Teaching Collaborative Writing: Towards Implementing High Impact Educational Practices among Northern Border University Students

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ABSTRACT
The present study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of teaching writing collaboratively on EFL students' essay writing skills. Thirty EFL male students enrolled in the preparatory year English program at the Northern Border University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, participated in this study. They were randomly divided into an experimental and a control group. Collaborative teaching of writing was used with the experimental group students, whereas students of the control group were taught in an ordinary way by using the prescribed book. In addition, a pre-posttest of writing was used to measure participants' essay writing skills. Results revealed that experimental group students surpassed their counterparts of the control group in essay writing skills.

Keywords: Collaborative Writing, Writing Skill, EFL.

1. Introduction
Writing is a very complex language skill. Without skilful regular teaching, many students — particularly novice ones — may not become skilled writers. Writing in one's mother language is not an easy job. Rather, it is a difficult and demanding task that requires several essential and interactive linguistic as well as metacognitive abilities (Schoonen et al., 2003). The ability of writing is not a natural ability that accompanies maturation in an automatic way, or even children and adults develop this capacity by immersion in a given linguistic community. Instead, much effort on the part of both the teacher and the learner in formal and regular teaching is necessary for the learner to learn how to write (Coimbra, 2009; Andrade & Evans, 2013).

Skilful writing for Steve and Perin (2007, p. 3) "is not just an option for young people—it is a necessity. Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and the global economy". It is a "complex, integrated performance that cannot be understood apart from the social and cognitive purposes it serves" (Deane et al., 2008, p. 1). More recently, writing, according to Sharplest (1999, p. 5), has been evaluated as "a social and cultural activity. A writer is a member of a community of practice, sharing ideas and techniques with other writers". The way in which we write is formed by the world in which we live as well as by the differences in culture that influence not only the language we use but also the assumptions that we have about how our writings are understood and used. Writing has been considered as one of the most challenging skills both for students and for teachers.
Writing is an integrated, socially situated skill in the sense that a single piece of writing, as assumed by Deane et al. (2008), may do many things at the same time: it tells a story; introduces facts and builds a theory upon them; it also develops a rational argument and tries to persuade its audience to accept a particular course of action; in the meantime, it addresses several audiences; clarifies and explains the author's viewpoint; it creates new ideas; combines other people's ideas into a unique mixture; and do it all perfectly and flawlessly. Writing is fundamental for studying all subjects and for learning all professions. It is only via writing well one can give a good account of him/herself as a student or when applying for a certain job, or when writing letters, e-mails, scheduling personal projects, giving instructions, making notes, making reports and when communicating one's thoughts effectively in any assessed written work, tests and examinations. It is by one's writing that many people judge him/her (Barrass, 2005).

Lin and Chien (2009, p. 79) put it clear that "at the beginning of our second millennium, freewriting is one of the primary methods that human beings use to convey their thoughts and communicate with each other". Therefore, it is crucially important for students, from the very beginning of their education journey, to recognize that their final grades depend not only on their knowledge and understanding of their subject but also on how skillfully they are able to convey this knowledge and understanding via writing. Student writing, according to Coffin et al. (2003), is at the heart of teaching and learning in tertiary education. It fulfills a variety of purposes, including assessment, learning and entering particular disciplinary communities.

Unfortunately, after more than 12 years at school, as concluded by Barrass (2005, p. 6), "many students starting courses in higher education are clever enough to understand their work and yet unable to communicate their knowledge, understanding and ideas effectively". Supporting this, Steve and Perin (2007) claim that:

"Every year in the United States, large numbers of adolescents graduate from high school unable to write at the basic level required by colleges or employers. In addition, every school day, 7,000 young people drop out of high school ... many of them because they lack the basic literacy skills to meet the growing demands of the high school curriculum" (p. 3).

According to Llosa et al. (2011) and Koutroufas and Gray (2013), the U.S. national statistics manifest that approximately 1/3 of high school students who are planning to continue on into post-secondary education do not meet standards of readiness for college-level writing. In addition, national test data show that only 24% of 12th-grade students performed at or above the "Proficient" level of writing on the NAEP. Furthermore, only 2% of English Language Learners (ELLs) scored at or above "Proficient" compared to 25% of non-ELLs.

