

The Impact of a Program Based on Collaborativist Learning Theory on Developing EFL Critical Writing Skills and Interaction among Languages and Translation Students

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Abstract

The current study aimed at examining the impact of a program based on collaborativist learning theory on developing EFL critical writing skills and interaction among second-year languages and translation students. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design. One experimental group of 33 EFL students at second-year Faculty of Languages and translation in the academic year 2020/2021 was randomly chosen to participate in the study. They received instruction through Microsoft teams in the light of a program based on collaborativist learning theory. To determine the necessary critical writing skills to be enhanced through the treatment, a checklist was designed, and the critical writing skills were approved by the jury members. Based on these skills, a critical writing test was developed and used as a pre-post test. In addition, an EFL interaction scale was designed and approved by the jury members to measure the students' level of interaction in English language classes. The t-test was used for the statistical analysis of data. Results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- and post-test in overall critical writing skills and each sub-skill, favoring the post test scores. There was also a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the post-administration of the EFL interaction scale and the test value, favoring the post administration. Therefore, the collaborativist learning theory based program had a positive effect on developing EFL critical writing skills and interaction among second-year languages and translation students.

Keywords: *collaborativist learning theory, critical writing skills, EFL interaction.*

أثر استخدام برنامج قائم على نظرية التعلم التشاركي في تربية مهارات الكتابة الناقدة والتفاعل باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لدى طلاب كلية اللغات والترجمة

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الملخص العربي

هدف البحث الحالي إلى التحقق من فعالية برنامج قائم على استخدام نظرية التعلم التشاركي في تربية مهارات الكتابة الناقدة والتفاعل باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لدى طلاب الفرقـة الثانية كلية اللغـات والترجمـة بجامعة الأهرام الـكنـدية. وقد أجريت الـدراسـة عـلـى ٣٣ طـالـباً وطالـبة يـمـثلـون هـذـهـ الفـئـةـ منـ الطـلـبـةـ. وقد تضـمـنـتـ أدـوـاتـ الـدرـاسـةـ: قائـمةـ لـمـهـارـاتـ الكـتابـةـ النـاـقـدـةـ لـلـغـةـ الإـنـجـليـزـيـةـ لـتـحـدـيدـ أـهـمـ مـهـارـاتـ الكـتابـةـ النـاـقـدـةـ لـدـىـ طـالـبـ الفـرقـةـ الثـانـيـةـ كـلـيـةـ الـلـغـاتـ وـالـتـرـجـمـةـ جـامـعـةـ الـأـهـرـامـ الـكـنـديـةـ،ـ واـخـتـبـارـ لـقـيـاسـ مـهـارـاتـ الكـتابـةـ النـاـقـدـةـ قـبـلـ وـبـعـدـ تـطـبـيقـ الـبرـنـامـجـ القـائـمـ عـلـىـ اـسـتـخـدـامـ نـظـرـيـةـ التـعـلـمـ التـشـارـكـيـ،ـ وـمـقـيـاسـ التـفـاعـلـ بـالـلـغـةـ الإـنـجـليـزـيـةـ.ـ وـقـدـ قـامـتـ الـبـاحـثـةـ بـالـتـطـبـيقـ لـمـدـةـ إـثـنـيـ عـشـرـ أـسـبـوـعاـ.ـ وـقـدـ عـوـلـجـتـ الـبـيـانـاتـ الـتـيـ تمـ جـمـعـهـاـ عـنـ طـرـيـقـ اـخـتـبـارـ الـكـتابـةـ النـاـقـدـةـ،ـ وـكـذـلـكـ عـنـ طـرـيـقـ مـقـيـاسـ التـفـاعـلـ بـالـلـغـةـ الإـنـجـليـزـيـةـ.ـ وـقـدـ أـكـدـتـ النـتـائـجـ بـعـدـ مـعـالـجـتهاـ إـحـصـائـيـاـ.ـ فـعـالـيـةـ الـبرـنـامـجـ القـائـمـ عـلـىـ نـظـرـيـةـ التـعـلـمـ التـشـارـكـيـ،ـ فـيـ تـرـبـيـةـ مـهـارـاتـ الكـتابـةـ النـاـقـدـةـ وـكـذـلـكـ التـفـاعـلـ بـالـلـغـةـ الإـنـجـليـزـيـةـ كـلـغـةـ أـجـنبـيـةـ.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مهارات الكتابة الناقدة - نظرية التعلم التشاركي - التفاعل باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

I- Introduction:

Students almost all over the world require the ability to write in English as a foreign language. It is strenuous to master not only the main writing skills but also the critical ones. The ability to write critically is essential for mature writing. The text you read has no life beyond the author without criticism. Ahangari and Sepehran (2014) clarify that critical thinking and writing are skills students must acquire to logically reason, argue, and approach a problem from various perspectives.

Critical writing is the writer's ability to respond to a text with logical and critical analysis and pay attention to its thematic argument. Although critical writing is essential for EFL students, teaching critical writing has been undervalued, and students' refusal to participate in critical writing activities is observed in their behaviour; additionally, their critical thinking skills appeared unsatisfactory. According to Stapleton (2002) and Alagozlu (2007), EFL students lack critical thinking skills. They are unable to express their own ideas in EFL writing because of their poor critical thinking skills. They stressed the significance of critical pedagogy in EFL writing classes. To reach the stage of logically expressing one's thoughts, inexperienced writers require training and modelling. Writing as a process needs meticulous planning and repeated and orchestrated strategic activities (LIU, 2006).

One of the primary goals of the educational system in the twenty-first century is to prepare students to function successfully in the knowledge society. This necessitates, among other things, the development of their ability to interact, collaborate, and work in groups in digital environments (Dery et al., 2017). Collaborative learning encourages students to work together in groups to complete a task or produce group outcomes. During this process, students are exposed to various points of view and take responsibility for each other's learning, resulting in higher achievement and productivity (Laal et al., 2013).

Technology has a significant impact on the learning process in this digital era. In addition, cloud services and applications have paved the way for more collaborative learning. According to Resta (2007), using technology to improve collaborative learning, especially in university education, has been the target of many studies that use some aspects of technology-supported collaborative learning. Furthermore, these technological advancements resulted in the emergence of new research domains represented in computer-supported collaborative learning or online collaborative learning (Stahl et al., 2014). According to Harasim (2017), collaborativist learning theory (aka online collaborative learning, or OCL) is proposed as a new learning theory that focuses on

collaborative learning, knowledge building, and Internet use to reshape education for the Knowledge Age. It responds to the Knowledge Age requirements of the twenty-first century and provides a theoretical framework to guide transformations in instructional design.

One of the main challenges of online learning is to improve learners' interaction. In collaborativist learning theory (aka online collaborative learning), students are active and engaged; they collaborate to create knowledge, discover new ways to innovate, and share their experiences and findings. They are encouraged to solve problems collaboratively through discourse rather than memorize correct answers. The teacher or instructor plays an essential role in this process. They not only facilitate the process by providing appropriate resources and learning activities that encourage students' learning, but they also serve as members of the knowledge community being studied, ensuring that core concepts, practises, and discipline standards are properly integrated into the learning cycle (Harasim, 2012).

