

**The Role of Collaborative Learning on Students' Writing Skills: A Research
at English House Language Center**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the implementation and role of collaborative learning in developing students' writing skills at English House Language Center. A qualitative case study design was employed to obtain an in-depth understanding of classroom practices and students' experiences during collaborative writing activities. The participants were six eighth-grade students selected through purposive sampling based on their active involvement and varied writing proficiency. Data were collected through non-participant classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation of students' written work. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings revealed that collaborative learning was implemented through small-group discussion, idea sharing, joint sentence and text construction, and peer feedback. These activities encouraged active participation and meaningful interaction throughout the stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Collaboration helped students generate richer ideas, organize texts more systematically, and improve language use, particularly grammar and vocabulary. It also increased motivation, confidence, engagement, and enjoyment, although differences of opinion and unequal participation occasionally required teacher facilitation. The study concludes that collaborative learning is an effective instructional approach for supporting the cognitive, linguistic, affective, and social dimensions of writing development in a non-formal EFL context. Teachers are encouraged to establish clear group roles, provide structured writing tasks, and guide constructive peer feedback.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning; Writing Skills; Peer Feedback; Qualitative Case Study; EFL learners

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a central productive skill in English language learning because it enables learners to communicate ideas, construct arguments, and participate in academic and professional discourse. Effective writing requires the simultaneous control of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. For learners of English as a foreign language, coordinating these elements is demanding, particularly when opportunities for authentic writing practice and meaningful feedback are limited. Brown (2001) describes writing as a complex process that combines linguistic knowledge with the ability to transform ideas into coherent written communication, while Hyland (2003) emphasizes that writing develops through recursive stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

Students often experience difficulty generating ideas, arranging them logically, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and maintaining grammatical accuracy. These linguistic problems may be accompanied by writing anxiety, low confidence, and reluctance to express ideas. Teacher-centered instruction and individual assignments can provide useful practice, but they may not fully address the social and interactive dimensions of writing. When feedback is delivered only after a final text has been completed, learners have fewer opportunities to negotiate meaning, compare alternatives, and revise their work during the writing process. Recent Indonesian studies also indicate that learners' writing development benefits from creative, supported, and interactive instruction, including picture-based dictation and narrative-writing activities (Namirta et al., 2026; Hermansyah, 2026).

Collaborative learning offers a learner-centered response to these challenges. It involves students working together toward a shared learning goal through discussion, mutual support, shared responsibility, and collective problem-solving. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory explains that learning is socially mediated and can be strengthened when learners interact within the Zone of Proximal Development. In writing classes, peers can function as sources of ideas, language models, readers, and feedback providers. Their interaction can therefore support both the process and quality of writing. This emphasis on active participation is consistent with research showing that active knowledge sharing and collaborative engagement can strengthen students' involvement and understanding (Kasman et al., 2026; Kahar et al., 2025).

Previous studies have shown that collaborative writing may enhance idea development, language awareness, engagement, and confidence (Storch, 2005; Shehadeh, 2011). However, many studies have been conducted in formal schools or universities and have focused mainly on measurable outcomes. Less attention has been given to how collaborative writing is implemented in non-formal language centers, where instructional time, proficiency levels, and classroom organization may differ. English House Language Center provides a relevant setting for examining how group interaction supports writing development among eighth-grade learners. Accordingly, this study addressed two questions: how collaborative

learning was implemented in teaching writing at English House Language Center, and what role it played in developing students' writing skills. The study focused on idea development, text organization, and language use, while also considering motivation, confidence, participation, and the challenges that emerged during group work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is an instructional approach in which learners construct knowledge through interaction and shared responsibility. Johnson and Johnson (1999) identify positive interdependence and individual accountability as essential characteristics: group members depend on one another while remaining responsible for meaningful contributions. In a language classroom, collaboration creates opportunities for explanation, questioning, negotiation, and mutual correction. These processes transform students from passive recipients of information into active participants in learning.

The theoretical foundation of collaboration is closely connected with Vygotsky's (1978) view that higher mental functions develop through social interaction. Support from teachers and peers enables learners to perform tasks that they may not yet complete independently. In collaborative writing, scaffolding can occur when a more proficient learner proposes vocabulary, explains a grammatical form, helps arrange an outline, or models a revision strategy. As support is gradually internalized, students become more capable of managing writing tasks independently.

