

# Individual, Pair and Group Writing Activity: A Case Study of Undergraduate EFL Student Writing

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## Abstract

The present study aimed to compare between individual and collaborative writing (pair and group of four) activities of 72 EFL students. The subjects of the study were assigned to produce their tasks by these three activities. Qualitative method was employed by using interview of nine students drawn from students with different levels of English proficiency (low, fair and high). It was focused on their perspectives towards skills practiced during working on written tasks: writing, thinking, participation, communication as well as their satisfaction of these activities. The results from content analysis demonstrated that overall the students practiced participation skills when doing individual and pair work. The students practiced writing skills when joining group work. With regard to the students' satisfaction, low proficiency students in low group were likely to enjoy coauthoring activity either pair or group work. Their satisfaction seemed to increase according to the number of group members. This is important for writing teachers to provide this activity for low proficiency students as this may lower the students' anxiety and foster their self-confidence, compared with completing tasks individually. On the contrary high proficiency students seemed to enjoy writing alone and were fairly satisfied group work. These students were likely to be more confident when performing the tasks individually or experienced some problems that might impede working collaboratively.

**Keywords:** individual writing, pair writing, group writing, collaborative writing

## 1. Introduction

Collaborative activity is recognized as one of the useful tools which can be apparent in writing processes which cannot be fully described by a neat paradigm. This is also asserted by Zamel (1982) who stated that the writing process is an approach to incorporate writing skills which occurs in the recursive nature of the composing process from the time that English language skills start developing. Silva (1990) translated this approach into the context of language classroom as stating,

“... this approach focuses on the need for providing a positive, encouraging, and collaborative workshop environment within which students, with ample time and minimal interference, can work through their composing processes. The teacher's role is to help students develop viable strategies for getting started (finding topics, generating ideas and information, focusing, and planning structure and procedure), for drafting (encouraging multiple drafts), for revising (adding, deleting, modifying, and rearranging ideas), and for editing (attending to vocabulary, sentence, grammar and mechanics)” (p. 15).

Reid (1993) also values the writing process and emphasizes the focus of this approach to process teaching on how the process is related to writers approach tasks by problem-solving method in areas such as audience, purpose, and the situation for writing. Focusing on this approach, Hyland (2003) further emphasizes that writers are independent producers of texts and further addresses the issue of what teachers should do to help learners perform writing tasks. Hyland (2003) also defines this approach as

“the numerous incarnations of this perspective are consistent in recognizing basic cognitive processes as central to writing activity and in stressing the need to develop students' abilities to plan, define a rhetorical problem, propose, and evaluate solutions” (p. 10).

From this writing process approach, collaborative activity tends to be occurred when the students help each other to plan, write and revise their tasks. This can be an efficient learning process as it helps students to learn by discovery. Farrah (2011) acknowledges the benefit of collaborative activity in a process writing class as stating,

“This type of learning enables students to be engaged in new learning styles as it provides them with a myriad of opportunities to interact while sharing their views, values and interests. Furthermore, collaborative learning has the potential to increase comprehension, promote critical thinking, maximize motivation, foster the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences, and create an interactive and relaxed atmosphere where students have an additional responsibility for their own learning” (p. 139).

More recently, it is also worth noting that the amalgamation of process writing and task-based approach significantly improve L2 learners’ academic writing (Javadi-Safa, 2018, p. 19). According to Javadi-Safa (2018), in the process oriented approach, individual writer’s approach to writing and the way they managed to follow the process through writing are more emphasized. At present, process inquiry in L2 writing has engaged in the period of post-process era that views writing as a collaborative and social act (Javadi-Safa, 2018). As such, in attempting to use this approach in the actual situation of a writing class using collaborative activity, the following theoretical and pedagogical background are reviewed.

### *1.1 Theoretical and Pedagogical Background of Collaborative Writing*

From a theoretical perspective, collaborative writing, the use of pair and group work in the second language classroom is supported by the social constructivist perspective of learning. This perspective was pointed by Vygotsky (1978) and Swain (2010), stating that learners who join collaborative activity are able to think at higher intellectual levels than when they work alone. This is rooted in the linguistic development which can increase in social interaction when learners are provided assistance by a more knowledgeable member of society. It is also believed that the learners with different levels of language proficiency, learning styles and background would contribute to this collaborative process and therefore improve “their problem – solving strategies” (Farrah, 2011, p. 138). When compared with working individually, Swain (1998) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2007) reported that learners who complete their tasks by collaborative work are successful and this could help learners solve linguistic problems that lie beyond their individual abilities.

