

# **Cooperative writing and ICT for teaching and learning of writing at primary school**

Final dissertation

Carla VELATEGUI FAJULA

5<sup>th</sup> grade. Final Dissertation

Tutor: Núria Camps

Early Childhood Education and Primary School Teaching, majoring in English

Faculty of Education, Translation and Human Sciences

University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia

Vic, May 2021

# Cooperative writing and ICT for teaching and learning of writing at primary school

Carla Velategui Fajula

---

## Abstract

The fact that writing is an instrument to participate in human verbal communication together with the fact that usually schools are the only environment in which students have real opportunities to write, leads to believe that cooperative writing tasks are a good way of improving the teaching and learning of writing in a Foreign Language in primary school. Involving this practice with the use of ICT allows teachers to prepare students for the knowledge society in which we live. The objective of this study is to define cooperative writing and its relation with ICT and motivation in order to discover if it may have a positive impact on the teaching and learning of writing in English as a Foreign Language.

**Key words:** Cooperative writing, Teaching writing, Foreign Language, ICT and motivation.

## Resum

El fet que escriure sigui un instrument per participar en la comunicació verbal humana juntament amb el fet que normalment les escoles són l'únic entorn en què els estudiants tenen oportunitats reals d'escriure fa pensar que les tasques d'escriptura cooperativa són una bona manera de millorar l'ensenyament i l'aprenentatge de l'escriptura en llengua estrangera a l'Educació Primària. En combinar aquesta pràctica amb l'ús de les eines TIC, els professors podran preparar els estudiants per a la societat del coneixement en què vivim. L'objectiu d'aquest estudi és definir l'escriptura cooperativa i la seva relació amb les TIC i la motivació per tal de descobrir si pot tenir un impacte positiu en l'ensenyament i l'aprenentatge de l'escriptura en anglès com a llengua estrangera.

**Paraules clau:** Escriitura cooperativa, Ensenyament de l'escriitura, Llengua estrangera, TIC i motivació.

## Resumen

El hecho de que la escritura sea un instrumento para participar en la comunicación verbal humana junto con el hecho de que generalmente las escuelas son el único entorno en el que los estudiantes tienen oportunidades reales para escribir lleva a pensar que las tareas de escritura cooperativa son una buena forma de mejorar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la escritura en una lengua extranjera en la escuela primaria. Al involucrar esta práctica con el uso de las TIC se permitirá a los docentes preparar a los estudiantes para la sociedad del conocimiento en la que vivimos. El objetivo de este estudio es definir la escritura cooperativa y su relación con las TIC y la motivación para descubrir si puede tener un impacto positivo en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la escritura en inglés como lengua extranjera.

**Palabras clave:** escritura cooperativa, enseñanza de la escritura, lengua extranjera, TIC y motivación.

## **1. Introduction**

The teaching of writing in the Foreign Language is done during primary education in Catalonia. In general, schools are usually the only environment in which students have real opportunities to write and have tended to spread the idea that students should write individually, whereas writing is an instrument to participate in human verbal communication. This topic was chosen because there is little research about it in our country and knowing and understanding how to develop adequate and rich cooperative writing tasks could be useful for English teachers.

The objective of this study is to define cooperative writing and its relation with ICT and motivation in order to discover if it may have a positive impact on the teaching and learning of writing in English as a Foreign Language. To do so, the literature review is divided into four parts. The first one consists of an explanation and contextualization of the teaching of writing of English as a Foreign Language in primary school in Catalonia as well as the process of writing. The second one is dedicated to defining and explaining the term cooperative writing and its characteristics. The third one is related to the use of ICT when writing cooperatively. The last one talks about motivation when writing. Next, the methodology, context, objectives and instruments and the analysis of the data collected during the sessions will be examined. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn together with some reflections, limitations and future lines of research.

## **2. Teaching writing**

Writing is an important skill and an instrument to build and construct knowledge and to participate in human verbal communication. Consequently, the school must provide space and time for writing and learning to write. Furthermore, during this time, students should be able to write in interaction with their peers, as peer interaction during the writing process is a tool for learning to write and to think about what is written (Camps, 2017). What is more, “[...] learning to write is only achieved by writing, that is to say that writing activities are to be considered as a goal and as a means to learn how to write.” (Camps, Guasch, Milian & Ribas, 2000, p.105)

In 2017 the Government of Catalonia established a new curriculum organized in areas and competences. The dimension of written expression is integrated by three competences related to planning, producing and revising simple texts appropriate to the communicative situation

and with the help of supports. The curriculum defines writing as an activity that allows children to participate in communicative situations. Moreover, it suggests that English writing tasks at school should have clear objectives, contextualization, indication of addressee and purpose.

Writing or learning to write is not an easy task, but it can be facilitated by carrying out a number of actions: creating an environment in which students perform and are recognized as writers and in which their work is valued, giving models and vocabulary, motivating students by helping them to see that they are capable of writing in the foreign language and giving opportunities to write and promote the diversity of styles present in the classroom to promote at the same time creativity (Arboleda, 1997).

Broadly speaking, schools have tended to spread the idea that students should write individually only to hand in the assignment to the teacher, who is usually the one in charge of the correction that consists of writing some comments, which has very little impact on learning (Camps, 2017). This prevents students from gaining experience in text improvement and may cause them to be totally dependent on the teacher's judgment, who normally only makes formal corrections related to spelling and morphosyntax, neglecting the discursive and content aspects, which can make students believe that writing is a task only focused on formal aspects (Milian, 2011).