II- Literature Review:

Critical Writing:

The term "Critical Writing" refers to a type of writing primarily used in academia, in which the writer presents a "reasoned argument" on a specific issue or topic based on a "critical" analysis of relevant information. It refers to thinking and writing processes through which one evaluates all available information and points of view about a specific issue and then draws one's own conclusions based on this evidence (Hutchison, 2007). However, Barnawi (2011) defines critical writing as the ability to analyze facts, generate and organize ideas, make comparisons, maintain opinions, solve problems, and judge arguments using existing information, prior knowledge, experience, and world knowledge when writing. He also explains that as part of the process-oriented activity, student writers are expected to develop the ability to think critically.

Writing critically does not always imply writing negatively about a topic. It simply means taking into account all aspects of an argument. A critical writer should consider all points of view when writing to demonstrate their understanding and awareness of the subject matter (University of Leicester, 2009).

Critical writing is essential for developing thinking and communication skills. Critical writing can improve critical thinking because it requires students to express their ideas to a specific audience based on logical thinking. They can inspire ideas that they would not have

thought of before. Students not only know but also understand what they are learning. They should determine which tools are most important for effective communication. There is always a chance to think through an argument when writing. Thus, critical writing can be seen when one person thinks differently (Valentin et al., 2018). It also raises awareness of a particular point of view and allows examining the validity to consolidate concepts, facts, ideas, and opinions. Knowledge is restricted when writing critically, and complex problems can be worked together (Quitadamo & Kurt, 2007).

Furthermore, critical writing requires a much higher level of expertise. Critical writers take part in academic debates. First, they must weigh the evidence and arguments of others and contribute their own perspectives. Second, they should determine the main positive and negative aspects on which they can comment. Finally, they evaluate their relevance and usefulness to the debate they are participating in for their assignment and determine how they can best be woven into the argument they are developing (ATAÇ, 2015).

Critical writing has four characteristics. The first feature is the need for a clear and confident refusal to accept other writers' conclusions without first evaluating the arguments and evidence they present. The second feature is that critical writing should include a balanced presentation of causes why other writers' conclusions should be accepted or treated with caution. The third one is concerned with a clear explanation of your evidence and argument that leads to a conclusion. Finally, the final feature acknowledges the limitations in your evidence, argument, and conclusion (ATAÇ, 2015). While Cottrell (2017) describes the characteristics of good critical writing as follows: first, content: background information is kept to a minimum. It examines the evidence presented by expert writers and uses it to build an argument. Second, point selection: a good critical writer understands which aspects of the topic are the most debatable and covers a wide range of viewpoints. This depends on the critical reading of the appropriate sources. Third, language clarity: points should be presented clearly so that the reader understands the significance. Good writers should edit their work several times before submission. Fourth, structure: students discuss and analyze similar viewpoints before looking at alternative perspectives. This makes more sense to the reader. Finally, linking points: critical writing should be well planned out so that the most important points stand out clearly.

As critical writing skills in EFL are essential, many researchers conducted studies to develop university students' critical writing skills. ATAÇ (2015) investigated the first-year students' critical thinking, and

writing skills enrolled in the English Language Department at Nevsehir H. B.V. University. According to the study's findings, critical thinking and critical writing are interrelated, and students generally have a positive attitude toward the relationship. Moreover, Linh (2016) investigated the impact of an instructional design model to help students learn collaboratively via Facebook groups to develop their English writing skills in the first year of their university education. At the same time, Madkour et al. (2016) clarified that using an E-learning strategy based on the reflective approach effectively enhances English majors' critical writing skills at the Faculty of Education. In addition, Zahran (2018) revealed the effect of project-based learning on developing EFL college students' critical reading and writing skills. Similarly, Ibrahim explained (2018) the impact of a suggested eclectic approach on developing EFL majors' critical and writing skills at the Faculty of Education- Helwan University. Finally, Helwa (2020) explored the effect of incorporating telegram application into digital mind mapping to develop third-year English section students' EFL critical reading and writing skills at the Faculty of Education- Banha University.

According to Woodhouse, J., & Wood, P. (2020), students face a critical writing challenge as it necessitates the ability to take multiple perspectives on the same subject. Students must read, evaluate complex concepts, and step outside of their daily work to view what is often taken for granted as an assumption through a critical lens. They should also identify key positive and negative aspects. They can assess their relevance and utility in the debate. Then, they should determine how these aspects can be best woven into the argument they are developing. They compare materials and investigate why something does not work. Furthermore, they apply their own judgments, connect areas of knowledge, and weigh up alternatives. Despite these obstacles, the researcher supports the call to develop critical writing skills because it encourages using one's mind while writing. It generates and stimulates students' points of view to make a decision. It also emphasizes the importance of gathering information from various sources. As a result, the current study aims to improve critical writing skills among second-year language and translation students.

Using new technology in education can change the way people learn and teach. So, utilizing and implementing modern technology-based teaching strategies and theories in traditional classes can be an effective teaching method. As a result, EFL teachers can create a suitable technological environment to attract learners' attention and motivate them

to learn. Furthermore, it may assist learners in dealing with real-world situations. However, technology in the classroom can be more beneficial if supported by appropriate pedagogical theories and models (Sabzian et al., 2013). For example, the collaborativist learning theory is a modern theory that advocates for the use and application of modern technology in learning and attainment.

Collaorativist Learning Theory:

Collaborative learning is simply two or more learners working together to achieve a common goal. It occurs when the teacher uses small groups and encourages them to collaborate in order to benefit from one another's knowledge (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). Harasim (2004) defines collaborative learning as an educational theory and pedagogy in which students discuss and collaborate to learn and apply relevant concepts to solve problems in their field, deepen their understanding, and create new products or processes. Collaborative learning is considered a creative and effective teaching theory and strategy system that involves students' cooperation as the basic power and group activities as the essential teaching methods. It allows students not only to share several sources of information and knowledge but also to exchange experiences. According to Dooly (2013), through sharing information and active discussion, students have the opportunity to exercise, validate and improve their mental abilities. In this context, the main goal is to acquire knowledge and improve students' ability to build knowledge in innovative ways (Paavola et al., 2004). Thus, collaborative learning shifts the emphasis from the teacher transmitting information and knowledge to assisting students in constructing knowledge independently by adopting the vision of learning as a social process (Hiltz et al., 2000).

Cooperative and collaborative learning are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably; however, educators differentiate between them as cooperative work typically entails dividing work among team members who work separately to complete their own tasks; then, they combine the tasks to create a single product for the group in a final phase. In contrast, collaborative work entails all team members tackling problems together in a coordinated effort (Lehtinen et al., 2007). As a result, Collaborative learning increases student engagement, helps them improve critical thinking, promotes problem-solving, and motivates students to learn and achieve (Raman & Ryan, 2004).

According to Hui (2013), collaborative learning has many advantages in language classes:

- A. Collaborative learning can increase students' confidence.

When asking questions in the traditional classroom, students are afraid of giving incorrect answers and being laughed at by their classmates. Collaborative learning methods, on the other hand, can boost students' self-esteem. Students will be more interested and motivated to learn a foreign language if they gain full recognition for their efforts. Moreover, students can assist one another in consolidating theoretical knowledge while also experiencing the joy of sharing.

B. Collaborative learning improves students' communicative language competence.

One of the essential characteristics of language is that people use it as a medium to communicate with others. Therefore, teachers can effectively improve students' language communication skills by carefully designing the communication process. For example, in a collaborative learning process, students participate in group activities to receive assistance from teachers and peers, thereby stimulating students' emotions and promoting their learning initiative to create an optimized language communication environment in which students can practice and acquire language through mutual communication.

