

Collaborative Student Writing in the Literature Classroom

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Abstract

Many schools and colleges today encourage collaborative work in disciplines such as science or geography projects, but the study of literature generally seems to discourage the collective process, perhaps because literary production itself is seen as an act of individual creativity. Could one apply the principles of collaborative work to writing about literature, and if so, would it increase both the understanding and appreciation of the literary text, and also improve the writing skills of students, especially in the case of second-language learners? This paper is a study of two groups of Arts major students at Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman, to discover whether the same sets of students, at two different levels, perform better in an individual or a collaborative writing exercise on literary topics, and also to compare their experiences of the two different types of writing. It was found that although some students did express reservations about collaborative writing, most were enthusiastic about the experience, and felt that it had improved not only their understanding of the literature but also their academic writing skills. However, as there were so many other variables involved, in terms of differences in the linguistic competence and personalities of the members, it would be difficult to come to any final conclusion about the benefits of collaborative writing and language improvement.

Keywords: academic writing, collaborative writing, literature, second-language learning, Sultan Qaboos University