

Investigating the Effectiveness of Collaborative Writing's Multi-Tasks in Bridging the Gap between EFL Classroom Activities and Workplace Practices

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Abstract

The study investigates the effectiveness of collaborative writing tasks on EFL undergraduates' writing performance aiming at bridging the gap between EFL classroom activities and workplace practices. The study involved 44 participants, who were divided into experimental groups that participated in a series of collaborative writing tasks and essay writing, unlike the control group which wrote individually. The two groups were given the same writing test. The results showed that due to the extensive practices, the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group. The essay's content analysis revealed that most students found collaborative writing was a beneficial experience for improving their writing, learning new ideas, and styles, all these prepare students for real-world writing tasks of future careers like communication skills, developing critical thinking, problem-solving collaboration in writing business reports or plans, whereas few of them feel frustrated and demotivated because some members are not contributing, few members take over others which created an observable conflict, it consumes time, and language fluency issues. The study recommends using collaborative writing widely in EFL classrooms and suggests investigating its effects on speaking and listening.

Keywords: Collaborative writing, solo writing, multitasks, EFL classroom activities, workplace practices.

1. Introduction

Collaborative group writing is advanced as technology advances and becomes more fruitful. It eases working from anywhere and sharing opinions this view was supported by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1981) which highlights the importance of verbal group interaction in learning interaction and states that social interaction is the base for cognitive development. Moreover, Swain & Lapkin (2000) notions of language oral tasks in enhancing and pushing language outcomes. Collaborative writing has several definitions, the most common means that collaboration is not limited to pre- or post-writing activities, but rather that students are engaged in collaboration in all stages of writing from decision-making to drafting to final editing of the text. Collaborative learning is perceived as one of the approaches that aid ESL students to become proficient in writing (Veramuthu & Shah 2020). Collaborative writing requires skills that will be

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necessary in their future workplaces such as good planning, coordination among group members, problem-solving, and frequent communication (Storch 2019). Students are accountable not only for their learning but also for their peers, which means they must share their expertise and master newly acquired information more dynamically. As they compose, students must communicate with each other and negotiate choices (and possible dissent) in both digital platforms and in face-to-face communications, all while maintaining a respectful learning environment, these are high expectations. Storch (2017).

1.1 The problem

Many EFL classrooms have limited collaborative writing practices which limited the studies on how to measure collaborative writing significances and outcomes compared to the solo writing process. These limitations may happen due to some challenges teachers may encounter such as the methods and techniques to use for teaching collaborative writing, and how to initiate, plan and control these groups. Moreover, they may not know to what extent do some students struggle with writing skills, whether are they going to get the benefits of being among a group, or whether those of high performance going to bear being among low-performance students. Therefore, the current study may look for some key factors for advancing this field.

1.2 Goals

The study goals are:

1. Developing students' writing skills by receiving feedback from their peers and collaborating to produce high-quality products.
2. Encourage EFL students to work collaboratively to develop ideas and find solutions.
3. Providing EFL students with communication skills they need to work together and to get their ideas across to others.
4. Building teamwork skills to work collaboratively in the classroom to achieve common goals and to prepare EFL for workplace-required practices.

1.3 Hypotheses

The study hypotheses are based on the following considerations that collaborative writing:

1. Working together as a team guides students to achieve common goals and develop important collaborative skills needed in class and in the future workplace.
2. Dividing the writing workload among the team helps getting more done.
3. Building important productive skills for classroom and future employability as well.
4. Collaborative activities produce higher quality work through getting feedback from peers and improving their writing outcomes. This helps students to develop the perfect skills essential for academic performance success and prepares them for future jobs.

1.4 Questions

The questions that guided this study for improving collaboration, increasing productivity, and ensuring perfection among EFL undergraduates are:

1. To what extent does collaborative writing lead to improve and increase the production of written output?
2. Does writing collaboratively produce better products than solo ones?

5. Does writing collaboratively achieve a higher level of perfection and skills essential for success in their academic performance and for future jobs than solo writing?

