



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN ESL/EFL FEMALE LEARNERS
PRODUCT, PROCESS, AND PERCEPTIONS IN COLLABORATIVE TASKS**

SEYED YASIN YAZDI AMIRKHIZ

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By

SEYED YASIN YAZDI AMIRKHIZ

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

September 2012

Dedicated to:

My Leila

My Parents

My Teachers



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman: Professor Kamariah Abu Bakar, PhD

Faculty: Educational Studies

Collaborative writing has been approached and investigated from various perspectives in the relevant literature. The purpose of this study was three-fold: to investigate the influence of collaborative writing on the quality of individual writing (*Product*), the verbal interactions between the peers during collaborative writing sessions (*Process*), and *Perceptions* of participants towards collaborative writing (learning). The study involved eight participants who were divided into two EFL (i.e., Iranian) and two ESL (i.e., Malaysian) homogeneous dyads.

To investigate the *Product*, the dyads performed collaborative writing for 15 sessions; after any three consecutive collaborative writing sessions, each participant was asked to carry out a writing task individually. The tasks used in both collaborative and individual writing were isomorphic graphic prompts (IELTS

Academic Module task 1). The writing quality of five individually-produced texts was determined in terms of task achievement (TA), cohesion/coherence (C/C), grammatical range/accuracy (GR/A), and lexical resources (LR). The findings showed the most positively-affected areas among all the participants were TA front, followed by C/C front. GR/A did not display any improvement among EFL/ESL participants, and LR showed minor improvement only among three of ESL participants. Also, regression was a frequent incident among the participants. The findings are discussed in the light of the socio-cultural perspective of learning, emergentist perspective (one that is informed by chaos complexity theory), cultural background of the participants, the typology of tasks used, the role of the participants' language proficiency, and participants' collaborative dynamics during collaborative writing sessions.

To examine the *Process*, the pair talk was audio-recorded and transcribed for each dyad. The transcribed data were segmented at three levels (type of talk, type of activity and episodes). The findings indicated certain similarities and differences among the EFL and ESL dyads. The most remarkable discrepancy was related to the Language Related Episodes (LREs). It was revealed that EFL/ESL dyads had different orientations towards metatalk; EFL dyads tended to focus considerably more on meta-linguistic features of language than ESL dyads. The findings are discussed with a reference to the different status of the English

language in the two contexts of Iran and Malaysia (i.e., EFL vs. ESL) as well as the effect of previous educational experiences of the learners.

To investigate the *Perceptions*, data came from a number of sources: interviews, observations, stimulated recalls, participants' language learning histories and content analysis of the pair talk for the pronouns (i.e., first-person and second person pronouns). Existence of numerous sources of data and methods made triangulation of the findings possible. Interviews revealed that despite some similarities in the mindset of EFL/ESL participants towards collaborative learning, there were notable divergent attitudes towards the practice as well. Observations of the collaborative sessions and stimulated recall showed that the collaborative behavior of Malaysian participants was following a seamless pattern of acquiescence, lack of criticism and non-confrontation, whereas there were numerous instances of confrontation, inflexibility and mutual criticisms in the interactional behaviors of Iranian participants. The content analysis of the pair talk for pronouns indicated that EFL participants tended to use "I" and "YOU" considerably more than their Malaysian counterparts, whereas Malaysian participants were found to have a stronger tendency to use "WE" more. Comparing language learning histories of EFL/ESL participants revealed certain discrepancies. Juxtaposing these findings led the researcher to conclude that the collectivist orientation was tangibly stronger among Malaysian participants than

among their Iranian counterparts. The findings are discussed with regard to the macro-cultural dichotomy of world cultures (collectivist/ individualist).

