terms like "fragment" and "agreement" so that they understood this when they used the form to evaluate their peer work during the second step.

For the individual writing, there were 29 pieces of work for the students to evaluate during the second step. As there were a total of nine groups of students, each group had to evaluate three or four pieces of work. However, only one piece of work was given to each group at a time and the evaluation had to be finished within 20-30 minutes. When a group had finished evaluating the

first piece, it would get the next piece, and so on. This was to help facilitate collaborative working. If all the three or four pieces were given to each group at once, it was likely that each individual student in the group would read just one piece of work. Then there would be no collaboration or interaction among group members. Thus, they would learn nothing from one another.

As the students were not familiar with working together in groups and interacting among themselves, the researcher helped them have a better understanding about this collaborative learning by giving them an activity during the first step of the second sub-period after they had experienced group work for two classes. Before having them write in groups, the researcher had them brainstorm and come up with answers to the following questions:

- 1) What do you think are the purposes of group work?
- 2) What are appropriate roles and responsibilities of a group member?
- 3) What are the advantages of group work?

Then the researcher elicited answers from each group and wrote them on the board or a piece of paper to be shown on a screen. Next, each group reordered the answers from the most to the least important. This activity was expected to help create student trust and understanding in this learning and teaching method. Trust is a necessary condition for stable and effective collaboration and the teacher has a role in encouraging trust among students during group activities (Johnson and Johnson, 1987). After that, the researcher concluded by showing the class important points about group work (see Appendix C).

### ***Results and discussion***

#### *- Class observation*

Overall, the collaborative activities used in this study have significant advantages when it comes to learning and teaching. From the researcher's observation, the atmosphere in the

classroom improved as students had more interaction among themselves and were active in completing their work. They seemed to enjoy working together. Certainly, the class became livelier. However, the students did not talk about things other than their essay. This also shows that students were interested in learning the lessons themselves. The researcher would become their second choice just in case they could not find the solution themselves. They were eager to help one another in solving problems of both their own and others' groups.

During the writing activity, students could share their ideas and opinions to write an essay, which was the group outcome. All members in most groups were involved in the writing. There were only one or two groups in which one student was quiet and had difficulty participating in the activity. The researcher had to wait before intervening and give them more time to adjust themselves. They could get along well during later classes. However, in case the situation did not improve, the researcher needed to intervene indirectly by talking with the group about the progress of their work or asking about each member's responsibilities and involvement. If it was the first time they wrote together, the researcher would suggest that they assign among themselves who would write each part of an essay: the introduction, the body, or the conclusion. They then needed to discuss the cohesion, organization, and language of the whole essay after all parts were combined.

During the evaluating activity, the evaluation form was very helpful. Usually, students are more interested in checking grammatical points, but with this form, the content, organization, and language were equally important. They needed to check all these points of an essay. Therefore, they would gradually realize the importance of the content and the organization as well. Also, it helped students to practice critiquing and evaluating a piece of work. This was different from the first half of the semester. Now, they themselves took on the teacher's role by reading, checking, correcting, and evaluating the work. This could help motivate them to learn what a good essay looked like so that they could evaluate others' work as well as their own.

The presentation part did not take more than ten minutes. This was to show how some groups' work was interesting. The whole class could learn a lot from the selected work. The researcher needed to prepare for this. She had in mind which piece of work was going to be presented and could draw the whole class's attention to it. Also, the researcher could use this time to encourage students by discussing good points of the chosen essays. For example, one essay was written by a group of one girl and two boys. The girl had good language and the second highest score on the mid-term exam, while one of the boys got the lowest score. However, the idea presented in their essay was very interesting and it was the boy who suggested it to the group. He was quite proud of this and could see a strong point in himself. The two boys were very active during the writing activity although both were quite passive during the first half of the semester.

During the rewriting activity, the students could also learn a lot. They got their work back with an evaluation form. They could know how well they had done their work. The work did not end like before. They needed to improve it and could get significant feedback from the researcher in person. It was a good chance for them to interact with the researcher about their work. They could see that their work was meaningful as it was read by both the teacher and their peers. This could help increase their motivation to write better. They knew that the researcher was available during the period so they were eager to ask her questions about their work. The sense of learning could be felt during this short period of time.

The students had to improve their work in terms of content, organization, and language. They spent this period solving problems themselves, and this made significant gains for them as they learnt the reasons why they were wrong. Therefore, the response of their peers and the researcher would not be ignored, but would prove to be meaningful.

#### *- Questionnaire results*

In the last class, students were asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix D). Twenty-four questionnaires were

returned to the researcher. Some of the more interesting results of the survey are as follows.