1.5 Significances

The importance of this study lies in its role to train and develop EFL undergraduates' collaborative writing skills, promote their critical and creative thinking, integrate communication skills using a variety of strategies and methods, maximize the benefits of brainstorming, peer review, co-authorship, and interdisciplinary thinking using a different social approach. The study emphasizes that collaborative writing is an efficacious process involving multiple stages and activities, such as before, during, and after writing.

Moreover, the findings of this research will be of interest to EFL writing instructors, EFL undergraduates, researchers, and writing curriculum designers. The research provides valuable insights into the benefits and drawbacks of collaborative writing, and it suggests some techniques through which collaborative writing can be used to improve the writing skills and labor market readiness of EFL undergraduates.

2. Literature Review and Related Studies

Writing is a productive skill that acts as a medium for communicating thoughts, plans, and feelings. Again, a framework for interpersonal communication and an appropriate tool for achieving personal, professional, and academic goals. Even if it's important, it's not easy to write because you have to know the content and grammar. Additionally, learners may find it difficult to organize ideas logically. Collaborative writing, therefore, facilitates learning in one's environment through social interaction, it is a process that provides students with opportunities to discuss, explore, and improve their learning skills (Dobao, 2012). Its creation is based on Vygotsky's idea of working with professionals to promote growth (Hiedar, 2016). Co-authorship is characterized by interaction with classmates and widespread use. Learners discuss writing topics and generate ideas. Jelodar and Farvardin (2019) assume this type of writing is a practical implementation of a semantics-based learning process that improves lighting accuracy. Collaborative learning strategies are explicit approaches or procedures to guide the process of collaborative learning. Collaborative learning occurs when dyads or small groups have been engineered to share responsibility, authority, and learning outcomes (Udvari-Solner, 2012). To promote active learning, teachers across disciplines and in all kinds of colleges are incorporating collaborative learning into their teaching (Barkely and Cross, 2005) Pajares (2002) explained that social learning theory (SLT) is based on the concept that learning occurs through social observation and subsequent imitation of modeled behavior. According to SLT, people learn by observing the actions and outcomes of others. In this way, individuals can learn to imitate observed behavior and be rewarded.

Collaborative writing is a social process in which a team focuses on a common goal and negotiates, coordinates, and communicates through the creation of a shared document (Lowry Curtis & Lowry, 2004). Various strategies can be followed (Ede and Lunsford, 1990), but five strategies are the most common (Berndt, 2011). These are one-for-all writes, in-sequence writes, all-in-parallel writes, all-in-reaction writes, and multimode writes. Each offers a different approach to coordinating paperwork within a group and is suitable for different purposes. Top performers (Pros) will take the current level of the beginner to their potential growth level and provide appropriate support. Shehadeh (2011), and Su & Zou (2020) define co-writing as a collaborative process of two or more of her group members. They write texts together, the number of which increases with the number of students.

Collaborative writing yields spelling accuracy and measures how well the generated text adheres to the target standard (Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). According to this definition, precision can refer to certain grammatical features and percentages. Error-free clauses.

The general opinion is that most students have experience working together. Better grammatical accuracy and better use of vocabulary (Dobao & Blum, 2013). Dobao (2012) argued that L2 writers could work in pairs or small groups to collaboratively produce texts with more accurate language-related episodes. Similarly, Storch (2005) argued that co-authored texts are more precise and complex. A study by Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) reached similar conclusions. Together, they compared individual writing approaches in terms of accuracy, complexity, and fluency. The poll results showed it. This collaboration did not produce fluent or complex sentences but instead helped authors build grammar and proofread their writing. Similarly, Jafari and Ansari (2012) found that authors belonged to cooperative groups, and a more accurate sentence was generated.

Despite the above research results, Kang and Lee (2019) conclude that collaborative writing improves writing. It's fluid and complex but doesn't improve accuracy. Some researchers argue that co-authorship is impossible. Help your students improve their writing skills. They believe that a lack of knowledge leads to students not engaging in writing. activity (Prinsen et al., 2009). Furthermore, Bremner (2010) suggested that I was not actively involved in co-authorship. Most of the participants answered that it was difficult to write sentences together.