Writing is a process that takes time, and it is important to make students aware of it. In general, the process of writing a text takes place over a period of time; a few class sessions or even weeks (Milian, 2011). This process is not linear but composed by recursive stages; we can go from one to the other and back to the previous one. This means that an initial idea is not developed in a definitive way. Instead, the writing begins with a series of ideas from which a few are selected and reorganized and parts of the writing are eliminated or added to express it better (Camps, 2017; Arboleda, 1997; Locke, 2010 & Milian, 2011). Additionally, apart from knowing the process, it is important that students know the audience, the purpose and the type of text they have to write (Arboleda, 1997). In the following figure it is possible to observe the recursive process of writing and the different stages:

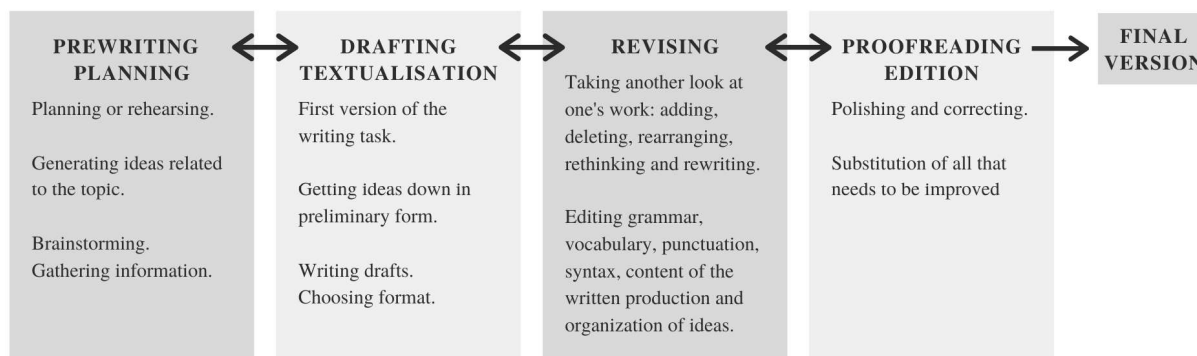


Figure 1: Own creation. This image explains the process of writing according to: Arboleda (1997), Camps (2017) and Locke (2010)

### 3. Cooperative Writing

Learning can be defined as an active process of constructing knowledge while interacting with the social environment. Cooperative learning is an instructional method in which students work in small groups to carry on an assignment or project under concrete conditions and to accomplish shared learning goals (Felder & Brent, 2007 & Zhang, 2010). Besides, Zhang (2010) states that: “Cooperative language learning is to apply cooperative learning techniques to the language learning either for the native or foreign language [...]” (p. 81).

Cooperative writing is a pedagogical practice and a kind of cooperative learning in which students usually cooperate in teams of three or six, as when working in pairs there may be a lack of diversity of ideas and approaches, and when working in groups of six or more there may be some inactive students. Teachers should form heterogeneous in ability level teams (Felder & Brent, 2007) rather than allowing students to choose them since otherwise situations of exclusion such as grouping of higher proficiency students or grouping of friends may occur.

In the following table the most important features of cooperative writing are exposed:

<b>Learner roles</b>	Active participators and autonomous learners.
<b>Teacher roles</b>	Organizer, counsellor, guider, negotiator and facilitator of the communication tasks and cooperative skills.
<b>Types of activities</b>	Structured group work, assigning roles, to engage learners in communication and help them to coordinate the cooperative activity, so each team member has a responsibility.
<b>Interactions</b>	Intense interaction among students; they have to trust each other.

	A few teacher-student interaction.
<b>Room arrangement</b>	Cooperative small groups of 3 to 6 members. Some class rules are set to emphasize team responsibility.
<b>Student expectations</b>	All members contribute to the success of the group towards a single team product and to achieve a shared learning goal.
<b>Teacher - student relationship</b>	Collaborative and equal.

Adapted from “Cooperative language learning and foreign language learning and teaching.”, 2010, pp. 81-83, Zhang, Y. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* and “A research synthesis on effective writing instruction in primary education.”, 2014, pp. 693-701, De Smedt, F., & Van Keer, H. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* and “Motivation strategies in the language classroom”, 2001, Dörnyei, Z.

Another feature of cooperative tasks is called positive interdependence, which consists in assigning roles to the members of the small groups to ensure that all the members participate actively and know exactly which is their responsibility (Pujolàs, 2008 & Dörnyei, 2008). Some examples of roles could be: coordinator, secretary, writer, reviewer, material responsible and spokesperson. Furthermore, cooperative structures are used to help the small teams to organize themselves, count on each other, collaborate and guarantee the cooperative work. There are many cooperative structures that can be used. One example is the rotating folio which consists of one member of the team starting to write on a folio and then passing it to the partner next to him or her. The folio rotates clockwise until all team members have participated. Each member can use a different pen so at first glance the contribution that each one has made is more highlighted (Pujolàs, 2008).