C. Collaborative learning helps create a positive and relaxing learning atmosphere.

Collaborative learning uses group learning as the main organizational structure. It requires group members to share goals and resources, which contributes to creating a positive and relaxing learning environment and reducing students' learning anxiety. To achieve teaching goals together, all team members must participate in tasks together, communicate directly, rely on each other, and use group performance as the evaluation criterion. Because collaborative learning is a group activity, the interaction and communication between teachers and students is emphasized throughout the learning process. Only by working together and maintaining the same pace, the group will be able to complete the learning task smoothly and with the desired effect.

The concurrence of constructivist learning approaches and the development of the Internet has led to the development of computer-mediated communication (CMC) or networked learning, which has evolved into what Harasim (2017) now refers to as collaborativist learning theory (aka online collaborative learning, or OCL). According to Lipponen et al. (2004), O'Malley and Scanlon coined and created the term "online collaborative learning" and considered it an important domain. Due to several factors, online collaborative learning may be more effective than face-to-face collaborative learning. First, students'

schedules are no longer conflicted; second, students feel more responsible for their own learning; third, students' thinking is more focused and clear; and fourth, the learning process is more organized and saved for future use

Collaborativist learning theory (aka OCL) refers to educational applications that focus on collaborative discourse and knowledge building through the Internet. Learners collaborate online to identify and express issues of understanding and adapt their new understanding and analytical terms and tools to solving problems, constructing plans, or developing interpretations for phenomena. Collaborativist learning theory relies on processes that result in conceptual understanding as well as knowledge products. It depends on peer discourse, which is informed by the processes and resources of the knowledge community and facilitated by the teacher as a representative of that knowledge community (Harasim, 2017).

According to Thompson & Ku (2006), Online collaborative learning has four characteristics; the first is individual participation required to achieve collaboration. The second characteristic is interdependence, which needs interaction among group members in order to share information and ideas. The third characteristic is the synthesis of information resulting from each group member. Finally, the online collaborative group should be independent of the instructor; whenever a group member has a question, they should ask each other for answers rather than immediately asking the teacher.

Collaborativist learning theory aims to improve students' academic performance on a large scale, improve the classroom's social-psychological atmosphere, and develop students' good psychological quality and social skills, considering group performance as the evaluation standard and standard reference evaluation as the primary means. It is a type of all-around learning in which teachers assign learning tasks and control the teaching process. Students collaborate to carry out English practise activities within or between groups under teachers' guidance to complete learning tasks and achieve teaching goals (Cao, 2019). Online collaborative learning can directly develop various high-level intellectual skills, such as critical thinking, analytical thinking, synthesis, and evaluation, essential for digital learners. It also can lead to deep, academic, or transformative learning (Bates, 2014).

Laal and Ghodsi (2012) divide the benefits of online collaborative learning into three categories: social, psychological, and academic. Socially, students benefit from OCL by enhancing their social understanding and acceptance; students tend to be more tolerant and open

to diversity. Psychologically, one of the psychological benefits of OCL is increasing student's self-esteem and retention. In addition, students experience a less anxious learning environment which results in a highly effective outcome. Academically, the benefits are categorized into four parts; course characteristics, individual characteristics, various aspects of the collaborative learning process, and satisfaction. The first element, course characteristics, includes the group's size and the required materials students need to collaborate to attain the desired goal. This collaboration helps lazy and unmotivated learners to work successfully with one another and increase social engagement. Further, the second element focuses on the students' opinions about integrating technology in collaborative learning. The third element involves dynamic group work in which students plan the learning process together and support each other by discussing the content, determining techniques, and contributing ideas to achieve an intended mutual goal. Finally, student satisfaction is critical because it is vital for the learner to feel content and satisfied with collaborative learning (Dewiyranti et al., 2007).

According to Harasim (2017), the collaborativist learning theory (aka online collaborative learning) has three key elements. These three elements are online collaborative learning pedagogy, online collaborative learning environments, and online technology tools that enhance collaboration.

1- Online collaborative learning pedagogy:

The main feature of online collaborative learning pedagogy is that learning processes occur due to collaborative activities, so students should work collaboratively to negotiate and change the meaning. Harasim (2017) divided the collaboration process into four major intellectual stages in this context. These four phases are as follows: idea generation, idea organization, intellectual convergence, and final position.

In the first stage, Idea Generating, learners participate in a group discussion of a particular topic, question, or knowledge problem in their discipline. Each participant joins the discussion to share his or her initial thoughts on the subject. Then, the teacher or moderator introduces the discussion processes and the knowledge problem to be addressed. Idea generating (also known as brainstorming) encourages participants to express their opinions and generate a variety of divergent perspectives on a given topic. This is a highly democratic phase in which everyone presents one or more ideas. Students also begin to introduce new ideas gained from the professor's or moderator's readings. **In the second stage, Idea Organizing**, learners interact with their peers, confronting their

perspectives as well as ideas from readings and other sources of information suggested by the professor or group members. Each learner's awareness of how the topic can be viewed has grown due to the input. Learners begin to organize, analyze, and filter the ideas presented by accepting some, elaborating, expanding, or rejecting others. Course readings and teacher's comments that facilitate the discussion interpret the influence of the knowledge community as the frame of reference. Students deepen the discussion and understanding of the topic by applying the new analytical terms introduced by their teachers. This phase is primarily distinguished by applying analytical concepts and references to the literature to organize or group similar ideas into fewer and more refined categories. **In the third stage, Intellectual Convergence**, learners reach a level of Intellectual Convergence and take a position on the topic or a resolution of the knowledge problem through discussion and analysis informed by the readings and supported by the teacher/moderator. Intellectual convergence includes (and is most often characterized by) agreeing to disagree or, in some cases, reaching a consensus. Intellectual convergence can be seen in a final co-produced product such as a report, a group presentation, a final paper, or an intellectual statement such as a discussion summary. Finally, when students begin to change a concept or an idea due to the interaction process that occurred in the previous stages of collaboration, they have reached the final position stage.

2- Online learning environments:

The term "online learning environment" refers to web-based software that is intended to support learning activities (Harasim, 2017). These environments are more than just channels for information transfer; they also allow students to negotiate meaning and engage in conversations with one another. Video conferencing systems like Zoom and Microsoft Teams are common examples of such online environments. Furthermore, these environments are free from place and time constraints and are run via the Internet (Harasim, 2017).

3- Online technology tools:

Online technology tools are the third component of online collaborative learning. The process of knowledge exchange is carried out through using such online tools. Online learning tools enable or facilitate the delivery of tasks in an online learning environment (Harasim, 2017). These tools can be web-based or other tools primarily intended for educational purposes like breakout rooms, whiteboard interacting and

sharing files. These tools assist the teacher in implementing the online collaborative learning pedagogy.

Teacher's role in collaborativist theory:

In collaborativist theory (aka OCL), the instructor's role is critical. The teacher structures the course as a set of group discussions focused on knowledge problems common to the discipline, introduces appropriate concepts and resources to facilitate informed debate, encourages and models the analytical language that represents the discipline, intervenes to facilitate the discussion, and assists students in attaining a level of intellectual convergence to analyze or solve the problem. The teacher is more than just a facilitator of group discussion; he represents the "science" of the knowledge community and serves to incorporate students into the discipline. The course serves as a model for the behaviour and processes of the knowledge community in addressing knowledge problems (Harasim, 2017).