The focus of the above studies was primarily not on how collaborative writing affects writing, but what it can do beyond that. Integrating Learning into EFL writing education is a powerful tool. Strategies to make learning more engaging. Internet-based learning media such as wikis and blogs are integrated for optimal dialogue and writing for cognitive development (Talib & Cheung, 2017) other researchers have stated this (Anwar, 2021)

Chen & Yu (2019) study examined students' perceptions of collaborative writing in a teacher-centered class and their change in beliefs about English writing. Results showed that collaborative writing improved writing, provided opportunities for idea pooling, and had positive emotional and social effects. However, participants were concerned about limitations in learning, increased difficulty dealing with diverse views, and negative emotions. The study also revealed a reconsideration of good English writing, its purpose, focus, and nature from individual work to teamwork.

Most of the results reached by the above studies are consistent with the current study and confirm the benefits of collaborative writing for example Sarkhsh & Najafi (2020) investigated the differential impact of collaborative and individual writing approaches on the development of fluency and accuracy in male and female EFL learners. The data were analyzed and found that co-authorship helped both men and women to write more fluently in the short and long term. Additionally, collaborative essays were more accurate than individual essays. Technologies also play a significant role in enhancing collaborative writing such as Zhang & Zou (2022), who conducted a systematic and in-depth review of 34 relevant empirical studies from 2009 to 2019. The results showed that wikis, Google Docs, offline word processors, Facebook, chats, and forums were the six main types of tools that enhanced the implementation of collaborative writing in and out of class.

On the other hand, this study was inconsistent with some results about students' worries about learning limitations, increased difficulty in dealing with differing views, and negative emotions when focusing on individual work to teamwork. obtained by Chen & Yu (2019) who examined students' perceptions of collaborative writing,

This study aims to fill the gap by providing evidence of the effectiveness of collaborative versus solo writing to EFL undergraduates by comparing it with solo writing in a controlled setting. It fills the gap by exploring the impact of co-authoring on collaboration, production, and perfection through quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Findings from this study may influence writing instructions for EFL students, help teachers decide whether to use collaborative or solo writing, and influence

the design of effective activities. A rational grading and assessment of collaborative writing motivates and encourages students to contribute and engage fully in the activity (Storch 2017))

3. Methodology

The current study used a mixed-methods design, with both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The quantitative data was collected using two performance tests administered to both the control-solo writing, and experimental groups. The qualitative data was collected through reflection essays to gather the experimental group's opinions and attitudes on the benefits and challenges of collaborative writing and working as teams. The overall goal of the study was to better understanding how collaborative writing affects students' cooperation, communication, production, and perfection the thing that can bridge the gap between classroom writing activities and prepare students' future job requirements.

3.1 Participants

The participants were two groups (n=44) of female undergraduates majoring in the English language, in the academic year 2023. Their ages ranged between 21 to 23 years old. They enrolled in solo and cooperative writing courses as follows:

3.1.1 Group A: Experimental group:

It was the group, that enrolled in a collaborative writing course that lasted for 14 weeks (42 hrs.) and consisted of (n=22) female students. They wrote as teamwork.

3.1.2 Group B: Control group:

It was the group that enrolled in a typical writing course (writing 2) that lasted for 14 weeks (42 hrs.) and consisted of (n=22) female students. They wrote individually.

3.2 The procedures

Two different writing courses were taught to the experimental and control groups, according to the courses' specifications and learning outcomes (CLOs). Both courses lasted 14 weeks (42 hours) and were taught by the researcher. Regarding the experimental group, the instructor nominated five leaders, who were directed to form groups of five students. Students were free to choose which group to join. Each group leader was responsible for making a list of rules, drawing a map, presenting themes to the team, creating a basic framework, controlling the group's members, and generating the group's ideas for writing the final approved work. As stated by Yang (2014), forming "group rules" was the main mediational means in the process of collaborative writing across the groups of ESL students. In the control group, students worked and submitted written assignments individually. The control group then sat for a performance and achievement exam to compare their exam scores with those of the collaborative writing group. All of these procedures were designed to ensure that the research objectives and procedures were applied in a controllable manner to avoid unforeseen limitations or variables. Finally, one of the collaborative writing tasks was a reflection essay, which was used to gather groups' opinions about the benefits and challenges of writing collaboratively.