On the pedagogical side, several researchers have underlined the benefits of collaborative activity in L2 learning. McDonough (2004) emphasized that “...learners may feel less anxious and more confident when interacting with peers during pair or small group activities than during whole-class discussions” (p. 208). Dunne and Bennet (1990) also views this activity as an opportunity for learners to interact and learn from their peers. The learners in this activity help each other without feeling embarrassed. Therefore, this learning style would lead to better learning. In order to process this activity effectively D. W. Johnson and R. T. Johnson (1987) described characteristics and steps of cooperative learning as follows:

- “1). All the group members share the common responsibility together. They cooperate to accomplish the assigned task with the common targeted goal and also share information as well as materials among the group members.
- 2). The group members have a good interaction to each other. They discuss and exchange the opinions and ideas with one another.
- 3). Each of the group members has his or her own responsibility in the assigned task with the utmost goal of working at their best effort.
- 4). The group members have small group skills and a good human relationship. The teacher has the duty in evaluating the group performance of the students.
- 5). The group members apply the group process in learning and working. The group process includes the recognition of good leadership and membership, having a good work procedure i.e. knowing what and why they are going to do, where to do, and who else do it. It also includes the evaluation of resulted work and the individual group member performance as well as the group’s performance as a whole.” (p. 23).

As such, due to both theoretical and pedagogical considerations, it has been concluded that learners should be encouraged to participate in activities that foster collaboration in L2 classroom. In order to ensure the benefits of collaborative activity in learning context, previous conducted research in the next section is presented.

### *1.2 Collaborative Writing as a Method for Developing Thinking Skills*

Research findings revealed positive results of collaborative writing on developing thinking skills. It is noted from previous research both in L1 and L2 learners that joint production method is a way to foster reflective thinking (Storch, 2002; Storch, 2005). Based on Farrah (2011) concerning critical thinking skills, it was found that the collaborative approach enabled some of the students to create a richer body of content and challenge other students to think more carefully about the topic at hand.

Similarly, Reither and Vipond (1989) addresses the indirect form of collaboration as knowledge making method. It implies that writing is a process of participating or collaborating in the construction and reconstruction of the already existing knowledge. When students write, they do not solely make their own meanings, but concern with the meanings of others who have contributed to the same field of knowledge (Mutwarasibo, 2013). This is in line with Barkley et al. (2005) that emphasizes the advantage of collaborative activity in which students would be encouraged to think critically when performing this task.

Based on Lee (2011), social and cognitive dimensions of collaborative writing are revealed that while shared knowledge facilitates decision-making, differences allowed for the development of thinking skills (Yong-Mei, 2010). It is therefore, collaborative writing should be taught to students as they could be used outside the classroom. The study also suggested that the participant roles in collaborative writing should be taught as it could be an effective strategy for teaching higher thinking skills.

From these studies, thinking skills were focused when doing collaborative writing studies. Therefore, it would provide fruitful evidence if future investigation of thinking skills will be done in accordance with other important skills for EFL learners.

### *1.3 Learners' View Concerning Collaborative Writing*

As the previous studies called on future research to examine learners' perception concerning collaborative writing, there are more fruitful results regarding this issue. Mutwarasibo (2013) presented some challenges on the students' ways of organizing group writing and collaborative writing. Some of the subjects preferred to work individually and "shy away from anything related to collaboration" (p. 20). The study was conducted with 16 students, divided into groups of four. Apart from group membership, the students were assigned to manage their planning, organization and schedule of collaborative writing activities without guidance and instruction by the teacher throughout a five-week period. Interview session was carried out after their paper submission. Overall, positive attitude towards the method was found, but there was only a link that students consider writing as an activity to be done individually. This was assumed that the students' negative view may cause by lacking of confidence.

This evidence of students' view towards writing also coincided with McDonough's (2004) and Watanabe and Swain's (2007) study which revealed the students' reluctance on getting involved in collaborative writing. Some students might not have pleasant and friendly interaction as they might not know "how to maintain effective social skill" (Nor and Abd Samad, 2003, p. 1). The results of students' negative view can be suggested by previous conducted research that effective collaborative method is not only assigning the students to do group work but also supporting, guiding and training from a more knowledgeable system (Burdett, 2007).

Research on collaborative writing concerning learners' view was also emphasized in Storch (2005) and Farrah (2011). Storch (2005) investigated the process and product of collaborative writing with 23 adult ESL students in Australia. The participants were required to choose either working in pairs or individually. Eighteen students chose to work in pairs and five chose to work individually. It was reported that most students were positive about the experience, although some did express reservations about the collaborative activity. It was concluded that collaborative writing provides students the opportunity to pool ideas and provide each other with immediate feedback. This research on collaborative writing was also found in Farrah (2011) that investigated students' attitudes towards enhancing the writing skills of 92 Palestinian English Majors by using collaborative learning. A 32-item questionnaire was used as a main research tool to assess the attitudes of the students. The results revealed that the students had positive attitudes towards collaborative learning. There was a statistically significant difference among students with different proficiency levels showing that low achievers, less advanced learners and extrovert students had positive attitudes towards the activity. It was obvious that these two collaborative writing studies could gain an insight into the perception of learners, but they did not compare with pair writing that might yield some more interesting point and provide some guideline of how to choose each writing activity in class.