Tu (2004) illustrates four elements that teachers should consider in the online collaborative learning context: empowering learners, continuing support, being patient, and building community. In empowering learners, teachers no longer provide students with information; instead, they serve as facilitators, guiding students to take responsibility for their learning by participating in various learning tasks that match their learning styles. While for continuing support, teachers should support their students emotionally, intellectually, mentally and digitally to facilitate the online collaborative learning process. In terms of being patient, students might spend a long time getting involved in the online learning process. Therefore, teachers should react positively and encourage them by offering them a safe environment to achieve their tasks. Finally, for building communities, in online collaborative learning, teachers should build a sense of community that provides students with a relaxed learning environment to feel safe and free while expressing their ideas, thoughts and perspectives.

Many researchers explored the highly beneficial nature of collaborativist learning theory (aka online collaborative learning) in the context of teaching and learning. Mahawan and Langprayoon (2020) investigated the impact of online collaborative learning to improve the English communication skills of university students enrolled in the English Teaching Program. The study sample was 23 English teaching program students from the Faculty of Education at Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya Rajabhat University. The results revealed that English communication skills were higher after using the online collaborative

learning approach, with a statistically significant difference at 0.05 level. The findings revealed positive outcomes with a significant impact.

Similarly, Blau et al. (2020) investigated the effect of online collaborative learning on promoting students' digital collaboration skills and the sustainability of e-collaboration in schools' culture. The study participants were required to fill out an online questionnaire with multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The findings revealed that the leadership experience of coordinators was higher, and it was considered as a powerful predictor of digital collaboration skills, but it did not predict any e-collaboration sustainability. Furthermore, Qu (2020) explored the effective ways and methods of implementing collaborative teaching in blended teaching of English college students online and offline. The study recommended the use of collaborative learning online due to several advantages. First, it encourages students to cooperate, explore and communicate. Second, it motivates students to complete various tasks with high quality. Third, it enhances students' confidence and stimulates their interest in learning.

Moreover, Rock and Redmond (2021) examined teachers' perceptions and experiences in a global learning community over 12 years. The study adopted the online collaborative learning framework developed by the authors in 2006. The study aim was to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers who participated in online discussions about real-world issues in today's diverse and digital classrooms. Participants showed significant improvement in fostering social presence, developing and maintaining teaching presence, creating and sustaining a learning community, and effectively participating in critical discourse.

Students in the twenty-first century are expected to be active learners in all aspects of the learning process. As a result, in addition to planning for students' academic achievement, they need to develop desired skills such as communication and interaction with society. In this regard, the collaborativist learning theory is essential for developing students' interaction.

Learners' interaction in EFL online classrooms:

The engagement of language learners with the language is part of what makes an effective language class. Language teachers strive to provide opportunities for students to interact with one another and with native speakers, as interaction is an incredibly effective method of language acquisition (Bowles, Adams, & Toth, 2014; Mackey & Goo, 2007). Early definitions of interaction were human-to-human, with at least two people involved. Interaction is defined by Daniel and Marquis

(1993) as any activity during which a student has two-way contact with one or more people.

Moore and Kearsley (2011) distinguish three types of interaction: learner-content interaction, learner-instructor interaction, and learner-learner interaction. A student's interaction with the topic or subject matter presented for the study is a learner-content interaction. It allows learners to construct knowledge by incorporating new understanding into their cognitive structures. It is an intellectually interacting process with the content, altering a learner's mind's understanding, perspectives, and cognitive structures. While learner-instructor interaction refers to the assistance, support, stimulation, organization, and counsel that the instructor provides to the learners to help them construct a new understanding of the content. When the learner interacts with the instructor and applies his new understanding, the instructor here represents expert knowledge, allowing the learner to test the validity of his new understanding. Moore and Kearsley observe this type of interaction taking place even when there is no face-to-face contact between the instructor and the learner, as in online courses. Learner-learner interaction is the interaction between one student and other students, whether alone or in groups, with or without the instructor presence. This is especially important when applying and evaluating new knowledge because the learner's peers serve as a touchstone for his understanding.

In distance education, Thurmond and Wambach (2004) define interaction as "the learner's engagement with the instructor, other learners, the course content, and the technological medium used in the course".

Interaction between students in a classroom is an essential aspect of a successful educational setting. Their interactions provide comprehensible input to each other, and they can collaborate to negotiate meaning and modify output (Toth, 2008). This process has led to effective language learning and is an essential component of an EFL classroom. Online EFL classrooms, in theory, should allow for this type of interaction, but whether they actually do so is debatable.

Online classes, according to some research, do provide a setting for such interaction. For example, Lan (2015) discovered that in an experiment with elementary students in Taiwan, an online environment could improve students' English performance and provide an environment that fostered rich interaction between students. While Bianchi et al. (2018) discovered that students not only interact with one another and

with their instructors in meaningful ways, but also the online classrooms increased the extent to which they could interact. As a result, the online classroom helped shy students to participate much more frequently.

Furthermore, many studies investigated how online classrooms can enhance EFL learner interaction. For example, Hamouda (2020) explored that students who participated in an online classroom experienced improved interaction between learners, which led to more significant improvements in their speaking test scores when compared to those in a traditional in-class teaching group. These findings were consistent with Alhawiti (2017), who reported that an experimental group of college students who participated in an EFL online classroom interacted better in English by the end of the semester than the control group. These findings indicate that online classrooms could be an effective way to promote learners' interaction.

Streetman (2018) clarifies that online collaborative learning promotes student-student interaction, higher-order thinking skills, and communication skills such as writing texts, emails and chats. For example, in OCL, through task-based learning, students become familiar with giving and receiving feedback from their peers; they also master academic writing skills and multiple activities they cannot experience individually (Kharrufa, 2010).

Context of the Problem:

The current study problem is derived from the following resources:

For EFL critical writing skills, it could be noticed according to the review of related studies (Madkour et al., 2016; Ahmed, 2018; Zahran, 2018; Nabil, 2019), Students struggle while writing in general and critical writing in particular. They didn't express their own ideas with logical reasons, and they focused on structure rather than the writing process.

The researcher also administered a critical writing test in Fall 2020 as a pilot study to identify the difficulties facing the second-year EFL languages and translation students at Ahram Canadian University and determine the extent to which these students lack those skills. The sample of the pilot study consisted of 36 students. The pilot study results revealed that 69% of the students got less than 50% of the test's total score. They could not give opinions and provide evidence to support these opinions, provide cause and effect relationships, make comparisons, evaluate the author's point of view, solve problems, make predictions, and use organizing structures. At the same time, the researcher interviewed

the same group and revealed that 72% of the students lacked engagement and interaction to participate successfully in writing tasks.

As a result, there are many reasons for students' lack of critical writing skills; the most important is the teaching method. Furthermore, teaching aids such as computers and the Internet are essential and may positively impact students' critical writing. Therefore, it appears that there is a need to adopt new critical writing teaching techniques that will help students become better writers.

Statement of the Problem:

In the light of the aforementioned argumentative account, it became crystal clear that EFL second-year languages and translation students, Ahram Canadian University, lacked critical writing skills and interaction.

So, the current study attempted to explore the impact of a program based on collaborativist learning theory on developing EFL critical writing skills and interaction among second-year languages and translation students.