3.3 The Study Tools

Data collection tools were: a) a list of writing tasks assigned weekly preceded by a collaborative writing syllabus taught throughout the first semester of 2023/2024, b) reflection essays written by the five collaborative groups, ended by c) two performance tests as follow:

Table 1: Collaborative Writing Weekly Multi tasks and Course Learning outcomes (CLOs)

Table 1- Tool 1: Writing task's titles and course learning outcomes (CLOs)

Weeks	CLOs	Tasks' Title
1 st and 2 nd	Course orientation and introduction	The Risk of Social Media
3 rd and 4 th	Transitions for Coherence in the essay unity.	Learning Foreign languages
5 th	Language and grammar and run-on sentences.	A Speech at graduation
6 th	Quiz 1	
7 th	Identifying pronoun reference.	Overcoming Difficult Situations
8 th	Critical thinking and responding to responding to the text.	Course in Art at some Medical Schools
9 th	Brainstorming and outlining - Compare and contrast	A letter to a friend: Comparing personal and academic life.
10 th	Quiz 2	
11 th	Searching and researching	Searching and analyzing website
12 th	Examining Students' Essay Writing Developing Idea	Capturing Children's Emotions Expression of Youth
13 th	Revising and editing the written drafts	Writing a report about the benefits and challenges of writing within a team at the university. (it is used as a third measuring tool for students' opinions about writing collaboratively)
14 th	Publishing final drafts	Students submissions
Total	42hrs.	
15 th	Final Exam	40 Marks

Instructions for the Collaborative Group:

Steps:

1. The team should create sentences together.
2. The team build on each other point to develop and write a draft.
3. The team should share in editing, refining,
4. The group leader should enclose the group's full names and upload the final production weekly via the Blackboard Dropbox.

Tool 2. Performance Writing tests

Two test scenarios that carried the same titles were administrated with the experimental and control groups by the end of week 15 of the third semester of 2023/2024. The instructor assigned three titles for the students to write in two (an essay and a paragraph) to write them individually. The test score is out of 40 marks.

Table (2) Comparing the experimental and control group Exams' Scores out of 40 marks:

St. / Groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Experimental	25	33	21	39	37	38	26	34	24	33	27
Control	14	22	18	32	34	35	21	22	24	35	21

Table (2) Comparing the experimental and control group Exams' Scores out of 40 marks:

St. / Groups	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Experimental	31	36	36	33	29	39	27	37	22	9	35
Control Gr	24	21	24	23	29	30	21	22	21	28	29

Tool 3: Reflection Essays

The collaborative writing groups were assigned to write a report about the benefits and challenges of writing with teamwork at the university. Essays were used as measurement tools to collect the participants' opinions about collaborative writing's benefits and challenges they may encounter.

3.4 Data analysis procedures:

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) was used to analyze the data in this study p-value of 0.05 was considered statistically significant. The paired sample t-test is a statistical procedure used to determine the means differences between two groups.

4. Findings

4.1 Finding of the two Performance Tests

The following are the results of the research entitled " Collaborative vs. Solo Writing from Theory to Practice Multi Tasks for Bridging the Gap between EFL Classroom Activities and Workplace Practices

Table (3) Descriptive Statistics of Collaborative writing exam scores and Solo Writing exam scores:

Group	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental Group	31.86	22	5.21	1.11
Control Group	24.14	22	5.54	1.18

Table (3) shows the mean and standard deviation of the two groups (Experimental and control), the mean of the Experimental Group (31.86 ± 5.21), and the mean of the Control Group (24.14 ± 5.54), this clarified the difference in means.

Table (4) Comparing the collaborative and Solo writing exams' Scores out of 40 marks:

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	Df.	Sign.(2-tailed)
Experimental Group	7.72727	4.95870	1.05720	7.309	21	0.000*
Control Group						

* significant at level 0.01.