2. Statement of the Problem

EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia need to keep up with the high impact educational practices (HIPs) used in teaching English as a foreign/second language all over the world. Actually, EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia employed nearly all teaching methods and educational practices over the past years. However, most EFL students find writing as a difficult task. Their writing, in general, is poor and difficult to follow. Hence, this study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of teaching writing collaboratively on the Northern Border University EFL students' essay writing skills. More specifically, the study attempted to answer the following question:

2.1. What is the effectiveness of teaching writing collaboratively on the Northern Border University EFL students' essay writing skills?

3. Hypotheses of the Study

3.1. There are statistically significant differences favouring the experimental group between the mean scores obtained by students of the experimental group and those of the control group on the posttest of essay writing.

3.2. There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores obtained by students of the experimental group on the pretest of essay writing and their mean scores on the posttest favouring the posttest.

4. Objectives of the Study

The current study attempted to achieve the following objectives:

4.1. Explore the effectiveness of teaching writing collaboratively on the Northern Border University EFL students' essay writing skills.

4.2. Pave the way for implementing high impact educational practices (HIPs) among Northern Border University EFL students.
5. Significance of the Study

The current study derived its importance from the following:

5.1. Implementing HIPs is urgently needed nowadays in light of the Kingdom’s Vision 2030.

5.2. The findings of this study might attract the attention of EFL teachers and curriculum planners, and developers to the importance of incorporating collaborative techniques and strategies in language teaching and learning.

6. Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to:

6.1. EFL students enrolled in preparatory year English program at the Northern Border University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Because of sex segregation executed in Saudi Arabia, male students were preferred to be the participants of this study in order to guarantee effective teaching and better interaction.

6.2. Essay writing domains in this intervention included; organization, mechanics, vocabulary & language use, and ideas & content.

7. Literature Review

7.1. Second Language Writing

Writing is an essential aspect of today’s EFL/ESL learners’ academic and communicative competence. Learners while learning a second/foreign language do not acquire effective writing automatically. It is a difficult job that needs systematic teaching and adequate practice. Second language writing is an “interdisciplinary field of inquiry that draws on and contributes to various related disciplines, including applied linguistics and composition studies, which are themselves highly interdisciplinary” (Matsuda, Ortmeier-Hooper & Matsuda, 2009, p. 457). Olstain (2001, p. 207) claims that “within the communicative framework of language teaching, the skill of writing enjoys special status”. She (Olstain) justifies her claim by pointing out that through writing skill, one can communicate a diversity of messages to a diversity of readers, whether they are close or distant, known or unknown to the writer. However, writing before the advent of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach was a “means of reinforcing structural patterns; it was limited in scope, and generally quite controlled” (Andrade & Evans, 2013, p. 3). Until the latter half of the 20th century, writing, according to Matsuda, Ortmeier-Hooper and Matsuda (2009, p. 458), was not a big concern among ESL/EFL specialists for many reasons. First, the need for literacy, in general, was limited before the 19th century. A high level of second or even first language literacy was not needed by most people at that time. Second, as a result of industrial and technological advances that led to the increase of international exchange of people, and the affordability and safety of worldwide travel and trade for a wide variety of people, the need for learning how to speak English, as well as other modern languages became more evident than before. Third, the emergence of modern scientific linguistics in Europe, with phonetics as the heart of the scientific study of language. Those linguists endeavoured to establish their own discipline by detaching themselves from ancient, or what they called, ‘dead’ languages that existed only in written forms. Furthermore, phoneticians, at that time, argued that language is speech, not writing and that writing is the inaccurate representation of language.

With the change in the 1970s in English language teaching pedagogy from grammar-based teaching methodologies to communicative language teaching (CLT), writing began to "assume a position of importance as a skill in its own right" (Andrade & Evans, 2013, p. 3). In addition, in the 1960s, research in second language writing began to establish itself as an important growing field among higher education 2nd language teachers in the United States of America. Furthermore, with the worldwide expansion of the English language as the lingua franca of both academic and professional communication, and with the economic globalization, accompanied by migration of people across domestic borders, both 2nd language writing research and pedagogy continued to grow more and more, becoming increasingly evident in many countries (Matsuda & Silva, 2005; Matsuda, Ortmeier-Hooper & Matsuda, 2009), supporting this, Andrade and Evans (2013, p. 3) state that the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a notable increase in the number of students coming from overseas seeking admission and enrollment in the universities of English-speaking countries. Those students needed to learn how to write more fluently and how to compose meaningful academic, professional articles. This increasing need for academic and professional writing triggered the regular and systematic teaching of the once-neglected writing skill.