Questions of the Study:

The current study was an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What are the EFL critical writing skills required for second-year languages and translation students?
2. To what extent do second-year languages and translation students acquire these skills?
3. How can a program based on collaborativist learning theory (aka online collaborative learning) be used to develop EFL critical writing skills among second-year languages and translation students?
4. What is the effect of a program based on collaborativist learning theory on developing EFL critical writing skills among second-year languages and translation students?
5. What is the effect of a program based on collaborativist learning theory on developing EFL interaction among second-year languages and translation students?

Hypotheses of the study:

Based on the previous studies, the study hypotheses have been formulated as follows:

- 1) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance in the

pre-and the post- administrations of the critical writing test as a whole and in each sub-skill, favoring the post-administration.

- 2) There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance in the post-administration of the EFL interaction scale as a whole and the test value, favoring the post-administration.
- 3) The program based on collaborativist learning theory would have an effect on developing the overall critical writing skills and each sub-skill among the EFL second-year languages and translation students.
- 4) The program based on collaborativist learning theory would have an effect on developing the EFL interaction among second-year languages and translation students'.

Aim of the study:

The present study aims to develop EFL second-year languages and translation students' critical writing skills and interaction in the light of a program based on the collaborativist learning theory.

Significance of the study:

The results of this study are hopefully expected to be helpful to:

- 1- The EFL students: This study may help EFL students improve their critical writing skills and interaction.
- 2- Lecturers: This study may provide lecturers of this stage with instructional material based on collaborativist learning theory, which could improve their performance in the EFL classrooms and their students' critical writing skills.
- 3- Course designers: This study may exceed the ability to utilize collaborativist learning theory in designing different language courses.

Delimitations of the study:

This study was delimited to:

- Some EFL critical writing skills required for second-year languages and translation students, which have been approved by the jury members.
- A group of thirty-three EFL students enrolled at the faculty of languages and translation, Ahram Canadian University.
- The Fall semester of the academic year 2020-2021 as the time duration of the experiment; one lecture per week (two hours each).

Definition of terms:

Critical Writing:

Barnawi (2011) defined critical writing as the ability to analyze facts, generate and organize ideas, make comparisons, maintain opinions, solve

problems, and judge arguments using existing information, prior knowledge, experience, and world knowledge when writing.

In this study, critical writing is a form of writing in which students can present their reasoning and evidence in a clear well-structured manner to give opinion and provide a reasonable evidence to support point of view, provide causes and effects, make comparisons, make predictions and give appropriate solutions for a problem.

Collaorativist learning theory:

Harasim (2017) defined Collaorativist learning theory (aka online collaborative learning) as an educational application that focus on collaborative discourse and knowledge building through the Internet. Learners collaborate online to identify and express issues of understanding and adapt their new understanding and analytical terms and tools to solving problems, constructing plans, or developing interpretations for phenomena.

In this study, collaborativist learning theory is defined as an instructional approach where students collaborate online through Microsoft teams application to implement three main stages: idea generating, idea organizing, and intellectual convergence to complete a writing task.

EFL interaction:

The current study adopts the definition of Thurmond and Wambach (2004), which views interaction as "the learner's engagement with the instructor, the course content, other learners, and the technological medium used in the English language course."

III- Method, Instruments, and Procedures:

A- Design of the study:

The current study used the quasi-experimental design (one group pre/post) to examine the effect of a program based on collaborativist learning theory (aka online collaborative learning) on developing EFL critical writing skills and interaction among second-year languages and translation students.

This study is partially analytical as it contained a theoretical framework and partially experimental as it implemented a pre-post critical writing test and interaction scale.

B- Instruments and materials of the study

1) A checklist of EFL critical writing skills required for second-year languages and translation students.

- 2) An EFL critical writing skills test was used as a pre-posttest for testing the study group.
- 3) The critical writing rubric.
- 4) The EFL interaction scale.
- 5) The program based on collaborativist learning theory (aka online collaborative learning) was implemented to enhance EFL critical writing skills and interaction among second-year languages and translation students.

1- The EFL critical writing skills checklist:

a. Aim of the checklist:

The EFL critical writing skills checklist was designed to determine the critical writing skills relevant to second-year languages and translation students (Appendix. 1).

b. Description of the EFL critical writing skills checklist:

The EFL critical writing skills checklist, in its final form, consists of seven sub-skills; namely: Use an organizing structure, Evaluate the author's point of view, Give opinions and provide evidence and examples to support these opinions, Provide cause and effect relationships, Solve problems, Make comparisons, and Make predictions.

c. Validity of the EFL critical writing checklist:

The checklist was submitted, in its initial form, to jury members in the field of Curriculum and EFL instruction; changes and modifications concerning the skills were considered. Based on their feedback, seven skills were agreed upon.

2 - The critical writing test:

a - Aim of the test:

The test was pre and post used to measure critical writing as a whole, and each critical writing sub-skill assigned to EFL second-year languages and translation students to determine the effectiveness of using the collaborativist learning theory to enhance their critical writing skills.

b- Description of the test:

The test was designed to measure the seven critical writing sub-skills assigned by the jury members as very important for college students. The test consisted of three writing questions; each question measured two skills, while the skill (use an organizing structure was measured in all questions (Appendix. 2).

c- Validity of the test:

To test the validity of the critical writing test, two forms of validity were used; *content validity* and *construct validity*. To test the content validity, the test was given to a panel of jury members to evaluate each question in terms of content and level of the measured skills. Moreover, they were

asked to assess the test as a whole in terms of correctness, the number of questions, scoring suitability of the test for the student's level, the suitability of the test for students' age, and its time limits. The test proved to be mostly a valid one as the TEFL jury members approved most of the questions with few modifications as modifying some sentences in terms of words selected to be easier for the students.

To test the construct validity, the correlation coefficient was calculated between the total score for each skill and the total score of the overall test by using the statistical package for social science software (SPSS). The correlation coefficient and the significance level are presented in table (1)

Table 1
Correlation Coefficients between Each Skill and the Overall Score of the Critical Writing Test

N	Skill	Correlation coefficients	Level of significance
1	Use an organizing structure	0.90	0.01
2	Evaluate the author's point of view	0.75	0.01
3	Give opinions and provide evidence to support these opinions	0.83	0.01
4	Provide causes and effects	0.87	0.01
5	Solve the problem	0.83	0.01
6	Make comparisons and contrasts	0.85	0.01
7	Making predictions	0.78	0.01

All correlations were statistically significant. This proved that the test was internally consistent and valid.

d- Reliability of the Test:

To verify the test reliability, the internal consistency method and test-retest method were used. Cronbach's Alpha technique was calculated by (SPSS) program. Accordingly, the test was administered to a randomly chosen group of (36) second-year languages and translation students at Ahram Canadian University. These students were excluded from the study group. The test reliability was 0.81. Then, after two weeks, it was administered to the same group again. The Pearson correlation between the two administrations was (.993), which is significant at the 0.01 level. This result proved that the test was statistically reliable.

e- Piloting the EFL critical writing skills test:

To check the clarity of the test instructions and questions, the researcher administered the test to 36 second-year languages and translation students (the same group used to calculate the reliability of the test) to examine:

1. The clarity of test instructions.

2. The suitability of the test items for students' educational level.
3. The simplicity /difficulty level of the test questions so that students could understand them easily.
4. Test timing.