In the following table can be seen several positive effects of cooperative writing:

<b>Active method</b>	As Felder & Brent (2007) state: “[...] students learn more by doing something active than by simply watching and listening [...] cooperative learning is by its nature an active method”. (pp. 1 - 2) One objective when using it, is for students to not only learn grammatical rules and vocabulary but also to use it in practice (Zhang, 2010).
<b>Positive effects on relations among students</b>	Cooperative writing gives children an occasion to develop their social abilities while cooperating, sharing, discussing, requesting, making suggestions, encouraging, disagreeing, exploring ideas and relying on each other to be able to complete the task (Felder & Brent, 2007 & Zhang, 2010). Furthermore, it fosters the negotiation of meaning since

	<p>students go through the writing task cooperatively (Herrera Ramírez, 2013), at the same time that increases students face-to-face interaction and negotiation in the writing process, which improves the quantity and quality of peer talk and peer feedback (Felder &amp; Brent, 2007 &amp; Talib &amp; Cheung, 2017).</p>
<p><b>Improvement in language learning</b></p>	<p>Cooperative writing can also have a positive impact on language learning. Zhang (2010) emphasizes the fact that when writing cooperatively, students produce shorter but better texts, and make a more accurate and appropriate use of the language, not only when writing, but also when interacting between them as it creates a valuable situation to foster oral practice and listening comprehension. When writing cooperatively, students can develop and improve their skills and capabilities, improve their vocabulary and foster their learning about text coherence (Talib &amp; Cheung, 2017). Besides, this type of cooperative learning fosters the writing habit and provides functional approaches to use and produce language with objectives and in a functional manner (Herrera Ramírez, 2013 &amp; Zhang, 2010).</p>
<p><b>Scaffolding</b></p>	<p>Nunan (2010) points out that “Whenever we have more than one student in a learning group, we will have diversity” (p.10). For this reason it is important to provide all students with opportunities to learn from their peers. This can be a great opportunity to scaffold their learning and provide a positive atmosphere in which all students can learn and develop the target skills, see how others approach problems and gain a deeper understanding of the language by teaching others (Talib &amp; Cheung, 2017 &amp; Felder &amp; Brent, 2007). Furthermore, as cooperative writing provides a positive and supportive environment, all students have the opportunity to get involved in writing towards a shared goal and learn from each other (Harmer, 2006 &amp; Talib &amp; Cheung, 2017).</p>
<p><b>Other positive effects</b></p>	<p>When working cooperatively, students tend to be more positive and open and the quality and quantity of work is better. Cooperative writing may also have a positive impact in children's critical thinking, self-esteem</p>

	and long-term retention, may help them to enrich their cognitive development and help them to make an appropriate use of interpersonal skills such as verbal and non-verbal communication, listening skills, negotiation, problem-solving, decision-making and assertiveness (Zhang, 2010; Talib & Cheung, 2017 & Felder & Brent, 2017).
--	--

#### **4. Use of ICT**

The presence of web technologies and use of diverse online cooperative writing tools in teaching and learning environments is increasing and will increase in the coming years (Brodahl, Hadjerrouit & Hansen, 2011). Its integration is necessary in schools to improve education and facilitate the integration of primary school children in the society of knowledge and ensure that they are well-prepared to participate in a world where new technologies are more and more present (De Smedt & Van Keer, 2014). In this sense, Herrera Ramírez (2013) states that: “[...] if the internet became learners' new world and reality, teaching practices should go far beyond and introduce the use of web tools to learn.” (p. 168). Therefore, schools need the integration of technologies to improve learning and teaching, in particular, to promote more writing tasks and cooperative writing experiences (Herrera Ramírez, 2013).

The relationship between cooperative writing and the integration of ICT seems to have a positive impact in the teaching and learning of writing in a Foreign Language (De Smedt & Van Keer, 2014). Using ICT to write cooperatively in English may help students to improve their language acquisition, and motivate them to continue with their learning and be more engaged in the task at hand (Azmi, 2017 & Talib & Cheung, 2017). Moreover, ICT enhance motivation, promote autonomous learning, foster critical thinking, encourage innovation and creativity, promote communication and cooperative learning and boost primary school children performance on writing tasks (Azmi, 2017). Consequently, when writing cooperatively and using some kind of ICT children participate more in peer editing work and may have more positive attitude towards language learning (De Smedt & Van Keer, 2014 & Azmi, 2017).



## **5. Writing and motivation**

Motivation seems to be essential when writing cooperatively as a motivated student is a learner who is willing to invest energy into language learning, which leads to more participation and an improvement in the writing production (Herrera, 2013; Bruning & Horn, 2000 & Csizér, 2019). This, together with the fact that usually schools are the only environment in which students have real opportunities to write (Bruning & Horn, 2000) lead to think that motivation and writing should be joint. In this section some conditions seen as keys for developing motivation when writing cooperatively are specified.

The quality of the writing experience is highly determined by teachers' beliefs about writing and how they use writing in their classes as well as their ability to help children see the benefits of writing and their value over the efforts and risks. For this reason, teachers should give students tools for improving their writing skills, help them to believe in their competence as writers and foster beliefs such as writing is a critical tool for cognitive stimulation growth and self-expression. Furthermore, teachers should help students to see writing as a way of communicating and expressing rather than a mechanical task (Bruning & Horn, 2000 & Csizér, 2019).

In order to foster motivation and help students to achieve higher levels of performance, teachers should generate students interest and help them to set specific and challenging goals to accomplish during the writing task. To fully engage in the task and feel motivated, students should perceive the utility of the writing task and be able to maintain the control during all the task. Consequently, using authentic tasks when writing cooperatively may help students to feel motivated as they know there will be a real audience, and thus they are writing with a purpose (Bruning & Horn, 2000).

It is also important to foster a positive emotional environment to create and increase motivation when writing. To do it, it is essential to remove the conditions that make writing a negative experience, such as the stress related to writing, to ensure that students are engaged in enjoyable and successful activities. Furthermore, teachers should raise students awareness on how to turn demotivation around and motivate themselves, as motivation is related to the successful use of English (Bruning & Horn, 2000 & Csizér, 2019).