From these collaborative research which reported positive results on students' view, the present study, as a consequence, aims at looking into the students' perspective towards collaborative activity both pair and group work compared with individual work as well as an insight of skills practiced the students employed.

### *1.4 Collaborative Versus Individual Writing Research*

One issue has been raised for writing teachers as well as researchers is the comparison of collaborative and individual activity on writing benefit. The learning benefits of effectively collaborating groups are also reported in the studies carried out by Shehadeh (2011) and Dobao (2012).

In a L2 context of United Arab Emirates, Shehadeh (2011) investigated the differences in language accuracy, content and organization between texts written in pairs and those written individually among university students. It was shown that as a whole the effect of writing in pairs was significant for content, organization and vocabulary. It was concluded that collaborative writing had an overall significant effect on students' second language writing. It was also noted that this study compared between pair and individual work. Therefore, group work with more than two students should be investigated in future research to provide beneficial information in collaborative writing research.

A study conducted by Dobao (2012) who examined the benefits of collaborative writing tasks by comparing the performance of the same writing task of four-student group, pairs and individual learner. The writing tasks were measured in terms of fluency, complexity and accuracy. The results showed that the texts completed in groups were linguistically more accurate than those composed either individually or in pairs. Besides, it was observed that collaborating students were able to solve some problems related to English as a foreign language and thus construct new knowledge. All the above examples serve to show the relevance of investigating students' reflections on their experiences of collaborative work.

Therefore, in order to provide a better understanding of collaborative writing activity, further studies should also investigate activity which can offer the opportunity for the learners to gain scaffolding from their peer both in pair and group works as well as examine their individual work. The measurement should cover accuracy, fluency and quality. Also, in order to fill in the gap of sociocultural perspective, the students' attitude towards different activities: individual, pair and group work is needed to be revealed based on the students' response. In addition, the number of comparative studies on grouping method in collaborative writing, particularly research addressing evidence of EFL learning outcomes, is less focused on group members either pair or group work. It can be noted that future studies should be carried on providing evidence to reveal suitable collaborative activity for either pair or group work of learners.

### *1.5 Methodological Flaws on Collaborative Writing Research in EFL Context*

The concept of collaborative learning (the grouping and pairing of students for the purpose of achieving academic goal) has long been widely researched and advocated throughout the professional literature. Some issues have been left for further investigation. In order to fill some gaps of the existing body of research on collaborative writing, the present study concerns itself to be distinct from previously conducted research in the following important ways.

First, one of the important issues left for research on collaborative writing is the potential of writing in foreign language context in particular (Polio & Williams, 2009; Shehadeh, 2011). These studies address the importance of further research to emphasize on EFL contexts. This coincides with Ortega (2011) who mentioned that second language writing research is generalized to EFL writing contexts. Accordingly, the study called on future studies to examine the use of pair and small group activities in different EFL context. Also learners' perceptions about the benefit of these activities should be investigated to provide a better understanding on this issue. It is, therefore, important to provide an insight into the provision of collaborative writing activity based on research on EFL students to provide implication of EFL students' writing rather than on generalizing from ESL students.

Second, investigation of broader perspective may go beyond the effects on improvement of writing. Previous studies suggest a focus on the students' perception of this joint writing activity (Storch, 2005; Kim, 2008). One study conducted by Kim (2008) compared the effects of collaborative and individual tasks on vocabulary by Korean learners. It was found that the students who produced jointly written tasks performed significantly better on the vocabulary post-test than the students who wrote individually. However, it could be noted that the students were tested based on the knowledge of word meaning rather than the use of vocabulary. Thus, it reflected one aspect of vocabulary learning. It is suggested from this previous study that future research should not only investigate collaborative and individual work in which only word meaning was examined, but also provide a broader perspective of learners' perceptions about the benefit of these activities to provide a better understanding on this issue (McDonough, 2004). Thus, the present study also demonstrates a comparison among three different activities done by group of four students, pairs and individual students in order to see the different perspectives of EFL students.

Third, one of the open issues regarding collaborative writing is based on the recent studies (Storch & Wiggleworth, 2007; Shehadeh, 2011; Dobao, 2012). They called for future research to take into account the learners' level of English proficiency when performing different tasks. Some studies examined only intermediate level learners. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized across "proficiency levels" (Dobao, 2012, p. 55). Therefore, collaborating students with different levels of English proficiency should be taken into account of

learner-related factors influencing the activity.