Table (4) showed there were statistically significant differences between the two groups (Experimental, Control), the result proved that there were significant differences in favor of the Experimental Group ($t = 7.309$, $P. \text{ value} = 0.000 < 0.05$).

Table 5: Findings of collaborative writing groups' opinions essays about benefits and challenges

Group No.	Opinions about the Benefits	Opinions about challenges
1	Scaffolding writing skills	The challenge of managing the time for the submission of some students' contributions as scheduled
2	Increase engagement	Some students have commitments outside and delay submitting their contributions and this is beyond the submission schedule.
3	Aids in problem-solving.	Some conflicts may occur among the team.
4	Building good relationships and communication skills among the team.	Some students tried to take advantage of other members and did not contribute their share
5	Add knowledge and more understating of the given topics	commitment to submitting individuals' fair share

5. Discussion of the Study Findings

5.1 Discussion of Tests' Findings

The discussion of the results obtained from data analysis of the research that compares collaborative vs. solo writing enhances cooperation, increases production, guarantees perfection, and prepares undergraduates for the workplace. The results in Table 3 show that the mean score for obtained by experimental group which participated in collaborative tasks was (31.86) was significantly higher than the mean score for the control group (24.14). This difference in means is statistically significant as evidenced by the fact that for t- test is $p < .0.000$ level.

The results in Table 4 shows that there were statistically significant differences between the two groups (Experimental and control) in terms of their writing performance. The Experimental Group, which used collaborative writing, had a significantly higher mean score (31.86) than the Control Group, which used solo writing (24.14). This difference in

means is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level, which means that it is very unlikely to have occurred by chance.

The t-statistic of 7.309 and the p-value of 0.000 both indicate that the difference in means is large and statistically significant. This suggests that collaborative writing was more effective than solo writing in terms of enhancing cooperation, increasing production, guaranteeing perfection, and preparing undergraduates for the workplace.

The higher mean score for the Experimental Group suggests that collaborative teams were more likely to cooperate, produce more work, produce more perfect work, and be better prepared for the workplace than solo students. This is likely because collaborative writing requires students to share ideas, feedback, and responsibility. This process can help to build trust, communication, and teamwork skills, all of which are essential for success in the workplace.

In addition, the findings answer the research questions, prove its hypotheses, and achieve its goals that collaborative writing can help writing teams share the workload and rely on each other for support. This can be especially helpful for students who are struggling with writing assignments. Collaborative writing can also help to improve the quality of writing, as writers can benefit from each other's feedback and suggestions. Overall, the results of this study suggest that collaborative writing is a more effective way to write than solo writing. Collaborative writing can enhance cooperation, increase production, guarantee perfection, and prepare undergraduates for the workplace.

The current study's findings are consistent with previous research on the benefits of collaborative writing. Students who work in cooperative groups tend to produce more accurate sentences and their writing skills improve overall. However, some studies have found that collaborative writing does not necessarily lead to more fluent or complex sentences. It is important to note that there are many factors that can influence the effectiveness of collaborative writing, such as the composition of the group, the nature of the task, and the teacher's role in the process. More research is needed to better understand the factors that contribute to the success of collaborative writing.

Comparing of these study's results with previous research, the current study's findings are consistent with previous research on the benefits of collaborative writing. For example, Dobao (2012), Hiedar (2016), Jelodar and Farvardin (2019), Udvari-Solner (2012), Barkley and Cross (2005), Pajares (2002), and Lowry Curtis and Lowry (2004) all found that collaborative writing improves students' writing competence. However, the current study's findings are inconsistent with some previous research on the effects of collaborative writing on accuracy, complexity, and fluency. For example, Storch (2005) argued that co-authored texts are more precise and complex, while Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) found that collaboration did not lead to more fluent or complex sentences. Kang and Lee (2019) also found that collaborative writing does not improve accuracy.