Cooperative environments contribute to student motivation, specifically, may motivate students to develop their writing skills and help them to build their self-esteem and self-

confidence, as this type of environment fosters learning and generates less anxiety compared with other learning environments. When talking about cooperation we refer to peer cooperation and interaction in an autonomous way without the help of the teacher which is necessary to build learners communicative competence and a great contributor to motivation. When cooperating, students depend on each other as they share common goals. This situation fosters and increases one's effort, solidarity among them and group cohesiveness (Dörnyei, 2008 & Talib & Cheung, 2017).

## **6. Methodology**

In order to meet the objectives, this research uses the socio-critical paradigm, using the action research methodology in which the researcher has a double role: to do research on the area of study and to be self-investigated. By using it, the researcher is able to do a better self-reflection and action-reflection as well as to transform reality while building a better understanding of their research and practice. Through the use of this paradigm, this study aims to analyse the effects of cooperative writing on language learning and on children's performance of the writing task in English and the effect of ICT in the process. The research question which has served as the core of this study is: Do cooperative writing and the use of ICT have positive effects on the teaching and learning of writing at primary school?

The main objectives of this study are the following:

- 1) To define cooperative writing and its characteristics.
- 2) Discover if ICT and cooperative groups and structures have a positive impact on the learning of writing in English as a Foreign Language.
- 3) To elaborate a checklist of suggestions for rich and adequate cooperative writing tasks.

Three main instruments have been used in order to collect data: surveys (see appendix 1) carried out among the fourth-year students participating in the study, two teachers from the school where the study was carried out have been interviewed (see appendix 2) to know their opinion about cooperative writing, the role of communication in cooperative tasks, cooperative and individual writing and the use of ICT, and the last instrument were observation and evaluation grids (see appendix 3). The surveys were constructed on the basis of two models: one proposed by Herrera Ramírez (2010) and the other by Brodahl, Hadjerrouit & Hansen (2011). With regard to the topics and questions of the surveys, it were

related to new language learning, cooperative writing and cooperative structures and the benefits, drawbacks and motivation related to it and the use of ICT. In the evaluation grids, the following aspects were taken into account: group work, attitude and the ability and capacity of planning, producing and revising the text. The interviews have been used to complement the analysis. All three instruments allowed to obtain contextualized and significant information and facts about cooperative writing and the use of ICT.

## **7. Context and sample**

In order to carry out this study, the cooperative writing sessions and the observation of these, took place in a Pre-school, Primary and Secondary semi-private school located in a town of about 14000 inhabitants in the region of Osona. English is the first foreign language the school introduces through the use of books of the same editorial during primary to ensure there is a progressive and final acquisition of the language. The cooperative writing sessions were carried out with the primary 4th grade group, formed by 23 students and very diverse in terms of levels. Students were divided in heterogeneous groups: two groups of four and three groups of five. In this case, roles were not been assigned to students to create a positive interdependence (Pujolàs, 2008 & Dornyei, 2008) for the reason that students are defined as active and autonomous learners and the type of interaction they have between them is intense and with a few interventions of the teacher.

The objective of the sessions was for them to write a book of riddles about jobs, which was the topic they were working on with their English teacher. The model proposed, was a short text of 3 lines describing the work of a woman extracted from the page 35 of the book *Go! 4* from the publisher Richmond. The final product that the groups created during 6 sessions of one hour each and using the web programme Canva, had between 5 and 6 pages, between 15 and 25 phrases in total and between 76 and 128 words in total.

Taking into account that ICT play an important role in the development of this study, it should be noted that the school has a computer room with enough tower computers for each pupil. Yet, this room does not allow for movement nor communication between pupils as there are 5 long tables on each side of the room placed one behind the other leaving just enough space for chairs. The school also has 12 laptops which must be reserved in order to use them. Every week more than half of them were booked.

## 8. Results

The results were extracted from the analysis of the observation and evaluation grids, filled in by the students and by the person in charge of the present study, from the interviews with two teachers from the school where the study was carried out, and from the surveys that were carried out among the fourth-year students who participated in the cooperative writing sessions. Consequently, the results of the current study have been organized in these 3 blocks.

### a. Block 1: Evaluation grids

In the evaluation grid five items (group work, attitude and the competences 7, 8 and 9, related to planing, producing and revising texts, from the 2017 Primary Education Curriculum) are evaluated through 4 levels: The first level is equivalent to an unsuccessful achievement, the second level is equivalent to a successful achievement, the third level is equivalent to a remarkable achievement and the fourth level is equivalent to an excellent achievement. Another important aspect is the fact that each group filled in an evaluation grid (self-evaluation) and another one was filled in by the researcher of the study for each group (teacher evaluation) and at the end of the sessions the evaluation were commented with each group.

**Group work:** Regarding the group work, all the teams performed between level three and four of the evaluation grid. On the one hand, two groups did a good group work, and it can be clearly seen in the text that they did the task cooperatively, although some group members have done more than others. On the other hand, the other three groups managed to do the planning and discussion as a team and thus, they did a very good cooperative work from the beginning. When comparing the evaluation grids they filled in and the ones filled in by the researcher, it is possible to see that two groups rated themselves higher in comparison with the evaluation grid filled in by the researcher and also one group rated themselves lower.

**Attitude:** Four of five groups showed a positive attitude and willingness to participate and to do (level 3). The other group showed a very positive attitude (level 4) during all the sessions, and they helped each other from the beginning. Nevertheless, some students adopted an acceptable attitude (level 2) as they only participated sporadically, and some others showed a very positive attitude (level 4) and apart from participating they were helping others.

**Competence 7:** Firstly, all the groups were able to apply the structure of the text to order their ideas (level 4). Secondly, two groups were able to organize and order their ideas with the help of support and the given model in an autonomous way (level 3). While the other three groups autonomously chose the ideas to write the text and ordered the ideas in a logical and well-structured way without the need of following nor copying the given model. Finally, two groups used a very basic vocabulary (level 1-2) to write their riddles, whereas the other three groups used an adequate and elaborated vocabulary (level 3-4).