This time was estimated according to the following formula:

The addition of the time taken by each student divided by their number (N.) = 75 minutes

f- Scoring the test:

The total mark of the critical writing test is "36" marks. Each question is worth 12 marks and assesses two critical writing skills, and the skill (use an organizing structure) was measured in each question. All questions were scored according to the critical writing skills rubric that the researcher designed. Students' answers were sent with the rubric to another rater to do inter- rater reliability.

3- The critical writing rubric:

a- Aim of the rubric:

The researcher designed the critical writing rubric to assess students' performance in the pre/post critical writing test (Appendix, 3).

b- Description of the rubric:

the critical writing rubric was divided into seven categories: Use an organizing structure, Evaluate the author's point of view, Give opinions and provide evidence and examples to support these opinions, Provide cause and effect relationships, Solve problems, Make comparisons, and Make predictions. These categories were then used to determine the assessment criteria which represented the desired standards or expectations of students' performance. To determine the degree to which student's performance met the task criteria, four levels of descriptors that differentiate several levels of performance (i.e., exceeding standards, meeting standards, approaching standards and below standards) were specified and described qualitatively and quantitatively.

c- Validity of the rubric:

The critical writing rubric was submitted to EFL specialists to determine if the rubric items measured and reflected the targeted critical writing skills. Accordingly, they indicated that the components of the rubric were valid and comprehensive.

d- Reliability of the rubric:

The reliability of the critical writing rubric was estimated using the inter-rater reliability by calculating the correlation coefficient between the researcher and another rater who scored the critical writing test of the

study group. The correlation coefficient between the two raters' scores was 0.91.

4- The EFL interaction scale.

a- Aim of the scale:

The scale aimed to investigate the degree of the students' engagement in English language class after implementing the program that is based on collaborativist learning theory (Appendix, 4).

b- Description of the scale:

The scale was designed considering the previous studies. In its final form, it included seventeen items. All the items were positive except for items number (14, 15, 16, 17) to balance and verify students' answers. As well, the items of the scale were direct, clear, and simple.

c- Scale validity:

To test scale validity, it was submitted to jury members specialized in Curriculum and EFL Instruction and Educational Psychology. They evaluated the appropriateness of the scale's items and the clarity of the scale instructions and items. Therefore, the scale's items were modified based on their recommendations.

d- Scale reliability:

To test scale reliability, the reliability coefficient was estimated by using Cronbach Alpha Formula. The estimated value was (0.81), and it was considered acceptable.

e- Scale scoring:

The scale was a five-point Likert scale. All the scale items were answered on a 5- point Likert scale as follows: For the positive statements, points: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree. For the reverse statements, points: 5 strongly disagree, 4 disagree, 3 neutral, 2 agree, and 1 strongly agree.

f- Scale duration:

The duration of the scale was estimated by summing up the times of the fastest and the slowest students in answering the scale divided by two. So, the time allocated to the scale was $20+30/2= 25$ minutes.

5- The Study Material (The Program Based on Collaborativist Learning Theory)

a. Aim of the program:

This program aimed to develop EFL critical writing skills and interaction necessary for second-year languages and translation students.

b. Objectives of the program:

By the end of the instructional periods, participants were expected to develop their interaction and write paragraphs reflecting the following skills:

- Use an organizing structure
- Evaluate the author's point of view
- Give opinions and provide evidence to support these opinions
- Provide causes and effects
- Solve the problem
- Make comparisons and contrasts
- Make predictions

c- Content of the program:

The program includes course material and a teacher's guide. The content of the program is task-based. The content of the program was adapted from various sources and websites (Appendix 5).

d- Description of the program:

The program consisted of 12 sessions. The first two sessions were orientation sessions, and the other ten sessions were instructional ones through which EFL critical writing skills were practised in the light of collaborativist learning theory.

The titles of the topics were as follows:

Session 1: Orientation session on how to register and use Microsoft teams

Session 2: How to work collaboratively via Microsoft teams, paragraph structure and the importance and need of critical writing

Session 3: Design

Session 4: Identity

Session 5: Survival

Session 6: Thought

Session 7: Movement

Session 8: Fire

Session 9: Disease

Session 10: Law

Session 11: Sound

Session 12: Tomorrow

e- The Suggested steps for using the proposed program:

The proposed program of the present study was implemented via Microsoft teams in the light of collaborativist learning theory through the following steps (warming up, forming the collaborative learning group, setting group agreement, planning, drafting, revising and editing).

Lesson procedures:

1- Warming up: The instructor started the online lesson through Microsoft teams by asking students questions that prepared them for the writing task of the lesson. Then, the instructor displayed a video, presented some vocabulary, a reading passage that are related to the writing task.

2 - Forming the collaborative learning group: The researcher used the informal group technique in this study, where students were randomly grouped to give participants more opportunities to collaborate with different participants each time. The group size was kept to a maximum of 4 to 5 members in order to maximize the potential benefits of the small group size.

3 - Setting group agreement: The instructor encouraged each group to create a group agreement that would serve as a contract between group members. For example, we will work together collaboratively to complete the required task. In addition, we will listen carefully to each other. We will respect each other's opinions and points of view. We will complete the assigned task on time, and so on.

4 - Planning: the planning stage of the writing task includes students' participation in an online environment via a three-step process: idea generation, idea organization, and intellectual convergence.

a. Idea Generating, the first phase, refers to divergent thinking within a group, including brainstorming, verbalization, generating information, and sharing ideas and positions towards a specific topic or problem. Participants engage in democratic participation and contribute toward building a large and diverse set of ideas and perspectives.

b. Idea Organizing, the second phase, is the beginning of a conceptual change which demonstrates intellectual progress and the beginning of convergence as participants encounter new or different ideas, explain and classify these new ideas based on their relationship and similarities to one another, selecting the strongest and avoiding weaker positions (referencing, agreement, disagreement or questioning). This phase demonstrates intellectual progress by recognizing multiple points of view and determining how they relate or do not relate to one another and the topic.

c. Intellectual convergence, the third phase, is typically reflected in shared understanding (including agreeing to disagree) and the construction of shared knowledge and understanding. Idea structuring gains a level of intellectual synthesis, understanding, and agreement through gradual convergence, in which participants in the discussion agree to disagree and/or co-produce a conclusion, such as a solution to a problem, an

assignment, a report, a summary, or a presentation. Finally, when students begin to change a concept or an idea due to the interaction process that occurred in the previous stages of collaboration, they have reached the final position stage.

5 - Drafting: Drafting is a process of translating thoughts into a written composition. Each group begins to write their first draft by following their notes of ideas organized at the planning stage.

6 - Revising and editing: This includes revising, editing, and evaluating a draft for the writing task. After writing, a representative of each collaborative group read their paragraph, and the other groups provided the necessary feedback on their performance. Then the instructor assessed each group and provided formative feedback about their critical writing skills and collaboration.

f- Duration of the program:

The program duration was twelve weeks in the fall semester of the academic year 2020-2021. The sessions were 12 sessions, one lecture per week, around 120 minutes each.

g- Evaluation:

The evaluation system used in the proposed framework included both formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation was used to assess students' gradual progress in critical writing skills and their exploration of personal visions. Summative evaluation was used at the end of the experiment to assess students' progress.

During the program's implementation, the researcher carried out formative evaluation via a specific step known as assessment for learning. Furthermore, written paragraphs were used to track students' progress.

In terms of summative evaluation, the experimental group was given a pre-post critical writing test and post administration of the EFL interaction scale at the end of the proposed programme application. As a result, it aims to explore the impact of the proposed program on the development of EFL critical writing skills and interaction among second-year languages and translation students.