Today, “good writing ability is very much sought after by higher education institutions and employers” (Coombe, 2010, p. 178). In addition, second language writing, as perceived by Matsuda, Ortmeier-Hooper and Matsuda (2009, p. 466), is essential, nowadays, for “politicians, business people, engineers, and lawyers who work with their counterparts from other parts of the world”. On the other hand, second language writing is perhaps one of the most practical, as well as sophisticated, fields of research that encompasses a variety of theoretical, disciplinary, and methodological aspects (Matsuda & Silva, 2005).
7.2. **Collaborative Group Work**

Collaborative learning or collaborative group work is a student-centred, teacher-facilitated way of learning and teaching in which a small group of students, usually from 4 to 5, is responsible for its own learning and that of all group mates. Students in that group interact with each other, as well as with their teacher, and work collaboratively, over the Internet or face-to-face, to practice and learn elements of a certain subject matter, solve a problem, complete a task or achieve a certain goal. In this respect, Felder and Brent (1994) add that collaborative learning may occur in or out of the classroom; exercises undertaken inside the classroom may take from 30 seconds to an entire class period and may include making and/or answering questions, clarifying certain observations, solving certain problems, summarizing certain material, determining the certain settling problems, and generating creative ideas and solutions through rigorous and freewheeling discussion; out-of-class activities may involve experimentation, designing projects, writing reports, and preparing for class presentations.

According to Panitz (1999a, p. 3), collaborative learning is a personal philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle. It is not just a classroom technique. It "respects and highlights individual group members' abilities and contributions". Collaborative group members share authority and accept responsibility for the group's actions, including the responsibility for their own learning. Supporting this, McWhaw, Schnackenberg, Scilater and Abram (2003) put it clear that collaborative learning stands for a different philosophy of interaction by which students are given more authority over their learning than in traditional teaching. They added that "in collaborative learning environments, students should be responsible for the governance and evaluation of their group" (p. 71). For George and Dale (1990), collaborative learning can take place almost anywhere, both inside and outside classrooms. It can be engaged in by two or more cooperative persons if there is something that they have a real need to learn.

Collaborative learning had its underpinnings in the works of famous educators such as Educators such as Piaget, Dewey, Bruner and Vygotsky. In the social constructivism theory advanced by the famous Russian educational psychologist Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, it was suggested that social interaction leads to gradual and continuous development and changes in learners' thought and behaviour. Learners develop knowledge directly by experiencing things and by reflecting on such experiences with their peers (Nickel, 2010; Davidson & Major, 2014; among others).

Johnson, Johnson and Smith (1991) summarizes the principles underlying collaborative learning in their definition of a new paradigm of teaching: the first principle is that knowledge is created, discovered, and transformed by students themselves, whereas teachers create the proper conditions in which students can create meaning out of the material they study by processing and then retaining it in their long-term memories; the second principle is that students have an active role in the learning process. They create their own knowledge actively because learning is seen as something done by the learner, not to the learner. Knowledge is not accepted passively from the teacher; the third is that the teachers' effort is aimed at developing students' capabilities; the fourth is that education is a personal deal among students themselves and between the teacher and his students as they work together, and the fifth is that all of the above can only happen within a collaborative context (Cited in Panitz, 1999a, p. 3). According to Davidson and Major (2014, p. 20), collaborative learning was developed along with areas such as Learning through Talking, Language Across the Curriculum, Whole Language Learning, etc. These approaches emphasize creating "an environment that best helps an individual to develop mentally, emotionally, and socially through being an active participant, personally committed to learning within the context of a supportive learning community".