**Competence 8:** Two groups achieved the third level on this item as they wrote short, well-structured texts, with an appropriate use of vocabulary. Moreover, they followed the model and used its structure. The other three groups achieved the fourth level of the evaluation grid as they wrote short and elaborated texts with personalized sentences without the need of copying the model.

**Competence 9:** Three groups did a good revision of the text (level 3) and handed in a clear and fluent text with some small errors such as: “He wears s a uniform” or “He sings a songs”. Whereas the other two groups were capable of doing a complete revision and proofreading of the text (level 4) and handed in a well-written text with good linguistic level and no errors.

## **b. Block 2: Surveys**

In the surveys, 95.5% of the fourth year-students stated that they learned something new during the process: to correctly write and create riddles in English, to use the web application Canva, acquired new words in English, to work better and in a cooperative way with the group and learn to learn from the other teammates.

This primary fourth students group had written cooperatively in Catalan or Spanish before, but not in English as it can be extracted from the surveys. Furthermore, not all the students felt motivated to write in English when writing cooperatively. The ones who did (77.3%), expressed the following ideas about why they felt motivated: because they were eager to help and learn, it was a new experience, they helped each other, they learned more English, they were working with friends, and they did not have to think alone, because everybody was working, and they could have fun and learn. Conversely, the ones who did not feel motivated (22.7 %) expressed that they prefer to work individually, that they got angry at some point and that they did not like the experience of writing cooperatively in English.

The majority of the students; 90.9% believed that the rotating folio structure was useful for working cooperatively in groups. Some reasons why they found it useful are: because this way everybody participated in writing, everybody could help others, the decisions were made as a group because all opinions counted and were important, and it was easy to cooperate in the writing task. Students who believed this structure was not useful stated that in their group everybody discussed and got angry.

According to the students answers, the benefits related to working cooperatively with their classmates are: learning to work cooperatively in teams while sharing the responsibility of the task with all the group and all of them participating and writing, working with friends and knowing their classmates better, helping others who know less or being helped (spelling corrections, learn vocabulary, to better understand the task, learn new things and ideas, etc.) and finishing the task faster, better an in a funnier way.

As regards to drawbacks, most of them had to do with relations and behaviour such as the fact that when working cooperatively in groups they can not work in their way or at their own pace, there may be misunderstandings, distractions, disagreements and fights, which makes it take longer to finish the task. Furthermore, students stated that when another person in the group is writing it is difficult to find something to do, and you may feel like you are loosing time. Besides, some students stated that they do not like working in groups and for them this was a huge drawback.

Talking about things they liked the most and the least, it was possible to observe that, to a large extent, the things they liked the most had to do with computers or the web programme Canva: Writing with laptops, using Canva and creating a book with a web programme. Other positive experiences were seeing the final result of the printed book, working in groups and learning the jobs in English. On the other hand, in general, the things they liked the least had to do with the exercise of writing: writing in English, writing by hand and creating and writing the draft. Other negative experiences from their point of view, were: doing the task in groups, doing it on the laptop, there was too much noise, some discussions with classmates and group formation.

A large number of 4th grade students, 72.7% in concrete, believed that Canva was an easy web tool to use to create their book of riddles. However, a 13.6% of the students found the programme difficult to use. And a 13.6% did not give any answer to this question. Additionally, the majority of students (an 82.6%) believed that using Canva motivated them

to cooperate with their group. Some reasons why they were motivated are: because they helped each other with the programme (some of them stated that they would not have been able to do it on their own), because it was fun and a new experience, because all the members wanted to work and participate (everybody contributed ideas to create a shared final idea) and because it implied using the laptops, among others. Nevertheless, 13% of the students felt it was not motivating because it was a normal experience and for some of them, working in a team is a bad experience.

77.3% of the students believe that the fact of being working cooperatively with their peers helped them to improve their writing in English. The positive things that they have learned by working as a team are that their teammates knew something they do not and this helped them to learn new things, they felt they were being helped and scaffold in their writing and spelling, they learned new vocabulary and structures from their peers which helped them to improve their writing. Whereas the 18.2% of the students felt that they have not improved in any aspect of their writing in English because they already knew all the structures and vocabulary used and because they already knew how to do it individually and did not need help from their peers.

### **c. Block 3: Interviews**

With reference to the interviews, the two teachers interviewed agree on some aspects and have opposing views on others.

Talking about aspects on which both have the same opinion, can be found the idea that in order to learn to write it is necessary to improve the speaking skill before starting to write in the foreign language, because it is necessary that students follow the same process as in the mother tongue; listen, speak, read and finally write. Not only they both have proposed cooperative writing tasks following a model, but also both agree on the fact that cooperative writing tasks are good for students in order to help others and learn from each other. Aside from the fact that one of them believes that individual tasks are good for all students because can be adapted to levels and motivation of the students. In addition, they both believe that the use of ICT tools for cooperative writing have a positive impact in the teaching and learning of writing in a foreign language as it gives extra motivation to students, and it makes possible to access to a lot of information in an easy and fast way. Moreover, both agree on the idea that motivation plays a key role when doing cooperative tasks, and that schools need the

integration of ICT because the society is also going that way and the school has to prepare children for the society.