Fourth, a number of collaborative writing studies examined affective benefits for learners on reducing anxiety, raising self-confidence, increasing motivation and fostering a sense of accountability (Savova & Donato, 1991; D. W. Johnson & R. T. Johnson, 1998; Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011). According to the study conducted by Mulligan and Garofalo (2011), they focused on the students' positive and negative comments on collaborative writing which provided five discrete categories on social skills development, stress reduction, writing content, and grammatical and structural proficiency. The limitation was found in the method using only pair work. Subsequently, one issue needed to study further is to compare collaborative writing activities between pair and other groups of more than two participants to gain more data on their responses.

Consequently, an important basis for research design of the present study is the relevant literature reviewed in four important ways. Firstly, with regards to the potential effectiveness of conducting research on EFL writing for EFL students, the present study focused on Thai EFL students with the respectable number of subjects, 72 students who studied in Thailand. Then nine of them were selected to attend the interview session for qualitative data. Secondly, the study also aimed at providing a broader perspective of collaborative method. In order to provide some fruitful information on the individual and collaborative writing-based approach, the study placed these students into three different English proficiency levels which reflected their differences in performing tasks from different activities; individual, pair and group work. The student perspectives derived from a semi-structure interview as well as satisfaction were also discussed to demonstrate their attitude towards different task types. Finally, the present study aimed at analyzing comparative results on individual work and collaborative methods in both pair and group work of four students. For these reasons, it is hoped that the results of this study would help in adding new information to fill some gaps in the existing body of knowledge about the effects of individual and collaborative writing, particularly in a real EFL context. Based on the flaws of previous conducted research on collaborative writing activities, this study makes an attempt to fill some gaps of the existing body of research in this area as addressed in the following research questions.

- What are the students' perspectives towards individual, pair and group work of students with different levels of English proficiency?

#### *1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study*

1). The study was conducted over a period of three weeks.

2). This study used a non-probability sampling which did not involve random selection. The group of 72 Thai EFL university students studying in Paragraph Writing course was selected to participate in the study. Nine of them were randomly selected to participate in the semi-structure interview. Thus, the findings of the present study cannot be generalized to other learners in a different context in other regions of Thailand.

3). This study focused on the students' attitude towards only three writing activities. The activities employed in this study were (1) individual writing activity; and collaborative writing consisting of (2) pair writing activity; and (3) group (of four students) writing activity.

4). The study attempted to determine the students' perspectives towards the different writing activities based on four important skills practiced and their satisfaction. The skills included writing, thinking, participation and communication.

5). The present study is aimed to investigate the three writing activities on the task completion regard to only one genre, namely expository.

## **2. Method**

The research instrument in the present study was a semi-structure interview with nine students with different levels of English proficiency drawn from 72 students during a 3-week period. The research procedure aimed to investigate the students' perspectives towards individual, pair and group work categorized based on their different levels of English proficiency. These perspectives were the students' attitude towards practiced skills and satisfaction when engaging in different writing activities. The practiced skills were writing, thinking, participation and communication. All 72 students were placed into three levels of English proficiency (low, fair and high) based on their grade average of two English courses: Fundamental English and Developmental English. Table 1 presents the number of students in each level.

Table 1. Students with different levels of English proficiency

Levels of English Proficiency	Low	Fair	High	Total
	0.00-2.00	2.01-3.00	3.01-4.00	
Number of Students	24	30	18	72
Percentage	33.30	41.70	25	100

According to Table 1, with a total of 72 students, the highest percentage was found in fair group with 30 students, followed by low group with 24 students and high group with 18 students.

### 2.1 Task

The researcher designed the task based on the five core components proposed by Nunan (1989) in order to provide students with “a balance of knowledge and skills practice” (Hyland, 2003: p. 116). The designed task was given to the students throughout the course. All 72 students from the three sections received the same treatment. They were taught by the same teacher researcher using the same syllabus of 17 week-lessons including midterm and final examination as well as teaching and evaluation materials. They also had the same pre-writing activities, choosing any method the lecturer addressed in the Introduction to Writing lesson, such as brainstorming, clustering, free writing, drawing a sketch, etc.

As there were eight lessons in the course, the data collection was conducted when expository lessons were taught which was between weeks 11-13. In each class meeting the students learned from the model paragraph of expository writing. Then they were assigned to work in pairs, groups of four students and individually to complete a paragraph of at least 100 words in each class meeting. All 72 students experienced three writing activities in order to compare the differences among them. Then the data from only 9 students were analyzed. From a total of 72 students there were 36 pairs in the first week of the experiment (week 11), 18 groups of four students (week 12) and 72 individual works (week 13).