Experimentation went through the following steps:

1- The researcher designed the study materials and the instructor's guide, which were then validated by a number of ELT experts.

2- Thirty-three EFL students were randomly chosen from the second-year faculty of Languages and translation – Ahram Canadian University.

3- The researcher pre administered the critical writing test to the experimental group.

4- The researcher taught the experimental group through Microsoft teams in light of the program based on the collaborativist learning theory.

5- The researcher post administered the critical writing test and the EFL interaction scale to compare the pre and post administering results.

IV. Data Analysis and Results:

The current study purpose was to examine the effect of the program based on collaborativist learning theory on developing EFL second-year Languages and translation students' critical writing skills and interaction. The material was developed and experimented with students enrolled in the faculty of languages and translation at Ahram Canadian University. The sample was submitted to pre-post administrations of a critical writing test and post administration of the EFL interaction scale. The statistical package for social science program (SPSS Ver.23) was used to calculate the t-values for testing the differences between the mean scores of the study group on the pre and the post testing. The statistical analysis of the data and the results were interpreted in terms of the study hypotheses.

To test the first hypothesis which stated: "there would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance in the pre- and the post- administrations of the critical writing test as a whole and in each sub-skill favoring the post administration", Paired sample t-test was used. The results are presented in table (2).

Table (2)

T-test Results Comparing the Mean Scores of the Pre- and Post-Administration of the Critical Writing Test for the Experimental Group in Each Critical Writing Sub-Skill Assigned. (N=33, DF=32)

Critical Writing skills	Mean pre	Mean post	Std Deviation pre	Std Deviation post	"t. value"	df	Sig
1- Use an organizing structure	6.84	10.03	1.39	1.05	10.97	32	0.01*
2- Evaluate the author's point of view	2.09	3.36	0.80	0.55	8.35	32	0.01*
3- Give opinions and provide evidence to support these opinions	1.88	3.27	0.65	0.67	9.68	32	0.01*
4- Provide causes and effects	2.12	3.03	0.86	0.68	7.69	32	0.01*
5- Solve the problem	1.79	3.01	0.59	0.85	8.65	32	0.01*
6- Make comparisons and contrasts	2.36	3.09	0.74	0.63	6.19	32	0.01*
7-Make predictions	1.82	2.88	0.58	0.70	7.73	32	0.01*
Total	18.73	28.70	2.15	2.11	19.63	32	0.01*

(*) statistically significant difference at 0.01

Table (1) confirms the following:

1) There is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of experimental group students' performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the critical writing sub-skills test in favor of the post-administration of the test.

2) The mean scores of the experimental group in the post administration of the critical writing test (28.70) are higher than those of the pre one (18.73). Thus, a development of the overall critical writing skills of the experimental group students is proved. Therefore, this provides enough evidence to support hypothesis 1.

The difference between the experimental group scores in the pre and the post administrations of the critical writing test in each skill is evident in figure (1).

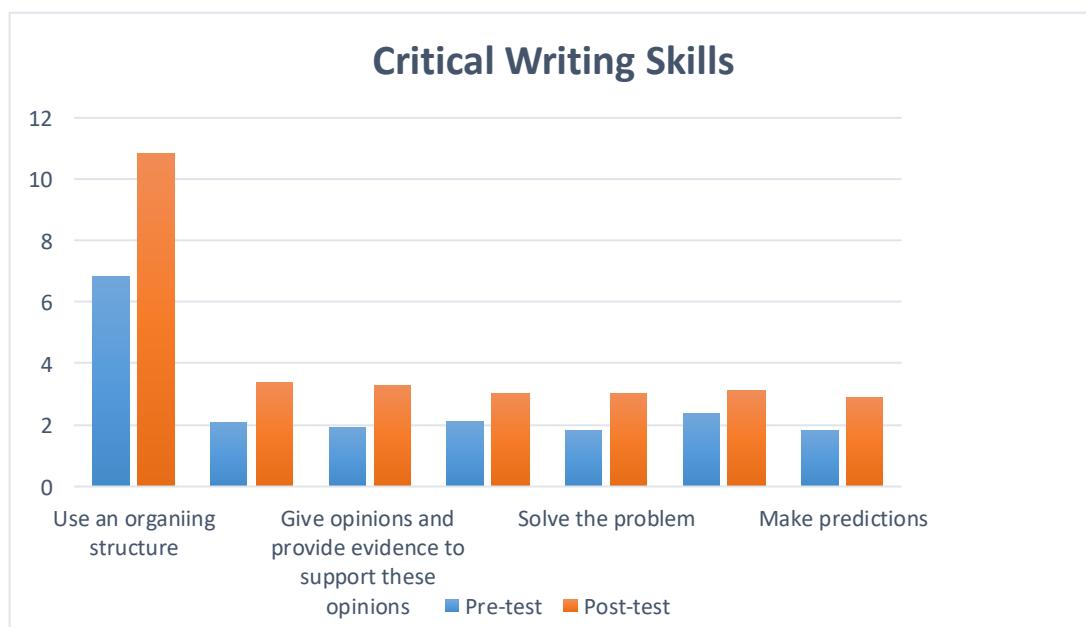


Figure (1): The Pre-Post- Critical Writing Sub-Skills Test Results of the Experimental Group

To test the second hypothesis which stated: "There would be a statistically significant difference at 0.01 between the mean scores of the experimental group students' performance on the post-administration of the EFL interaction scale as a whole and the test value in favor of the post-administration of the scale". A one-sample t-test (SPSS, Version 23) was used to compare the students' performance on the post-administration of the scale and the test value. The results are presented in table (3).

Table (3)
One Sample Statistics for the EFL Interaction Scale for the Experimental Group

Administration	Mean	Std Deviation	"t. value"	Sig
Test value	68	0.00		
Post	75.15	6.75	6.08	0.01*

(*) statistically significant difference at 0.01

T-test proved that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of experimental group students' performance on the post-administration of the EFL interaction scale as a whole and the test value in favor of the post-administration. As illustrated, the mean scores of the experimental group in the post administration of the EFL interaction scale is (75.15) are higher than those of the test value (68). Thus, a development of the EFL interaction of the experimental group students is proved. For further elaboration, see figure (2).