There are some explanations for why collaborative writing improves students' writing competences, compared to solo writing. The first explanation, is due to the chance of learning from peers and getting feedback that play significant roles on discovering and correcting mistakes. The second explanation was due to the chance they had to develop their critical thinking that developed by discussion and debate for their ideas and end up by finishing their writing tasks. Final explanation, it creates the soul of teamwork to coordinate and cooperate their efforts for achieving goals. To conclude, these results suggests that collaborative writing was more effective than solo writing in terms of enhancing cooperation, increasing production, guaranteeing perfection, and preparing undergraduates for the workplace.

Adding to the above mentioned explanations, the distinguish results were due to the reality that the two groups were instructed by the researcher, who implements intensive

and extra tasks with the experimental group the thing that creates differences in the two groups' performance

Regarding the current research limitations, the researcher has only one observation is that it was conducted within EFL female undergraduates and its findings would better to be better generalized with male participants. Moreover, the study used only tests, and tasks to examine the effects of collaborative writing on improving students' writing, developing critical thinking skills and ability to solve problems these provide strong evidence that collaborative writing is a more effective way to write than solo writing, a close-ended questionnaire needs for measuring participants' perceptions and attitudes towards writing collaboratively.

It is important to note that there are many factors that can influence the effectiveness of collaborative writing, such as the initiating collaborative writing groups, the nature of the tasks, and the teacher's roles in the teaching processes and techniques. More research is needed to better understand the factors that contribute to the successful or unsuccessful of collaborative writing.

5.2 Discussion of the Reflection Essays

A content analysis of the reflection essays written by the experimental groups, who worked collaboratively as teams, concerning the benefits and challenges of writing as teamwork indicated that the benefits of collaborative writing included: sharing knowledge and opinions on the subject matter, receiving feedback on ideas from different perspectives, collaborating to share knowledge on the topic, which deepened group members' understanding of the subject and helped to improve the teams' abilities to solve problems, exposure to various writing styles, encouragement to unite and finish before the deadline due to regular scheduled submissions from most of the members, which ensured frequent engagement and responsibility toward teammates, and activated them to produce high-quality products, satisfaction and preparedness for the workplace,

The challenges of collaborative writing, as reported by the EFL undergraduates, were few compared to the benefits gained, and included: breaking the scheduled time for submitting some contributions due to some members' family commitments, some members not sharing effectively and relying too much on others, which disturbed the active members and created the feeling of unfairness in distributing assignments' scores.

To conclude, despite the fewer difficulties of joining a collaborative writing team encountered by EFL undergraduates, the benefits outweigh those difficulties. This encourages members to effectively participate in these writing groups to improve the quality of their writing and enhance regular communication between them. Working as a team improved their writing performance and prepared students for a future career where teamwork is required.

5.3 Recommendations

Collaborative writing might be a significant tool for the development of writing talents and bridging the gaps between activities done by the students inside the classrooms and the workplace requirements they may encounter in future jobs by following these recommendations,

1. researchers have to discover the efficiency of collaborative writing amongst EFL undergraduates by carrying out studies with a variety of learners, utilizing distinct activities, and measuring the outcomes.
2. Teachers have to disclose their experiences to advert and enhance the application of collaborative writing in the classrooms.
3. Curriculum developers have to build resources to back up collaborative writing, such as lesson plans, activities, and assessment tools.

Recommendations concerning the challenges faced by collaborative writing teams, the study recommends the following to ensure active participation, create collaboration, and guarantee success:

1. The collaborative writing group's members must commit to the earlier plan created by the instructor and the group's leaders through which they distributed members' responsibilities.
2. The deadline for submitting members' contributions should be respected.
3. The course instructor should follow up on the teams' progress and members' commitments via its leaders.
4. The instructor and each group leader have to be flexible to create a feeling of working as a team to avoid conflicts.

5.4 Suggestion for future research

Collaborative writing studies are comparatively new areas of researching, and their efficiency is still poorly comprehended. However, the study proposes collaborative writing could be an indispensable generator for enhancing writing skills of EFL students. Coming study in this place could help make collaborative writing even more persuasive for this stratum. It is advisable to employ quantitative data collection like close-ended questionnaire to infer more participants' perceptions of collaborative writing.

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