The aim of the assigned expository paragraphs was to give judgment and opinion. They were assigned to work in pairs on the topic of “Being a Student at the University” for the first week (week 11), in groups of four on the topic of “The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills We Should Have” for the second week and individually on the topic of “English is Important for My Life” for the third week of the experiment.

In applying collaborative writing methods, the present study provided a chance for the students to choose their partners (when being assigned pair work) and group members (group work of four students). It was because giving this opportunity for the students could strengthen the cooperative learning atmosphere that is considered to be one of the central ideas of this approach (Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011). In order to ensure that the students could process their job in a real situation of corroborative writing, the collaborative writing guideline adapted from D. W. Johnson and R. T. Johnson (1998) was described, demonstrated and given to them before the collaborative procedure. The following procedure based on D. W. Johnson and R. T. Johnson (1987) was applied when the students were assigned to do collaborative activities.

- 1). The teacher identified the learning objectives of the writing activity.
- 2). The teacher asked the students to form a group of two/four before the teaching procedure.
- 3). The teacher informed the students about the learning objectives and tasks required in the learning procedure.
- 4). The teacher explored the achievement of cooperative writing and enhanced the learning skills for both the individual and the group.
- 5). The teacher evaluated the learners and helped explaining them to know about advantages of cooperative writing.

As mentioned above, it is obvious that the role of the researcher was being a teacher, teaching throughout the course, checking the progress and development of students while doing the writing activity and providing materials and writing checklists as well as information.

In each class meeting with three hours (180 minutes), the students firstly attended a 45-minute lecture of model paragraph and mini-lesson of grammatical structure used in expository paragraph provided by the instructor. They completed the activity by first reviewing the collaborative writing guideline, reading and discussing short texts of each model paragraph. The students then took writing process approach by starting with pre-writing activity within the time allocation of 25 minutes. Mostly, they brainstormed their ideas among group members.

The students also had 40 minutes to draft their paper and another 40 minutes to write on. This was followed by a 30-minute revising and editing activity. Then they were provided revising and editing guideline. They were allowed to use sources of information, such as a dictionary or textbook and to ask about the model paragraph or any related information of their writing. Then the instructor provided lecture or wrap-up lesson to emphasize on the content or language problems found during the activity.

### 2.2 Language Used in the Activity

In the present study the students were assigned to use first language (Thai) instead of the target language (English). This was because the student writer would feel free to participate in composing (Shehadeh, 2011). Also using English might impede their vocabulary as well as creativity when being assigned to carry on a conversation in English. This coincided with the study by Storch and Aldosari (2010) in that “there was a modest use of L1 in pair work activity and that task type had a greater impact on the amount of L1 used than proficiency pairing. L1 was mainly used for the purpose of task management and to facilitate deliberations over vocabulary.” (p. 335).

### 2.3 Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured interview was used to collect the students’ qualitative information on the students’ attitude towards all three writing activities namely, individual, pair and group work. There were three questions, which were read and agreed upon by three experienced teachers of English, one native speaker and two Thais. A total of nine students, three from each of three levels of English proficiency (low, fair and high), were randomly selected to participate in the interview sessions administered individually. Each session was tape recorded, conducted in Thai and translated into English. The followings show the three questions used to collect qualitative data.

- 1). What do you think about the individual writing activity?
- 2). What do you think about the pair writing activity?
- 3). What do you think about the group writing activity?

### 2.4 Data Collection

The method of data collection was focused on the students’ attitudes towards and satisfaction with the writing activities. Therefore, it focused on the qualitative data gained from semi-structured interview with nine students. This data showed the students’ perspectives towards all three writing activities. After finishing each activity, nine of them were randomly selected to participate in the interview session.

## 3. Results

This section reports the students’ views and opinions after the experiment. To obtain the results regarding how students perceived different types of writing activities (individual, pair and group work) and writing practices in a process-based approach writing class, nine students with different levels of English proficiency were selected to participate in this interview session. Students 1-3 (S1-S3) were randomly drawn from the low proficiency group, students 4-6 (S4-S6) from the moderate group, and Students 7-9 (S7-S9) from the high group. In the interview session, the students answered the question in Thai and their answers were translated into English. The followings present the results of the qualitative data based on the interview scripts of the students’ views and opinions from the semi-structured interview.

Table 2. Students’ viewpoint towards individual writing

### Interview Question 1

#### *What do you think about the individual writing activity?*

**S1:** I accepted that this writing activity was useful, but I found it the most difficult to complete my paper. When I did not really know some meaning of any word or appropriate words to write on, I just guessed what they should be, so I did not think I could do it fairly well.