### *Atmosphere*

The atmosphere in the collaborative learning class was positive and supportive. Most of the students enjoyed the class and were more active when learning with their friends. Almost all students preferred the teaching and studying method used during the second half of the semester, and they enjoyed doing the class activities with their peers. They shared opinions, exchanged knowledge, and became more creative. They learnt together, not alone. They felt they had a chance to participate in the class. Thus, all these positive feelings could create closer relationships both between the teacher and the students and among the students themselves and motivated them to improve their writing skills. As Sills (1988) points out, “[w]orking collaboratively with classmates, compared with learning individualistically or competitively, increases the positiveness of students’ mood states, thereby increasing their motivation to achieve” (p. 21).

### *Attitudes*

In his study, Morton (1988) concludes that more positive attitudes toward the subject areas studied can be promoted by collaborative learning. Also, in this study, almost all students preferred the collaborative learning used during the second half of the semester. They had very positive attitudes toward this new teaching and learning method as well as the subject area studied. This can be supported by their views on the usefulness of the method as summarized below.

- They thought that critical and analytical thinking was promoted by working together and reading and evaluating others’ work. They were exposed to different views and styles of their peers and learned how to differentiate between good and bad points in each piece of work.

- Most of the students said they were more careful when writing an essay in English. This was because their work would be checked not only by the researcher but also by their peers and they did not want their friends to see that they had made a lot of mistakes again and again. Besides, they knew what types of errors they made, so they checked those points carefully. Earlier, students would hand in their work right after they finished the last sentence. This step helped create the habit of rereading their work looking for mistakes and correcting them before submitting it.
- The peer-editing activity was considered useful. Students admitted that their level of knowledge could be different from that of their peers so if their work was read by someone with higher ability, it was helpful in improving their work. Yet, peer editing would be useless if the editor had lower English proficiency. However, some said their friends knew something they did not and vice versa, so they could help each other. Reading their friends' work was a useful experience. They could practice editing and sometimes had a chance to read a good piece of work.
- All students except one thought that group writing was useful. It was more fun for them to work together. Besides sharing and exchanging ideas and knowledge through interaction, they learned a great deal from their peers, such as new words and techniques and styles of those with more advanced English, which could later be applied to their individual work. Also, they could practice teamwork skills and learn more about their peers.
- Group evaluation and presentation of other students' work were also considered useful. Students indicated that they could learn from others' mistakes and weak points. They also learned how to solve them through discussion with their peers. This was helpful to improve their own work, and they put in more effort to be able to

write better. For the presentation part, students were trained to show the group's opinions on a piece of work and not to be afraid of speaking in front of the class.

- All students considered the researcher's corrections and evaluation useful as they believed that the researcher knew best about the subject area studied and her evaluation was the final guarantee of their work. Working in groups could facilitate the researcher's discussion with each group of students. They felt good to know the researcher's opinions regarding their work which they thought more believable than their peers'. Most importantly, they felt that the researcher paid more attention to them.

### *Confidence in writing*

More than half of the students felt more confident to write an essay in English because they were more familiar with writing, had learned various essay patterns and how to put together the content, and had practiced checking their work carefully before submitting it. However, those who were still not confident in their writing were afraid of making mistakes, felt that writing was very difficult for them, and needed more practice.

The students' confidence had increased because they saw that their writing ability had improved in terms of organization, content, and language. They thought that they had learned essay components and how to plan an outline for their essay before starting to write. Moreover, they felt that they had been exposed to different sentence structures and better language. Yet, they indicated that they still needed more reading in English to expand their vocabulary, so that they knew which words to be used in their context as word choice was found to be a common problem of the students.

In the students' opinions, learning by working in groups could lead to more confidence in writing even when they needed to write alone at the end of the semester. This is also because they had a better understanding of essay writing. They had learned a lot from evaluating others' essays while working in groups. They



understood more about the organization and different types of essays and knew how to start and plan their work. Several research studies have proved this point.

### ***Implications and Suggestions***

Academic writing or essay writing is not an easy skill, either for teachers to teach or for students to learn. However, it is an essential skill taught at a university level, and students are expected to gain some academic achievement in a writing course.

The findings of the present study show that students had a better understanding about essay writing and could adapt knowledge learned in class to improve their writing ability. Their attitudes toward collaborative learning were positive as they found that they had a chance to experience the learning process in a supportive atmosphere. All of this led them to have more confidence in writing, as also found by Alonso (1988) that after group writing, students' individual essays improved a great deal and they became more confident writers.

The present study examined how collaborative learning could be adapted in a writing class. With collaborative learning, teachers can arrange classes in their own creative way according to course objectives, subject area studied, time available, and the students' levels of proficiency and interest. According to Johnson and Johnson (1994) and Feng (2001, cited in Chen, 2004), in a cooperative classroom, students are encouraged and instructed to cooperate and communicate with others, and help each other in order to accomplish learning tasks efficiently. Based on the findings of this study, the following are some suggestions for teachers who want to enliven their writing class and enlighten their writing students in collaborative learning.