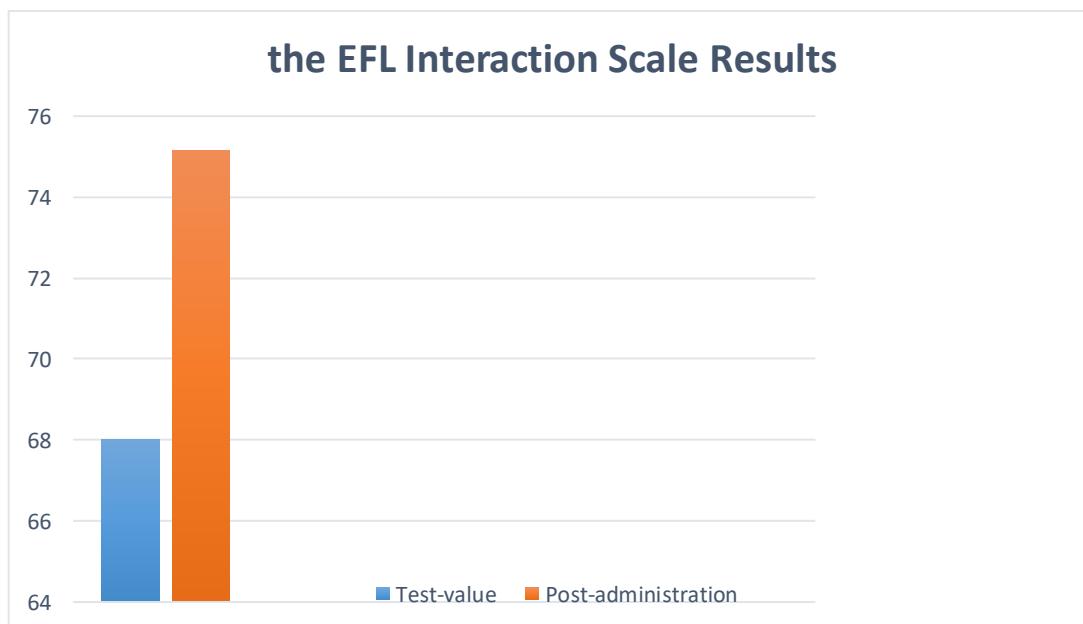


Figure (2): Differences between Participants' Mean Scores of the Post-Administration of the EFL Interaction Scale and those of the Test Value

To test the third hypothesis of the study which stated that "The program based on collaborativist learning theory would have an effect on developing the overall critical writing skills and each sub-skill among the

EFL second-year languages and translation students", the effect size of each skill was calculated using eta square formula.

Table (4): The Effect Size of the Program Based on Collaborativist Learning Theory on Developing the Overall Critical Writing Skills and Each Sub-skill

Critical writing skills	η^2	D	Effect size
1- Use an organizing structure	0.78	1.94	Large
2- Evaluate the author's point of view	0.69	1.47	Large
3- Give opinions and provide evidence to support these opinions	0.75	1.71	Large
4- Provide causes and effects	0.65	1.36	Large
5- Solve the problem	0.70	1.52	Large
6- Make comparisons and contrasts	0.54	1.09	Large
7-Make predictions	0.65	1.37	Large
Total	0.92	3.47	Large

The calculated effect size indicated that the implementation of the program based on collaborativist learning theory had a significant effect on the experimental group post-performance on each sub-skill score. Thus, the third hypothesis is supported.

To test the fourth hypothesis of the study which stated that " The program based on collaborativist learning theory would have an effect on developing the EFL interaction among the second-year languages and translation students", the same formula was used. The results are presented in table (5).

Table (5): The Effect Size of the Program Based on Collaborativist Learning Theory on Developing the EFL Interaction

	η^2	D	Effect size
EFL interaction	0.54	1.07	Large

The calculated effect size indicated that the program based on collaborativist learning theory had a significant effect on the experimental group's post-performance on the total score. Thus, the fourth hypothesis is supported.

In this quasi-experimental study, both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained to achieve the research questions of the current study.

The results might be due to the following reasons:

- Collaborativist learning theory offers participants a new experience in which they brainstorm, generate, organize, and reconstruct ideas and information in small collaborative groups, which was difficult to achieve in their face-to-face learning experience.

- Collaborativist learning theory-based classes promote learner-to-learner interaction and collaboration by encouraging interaction with the instructors as well as learner-to-learner interaction and collaboration. As a result, the collaborativist learning theory-based classes and learning environments are effective and result in better learning outcomes than traditional classrooms.
- Participants in tasks based on collaborativist learning theory had ample opportunities to evaluate their fellow team members and other peers, improving their self-reflection.
- The feedback participants received from the researcher and other peers during their collaborative groups on Microsoft teams breakout rooms allowed them to learn more from their mistakes.
- Collaborativist learning theory improves participants' ability to analyze and evaluate their ideas while writing critically. They justify and provide evidence to support their points of view. It also enhances their ability to compare and contrast ideas, provide causes and effects, make predictions, give appropriate solutions to a problem, in addition to demonstrating an effective organizational structure.
- Microsoft teams promotes participants better communication and collaboration while maintaining complete confidentiality. Its main features include real-time discussion, instant texting, programme sharing and running, PowerPoint presenting, audio calling, whiteboard interacting, assigning tasks, online meetings, and breakout rooms. Unlike other free web-conferencing tools, this copyrighted software is far more helpful for holding a long meeting that can last for several hours without interruption.
- Microsoft teams provides participants with more practise time to acquire and practise their EFL critical writing skills, as well as a better opportunity for the researcher to monitor students' writing progress in conjunction with their online collaborative discussion.
- Collaborativist learning theory helps students actively engage in their learning by connecting their prior knowledge to new information. It improves the interaction between students and enhances group work and team spirit. It also provides students with opportunities to be involved in concepts, information and events through discussion, asking questions and obtaining information.
- The collaborativist learning theory-based classes provide a safe online environment where students feel comfortable while writing through sharing their ideas and opinions without being afraid of making mistakes or receiving negative feedback.

- One of the main features of the collaborativist learning theory-based classes is the vital role of technology in enhancing the teacher-student interaction as teachers control the contexts where students participate in their collaborative groups. The teacher is more than just a facilitator of group discussion; he or she not only serves as a mediator between the students and the larger knowledge community but also represents, and assists in incorporating the students into the knowledge community's debates and research processes.
- The collaborativist learning theory-based classes provide students sufficient opportunities for interaction with their teachers and the learning of new language skills. Moreover, it encouraged shy learners to overcome their anxiety and participate more in online classes.

V- Conclusion:

Based on the current study results, it can be concluded that learning the educational content in the light of the collaborativist learning theory can enhance students' critical writing skills. Collaborativist learning theory offers an approach that highlights and respects collaborative group members' abilities and contributions, leading to increased engagement in the learning process. Similarly, it can also promote interaction among students, which could positively impact learners' experiences in L2 learning. Moreover, Microsoft Teams provides an easier way for small groups to communicate and collaborate effectively online. As a result, it is highly recommended to implement the collaborativist learning theory-based classes in educational contexts, especially in writing classes.

VI- Recommendations:

Based on the study results and discussions, the following can be recommended:

- 1- English language teachers should be trained on using collaborativist learning theory while teaching English to their students in different educational stages.
- 2- English language teachers should develop the students' EFL critical writing skills in the early educational stages to develop them in the following stages.
- 3- English language teachers should encourage students in the collaborativist learning theory environment to develop social responsibility skills and independence, listen to others, gain confidence, and get rid of any fears or hesitations while writing critically.
- 4- Students' responses, emotions, ideas and points of view should be respected and accepted to encourage them to write critically.

- 5- Curriculum designers should use collaborativist learning theory when designing English language courses and overcoming any teaching or learning problems.
- 6- Future research may explore effective approaches to training students to provide constructive peer feedback while writing critically.

VII- Suggestions for further research:

Based on the current study results, the following suggestions are presented for further research:

- 1- Exploring the effect of the collaborativist learning theory on developing students' critical writing skills at different levels of education.
- 2- Investigating the collaborativist learning theory's impact on developing other language skills; critical reading, listening, and speaking.
- 3- Examining the effect of using the collaborativist learning theory on developing students' critical thinking skills and motivation towards the English language.
- 4- Designing a training program for teachers on how to implement the collaborativist learning theory.
- 5- Utilizing other strategies on developing students' EFL critical writing skills.
- 6- Exploring more diversified use of wikis in collaborative language learning.

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