**S2:** It was a good activity, but I did not like it much. As I had to write alone, I had no friends to consult with, so I was afraid I could do it well. But I tried to make my paper better by using dictionary and grammar book which were very useful. I learned much from them, but it took time.

**S3:** I think it was a good activity. It was similar to writing exam. I felt quite nervous to have my paper done on

time. Also, I must do it accurately by myself without any help from others. I learned that I need to learn a lot to improve my writing.

**S4:** It was quite good to write alone because it could reflect how much I could do by myself. Although, my paper seemed not very good as compared with writing with friends, it was done by myself. I could know what I should study more and improve in the future.

**S5:** I think it was useful for me because it helped me to know myself. I was not sure if writing alone could help me write better as no one pointed out my mistake or errors, but I felt like I had to do it. And I knew some limitation of myself to be improved. If I could do it, I would be better in writing.

**S6:** I think this activity could teach students to complete anything by themselves. It was suitable for the students who were very great in writing. Anyway, I had no problems with this activity, but I need someone to talk to when encountering language problem, especially English vocabulary.

**S7:** I think it was very useful to know how well we could write alone. I practiced using dictionary and reference book in a very short time as the writing allocation was limited. I then learned how to improve my writing. I knew my weaknesses in each piece of writing.

**S8:** I found this activity the most useful. I had to manage everything while doing alone. Also, I had to solve problems by myself. When I had any problem when writing in English, I would consult other sources of information like textbooks, dictionaries. When I did it by myself, I could remember it. And this could help improve my writing, though it took time to complete it.

**S9:** I satisfied this writing activity. It saved time to complete writing piece. I did not have to discuss with others and convince them to believe me. I need to have a pre-writing, writing and revising activity by myself, so I had to plan very well, and did all the thing on time. It was like I was in a writing exam.

According to Table 2, it was found from the students' view towards individual writing that overall they thought that this writing activity was useful. They seemed to rely on themselves and consult some superior system such as grammar book or dictionary. Among the students drawn from three groups (low, fair and high proficiency) it was obvious that the students in high proficiency group still had a positive attitude towards this activity. For example, a student mentioned, "I satisfied this writing activity. It saved time to complete writing piece". And it was also found in a student in the same group's statement saying, "I found this activity the most useful. I had to manage everything while doing alone".

Table 3. Students' viewpoint towards pair writing

### **Interview Question 2**

#### ***What do you think about the pair writing activity?***

**S1:** I felt good when writing with friends. And felt better if I would write with my close friends. We could talk to each other what we would like to add in our paper. Some vocabulary and grammatical problems could be solved by us.

**S2:** I think this activity was suitable for writing activity. I had opportunity to plan, write and edit the writing piece with my friend. We felt comfortable to discuss and enjoy talking and sharing ideas. Although sometimes my friend and I had no idea to write some complicating sentence structure, we tried to solve the problem together.

**S3:** It was a useful activity which I could learn from my friend. When I could not figure out how to write something for the assignment, my friend could fill this gap. Finally we could finish it.

**S4:** The assignment was good for me to learn to write better from my friend. And sometimes my friend could also learn from me. I think my friend and I could share ideas and find the best thing based on our agreement. We rarely had problem when we had different ideas as we were ready to listen to each other.

**S5:** It seemed to be useful for a writing class where there were some students including me who were not sure about grammar and vocabulary. I needed someone to help by giving comments. But sometimes I realized that none of us knew how to use some sentence or words well, so both of us had to guess.

**S6:** Pair writing could improve my writing skills because my friend who was great in writing would give comments and demonstrate accurate writing work. So, I had a good chance to work with my friend. We could

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also share ideas and edit our paper, so I felt satisfied my paper written by two of us.

**S7:** I think that it took longer time to complete writing task. I sometimes liked and disliked my friend's ideas. We needed to find an agreement when we had different ideas. But I think it would improve our communication. Each of us needed to convince one another and prove it in the paper.

**S8:** I like this activity as I could share some ideas with my friend when I could not find anything to write on. My friend could help create some ideas for improving my paper. Sometimes my partner could give me different perspectives which were useful in the written work.

**S9:** It was useful when we had a partner that could give beneficial comments and provided various information to write. But sometimes my friend and I spent too much time discussing and making decision for something to write. It was a waste of time.

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For pair writing activity, the students in all levels seemed to value this as a useful activity. This can be seen in student 1 excerpt reporting, "we could talk to each other what we would like to add in our paper. Some vocabulary and grammatical problems could be solved by us." and in student 4 saying, "I think my friend and I could share ideas and find the best thing based on our agreement". However, there were some problems concerning time limitation found among these students as found in student 9's statement reporting, "my friend and I spent too much time discussing and making decision for something to write. It was a waste of time". This can show that this group of students had both negative and positive view towards pair writing activity. The negative one might result from the time consuming when finding the agreement among them.