1. Students may be afraid of English writing and consider it the most difficult skill to practice, especially if it is essay writing. Even worse, some may believe that they will never be able to improve their writing, especially if teachers only give them lectures on writing theories in class. Johnson and Johnson (1987) mention, "[t]rust is a necessary condition for stable cooperative and effective communication" (p. 114). If the trust level is high,

students will express their thoughts, opinions, and information more openly. Thus, the very first thing teachers need to do is to build students' trust in the teaching and learning methods. They need to make the concept of "learning together" known and felt by the students. This can be done by teachers showing the whole class their own confidence in the effectiveness of learning by working together. If the students see the value of this method, they should cooperate more which in turn leads to better performance in class and on exams. Also, teachers need to make them understand that they can learn from working together and use what they have learned with their friends to improve their own writing. Another important point for the teacher to consider is that some students may feel uneasy in expressing their own ideas which are different from their friends'. Thus, collaborative skills should be taught to the students so that they know how to support their points or show their disagreement with others' opinions.

2. For an essay writing class, the writing process should be clearly divided into steps. Working together in groups can help them understand what they are supposed to do in each step in order to produce a good essay. According to Johnson and Johnson (1987), "to ensure productive collaboration the teacher must plan and organize the session so that students know that the end is not simply to work in groups but to work in groups in an effort to reach consensus for an important task" (p. 22). Teachers may structure a writing process into four steps: outlining, writing, evaluating, and rewriting. Students can be given the opportunity to work together in groups in all four steps or any one of them. Realistically, however, students are usually concerned about their grades and their writing on the exam in which they are required to write alone, not in groups. Teachers, therefore, can alternatively have the students write individually and collaboratively. They can have students write together first so that they can discuss their work with peers and learn something before writing individually.

3. In most English writing classes, the students' role is to write while teachers are the ones who read and evaluate. From the findings, students learned many things from collaboratively evaluating peer work. The suggestion is that teachers need to

create an evaluation form consisting of important components of written work. This form will help facilitate students' discussion, and students can learn to evaluate a piece of work. For essay evaluation, it is not enough to check only the language. According to the result of a study by Kroll (1991), grammar and content feedback can have a positive effect on rewriting. Therefore, the evaluation form should consist of at least three parts: content, organization, and language. For the language part, teachers may have each student write an essay during the first class. From students' works, teachers can then examine types of errors made by the students and put them on the evaluation form for students to use.

4. Collaborative learning does not mean that the teacher just lets the students work by themselves. They still need his/her help and presence in class. In fact, the teacher should realize the change of his/her roles towards the students in class. He/She cannot sit at a desk doing something else while the students are writing. Instead, he/she needs to observe the students' behavior and how they contribute to the group, and then give appropriate help if they need it. In addition, the teacher's evaluation is still most valued by the students. Therefore, he/she needs to provide some time (perhaps during the rewrite session) for student consultation in case they do not understand the written comments or want to defend their work.

5. To make the writing process more meaningful to students, the teacher may have each student collect their work along with evaluation forms into a portfolio. Before the mid-term exam, the teacher may ask the students to write short reports on themselves in terms of their group work, their writing ability, according to the information collected in their portfolios, and how they are going to improve in the second half of the term. Then, before the final exam, students will need to write a second report to see if they have improved or not.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown that collaborative learning can be one promising method for a writing class. The teacher can adapt

this method for his/her writing class any way he/she likes and sees appropriate in order to motivate students. A carefully structured plan can lead to the relaxing atmosphere in class, students' motivation in learning, and positive attitude toward themselves and the learning, all of which are what most, if not all, teachers always want to achieve in their class.

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**Appendix A**  
**Evaluation Form**

Writer (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Content**

- |                                                                                   |     |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1. Is the thesis statement clear to you?                                          | Yes | No |
| 2. Is the topic sentence in each body paragraph clear to you?                     | Yes | No |
| 3. Is the thesis well-supported with enough details in the body?                  | Yes | No |
| 4. Is the essay logically developed?                                              | Yes | No |
| 5. Are there any redundant or irrelevant points or ideas which should be deleted? | Yes | No |
| 6. Does the introduction give the reader "clues" about the topic of the essay?    | Yes | No |
| 7. Is the conclusion effective?                                                   | Yes | No |

**Organization**

- |                                                                               |     |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1. Is the essay well-organized with an introduction, a body and a conclusion? | Yes | No |
| 2. Is there a thesis statement in the essay?                                  | Yes | No |
| 3. Is there the topic sentence in each body paragraph?                        | Yes | No |

