



## Effects of Collaborative Writing Pedagogy on EFL First-Year Students' Paragraph Writing Performance

Melisew Tibebe Amare<sup>1</sup>, Mekonnen Esubalew Tariku<sup>1</sup>, and Solomon Mesfin Yilma<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Language and Literature, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Debre Markos University, Debre Markos, Ethiopia

### Abstract

This study examined the effects of collaborative writing pedagogy on English as a Foreign Language first-year students' paragraph writing performance at Debre Markos University. Two intact classes were compared, with one receiving collaborative writing instruction and the other completing individual writing tasks. Pretest results confirmed that both groups had comparable initial performance levels. Following the intervention, students in the collaborative writing group demonstrated statistically significant improvements in paragraph writing performance, whereas the individual writing group showed minimal gains. Thematic analysis of students' reflections further revealed that collaborative writing enhanced peer interaction, participation, and writing confidence, although unequal participation and limited time were issues for some students. Overall, the findings suggest that collaborative writing pedagogy effectively improves paragraph writing performance and promotes interactive, student-centered instruction in English as a foreign language context.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Writing, Paragraph Writing, EFL Instruction, Student Engagement, Writing Pedagogy

\*Corresponding Author Email: [melisew2004@gmail.com](mailto:melisew2004@gmail.com)

### Article information

Received: 24Sept, 2025  
Accepted: 27Feb, 2026

Revised: 18Feb, 2026  
Available online: 31March, 2026

Doi: <http://doi.org/10.20372/ajids.2026.2619>

## **1. Introduction**

English is an international language used as a means of global communication. In this regard, as Pradier et al. (2025) affirm, the English language is the most dominant language of scholarly communication, and access to academic journals in every area of study. Command of the English language is thus essential not just for an effective role in global research teams but also for intellectual debates, collaborative professional undertakings, and access to further information (Crystal, 2020). At school, it is also very important in secondary and tertiary levels, especially in studying the four language skills which include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, writing is particularly highlighted for its significance in academic achievement and in facilitating communication (Hyland, 2003).

The increasing importance of English in the global arena has led to a growing interest in the teaching and learning of English writing (Zhao, 2010). Such orientations and needs for writing have thus been a critical problem especially in EFL contexts, where traditional approaches could not fully meet the multiple layers of writing development (Hyland, 2022). These approaches are driven by rote learning and individual performance and fail to recognize the cognitive, affective, and social elements required to transform language learners into proficient and confident writers (Storch, 2013). Although, all of them deserve their share of respect, some scholars argue that the inability of students to write well is sometimes attributed to the isolated or rigid application of such approaches (Hyland, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Badger & White, 2000).

In Ethiopia, particularly in higher education, EFL students face persistent difficulties in writing, especially in paragraph development. Often encountered challenges include limited vocabulary, inability to construct a proper topic sentence and support the topic sentence with details, and poor grammatical competence. The students also struggle to establish coherence, unity, and logical order, all attributes of good writing (Tamirat & Melese, 2024; Wendu & Abebe, 2023; Handayani, 2023). Similarly, drawing from the current researcher's decade-long experience as an EFL instructor in higher education, it has been consistently observed that a significant number of EFL students' writing performance is deteriorating. These problems are particularly evident among students at Debre Markos University, where this study is being undertaken.

In response to these challenges, a new perspective is emerging to take hold in EFL writing instruction that attempts to more fully involve learners in the process of writing. It is from this perspective that collaborative writing has been receiving considerable attention as a teaching strategy in general education and language education. According to Storch (2021) and Rezaei and Lovorn (2020), collaborative writing enables students to co-construct meaning, plan and revise together, and participate in peer feedback. Through these processes, learners develop accuracy and fluency in the language while acquiring metacognitive and social skills which conventional practices of language teaching often neglect to foster. In support of this, Bueno-Alaustey and Larumbe (2017) posit that second/foreign language learning is more effective if done collaboratively, either in pairs or groups. Empirical studies have also shown that collaborative writing can improve the writing process, resulting in more production and fewer errors (Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022; Yim & Warschauer, 2017; Azodi & Lotfi, 2020).