Table 4. Students' viewpoint towards group writing

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**Interview Question 3**

***What do you think about the group writing activity?***

**S1:** The assignment with this writing activity was very good for me. I could practice my writing by sharing with friends. I could learn from my friends who had interesting ideas and accurate grammatical knowledge. I learned a lot and did not work very hard when writing in group.

**S2:** It was a good time to work with friends. It seemed like we were in a meeting and we needed to have an agreement, otherwise we could not finish our written work. I mostly listened and tried to help by giving some comments for the group writing. However, all ideas needed to be accepted by the majority of the group. We spent most of our time brain storming ideas and find agreement. Finally we got a good work.

**S3:** When I joined this group writing, I felt that it created motivation for every group member to work and stick to the duty, though I could not help much on linguistic knowledge. I could develop my English writing skills by learning from my friends.

**S4:** Working in group could develop social communication among students. I had an opportunity to discuss with friends. Also, there was a chance to divide the responsibility on the group members. It made writing easier.

**S5:** It seemed to be the most useful activity. Weak students could share interesting ideas and learned linguistic knowledge from their friends at the same time. I enjoined brainstorming with friends and learned some accurate grammar from high proficiency friends.

**S6:** I think this activity could help the students to work in group and adjust themselves in order to work with others effectively. I had to listen to the group members both their ideas and grammatical rules. My friends and I had to discuss and think about the topic and find the resolution to complete the paper. Working with friends could help us improve grammatical accuracy, spelling and vocabulary. I sometimes could learn English idiom from my friend in the group.

**S7:** This activity was very useful for writing class. I found that there were some friends' interesting ideas. However, it was accepted that sometimes an exchange of ideas among group members could become an arguments. Then we would spend much time to find an agreement. Unluckily, sometimes we could not reach an agreement, and some ideas could not be used in our paper, so it wasted time.

**S8:** It was a good activity for practicing how to work in team and to find solution of any problem. To me, the exchange of ideas among friends could cause both enjoyable and boring atmosphere. When the group members exchanged ideas they could stimulate my imagination, but it wasted time if we could not reach a good resolution.

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**S9:** I think it was a good activity. But I found some disadvantage of it. The truth is when there were some weak students, I would not have any benefit from them. And they seemed unhappy to work without any help, especially on grammatical structure. I also felt that group work wasted time in order to discuss and correct the written work. When we had some problems either on ideas or grammar, we took longer time to solve them. As a result, it was frustrating.

With regard to Table 3, it was revealed that the majority of these students seemed to agree that they had opportunity to exchange ideas and work with other students as seen in student 3 saying, “I felt that it created motivation for every group member to work and stick to the duty”. On the contrary, it was accepted that some high proficiency level students seemed not to benefit from this activity. This can also be demonstrated in student 9 statement as, “when there were some weak students, I would not have any benefit from them. And they seemed unhappy to work without any help, especially on grammatical structure”. Also, wasting of time is one of the main problems found when the students could not reach an agreement. This was found in the statement of student 7 stating, “sometimes we could not reach an agreement, and some ideas could not be used in our paper, so it wasted time”.

This qualitative result can show that the students had both negative and positive view towards these writing activities. In order to implement these activities effectively writing teachers should be aware of the issues surrounding the learners. This could help the writing class to provide more practical and beneficial instructions to students in all levels of English proficiency.

#### 4. Discussion

Based on the results of the students’ perspectives towards individual, pair and group work activity regarding their skills practiced, it was obvious that not all learners with different English proficiency levels were expected to contribute equally to the skills practiced (writing, thinking, participation and communication). The following aims at providing final consideration based on the content analysis of the students’ perspectives towards skills practiced as well as their satisfaction when engaging in different activities based on empirical evidence.

Table 5. Employment of skills and satisfaction

Skills & Satisfaction	Individual		Pair		Group	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Writing	✓	✓	✓			✓
Thinking	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Participation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Communication			✓	✓	✓	
Satisfaction	✓			✓		✓

As the low and fair students’ perspectives towards skills practiced during individual, pair and group work activity seemed to be similar, this section therefore, is aimed to compare only low and high proficiency students in order to show the difference between these groups of students.

Firstly, when focusing on writing skills, the students in low proficiency group seemed to practice writing skills the most when working among group members. This may be because they valued this learning activity as a way to increase opportunities to practice (Long & Porter, 1985; Rollinson, 2005) as well as to improve “the content of their writing” (Mulligan & Gorafalo, 2011, p. 8). On the contrary, only high proficiency students valued individual work as an activity that offered much opportunity to practice writing skills. With having high confidence, they did not rely on other members in the group. This result contradicted to Mutwarasibo (2013) who found that some students preferred to engage in writing activity individually and did not participate collaborative activity, this may probably be because of their lacking of confidence.