## Language

<b>1. Grammar</b>	<b>Number of Mistakes</b>
1.1 articles and determiners	
1.2 tenses	
1.3 part-of-speech (verb, noun, etc.)	
1.4 verb form (participle, gerund, infinitive)	
1.5 prepositions	
1.6 agreement (determiner – noun / subject – verb / pronoun – antecedent) and singular/plural nouns	
1.7 others	
<b>2. Structure</b>	<b>Number of Mistakes</b>
2.1 fragment	
2.2 run-on	
2.3 omission of subject	
2.4 omission of object	
2.5 wrong use of conjunction	
2.6 wrong use of punctuation	
2.7 wrong word order	
2.8 others	
<b>3. Words</b>	<b>Number of Mistakes</b>
3.1 misspelling	
3.2 wrong word choice	
3.3 others	

Your comments and suggestions:

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Editor (s): \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Appendix B**

### **Error Types**

1. Errors in terms of grammar
  - 1.1 Articles
    - ◆ We rented speed-boat.
    - ◆ We stayed at a Hilton Hotel in Chiang Mai.
  - 1.2 Tenses
    - ◆ I went to the Similan Islands last year. The sand and the sea there is very beautiful.
  - 1.3 Word Form
    - ◆ Hard work is a key to succeed.
    - ◆ We angried at them very much.
  - 1.4 Verb Form
    - ◆ I wanted to diving.
    - ◆ I must stopped drinking.
  - 1.5 Prepositions
    - ◆ At May 1<sup>st</sup>, I left for London.
  - 1.6 Agreement
    - ◆ He is at the same age as every students in this class.
    - ◆ My friends was very funny.
    - ◆ Dogs are loyal to its owners.
2. Errors in terms of structure
  - 2.1 Fragment
    - ◆ When I was fifteen years old.
  - 2.2 Run-on
    - ◆ I would like to drive a car very much I don't know why.
  - 2.3 Omission of Subject



- ◆ At school have no swimming pool.
- 2.4 Omission of Object
  - ◆ She told that she would come to my house at 7.
- 2.5 Wrong Use of Conjunction
  - ◆ Although he tried to encourage me, but his words didn't make me feel better.
- 2.6 Wrong Use of Punctuation
  - ◆ We had many activities such as; riding banana boats, snorkeling, etc.
- 2.7 Wrong Word Order
  - ◆ School's my brother is far from our house very much.
- 3. Errors in terms of words and meaning
  - 3.1 Misspelling
    - ◆ My two elder sisters are airhostages.
  - 3.2 Wrong Selection of Word
    - ◆ You can buy no tax goods at the airport.
    - ◆ I had a very funny time.

## **Appendix C**

### **Group Work**

#### **Purposes and Goal**

- ◆ To practise group working skills (social skills)
- ◆ To practise critical and analytical skills
- ◆ To create a sense of shared responsibility
- ◆ To increase students' motivation and efforts to achieve
- ◆ To enhance collaborative learning and supportive class activities while reducing students' anxiety
- ◆ To promote positive attitudes toward self-development



To improve each individual's essay writing skills

#### **What you need to keep in mind**

1. All students are responsible for the group outcomes by sharing ideas, asking and answering questions, and helping one another, both within the group and among groups.
2. Each student competes against himself / herself, not others.

**Appendix D**  
**Questionnaire**

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect students' attitudes towards activities and techniques used during the second half of the English Writing for Economics course.

Please answer the following questions.

- 1) 1.1 How many pieces of work did you write in class?  
(Please circle.)
- 1                      2                      3                      4
- 1.2 Do you think the number is  too few or  
 too many? (Please tick.)
- 1.3 In your opinion, how many pieces of work should  
the students be assigned to write in one semester?  
(Please circle.)
- 1                      2                      3                      4  
5 or more
- 2) Having done the activities of group writing, reading,  
editing, and evaluating, do you think....
- 2.1 you have practised critical and                      Y                      N  
analytical thinking by reading others' work?  
Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2.2 you feel more confident when                      Y                      N  
writing an essay in English?  
Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2.3 you are more careful when writing                      Y                      N  
an essay in English?  
Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2.4 your English writing ability has improved in terms of

- content? Y N
- organization? Y N
- language? Y N

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2.5 you spent less time writing an Y N  
essay in English by the end of the semester?

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2.6 you have a better understanding Y N  
of essay writing?

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3) Do you think the self-editing activity is useful?  
Please explain.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4) Do you think the peer-editing activity is useful?  
Please explain.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5) Do you think group writing is useful? Please explain.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 6) Do you think group correction, evaluation and presentation of other students' work are useful? Please explain.

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- 7) Do you think the teacher's corrections and evaluation of your work are useful? Please explain.

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- 8) Do you prefer the traditional (before mid-term exam) or the interactional (after mid-term exam) teaching and studying method? Please explain.

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- 9) Please give any suggestions that might improve the class.

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