The findings of this study could have a number of implications (theoretical/pedagogical). The study adds to the previous attempts to extend the socio-cultural perspective of language learning from the traditionally predominant spoken discourse to written discourse, and also extends the boundaries of the benefits of collaborative writing. The benefits go beyond lexico-grammatical level as addressed by previous studies, and encompass task achievement and cohesion/coherence fronts of writing proficiency as well. Another significant implication of the study is that a universalistic perception that learners of similar proficiency dealing with the identical tasks generate more or less similar patterns of LREs was challenged. More importantly, the relatively contrasting perceptions of Malaysian and Iranian students towards collaborative learning could be seen as a caution against the invariable utilization of this modality of learning in all the contexts. This in turn highlights the fact that “one size might not fit all” all the time, and learning and teaching should be seen as context-bound and situation-based.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**VARIASI ANTARA BUDAYA DALAM PRODUK, PROSES DAN PERSEPSI
SEMASA PELAKSANAAN TUGASAN KOLABORATIF DALAM KALANGAN
PELAJAR WANITA ESL / EFL**

Oleh

SEYED YASIN YAZDI AMIRKHIZ

September 2012

Pengerusi: Profesor Kamariah Abu Bakar, PhD

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Penyiasatan dan pendekatan dari pelbagai perspektif dalam literatur yang berkaitan telah dijalankan ke atas penulisan secara kolaboratif. Tujuan kajian ini mempunyai tiga lapisan: yang pertama adalah untuk menyiasat pengaruh penulisan secara kolaboratif ke atas kualiti penulisan individu (Produk), kedua adalah untuk melihat interaksi secara lisan diantara para peserta semasa sesi penulisan kolaboratif dijalankan (Proses), dan ketiga adalah untuk mendapatkan pandangan para peserta terhadap penulisan kolaboratif (pembelajaran). Kajian ini melibatkan lapan orang peserta yang terdiri dalam kalangan pasangan homogen, iaitu dua orang peserta yang merupakan pengguna Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) (warganegara Iran) dan dua orang peserta yang

merupakan pengguna Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa kedua (ESL)(warganegara Malaysia).

Untuk meneliti produk, pasangan tersebut mengusahakan penulisan muafakat selama 15 sesi. Selepas setiap tiga sesi penulisan muafakat yang berturut-turut, setiap peserta dikehendaki mengusahakan tugas penulisan secara perseorangan. Tugas yang digunakan di dalam cara penulisan muafakat dan perseorangan adalah grafik isomorfik meminta (Tugas 1 Modul Akademik IELTS). Mutu penulisan daripada lima teks ciptaan perseorangan ditentukan dari segi pencapaian tugas (PT/TA), perpaduan/koheren (P/K/C/C), pelbagai tatabahasa/ketepatan (PT/K/GR/A) dan sumber leksikal (SL/LR). Penemuan menunjukkan kawasan yang terjejas adalah secara positif diantara kesemua peserta ialah kawasan PT, diikuti dengan kawasan P/K. Kawasan PT/K tidak menunjukkan sebarang peningkatan dikalangan peserta EFL/ESL, dan SL menunjukkan peningkatan kecil dikalangan tiga orang peserta ESL. Didapati juga penurunan pencapaian adalah satu kejadian yang kerap berlaku dikalangan peserta. Penemuan yang diperolehi adalah dibincangkan dari kaca mata perspektif pembelajaran sosio-budaya, perspektif emergentist (suatu yang dimaklumkan oleh teori kerumitan huru-hara), latar belakang budaya peserta, tipologi tugas yang digunakan, peranan kemahiran bahasa peserta-peserta dan dinamik kemuafakatan peserta-peserta semasa beberapa sesi penulisan muafakat.

Untuk memeriksa proses, bualan pasangan di rakam-audio dan di salin bagi setiap pasangan. Data yang disalin di bahagikan kepada tiga tahap (jenis bualan, jenis aktiviti, dan episod). Penemuan menunjukkan persamaan dan perbezaan tertentu dikalangan pasangan EFL dan ESL. Percanggahan yang amat luar biasa adalah berkaitan dengan Episod Bahasa yang Berkaitan (EBB). Ia mendedahkan bahawa pasangan EFL/ESL mempunyai orientasi berlainan terhadap metatalk; pasangan EFL cenderung memberi tumpuan ketara lebih kepada ciri linguistik meta daripada pasangan ESL. Penemuan dibincangkan dengan rujukan kepada status bahasa Inggeris yang berbeza di dalam konteks Malaysia dan Iran (iaitu FL lwn. SL) serta kesan pengalaman pendidikan pelajar.