Given that collaborative learning is a philosophy of interaction, cooperative learning (CL), according to Panitz (1999b, p. 5), is the more formally structured process or the set of procedures that "help people interact together in order to accomplish a specific goal or develop an end product which is usually content-specific. It is more directive than a collaborative system of governance and closely controlled by the teacher". It is the process of "individuals working together in a cooperative manner to make meaning of what is to be learned" (George & Dale, 1990, p. 3). Supporting this viewpoint, Parma City School District (1993, p. 13), views cooperative learning as a teaching/learning technique that "takes collaboration and group work to a structured format". Due to the overlap between collaborative and cooperative learning, the terms are often "conflated or used interchangeably, or alternately, they are considered related forms (Davidson & Major, 2014, p. 8).

**Elements of Cooperative Learning**

It is worth mentioning that not any group of students working together is considered cooperative learning. Felder and Brent (1994, p. 1) put it clear that "cooperative learning is not simply a synonym for students working in groups. A learning exercise only qualifies as CL to the extent that the listed elements are present". The listed elements mentioned by Felder and Brent (1994) include the five main elements indicated by Johnson et al. (1998). These elements are positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, appropriate use of social and collaborative skills, and group processing (Han, 2015; Davidson & Major, 2014; Nickel,
2010; McWhaw, Schnackenberg, Sclater & Abrami, 2003; Panitz, 1999a; Panitz, 1999b; Felder & Brent, 1994; Parma City School District, 1993; George & Dale, 1990; among others). This is what is discussed in the following section:

7.2.1. Positive Interdependence

Students in the one group should recognize well that they need each other to complete the group’s work or to achieve the determined goal, “sink or swim together (Panitz, 1999a, p. 8)”. Group members are obliged to rely on each other. If any one of the group members fails to do his/her part, everyone must suffer the consequences (Felder & Brent, 1994). Students in the same group should know that each one of them has a unique contribution to offer to the joint effort. They should keep in mind that each group member’s effort is necessary and indispensable for the group success. Teachers may secure positive interdependence among group members by establishing common goals, joint rewards, shared resources and by assigning roles to the group members (Panitz, 1999a).

7.2.2. Individual accountability

All students in one group must be held accountable for doing their own share of the work and for mastering all of the material intended to be learned to the group’s success (Felder & Brent, 1994). The performance of each student in the group is regularly evaluated, and the results are given to the whole group and to the individual. Teachers may secure individual accountability by applying an individual test to each student in the group or by randomly picking one member from the group members to give the answer (Panitz, 1999a).

7.2.3. Face-to-face promotive interaction

Although some of the group work, according to (Felder & Brent, 1994, p. 1), “maybe parcellled out and done individually, some must be done interactively, with group members providing one another with feedback, challenging one another’s conclusions and reasoning, and perhaps most importantly, teaching and encouraging one another”. Students in one group should encourage each other’s efforts to learn. They sit knee to knee and talk, explain, argue, support, applaud and teach what they know to their group mates (Panitz, 1999a).

7.2.4. Appropriate use of social and collaborative skills

Needless to say, without having and using effective collaborative and social skills needed by the group members, cooperative groups cannot function effectively. Group members are encouraged and helped to develop and use a variety of collaborative and social skills, including leadership, trust-building, decision-making, communication, and conflict management skills (Felder & Brent, 1994; Panitz, 1999a). These skills are badly needed by all group members in order to accomplish assigned tasks and achieve determined goals. Teachers must identify and model these skills and incorporate them into group activities so that students can use and evaluate them (Parma City School District, 1993).

7.2.5. Group Processing

In order to result in the optimum potential outcomes, change is essential for cooperative learning activities. The change process can be identified and achieved out of regular evaluation by the group members. From time to time, group members need to comment on how they worked together and on what they are doing well as a group. In addition, each one needs to evaluate his/her own participation and his contribution to the group learning (Parma City School District, 1993). According to Panitz (1999a), teachers can achieve group processing by assigning group members some tasks as asking them to list some member actions that helped the group succeed and list one more action that can make the group more successful tomorrow. In addition, teachers themselves can monitor the groups and provide them with feedback on how well they are working together in each group.