Nevertheless, despite these reported positive effects, collaborative writing is not free from criticism. Some scholars have maintained that simply interacting with one's peers does not inevitably create opportunities for meaningful learning. Along this line of thought, Chen, Liu, and Lin, (2023) stress the quality of learning in a group depends on the behaviors and relationships among the group members as they carry out the task. In this respect, some scholars argue that collaborative writing has the potential to limit students' ability to develop their individual writing skills. Elabdali (2021), for example argues that collaborative writing tends to favor group consensus instead of individuals' contributions leading to texts that lack depth and coherence. In addition, Storch (2019) mentions that collaborative writing may lead students to focus heavily on solving sentence-level problems rather than ideas and organization (Storch, 2019). Jones (2020) further highlights the lack of personal accountability in collaborative writing can lead to frustration since the contributions of the participants are not clearly defined. All these contradictory findings on the efficacy of collaborative writing instruction in ELT contexts in general and paragraph writing in particular indicate a need for further investigation.

Moreover, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, only two studies have been conducted and published to date on collaborative writing in the Ethiopian EFL setting. In this respect, Alemu and Mohammed (2022) carried out a study entitled "Effects of Collaborative Writing on Grade 11 Students' Paragraph Writing Performance in Terms of Content and Coherence at

Felegebirhan Secondary School.” Their results indicated that the students who took part in the collaborative writing activities showed significant improvements in content development and coherence compared to those who wrote individually. Likewise, Alemnesh (2018) conducted a study entitled “Effects of Collaborative Writing Instruction on Students’ Writing Performance and Social Skills at Wuregessa General Secondary School, Grade 10 in Focus.” The results indicated a significant improvement in the writing performance of students in the experimental group over those of the comparison group.

Although these studies contribute valuable insights in the field of ELT, several important research gaps remain unaddressed. For instance, methodologically, both employed quasi-experimental designs with limited qualitative insights, overlooking students’ reflections on the writing process. Conceptually, Alemu and Mohammed focused solely on content and coherence, whereas Alemnesh concentrated predominantly on lower-level aspects of writing without specifying whether the focus was on sentence, paragraph, or essay level, while giving insufficient attention to higher order aspects of writing. Contextually, both studies were conducted in secondary schools, limiting generalizability to higher education, where writing tasks involve greater complexity, organization, and cognitive demands.

These gaps underscore the need for research investigating collaborative writing practices in the tertiary education level, focusing specifically on paragraph writing performance. In response, the present study examines the effects of collaborative writing pedagogy on EFL first-year students’ paragraph writing performance at Debre Markos University, aiming to provide evidence-informed insights for improving writing instruction in similar contexts. Thus, based on the issues highlighted above, this study addresses the following research questions:

- i. Is there a significant difference in EFL first-year students’ paragraph writing performance in terms of content, coherence, organization, and grammatical accuracy before and after the classroom-based collaborative writing intervention?
- ii. What are EFL first-year students’ experiences in completing collaborative writing tasks, particularly regarding engagement, peer interaction, confidence, challenges, and perceived improvements in paragraph writing?

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Research Design**

An embedded quasi-experimental research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches was utilized in this study to investigate the effect of collaborative writing pedagogy on students' paragraph writing performance. The quantitative aspect was the main method to examine the pretest – posttest differences in paragraph writing, and the qualitative aspect was nested to investigate students' experiences and perceptions regarding collaborative writing (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). The study included a treatment group consisting of students who received the intervention and a comparison group that did not. The two groups were comparable at baseline, since both were drawn from intact classes that demonstrated similar paragraph writing performance based on pretest results.

The qualitative data were gathered via a post-intervention open-ended questionnaire, which encouraged students to consider their involvement, interaction with peers, and the strategies they used in the collaborative writing tasks. During the data analysis process, the qualitative responses were combined with the quantitative results to explain the mechanisms of collaborative writing in promoting paragraph-level performance rather than to explain statistical results. This design was chosen to allow for rigorous evaluation of performance outcomes in conjunction with documenting contextual and experiential factors influencing students' writing processes, providing a holistic view of the effects of the intervention.

### **2.2. Participants and Sampling Techniques**

The participants were chosen through a combination of convenience and random sampling techniques. Debre Markos University was purposively selected by convenience sampling since it was easily accessible for the researcher and it fulfilled the contextual criteria of the study although this confines the external generalizability of the findings to this particular university. Out of the twelve sections of EFL first-year students who registered for the course Communicative English Language Skills I, four sections were randomly selected for the pre-test due to practicality issues in conducting the pretest to all EFL first-year students and in collecting the data in detail, as suggested by (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Two intact groups that showed

no statistically significant difference in the pretest results of paragraph writing performance were then identified. This ensured that the groups were comparable before the intervention so that the differences seen later could be more justifiably attributed to the treatment rather than to pre-existing disparities. Finally, one section was assigned as a treatment group and the other as a comparison group by coin tossing. The final participants were 104 students with mixed gender and similar language backgrounds, reflecting the typical demographic profile of EFL first-year students at the university.