Long's (1996) interaction perspective further explains that negotiation of meaning helps learners notice communication problems and modify their language. Swain's (2005) Output Hypothesis adds that producing language pushes learners to recognize gaps in what they know. During collaborative writing, students must verbalize ideas, justify choices, compare alternatives, and agree on language forms. Such dialogue can make grammatical and lexical knowledge more visible and available for learning.

Writing Skills

Writing involves both a product and a process. The product includes the clarity, coherence, accuracy, and appropriateness of the final text, whereas the process includes planning, drafting, revising, editing, and responding to feedback. Harmer (2007) states that effective writing instruction should give learners opportunities to develop ideas and improve successive drafts rather than treating writing as a one-time performance. Hyland (2019) similarly views writing as socially situated because writers respond to purposes, audiences, and conventions. In this study, writing skills were examined through three interrelated dimensions. Idea

development concerned the ability to generate, elaborate, and select relevant content. Text organization concerned the logical sequencing of ideas and the use of a clear structure. Language use concerned grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, spelling, and punctuation. Collaborative tasks may support all three dimensions because learners share cognitive and linguistic resources while reviewing a common text.

Collaborative Learning and Writing Development

Collaborative writing allows students to participate jointly in planning, composing, and revising a text. Storch (2005) found that learners working collaboratively produced opportunities for language-related discussion and generally viewed the experience positively. Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) also reported that interaction around corrective feedback can support learners' processing and retention of language forms. Collaboration therefore does more than distribute a task; it creates a space in which writing decisions become explicit and open to reflection.

Idea generation can be improved when students contribute different experiences and perspectives. A learner who cannot begin an individual text may respond more easily to a peer's question or example. Through brainstorming, students expand possible content, select relevant points, and establish a shared direction. Collaborative outlining then helps them arrange the introduction, supporting details, and conclusion before drafting. This process can reduce cognitive overload because the responsibilities of thinking, evaluating, and composing are shared. Vocabulary resources acquired through mobile and game-based learning may further enrich the ideas students contribute during group writing activities (Saleh et al., 2026; Lestari et al., 2026).

Peer feedback is another major mechanism. When students read a classmate's draft, they encounter the text from an audience perspective and may identify unclear ideas, missing transitions, grammatical errors, or unsuitable vocabulary. Giving feedback can be as beneficial as receiving it because reviewers must apply criteria and explain their judgments. Shehadeh (2011) reported that collaborative writing supported both writing performance and positive learner perceptions, especially when students recognized the contribution of peer interaction to their texts. Peer review is particularly useful because grammatical problems remain common in EFL writing and become easier to notice when texts are examined collectively (Hikmah et al., 2025).

Collaboration also has affective value. Shared responsibility can reduce the pressure associated with individual writing, while encouragement from peers may increase confidence and persistence. Learners can test language choices in a relatively safe environment before presenting a final product. Nevertheless, group work does not automatically produce effective learning. Unequal participation, dominant members, unresolved disagreement, and dependence on stronger students may limit

its benefits. Teachers therefore need to provide clear roles, time limits, assessment criteria, and guidance for respectful feedback. Similar evidence from technology-supported English learning shows that engaging activities can increase motivation and sustain students' participation (Azis et al., 2026).

Previous Research and Research Gap

Research by Storch (2020), Zhang (2021), Alghasab (2022), and Rahimi (2023) consistently indicates that collaboration can promote engagement, idea development, peer scaffolding, organization, and language awareness. Yet previous investigations were commonly situated in formal or online environments. The present study extends the discussion to a face-to-face non-formal institution and uses observations, interviews, and documents to examine classroom implementation together with learners' experiences. This contextual focus provides insight into how collaborative learning functions under the practical conditions of a language center. Local studies have also emphasized collaborative learning, communicative instruction, and digital support as productive ways to promote active language learning in Indonesian classrooms (Kahar et al., 2025; Faradillah et al., 2025).