7.3. Benefits of Cooperative Learning

Needless to say, that the recognition of the importance of collaborative group work is increasing day after day in every aspect of life. Most people, due to workforce demands, have come to agree that collaboration allows an opportunity for people with different abilities and various levels of experience to collaborate to create something that is better than each member could achieve alone. In the education field, there are several proven benefits of cooperation. According to Felder and Brent (1994), cooperative learning enhances learning in several ways: 1) while working individually, weak students are likely to stop working when they get stuck, but if they are working cooperatively, they carry on; 2) while undertaking the task of explaining and clarifying material to their weaker mates in the group, brilliant students frequently find gaps in their own understanding and fill them in; 3) there is the possibility of delaying work or skipping assignments by students working alone, but being aware that others are counting on them makes cooperative group students determined to do the work in an appropriate way; 4) while working competitively, competitive students have incentives for not helping one another, but cooperative group students are rewarded for helping each other.
Detailing the benefits of collaborative learning with the intention to promote human interactions through cooperation as the preferred educational paradigm, Panitz (1999b) lists four main categories of benefits result from the use of collaborative group work. The first category is about academic benefits, the second is about social benefits, the third is about psychological benefits, and the fourth category is about assessment benefits. Academic benefits included developing critical thinking skills, getting students participating actively in the process of learning, enhancing classroom results, using proper problem-solving techniques used by brilliant students as models for other students and motivating students to learn. Social benefits included building diversity understanding among students and staff members, creating an encouraging atmosphere for modelling and for the actual practice of cooperation, and establishing and improving learning communities among students. Psychological benefits included rising self-esteem among students, decreasing anxiety, and creating positive attitudes among students towards their teachers. Assessment benefits included alternative assessment techniques. For Davoudi and Mahipo (2012), collaborative learning develops several skills which are considered essential for the 21st century. It promotes and develops social skills such as careful listening, turn-taking, conflict resolution, leadership and teamwork skills. Students coming from cooperative learning classrooms are politer and considerate of others. In addition, cooperative learning increases students’ liking for school, keenness on language class, enthusiasm for academic content and love for the teacher. Moreover, working in heterogeneous cooperative groups improves students’ learning to understand and work with others who differ from themselves.

Alharbi (2008) concludes that the benefits of cooperative learning in academic achievement include 1) improving higher-level thinking skills, 2) stimulating critical thinking, 3) helping students explain their ideas and their thoughts during group discussion, 4) developing students’ oral communication skills, and 5) changing the learning environment from a boring classroom to an encouraging and exciting one. In addition to the above-mentioned benefits, this researcher agrees with Panitz (1999b) that cooperative learning had confirmed positive effects on students’ psychological health. It is claimed that students who are learning in classrooms applying large amounts of cooperative learning are psychologically healthier and have higher feelings of self-esteem than students who are not.

8. Previous Studies

This study of Ahmad (2020) attempted to examine the effect of using cloud-based collaborative writing on EFL students’ writing quantity and quality. Study participants were twenty-one students from Jubail College of Education. The study used the one group pre-test-post-test design. Participants practised cloud-based collaborative writing for one semester. Results revealed no significant difference between the pretest and the posttest in writing quantity while revealed a significant difference in writing quality.

In a descriptive study, Talib and Cheung (2017) aimed to show the development of collaborative writing as a pedagogical practice over the last decade. A synthesis of published research on collaborative writing was conducted. The study sample included 68 experimental published studies between 2006 to 2016. Results of their analysis revealed that: (1) collaborative writing tasks can be facilitated via technology; (2) the vast majority of students are motivated through the improvement achieved in their writing abilities by using collaborative writing tasks, and (3) collaborative writing can be effective in improving students’ accuracy of writing and critical thinking skills.

The study of Mirazi and Mahmoudi (2016) attempted to investigate the effects of individual vs collaborative writing on EFL students’ writing quality. A quasi-experimental design was used. The study participants were both male and female students (26 students in each group). Results of the study showed that both types (individual vs collaborative) are effective in students’ writing abilities.

The study of Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014) compared the writing skills of students who practised collaborative writing by using Google Docs with those of students who practised writing in a face-to-face classroom groups. Participants of the study were divided into experimental and control groups. Tools used in the study included writing tests as well as self-report questionnaires. Results of data analysis revealed a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups. Students in the experimental group (Google Docs group) scored higher means than those of the control group (face-to-face classroom groups). Furthermore, experimental group participants showed positive attitudes toward collaborative writing using Google Docs.