### **2.3. Instruments of Data Collection**

Data from the sample students were gathered by means of paragraph writing tests and an open-ended reflection questionnaire with the addition of a rubric-based scoring system to depict both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of their paragraph writing performance. The use of both instruments ensured a comprehensive evaluation and enhanced the methodological rigor of the study.

#### **2.3.1. Paragraph Writing Tests**

To determine the students' paragraph writing performance before and after the intervention, two paragraph writing tests, one served as a pretest and the other as a posttest, were employed. The purpose of the pretest was to select two intact groups of students who had no statistically significant difference in paragraph writing performance. Besides, the pretest results were used as a baseline for future comparison with the posttest results. This allows for a proper evaluation of the effects of the collaborative writing instruction on students' paragraph writing performance. The posttest, on the other hand, was used to examine how the intervention had affected students' paragraph writing performance. The results were then compared with the pretest results for any changes that might have resulted due to the intervention. The data not only compared the empirical evidence on the intervention's efficacy but also served as a means for describing students' improvement in this construct. The two tests were made comparable in terms of difficulty, lexical and grammatical demands, and structural complexity through expert judgment and piloting to minimize practice effects. Additionally, each test was taken in standard classroom conditions and lasted 50 minutes.

Student responses were assessed via an adapted rubric derived from the descriptors of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Writing Task 2 (2018). The modified rubric was concerned with task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical range and accuracy with a focus at the paragraph level. Two raters rated all scripts and inter-rater reliability was calculated through Cohen's kappa. Besides, to minimize the impact of subjectivity, five hours of training session were provided to the raters.

### **2.3.2. Reflection Questionnaire**

An open-ended reflection questionnaire containing nine items was also administered to the treatment group after the intervention to complement the quantitative data. The questions addressed student involvement, peer interaction, paragraph development strategies, and encountered difficulties or advantages. The questionnaire was developed based on the research questions and informed by the collaborative writing literature. It was subsequently piloted with a few students who were not involved in the main study to ascertain its clarity and relevance. Responses were analyzed thematically to identify themes and explore students' understanding of the collaborative writing process, providing a qualitative perspective on improvements in paragraph writing performance.

### **2.4. Procedures of Data Collection**

The data collection processes began with the adaptation of all the tools, including the paragraph writing tests, rubric, and reflection questionnaire, to suit the aims of the research. Upon development of the instruments, the study's purpose was explained to the students for full disclosure, and written consent was secured from the participants to maintain the study ethics in data gathering. Out of all EFL first-year students registered in the course Communicative English Language Skills I, four sections were randomly selected to participate in the pretest. This established the baseline of the students in writing a paragraph and found two intact groups with similar scores. Then, by coin toss, one group (N = 53) was designated as the treatment group and the other (N = 51) as the comparison group. Although intact classes were used, the random selection of classes and comparable pretest scores minimized potential

selection bias, and assignment by coin toss further reduced systematic differences between groups.

Following group assignment, the 12-week intervention program was conducted by one instructor for both groups to ensure consistency of instruction. The treatment group participated in collaborative writing exercises that consisted of five stages: pre-discussion, brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing. Students co-constructed paragraphs in triads, led and monitored by the teacher, but final decisions and responsibility lay with the students. Meanwhile, the comparison group did all the work of the treatment group, but individually, with no collaboration.

After the intervention, a posttest parallel to the pretest was administered to both groups to assess changes in paragraph writing quality. The experimental group was then asked to complete a reflection questionnaire. Practical issues such as absenteeism, partial response, and noncompliance were also considered, with such measures as follow-up sessions and confirmation of response.

## **2.5. Methods of Data Analysis**

Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were used to analyze the data in this study, and they were integrally conducted to understand the effect of collaborative writing pedagogy on students' paragraph writing performance. At first, students' performance was summarized by calculating the descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation, to show the central tendency and the dispersion of scores within each group. Subsequently, inferential analyses were conducted to examine both between-group and within-group differences. Independent samples t-tests were used to compare pretest scores of the treatment and comparison groups to rule out baseline nonequivalence and to analyze posttest scores to determine the effect of the intervention. Paired samples t-tests were conducted to examine within-group pretest–posttest differences, further substantiating the effectiveness of collaborative writing instruction. The assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variances, paired observations, and data independence were checked prior to the analyses using Shapiro-Wilk and Levene's test, respectively, and all the assumptions were met. Before the analysis, the data were

checked for missing values and outliers; small number of missing ratings (<5%) was handled through list wise deletion and no extreme outliers were detected that warranted alteration. The effect sizes were computed by calculating the Cohen's *d* to evaluate the practical significance and to interpret the meaningfulness of any statistically significant difference in paragraph writing performance between the groups. Effect sizes of 0.2, 0.5 and 0.8 were regarded as small, medium and large, respectively.