As for aspects on which they have opposing views, it can be highlighted the fact that one of them states that writing skill is worked on progressively in primary education and that therefore, in initial cycle students hardly write and on the upper cycle they write more, whereas the other one states that students write too much in the Foreign Language in primary school. Additionally, one of them states that it is better for students to learn and improve their writing in English doing cooperative tasks whereas the other one states that both options (individual and cooperative) are valid and that it depends on the task. Moreover, one of them likes to use cooperative structures in general because are a good way of taking into account the different academic levels while the other believes that this kind of structures are too much time-consuming. Finally, one explains the process of writing to students before doing a writing task, and the other wants them to follow a model without following nor knowing the process of writing.

## **9. Discussion**

As the study shows, cooperative writing together with cooperative groups and structures may have positive effects on the teaching and learning of writing in English as a Foreign Language at primary school.

An important aspect when talking about teaching and learning to write is the process of writing and its recursive stages, as writing is a process that takes time, and it is important to make students aware of it (Milian, 2011). Through the interviews (see appendix 2) it has been possible to see that one of the teachers agrees with this statement, as she teaches her students this process, while the other prefers that students follow a model without giving importance to the process they may follow. When teaching writing in the Foreign Language in Catalonia, it is important to have in mind the three competences of the 2017 Curriculum related to planning, producing and revising which also have to do with the process outlined above. In this case, students writing cooperatively succeed in meeting these competences as all the groups were able to apply the structure of the text, and order their ideas in a logical and well-structured way and did a good or complete revision of the text, and thus, they performed between levels three and four of the evaluation grid.



When writing cooperatively, heterogeneous in ability level teams are a good way of avoiding situations of exclusion and, together with the rotating folio structure can help the teams to organize themselves, count on each other and guarantee the cooperative work (Felder & Brent, 2007 & Pujolàs, 2008). Following these lines, 90.9% of the students, who had not written cooperatively in English before, showed in the surveys (see appendix 1) their belief that this structure and the heterogeneous grouping were useful for writing cooperatively. This fact can be corroborated through the evaluation grids (see appendix 3), as all the groups had a performance between levels three and four, as it can be clearly seen in the text that they did the task cooperatively. One of the teachers who were interviewed also agree that cooperative structures are one of the most effective ways of taking into account the different academic levels. Additionally, both teachers agree with the authors when saying that cooperative writing tasks are good for students in order to help others, be helped and learn from each other.

With reference to the positive effects that cooperative writing may have in relation with language improvement, this study found out that, when students write cooperatively, they produce shorter but better texts, learn more by doing and use the grammatical rules and vocabulary acquired in practice and make a more accurate and appropriate use of language (Zhang, 2010; Felder & Brent, 2007 & Talib & Cheung, 2017). Accordingly, students stated in the surveys that working with peers helped them to improve their writing in English and learned new vocabulary and structures. This fact can also be observed in the evaluation grids as all the groups performed between levels three and four as they achieved to deliver short well-structured texts with personalized sentences and with an appropriate and elaborated use of vocabulary.

Similarly, when writing cooperatively, students have a great opportunity to scaffold their learning, develop target skills and gain a deeper understanding of language by teaching others and learn from each other (Talib & Cheung, 2017 and Felder & Brent, 2007 & Harmer, 2006). Additionally, students wrote on the surveys that during the cooperative task they learned to learn from others and realized that teammates knew some things they did not. In this way, they also felt they were being helped and scaffolded in their writing. From the interviews it can be extracted that both teachers believe that cooperative writing tasks are good for students to learn and improve their writing in English. Nonetheless, one of them also believed that individual tasks are valid, and it depends on the type of task and the method chosen.

Cooperative writing may not only have a positive impact on language learning but also on relations among students, on children's social abilities, critical thinking, self-esteem and may help them enrich their cognitive development (Felder & Brent, 2007; Zhang, 2010 & Talib & Cheung, 2017). The students who participated in the cooperative writing tasks and answered the surveys, believed that by writing cooperatively, they had the opportunity to know their classmates better and finish the task faster, better and in a funnier way. Nonetheless, some students did not like to work cooperatively because they found it difficult to work on their own pace and way, and they also stated there were misunderstandings, distractions, disagreements and some fights. Moreover, some students did not like to work in groups as it takes longer to finish the task.

One essential aspect when writing is motivation, a motivated student is a student who is willing to invest energy into language learning which leads to more participation and to improvements in the writing production. Cooperative environments such as cooperative writing contribute to students motivation and, concretely, motivate them to develop their writing skills while cooperating towards a shared goal (Herrera, 2013 and Brunning & Horn, 2000 and Csizér, 2019 and Dornyei, 2001 & Talib & Cheung, 2017). This fact can be corroborated through the evaluation grids as all the students showed a positive attitude and willingness to participate and help others.

Another essential factor that highly determines the quality of the writing experience is teacher's beliefs about writing and how they use writing in their classes (Brunning & Horn, 2000 & Csizér, 2019). Both interviewed teachers had proposed cooperative writing tasks following a model, but one of them believes that individual tasks are better as can be adapted to levels and motivation of each student. This kind of thinking is an impediment to pupils' ability to see writing as a way of communicating and expressing, and also a way of teaching pupils that writing is a tool that may be used individually and in which speech is not involved. Another aspect to have into account is that teachers should generate students interest and foster a positive emotional environment to create and increase motivation. During the cooperative writing task not all the students felt motivated to write cooperatively in English as some of them preferred to work individually and thus, they did not like the experience.

The integration of ICT in schools is a need to improve education and help children to integrate in the society of knowledge in which technologies are everyday more present. ICT

can be used together with cooperative writing experiences and tasks to motivate students, improve their language acquisition and encourage innovation and creativity (De Smedt, F., & Van Keer, H., 2014; Azmi, 2017, Talib & Cheung, 2017 & Herrera Ramírez, 2013). Both teachers agreed that ICT give extra motivation to students and that schools need the integration of these tools because it has to prepare students for the present society. Students also agree with these ideas as their surveys' answers show that the use of the web tool Canva and the use of laptops in general, motivated them to participate and take part of the writing task.