The study of Caruso (2014) used a pretest/posttest design to investigate the effectiveness of using wiki-based collaborative writing on students’ writing performance. Participants were 12 university EFL students in Bogota, Colombia. They were divided into two groups; experimental (practised wiki-based collaborative writing activities) and control (received no treatment). Results of descriptive statistics indicated an overall positive effect of collaborative writing on experimental group students’ written fluency.

Ajmi and Ali (2014)’s study explored the views, perceptions and practices of both EFL teachers and students with collaborative writing. The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods in data collection. Sixty-four EFL college students in Oman responded to a questionnaire, and five EFL teachers were interviewed. Results
revealed that the majority of both teachers and students had positive opinions towards collaborative writing practices. In addition, the study results indicated that both students and teachers could improve collaborative writing practices significantly.

The study of Aminloo (2013) examined the effect of collaborative writing on elementary level EFL students’ writing abilities. The study participants comprised 64 students divided into two groups (experimental and control). Students in the experimental group practiced collaborative writing while their counterparts in the control group wrote their writings individually. Results showed a significant improvement in experimental group students’ writing abilities.

9. Method and Procedures
9.1. Participants
Thirty EFL male students enrolled in the preparatory year English program at the Northern Border University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, participated in this study. They were randomly divided into an experimental and a control group. Upon excluding dropouts, the number of the students who successfully completed the experiment was 28 students equally divided between the two groups of the study.

9.2. Experimental Design
The study used a pretest/posttest experimental and control group design. An experimental group and a control group were exposed to pre-post means of getting data (a pre-posttest of essay writing). Collaborative teaching of writing was used with the experimental group students, whereas students of the control group were taught in an ordinary way by using the prescribed book.

9.3. Research Instruments
An essay-writing test was prepared and used by this researcher to answer the study question:

9.3.1. Pre-post Essay Writing Test
Based on the main objective of this study, the present test aimed at measuring EFL students’ easy writing skills. This test was of the essay type. The test in its final form included two writing prompts: one for the pretest and the other for the posttest. For each prompt, subjects were asked to write an essay of five paragraphs. A rating scale was devised by this researcher for scoring this test. Four main domains were specified to be measured by means of the rubrics of this rating scale. Each domain represented the main criterion of essay writing: the first domain was about the organization, the second was about mechanics, the third was about vocabulary and language use, the fourth was about ideas and content.

Each student's paper was scored by two raters, who independently rated the student's writing on four criteria of writing. These criteria should be present in the student's essay. They are the organization, mechanics, vocabulary & language use, and ideas and content. Thus, a student's final score on this test was the mean score given by the two raters. The scoring system was analytic. Analytic scoring simply means that more than one domain of a paper is evaluated. Each domain by itself was scored holistically. The score assigned indicates the test rater's overall impression of the student's command of the components of each domain.

9.3.1.1. Inter-rater Reliability
Before scoring this test, five essays, not included in the study, were rated by this researcher and another rater on the rubrics of the test rating scale for the purpose of establishing inter-rater Reliability. Correlation between the scores of the two raters was calculated. The reliability coefficient between the two raters was found (r=88). This value indicates high inter-rater reliability between the two raters.

9.3.1.2. The score scale
The score scale is a 4-point scale. Each one of the four specified areas of essay writing is evaluated separately and assigned a score of "1"(lowest), "2," "3," or "4"(highest). The scale is a continuum representing a range of quality. Each score point on the continuum is defined by area-specific scoring guidelines. Thus, the maximum test score was 16 marks.

9.3.1.3. Test validity and Reliability
To decide content and face validity, four writing prompts and a 4-point scoring rubric was prepared by this researcher and shown to some EFL university colleagues. After revising the test according to the comments of those colleagues, the final form consisted of two writing prompts: one for the pretest and the other for the posttest. Thus, the test was approved as a valid and appropriate tool for measuring EFL students' essay writing skills. Moreover, the reliability of this test was determined by administering it to the same pilot group of EFL majors (n=5) by using the
test re-test method and by calculating the correlation between the scores on the two administrations. Results indicated that the reliability coefficient for this test was found \( r = .86 \), which is considered a reasonable value for such tests.