The qualitative responses to the reflection questionnaire were subsequently analyzed for emergent themes, offering further insights to the quantitative results. This process included several readings of the responses, followed by coding statements concerning engagement, peer interaction, strategies, challenges, and outcomes as students perceived them, and eventually, clustering these codes into themes that were representative of their experiences in collaborative writing. To ensure reliability, a second coder also coded a subsample of the responses independently (inter-coder agreement was 0.87). The qualitative integration with the quantitative findings provided a more comprehensive explanation of what and why the intervention affected students' paragraph writing performance. Overall, this mixed-methods design provided strong empirical support for the effects of the collaborative writing instruction and a deep understanding of students' experiences, clearly fulfilling the aim of the study.

### **3. Results**

This section presents the analysis and key findings of the study, examining pre- and post-intervention results for paragraph writing performance and students' reflections on collaborative writing practices. The results are structured to demonstrate baseline comparability, intervention effects, and students' reflection.

#### **3.1. Pre-Intervention Results**

A paragraph writing pretest was administered to assess students' baseline performance prior to the collaborative writing intervention. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the treatment and comparison groups, ensuring that any differences observed in the posttest could be attributed to the intervention rather than pre-existing disparities.

Table 1. Pretest Statistics for Paragraph Writing Performance

Group	N	Mean	SD	Levene's F	Sig.	T	Df	p (2-tailed)
Treatment	53	47.93	2.53	0.341	0.56	1.27	102	0.204
Comparison	51	47.30	2.50	—	—	1.27	102	0.204

As shown in Table 1, the treatment group had a mean score of 47.93 (SD = 2.53), and the comparison group had a mean of 47.30 (SD = 2.50). Levene’s test confirmed homogeneity of variances (F = 0.341, p = 0.56). The independent samples t-test indicated no statistically significant difference between the groups (t(102) = 1.27, p = 0.204), confirming that the groups were sufficiently comparable at the start of the study. Practically, both groups demonstrated a similar moderate level of paragraph writing performance, providing a suitable baseline for evaluating the effects of collaborative writing instruction.

### 3.2. Post-Intervention Results

After twelve weeks of intervention, a posttest was administered to evaluate changes in students’ paragraph writing performance. Independent samples t-tests compared the posttest scores of the treatment and comparison groups, while paired samples t-tests examined within-group changes from pretest to posttest. Cohen’s d was calculated to assess the practical significance of observed differences.

Table 2. Posttest Statistics for Paragraph Writing Performance

Group	N	Mean	SD	Levene's F	Sig.	t	Df	p (2-tailed)	Cohen's d
Treatment	53	50.47	1.88	28.64	0.001	3.48	75.38	0.001	0.73
Comparison	51	48.52	3.54	—	—	—	—	—	—

As depicted in Table 2, the treatment group achieved a higher mean score (M = 50.47, SD = 1.88) than the comparison group (M = 48.52, SD = 3.54). Levene’s test indicated unequal variances (F = 28.64, p = 0.001), so Welch’s t-test was applied to provide a more accurate p-value under this condition. Results revealed a statistically significant difference between groups (t(75.38) = 3.48, p = 0.001, d = 0.73), indicating that students who received collaborative writing instruction outperformed the individual writing group in paragraph writing.

Within-group analyses further supported these findings. The treatment group showed a significant improvement from pretest ( $M = 47.93, SD = 2.53$ ) to posttest ( $M = 50.47, SD = 1.88$ ),  $t(52) = -5.74, p < 0.001, d = 0.79$ , reflecting a large effect of collaborative writing instruction. The comparison group’s pre-to-post change was smaller and not statistically significant (pretest  $M = 47.30, SD = 2.50$ ; posttest  $M = 48.52, SD = 3.54$ ;  $t(50) = -1.92, p = 0.061, d = 0.27$ ).