## **10. Conclusion**

When teaching writing in the Foreign Language during primary school years in Catalonia, it is important that teachers have in mind the three Curriculum competences as well as the process of writing and its recursive stages, to make students aware that writing is a process that takes time. What's more, the role of teachers is essential when writing cooperatively as they are in charge of creating heterogeneous in ability level teams taking into account the different academic levels to avoid situations of exclusion. Teachers have also the role to explain and expose cooperative structures to the students to help them organize and guarantee the cooperative work. Hence, the role of teacher is that of organizer, counsellor, guider and facilitator of the communication tasks and cooperative skills.

As for the study, its aim was to analyse the effects of cooperative writing on language learning and on children's performance of the writing task in English and the effect of ICT in the process in order to define what rich and adequate cooperative writing tasks in the Foreign Language should be. As it is a very small sample, the conclusions drawn cannot be generalized.

Regarding the positive effects of cooperative writing, it was possible to observe a positive impact on language learning and also an improvement on English writing. This is due to the fact that students learn more by doing and using the vocabulary and structures in practice. Additionally, it was also found that cooperative writing tasks had a positive impact on relations among students and other aspects. Students during cooperative writing tasks develop social abilities, self-esteem and may help them enrich their cognitive development. Furthermore, when doing cooperative writing tasks, students felt they were being helped and scaffolded in their learning and writing, which lead them to develop the target skills and gain a better understanding of the Foreign Language.

As for other important aspects when writing we can find motivation, teacher's beliefs and ICT. Motivation is essential when writing as motivated students are willing to invest energy into language learning and show a positive attitude and willingness to participate and help others. On the other hand, teacher's beliefs determine the quality of the writing experience as from it depends on that students see writing as a way of communicating and expressing. What is more, teachers should generate interest and foster a positive emotional environment to create and increase motivation. Finally, the integration of ICT in schools is necessary to improve education and help children to integrate in a society in which technologies are everyday more present. Moreover, when using ICT in cooperative writing tasks, students can improve their language acquisition, their motivation can increase and innovation and creativity are encouraged.

According to these aspects a checklist of suggestions for a rich and adequate cooperative writing tasks in the Foreign Language is presented:

- Make sure students know and understand the process of writing and its recursive stages and that they are aware that writing is a process that takes time.
- Create heterogeneous in ability level teams to avoid situations of exclusion and explain cooperative structures to the students to help them organize and guarantee the cooperative work.
- Use some type of ICT to motivate students and prepare them for a society infused in technology.
- Involve children not only in the writing of the text but also in the revision and correction to avoid the belief that writing is a task only focused on formal aspects and help students to see writing as a way of communicating and expressing.
- Foster a positive emotional environment to create and increase motivation when writing and remove the conditions that make writing a negative experience, such as the stress related to it.

As for limitations, this study presents some that should be explained. Firstly, it is important to say that the results can not be generalized as it is a small sample. Certainly, a larger number of interviews may have offered a wider picture. Secondly, the computers room of the school has enough tower computers for each pupil, but the room does not allow for movement nor

communication between pupils. It was decided to do the cooperative writing task with laptops, although the school has only 12 laptops which must be reserved in order to use them. On top of that, very few studies were found on how cooperative writing is carried out.

Finally, as a line of future research it would be interesting to know the opinion of more teachers and analyse and compare different opinions from more traditional and more innovative teachers in order to examine in more depth the topic.

## 11. References

- Arboleda, A. (1997). Desmitificando la escritura en inglés como L2. *Lenguajes*, 25, 88-102. Retrieved 20 January 2020, from <http://bibliotecadigital.univalle.edu.co/handle/10893/5561>
- Azmi, N. (2017). The benefits of using ICT in the EFL classroom: From perceived utility to potential challenges. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 7(1), 111 - 118.
- Brodahl, C., Hadjerrouit, S., & Hansen, N. K. (2011). Collaborative writing with Web 2.0 technologies: Education students' perceptions. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Innovations in practice*, 10, 73 - 103.
- Bruning, R., & Horn, C. (2000). Developing motivation to write. *Educational psychologist*, 35(1), 25-37.
- Camps, A. (2017). Escriure és participar en una societat alfabetitzada. Bases per a l'ensenyament de l'escriptura a l'educació obligatòria (I). *Articles de didàctica de la llengua i de la literatura*, 72, 31-38. Retrieved 18 January 2020, from <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/ejemplar/449722>
- Camps, A. (2017). Escriure i aprendre a escriure, dues activitats que s'encreuen. Bases per a l'ensenyament de l'escriptura a l'educació obligatòria (II). *Articles de didàctica de la llengua i de la literatura*, 72, 39-45. Retrieved 18 January 2020, from <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/ejemplar/449722>
- Camps, A., Guasch, O., Milian, M. and Ribas, T. (2000). Metalinguistic activity: The link between writing and learning to write. Inside Camps, A. and Milian, M. (Eds.). *Metalinguistic Activity in Learning to Write* (pp. 103-124). Amsterdam: University Press.
- Csizér, K. (2019). Motivation to learn foreign languages and storytelling. *Storytelling revisited*, 31-39. Retrieved 20 January 2020 from [http://dspace.uvic.cat:8888/bitstream/handle/10854/6127/artconlli\\_a2020\\_storytelling.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y#page=31](http://dspace.uvic.cat:8888/bitstream/handle/10854/6127/artconlli_a2020_storytelling.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y#page=31)
- De Smedt, F., & Van Keer, H. (2014). A research synthesis on effective writing instruction in primary education. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 112, 693-701.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivation strategies in the language classroom*. Madrid: Cambridge University Press.

