MOTIVATION OF SECOND- AND SIXTH-GRADE STUDENTS REGARDING INDIVIDUAL AND COLLABORATIVE WRITING

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Abstract

Writing motivation decreases in elementary school. This is an issue of major importance considering how it relates to writing skills which are necessary for education as a whole. Teachers must introduce students to the pleasure of learning, and working collaboratively is proposed as one way to sustain students' interest in writing. However, very little is known about the contribution of collaborative writing to writing motivation. This is because few studies have opted for recognized motivation indicators or a control design that would reveal the added value of a collaborative approach at different times in elementary school. The aim of this study is to compare the writing motivation of second- and sixth-grade students depending on whether they write individually or in dyads (repeated measures). After each writing session (individually and in dyads), the students answered a likert-scale questionnaire to assess their motivation on four indicators: self-competence, self-efficacy, interest and value. Preliminary results (t-tests) showed that second-graders are equally motivated to write in both contexts but that boys' motivation reached girls' only in the dyad context. Results for six-graders are expected. They will be presented and discussed to highlight the contribution of collaborative writing to writing motivation, which may vary depending on students' sex and grade level.

Keywords: Writing motivation, collaborative writing, elementary.

1. Introduction

Writing motivation decreases in elementary school (Ekholm et al., 2018; MELS, 2012). This is an issue of major importance considering how it relates to writing skills (Camacho et al., 2021), which are necessary for education as a whole. Teachers must introduce students to the pleasure of learning (MEQ, 2020), and working collaboratively is proposed as one way to sustain students' interest in writing (MEES, 2017).

Collaborative writing activities give rise to spoken exchanges regarding the text being produced. Collaborative writing is defined as a socio-cognitive process whereby several writers negotiate, coordinate their actions and share responsibility for the writing of a text (Lowry et al., 2004; Rubiae et al., 2016). Studies examining collaborative writing have shown that it leads to some improvement in the quality of the texts produced (Ferguson-Patrick, 2007; Graham et al., 2012; Lavoie et al., 2011) and appears to be beneficial to weaker pupils (Yarrow & Topping, 2001). However, very little is known about the its contribution to writing motivation. Elementary school students reported to appreciate writing with a peer (De Bernardi & Antolini, 2007; Paquette, 2009), but few studies opted for recognized motivation indicators like self-efficacy for writing or task interest and value (Boscolo, 2009; Troia et al., 2012) and few used a control research design that would reveal the added value of a collaborative approach. One study did compare fifth- and sixth-graders' motivation in individual and peer-assisted writing conditions, but no significant differences were found on motivation or self-efficacy (De Smedt, Graham, & Van Keer, 2018). At this point, it is hard to figure out how collaborative writing is beneficial to pupils' motivation in elementary school since no studies investigated its relevance with different grade-level students and with multiple indicators of motivation. The aim of this study was to compare the writing motivation of second- and sixth-grade students depending on whether they write individually or in dyads.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Fifty-four (54) french-speaking second-grade and sixty-three (63) sixth-grade students participated in this study. Once the necessary authorizations had been received, the pupils took the *Repérage Orthographique Collectif* (ROC) test, involving a spelling discrimination task and a dictation (Allal et al., 2006). Based on the results on this test, heterogeneous dyads of pupils were created using the pairing procedure proposed by Fuchs et al. (1997).

2.2. Procedure and instrument

The pupils planned, wrote and edited/corrected a story, first individually and then (two weeks later) in dyads. In writing these texts, they referred to pictures containing some elements of the story (e.g. main character, secondary characters, place, triggering event). During the writing activity in dyads, the pupils were given only one sheet of paper to write on to encourage discussion and prevent them from each working on the story separately. After each writing session (individually and in dyads), the students answered an adapted likert-scale questionnaire (Deneault & Lavoie, 2020) to assess their motivation on four indicators: self-competence (4 items), self-efficacy (5 items), task interest (4 items) and task value (3 items) (Boscolo, 2009). The 5-point scale was designed for children (a gradation from a smiley face to a sad face to express *totally agree* to *totally disagree*). Internal consistency for each scale was moderate to high (Cronbach alphas ranged from 0,66 to 0,91).

2.3. Data analysis

Since only the second-grade students' data were available at the moment of publishing this paper, paired T-tests were done on these data to examine the differences between individual and collaborative writing condition for each motivation indicator (self-competence, self-efficacy, interest and value). However, a 2 (grades) X 2 (writing conditions) MANOVA, with repeated measures on writing conditions, will be used on the mean scores of the four motivation indicators (dependent variables) when all the data will be available.

3. Results

T-tests analyses showed that there were no differences between individual and collaborative writing on self-efficacy, self-competence and task interest for second-grade students. The mean score for the task value was higher for individual writing than for collaborative writing ($p < .05$). Results for six-graders are expected soon.

Complementary analyses (t-tests) were done to explore the difference between boys and girls in the two writing conditions. Results showed that in the individual condition, the girls had higher scores for self-efficacy, self-competence and interest than boys, but that boys were as motivated as girls for these motivation indicators in the collaborative condition.

4. Discussion

These preliminary results showed that a collaborative context did not stimulate motivation more than an individual context for second-graders and that they attributed more value to the individual writing context. Although not surprising (since writing evaluation in school setting are mainly individual), these results expanded those of De Smedt, Graham, and Van Keer (2018) by showing that the collaborative context is not more motivating for young pupils from second-grade level than for older ones and that this tendency is confirmed with new motivation indicators such as self-competence belief, task interest and task value.

Our study also shows that boys' motivation reached girls' only in the collaborative context. Since girls are generally more motivated to write than boys (Camacho, et al., 2021), this result is of great importance. Past studies showed that the interactions between the boys in collaborative writing settings were similar to those for the girls (Marin et Lavoie, 2019). Together these findings suggest that, when it comes to writing, working in pairs in class could motivate boys to write and help them to feel confident about writing.

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