These results demonstrate that collaborative writing instruction enhanced paragraph writing performance, improving coherence, organization, lexical variety, and grammatical accuracy more effectively than individual writing practices.

### 3.3.Pre- and Post-Test Comparisons

Table 3. Treatment Group: Pre- and Post-Test Paragraph Writing

Repeated Measures	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen’s d
Pretest	53	47.93	2.52	-5.74	52	0.001	0.79
Posttest	53	50.47	1.88	—	—	—	—

Table 3 presents the pre- and post-test scores for the treatment group. The mean score increased from 47.93 ( $SD = 2.52$ ) on the pretest to 50.47 ( $SD = 1.88$ ) on the posttest, indicating an improvement in paragraph writing performance. A paired samples t-test confirmed that this difference was statistically significant ( $t(52) = -5.74, p = 0.001$ ). The negative t-value reflects the direction of the comparison (pretest minus posttest) and does not affect interpretation of significance. The corresponding effect size (Cohen’s  $d = 0.79$ ) represents a large practical impact, suggesting that collaborative writing instruction meaningfully enhanced students’ ability to organize ideas, use appropriate vocabulary, and apply correct grammar in their paragraphs.

Table 4. Comparison Group: Pre- and Post-Test Paragraph Writing

Repeated Measures	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen’s d
Pretest	51	47.30	2.50	-1.92	50	0.061	0.27
Posttest	51	48.52	3.54	—	—	—	—

For the comparison group (Table 4), the mean score increased modestly from 47.30 ( $SD = 2.50$ ) to 48.52 ( $SD = 3.54$ ). The paired samples t-test indicated that this change was not statistically

significant ( $t(50) = -1.92$ ,  $p = 0.061$ ), and the effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.27$ ) represents a small practical impact. These results suggest that individual writing instruction produced only minimal improvements in paragraph writing performance over the same period.

Overall, these findings indicate that collaborative writing instruction had a substantial and practically meaningful effect on EFL students' paragraph writing performance, particularly in enhancing coherence, organization, lexical choice, and grammatical accuracy, whereas conventional individual writing instruction produced only minimal gains.

### **3.4. Post-Treatment Reflection Questionnaire**

The responses of the participants to the reflection questionnaire were analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) through six phases: (1) data familiarization, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Codes were independently applied by the researcher and an experienced peer coder to ensure consistency. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved, thereby strengthening reliability.

The analysis yielded two general themes: the experiences of writing and writing challenges in a collaborative writing context. With respect to paragraph writing performance, the majority of students felt that participating in a series of collaborative writing tasks improved them in terms of the clarity of their ideas and the overall organization of their paragraphs. "Collaborating with my classmates made my sentences connect better and my paragraph have a smoother flow," said one student. Another added, "I got some new words from my peers and I put them in my writing properly." In general, participants highlighted that peer interaction helped them obtain higher coherence, more lexical variety, better grammatical accuracy and improved overall paragraph quality, which is corroborated by the improvements captured in the posttest quantitative results.

The second theme concerned challenges experienced during collaboration. Students mentioned difficulties with time management, coordinating group efforts, and managing differing peer expectations. As one participant stated, "Sometimes it was hard to agree with my group on how to start or end the paragraph." Despite these challenges, most students felt that the collaborative experience enhanced both their individual writing skills and their ability to work effectively in

groups. They suggested that more instructor guidance and improved group dynamics could further strengthen collaborative outcomes.

Taken together, the qualitative data from the reflection questionnaire contextualize the quantitative findings by illustrating how collaborative writing facilitated improvements in coherence, organization, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy, while also identifying practical challenges that may inform instructional adjustments.

#### **4. Discussion**

This study examined the effects of collaborative writing pedagogy on EFL first-year students' paragraph writing performance. The pretest results revealed that the groups were homogenous before the intervention, and thus any difference in the posttest could be attributed to the intervention. After the 12-week intervention, students in the treatment group showed significant gains over students in the comparison group with a moderate-to-large effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.789$ ), implying both statistical and practical significance.

The results of this study are consistent with Huang (2021), who reported that collaborative writing enables students to negotiate meaning and provide mutual support, thereby enhancing cohesion and organization. They also support the findings of Rezaei and Lovorn (2020), who observed that peer collaboration facilitates the detection and correction of grammatical errors through collective monitoring. By demonstrating these effects at the paragraph level, this study further contributes to the literature by highlighting collaborative writing as an effective strategy for developing foundational academic writing skills.