However, in order to overcome the problem it is suggested that the students who work in group need to be trained and provided continued support from superior system i.e., instructors or teachers (Shimazoe & Aldrich, 2010).

Regarding the students’ thinking skills when performing different task types, low proficiency students were

likely to employ the skills the most when working in pair. This may be because this type of collaborative activity might offer opportunity to share ideas and response to the smaller group members as compared with group work. Therefore, pair work might provide indirectly force to the low and high students to think and work with their partner. This was supported by Lee (2001), stating that when students shared knowledge, it would help learners to strengthen decision-making skills. It is therefore, suggested that thinking skills should be taught to students as they could be used outside the classroom. The participant roles in collaborative writing should be taught as it could be an effective strategy for teaching higher thinking skills.

Based on the participation skills found in low group, although the students did not value individual work with the highest level of satisfaction, they believed that they practiced participation skills the most when writing individually. The result is similar to those of the high proficiency students who also thought that they employ participation skills the most when encountering individual work. This is certain that individual work requires participation because they had to rely on themselves to complete this solitary task which was much different from pair and group work.

When comparing the two types of collaborative work: pair and group work, it was found that both low and high proficiency students seem to participate the most when being in pair work, followed by group work. This might be because collaborative writing provides students the opportunity to discuss, pool ideas and provide each other with immediate feedback (Storch, 2005). Storch and Wigglesworth (2007) mentioned that collaborative writing encourages students to interact on different aspects of writing and to give and receive immediate feedback on language, an opportunity missing when students write individually. The result also support Reither and Vipond (1989) addressing the indirect form of collaboration as knowledge making method. It implies that writing is a process of participating or collaborating in the construction and reconstruction of the already existing knowledge. When students write, they do not solely make their own meanings, but they concern with the meanings of others who have contributed to the same field of knowledge (Mutwarasibo, 2013).

For communication skills, it was found that low and high proficiency students didn't communicate much when doing group work, but did it much when engaging in pair work. This clearly remarked that pair activity with small size of group members seemed to help them to get along with their partners and to give them an opportunity to get to know them better. With this opportunity, it was expected to have a positive effect on stress reduction. Based on D. W. Johnson and R. T. Johnson (1998), this type of writing has been shown to lower anxiety and foster self-confidence, compared with completing tasks individually. Also, pair work seemed to provide more opportunities to develop the students' communicative competence. By working in pairs, students were forced by the small number of group members to discuss ideas and be more confident. As learners tried to express their ideas to each other, they had to clarify, rephrase and communicate. The process should also help them to actually develop communication skills.

With referred to the students' satisfaction of individual, pair and group work, it was obvious among this group of Thai EFL students that low proficiency students were likely to enjoy coauthoring activity either pair or group work. Their satisfaction seemed to increase according to the number of group members. This is important for writing teachers to provide this activity for low proficiency students as this may lower the students' anxiety and foster their self-confidence, compared with completing tasks individually (D. W. Johnson, & R. T. Johnson, 1998). On the contrary, the high proficiency students tended to enjoy writing alone and fairly satisfied group work. These students were likely to be more confident when performing the tasks individually or experienced some problems that might impede working collaboratively. Oakley et al. (2004 cited in Farrah, 2011), viewed some problem of negative consequences of collaborative writing as follows:

"...despite its perceived benefits, not all learners like to work in groups. The reluctance to work in groups may be due to ego centeredness among some students who will not acknowledge other learners ideas as they believe that they are much more competent" (p. 140).

Thus, it was noted that not all students can gain benefits from collaborative activity. Effective collaboration is not simply requested by placing students to work in groups. Writing teachers need to develop the activity for the students and gradually continue support, guidance and training from a more knowledgeable source. Thus, a trainer, teacher or instructor should provide this activity with careful consideration, being certain that students clearly understand the value of collaborative work before they embark on it (Shimazoe & Aldrich, 2010)

In summary, based on the students' perspectives towards individual, pair and group work, it was recovered that the reflection of the low and the high proficiency students which was believed to contribute the practiced skills (writing, thinking, participation and communication) differently when working on different task types. Also, the students' satisfaction yields some interesting issue which may be beneficial for EFL writing class in which the

writing teachers should be aware of issues surrounding the provision of writing tasks. These can be the types of writing tasks on the composing process, students' skills practiced during performing each activity, their preferences and levels of English proficiency. Therefore, all of these should be paired with a sequenced and well-structured teaching methodology within a motivating theme of activities which are effective ways to teach writing to students.

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