Untuk menyiasat persepsi peserta terhadap penulisan muafakat (pembelajaran), data diperolehi daripada beberapa sumber: temubual, pemerhatian, dirangsang mengimbas kembali, sejarah pembelajaran bahasa peserta dan analisis kandungan perbualan pasangan berkaitan dengan kata ganti nama (iaitu kata ganti nama pertama dan kata ganti nama kedua). Triangulasi boleh dilakukan dengan adanya kepelbagaian sumber data dan kaedah. Walau pun temubual mendedahkan sedikit sebanyak persamaan minda peserta EFL/ESL terhadap pembelajaran bermuafakat, ada juga terdapat sikap menyerak tertentu berkenaan amalan ini. Contohnya, manakala peserta Iran mempunyai keraguan yang signifikan berkenaan pembelajaran berkumpulan, peserta Malaysia nampaknya bersetuju dengan cara pembelajaran ini. Daripada kaedah

pemerhatian dan dirangsang mengimbas kembali (stimulated recalls) daripada sesi-sesi bermuafakat menunjukkan bahawa tingkah laku kerjasama peserta Malaysia mengikut corak persetujuan yang lancar, kurang kritikan, dan tidak konfrontasi, walhal tingkah laku interaksi peserta Iran penuh dengan contoh konfrontasi, kekejaman dan kritikan bersama sendiri. Daripada analisis kandungan perbualan pasangan bagi kata ganti nama menunjukkan bahawa peserta EFL lebih cenderung menggunakan “SAYA” dan “ANDA” berbanding dengan peserta Malaysia yang mempunyai cenderung yang kuat menggunakan perkataan “KAMI”. Dari segi perbandingan sejarah pembelajaran bahasa peserta EFL/ESL ada mendedahkan percanggahan tertentu. Menseiringkan penemuan tersebut menjadikan penyelidik membuat kesimpulan bahawa orientasi kolektivis adalah nampaknya lebih kuat dikalangan peserta-peserta Malaysia berbanding dengan rakan sejawat dari Iran. Penemuan telah di bincangkan dari kaca mata garis pemisah budaya makro dari budaya dunia (individualis/kolektivis).

Dapatan kajian ini boleh mempunyai beberapa implikasi (dari segi teori/pedagogi). Kajian ini menambah kepada cubaan terdahulu untuk melanjutkan perspektif sosio-budaya pembelajaran bahasa daripada wacana utama yang dituturkan secara tradisional kepada wacana bertulis, dan juga memperluaskan sempadan manfaat penulisan kolaboratif. Manfaatnya melampaui tahap lexico-tatabahasa seperti yang diperhatikan oleh kajian sebelum ini, dan merangkumi pencapaian tugas dan perpaduan dalam bidang

penguasaan penulisan juga. Satu lagi implikasi yang signifikan dalam kajian ini adalah bahawa persepsi sejagat bahawa pelajar yang mempunyai tahap kemahiran yang melakukan tugas-tugas yang sama boleh menjana lebih kurang corak LREs yang serupa telah dicabar. Lebih penting lagi, persepsi yang agak berbeza dia antara pelajar Malaysia dan pelajar Iran terhadap pembelajaran kolaboratif boleh dilihat sebagai satu amaran terhadap penggunaan yang sama modality pembelajaran dalam semua konteks. Ini seterusnya menekankan hakikat bahawa “satu saiz mungkin tidak muat untuk semua” sepanjang masa, dan pembelajaran dan pengajaran harus dilihat berasaskan konteks dan situasi.

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Last but not least, for any errors and inadequacies contained in this study, the responsibility is exclusively my own.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on (February 2012) to conduct the final examination of Seyed Yasin Yazdi Amirkhiz on his thesis entitled “Cross-cultural Variations in Product, Process, and Perceptions of EFL/ESL Learners in Performing Collaborative Writing Tasks” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institutions.

The logo of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) is a shield-shaped emblem. It features a red and white design with a central book and a sunburst. The letters 'UPM' are prominently displayed in a red box at the top left of the shield.

SEYED YASIN YAZDI AMIRKHIZ

Date: 12 September 2012

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