Qualitative data from the post-treatment reflection questionnaire further contextualized these findings. Two dominant themes were identified through thematic analysis: improvement in writing performance and difficulties in collaborative writing process. Students mentioned that collaborative work led to better structured thought process, better sentence coherence, and more efficient use of vocabulary and grammar. One student noted, "When I worked with my classmates, I could arrange my ideas better and explain them more clearly in my paragraph," while another said, "I got some new words from my friends and I used the proper words in my

writing.” These reflections mirror the quantitative results, supporting the conclusion that collaborative writing promotes paragraph writing performance.

Beyond technical writing gains, students highlighted motivational and affective benefits. Collaborative writing increased confidence, decreased anxiety, and made writing more engaging. For example, one student shared, “I was not scared to write because of the support from my group,” and another wrote, “Collaborative writing made me feel more confident as I could ask my peers if I was unsure about something.” These findings are consistent with Shehadeh (2011), who observed that collaborative writing fosters ownership and lowers writing-related anxiety.

Nevertheless, challenges also emerged. Students reported uneven participation, time constraints, and some conflicts within groups. “Sometimes two people were talking and the rest were quiet,” said one participant, and another added, “We had trouble finishing because we didn't always get along.” These concerns mirror Storch’s (2013) suggestion that group dynamics affect the results of collaborative writing. To be most effective, teachers should scaffold the process by assigning roles, monitoring interactions, and offering advice, but reserving decisions for students.

Another notable finding was that posttest scores in the treatment group showed less variability, suggesting that less proficient students benefited from peer support, while more proficient students reinforced their knowledge by assisting others. This aligns with Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), which emphasizes learning as a socially mediated process within the Zone of Proximal Development.

Overall, the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that collaborative writing pedagogy represents a holistic, learner-centered approach. By integrating structured writing sessions, peer interaction, feedback, and teacher facilitation, it enhances students’ competence, confidence, and engagement. The results validate the pedagogical value of interactive, collaborative learning in EFL contexts, showing that students can co-construct knowledge while improving paragraph writing performance and motivation (Storch, 2013; Swain, 2006).

## **5. Conclusion**

This research confirms that teaching writing through collaboration enhanced EFL students’ performance in paragraph writing. In terms of quantitative results, the treatment group

outperformed the comparison group in the mean scores, showed a less data dispersion, and had moderate to large effect sizes. The qualitative findings suggest that learners were more engaged, confident, and motivated during collaborative writing, and these experiences were associated with improvements in organization, lexical variety, and grammatical accuracy in their paragraphs. Together, these results support that collaborative writing instruction significantly enhances EFL students' paragraph writing performance.

There are some possible pedagogical implications that flow directly from these findings. First, EFL writing instructors can introduce structured collaborative writing activities, especially for the beginners and intermediate learners, to improve their paragraph writing ability. Second, guidance on collaborative skills, such as role allocation, time management, and peer feedback, are needed to overcome difficulties identified by students. Third, an integration of peer and instructor feedback can provide a balanced setting for students to gain multiple perspectives and scaffold assistance, and at the same time promote students' engagement and writing skills development.

The study also has some limitations that need consideration. To begin with, the study was carried out on EFL first-year students only, which creates limitations on its generalizability. Second, the study only measured the effects over a twelve-week intervention, which means that the durability of the effects is unknown. Third, while reflection questionnaires were useful, other means of collecting qualitative data, such as classroom observations, interviews, and discourse analysis, could have been employed for a better understanding of the results. Finally, while using a pretest group assignment and a coin toss approach reduces potential biases, some biases, especially those related to teachers, might still have been at play.

Building on the present study, research could be extended by contrasting face-to-face and online collaborative writing, exploring the influence of different grouping schemes (e.g., mixed vs. homogeneous proficiency), and by addressing more complex writing genres including essays and reports. Such investigations would shed light on the contribution of collaborative writing to the development of EFL writing and provide sound knowledge for more effective and evidence-based instructional practices.

## **Acknowledgments**

This study was made possible by the support of Debre Markos University. The authors would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to the University for its financial support that enabled them to conduct the study. Yet, the views expressed in this study should not be seen as representing the intentions of the funding body.

## **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

The authors do not have any conflict of interest.

## **Authors' Contribution**

Melisew Tibebe conceptualized the study, designed the research framework, conducted data collection, performed the data analysis, and drafted the manuscript. Mekonnen Esubalew and Solomon Mesfin supervised the study, provided methodological and theoretical guidance, and critically reviewed the manuscript for important intellectual content.

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