Felder, R. M., & Brent, R. (2007). Cooperative learning. *In Active learning: Models from the analytical sciences, ACS Symposium Series, 970, 34-53.*

Generalitat de Catalunya. Departament d'Ensenyament (gener de 2017). Currículum Educació Primària. Retrieved 18 December 2020, from <http://ensenyament.gencat.cat/web/.content/home/departament/publicacions/colleccions/curriculum/curriculum-educacio-primaria.pdf>

Harmer, J. (2006). *How to teach writing*. Edinburgh: Pearson Longman.

Herrera Ramírez, Y. E. (2013). Writing skill enhancement when creating narrative texts through the use of collaborative writing and the Storybird Web 2.0 tool. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, 15(2)*, 166-183.

Locke, T. (Ed.). (2010). *Beyond the grammar wars: A resource for teachers and students on developing language knowledge in the English/literacy classroom*. New York: Routledge.

Milian, M. (2011). La composició escrita. Com ensenyem a escriure, com n'aprenen els alumnes? *Articles de didàctica de la llengua i de la literatura, 54*, 104-113.

Nunan, D. (2010). *Teaching English to young learners*. Anaheim: Anaheim University Press.

Pujolàs, P. (2008). Cooperar per aprendre i aprendre a cooperar: el treball en equips cooperatius com a recurs i com a contingut. *Suports: revista catalana d'educació especial i atenció a la diversitat, 21-37.*

Talib, T., & Cheung, Y. L. (2017). Collaborative writing in classroom instruction: A synthesis of recent research. *The English Teacher, 46(2)*, 43-57.

Zhang, Y. (2010). Cooperative language learning and foreign language learning and teaching. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 1(1)*, 81-83.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Surveys

1. Creus que has après alguna cosa nova? SÍ  NO  Què?
2. Alguna vegada havíeu escrit de manera cooperativa en grups? SÍ  NO   
I en anglès? SÍ  NO
3. Creus que el procés i l'estructura cooperativa del full giratori ha set útil pel treball en grup? SÍ  NO  Per què?
4. Quins avantatges i inconvenients creus que té treballar amb companys de manera cooperativa?
5. T'has sentit més motivat/da a escriure en anglès al fer-ho en grups de manera cooperativa? SÍ  NO  Per què?
6. Què és el que més t'ha agradat?
7. Què és el que menys t'ha agradat?
8. Ha set fàcil utilitzar Canva per a fer el vostre llibre d'endevinalles? SÍ  NO
9. El fet de fer servir Canva t'ha motivat per a cooperar amb el teu grup? SÍ  NO   
Per què?
10. El fet de treballar amb companys t'ha ajudat a millorar la teva escriptura en anglès? SÍ  NO  Per què?



## Appendix 2: Interview

1. Do you agree with the idea that in order to write and learn to write it is necessary to speak? What is your opinion about it?
2. From your point of view, do you think that children work sufficiently on writing in English at primary school? How often do you think writing tasks in English should be set?
3. What do you think is better for students to learn and improve their writing in English: doing writing tasks cooperatively or individually?
4. What advantages and disadvantages do you think it has for students to do cooperative writing tasks in English?
5. Have you ever proposed cooperative writing activities in English?
6. Have you ever proposed to your students to use cooperative structures? And for writing?
7. When proposing writing activities in English, have you ever used or explained to your students the recursive process of writing?
8. Do you think that motivation plays a key role when doing cooperative writing tasks?
9. Do you agree with the idea that schools need the integration of technologies to improve learning, teaching and to promote more writing tasks and Cooperative writing experiences? What is your opinion about it?
10. Do you believe that the use of ICT tools for cooperative writing has a positive impact in the teaching and learning of writing in a Foreign Language? Do you think it is motivating for students?

### Appendix 3: Evaluation grid

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>Group work</b>	No organization of group work. Too much individual work.	There is a little cooperation in the general structure. Little group work.	Good group work. Cooperative task (some group members have done more than others).	Very good cooperative work from the beginning. Joint discussion and planning.
<b>Attitude</b>	Passive attitude; unwillingness to participate.	Acceptable attitude; sometimes participates.	Positive attitude; eager to participate and to do.	Very positive attitude; participates and helps others.
<b>Competence 7;</b> plan simple texts by identifying the most relevant elements of the communicative situation.	Is able to produce the requested text using a model.		Applies the structure of the text to order their ideas.	
	Create and order ideas using a model.	They organize and order ideas with the help of supports and a model in an autonomous way.		They autonomously choose the ideas to write the text and order the ideas in a logical and well-structured way.
	Uses a very basic vocabulary.		Uses an adequate and elaborated vocabulary.	
<b>Competence 8;</b> Produce simple texts appropriate to the communicative situation and with the help of supports.	They write short texts with simple sentences.	They write short texts with simple, well-structured sentences with the help of supports, guidelines and the model.	They write short, well-structured texts, use an appropriate vocabulary and follow the model.	They write short texts with elaborated and personalized sentences without the need to copy the model.
<b>Competence 9;</b> Revise the text in order to improve it according to the communicative situation with the help of specific aids.	No revision of the text; many errors and difficult to understand.	Poor proofreading and correction of the text; adequate although there are errors.	Good revision of the text; clear and fluent text with some errors.	Complete revision and proofreading of the text; well-written text with good linguistic level and no errors.