9.4. Pretesting

In order to ascertain the equivalence of the two groups of the study, this researcher administered the essay-writing test in order to measure EFL students' essay writing skills a week before starting the intervention. An independent t-test was used to compare the mean scores of the participants of the two groups. Results showed that the two groups of the study are equivalent in their essay writing skills.

9.5. Post-Testing

Upon finishing the intervention, this researcher started re-administering the essay-writing test in order to measure students' essay writing skills after the intervention.

9.6. Statistical Analysis of Data

After finishing post-testing procedures, the latest version of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to run an independent samples t-test for measuring the difference between the mean scores of the study participants on the pre-post essay-writing test.

9.7. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results obtained from this study. Results are presented in terms of the study hypotheses, followed by a discussion of these results.

9.7.1. Testing the First Hypothesis

An independent samples t-test was used to test the first hypothesis, which predicted that ‘there are statistically significant differences favouring the experimental group between the mean scores obtained by students of the experimental group and those of the control group on the posttest of essay writing’. Findings are shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>&quot;T&quot; value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.3571</td>
<td>.74495</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.2143</td>
<td>1.31140</td>
<td>-7.088***</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (1) shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores obtained by students of the control and experimental groups in the posttest of essay writing in favour of the experimental group. The experimental group got a higher mean (10.2143) than that obtained by the control group (7.3571). The result of the t-test shows that \( t = -7.088 \) and the difference is significant at \( .001 \) level. Thus, the first hypothesis is affirmed.

9.7.2. Testing the Second Hypothesis

An independent samples t-test was used to test the second hypothesis, which predicted that ‘there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores obtained by students of the experimental group on the pretest of essay writing and their mean scores on the posttest favouring the posttest’. Findings are shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>&quot;T&quot; value</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.5714</td>
<td>.7559</td>
<td>-6.533***</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (2) shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores obtained by students of the experimental group on the pretest and their scores on the posttest of essay writing in favour of the posttest. The experimental group got a higher mean (10.2143) in the posttest of essay writing than that obtained on the pretest (7.5714). The result of the t-test shows that \( t = -6.533 \) and the difference is significant at \( .001 \) level. Thus, the second hypothesis is affirmed.
According to the mean scores of the experimental group students on the posttest of essay writing, collaborative writing as a pedagogical practice is capable of improving students' essay writing skills. Experimental group students became better able to organize their essays in a skilful format by using transitions in an effective and logical way. They also became better able to produce complete sentences of various structures and lengths, with correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Their writing tones became much more clearer, consistent and suitable for their intended audience than before. Their essays showed well-developed main ideas and clarity of purposes.

The results of this study are in line with those of Aminloo (2013), Ajmi and Ali (2014) and Talib and Cheung (2017), which concluded that collaborative writing could significantly improve EFL students' writing skills. These results also confirm those attained by Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014), Caruso (2014), Mirazi and Mahmoudi (2016) and Ahmad (2020), who reached the same conclusion that collaborative writing is effective in developing EFL students' writing skills and the quality of their writings.

10. Conclusions

The objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of teaching writing collaboratively on EFL students' essay writing skills. Collaborative teaching of writing was used with the experimental group students; Results revealed that collaborative teaching is effective in developing EFL students' essay writing skills. In light of the study results, it was recommended that collaborative writing activities should be integrated into the EFL curriculum from the very beginning. In addition, writing classes should be run collaboratively and enthusiastically by students and teachers. Teachers should assume their basic roles as facilitators of critical learning, not just materials operators. Moreover, nothing should prevent meaningful discussion and negotiation of meaning inside writing classrooms. Further research is needed to examine practical classroom-based techniques of developing collaborative writing and to investigate students' attitudes towards it. More descriptive studies are also needed to identify obstacles that hinder the implementation of collaborative learning.

11. Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the approval and the support of this research study by grant No. 1111-COM-2019-1-10-F, from the Deanship of Scientific Research at the Northern Border University, KSA.

References