METHOD

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Collaborative Learning

The findings showed that collaborative learning was implemented through a structured sequence. The instructor first introduced the topic and explained the writing task. Students were then divided into small groups and asked to discuss the topic, generate possible ideas, prepare an outline, construct sentences, and develop a text together. In several activities, groups reviewed one another's work and provided comments. The teacher monitored the process, clarified instructions, and assisted groups that encountered difficulty. All six participants described group discussion as the most common activity. Discussions were used to select a topic, compare perspectives, determine relevant content, and decide how ideas should be arranged. Students also reported joint sentence construction, in which members proposed words or structures before agreeing on the version to include. Peer feedback occurred during drafting and revision, particularly when students checked grammar, vocabulary, and the clarity of ideas.

Students' Experiences and Affective Responses

Most participants expressed positive feelings toward collaborative writing. They described the activities as enjoyable, motivating, and less monotonous than writing alone. Group support made them feel more comfortable and confident because responsibility was shared and they could ask for help when uncertain. One

participant explained that collaboration enabled ideas to develop from multiple viewpoints, while another emphasized that classmates' support increased confidence in participating.

The positive atmosphere encouraged students to remain engaged throughout the task. Rather than waiting for the teacher to supply answers, they contributed suggestions, responded to peers, and negotiated decisions. This active involvement indicated that collaboration changed the writing lesson from an individual completion task into an interactive learning process. However, participants also noted that effective collaboration depended on coordination. Differences of opinion sometimes delayed decisions, and group work could be less useful when members did not contribute equally.

Development of Ideas

All participants stated that collaboration helped them generate ideas. Group discussion gave them access to perspectives that they might not have considered independently. Members expanded one another's suggestions, supplied examples, and helped identify ideas that were relevant to the assigned topic. This was particularly beneficial at the planning stage, when students often experienced difficulty beginning a text. The findings suggest that collaborative brainstorming reduced the burden of idea generation and enabled learners to produce richer content.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collaboration supported students in organizing ideas into a more systematic structure. Participants reported that preparing an outline together helped them decide the order of information and connect supporting details with the main topic. During drafting, members discussed where sentences should be placed and whether the text flowed logically. Although occasional disagreement required adjustment, most students believed that group work improved coherence and made the writing process more directed.

Peer interaction also contributed to grammar and vocabulary development. Students corrected one another's errors, suggested more appropriate words, and compared alternative sentence forms. Several participants explained that direct correction from classmates helped them understand mistakes rather than merely replace an incorrect answer. The documentation supported these accounts by showing revisions in word choice, sentence construction, and text sequencing across drafts. The students' gains in word choice also parallel findings that mobile-assisted vocabulary learning and interactive vocabulary media provide learners with wider lexical resources (Saleh et al., 2026; Lestari et al., 2026).

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Findings

Theme	Main Evidence
Implementation	Small groups, topic discussion, joint drafting, peer feedback
Idea development	More perspectives, richer content, easier brainstorming
Organization	Collaborative outlining and more systematic sequencing
Language use	Peer correction of grammar, vocabulary, and sentences
Affective impact	Higher motivation, confidence, comfort, and engagement
Challenges	Different opinions, coordination, and unequal participation

Socially Mediated Writing

The findings support Vygotsky's (1978) argument that learning develops through social interaction and assisted performance. Students used peers as sources of scaffolding when generating ideas, organizing a text, and resolving language problems. The assistance was reciprocal rather than exclusively provided by a more proficient learner: different students contributed content knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical awareness, or organizational suggestions. Collaborative writing thus created a temporary community in which the task became achievable through pooled resources.

The interaction observed in the classroom also reflects Long's (1996) account of negotiation and Swain's (2005) view of pushed output. Students had to explain what they intended to write, respond to questions, and defend or modify proposed sentences. When a group member could not express an idea clearly, the difficulty became visible and prompted discussion. This process helped learners notice gaps in vocabulary and grammar and encouraged them to seek more precise forms. Language learning therefore occurred during the creation of the text, not only through the teacher's evaluation of the final product. The improvement in idea generation is consistent with collaborative writing research showing that joint planning broadens content and deepens engagement (Storch, 2013; Zhang, 2021). Students did not depend on a single individual's knowledge. Instead, one suggestion triggered another, allowing groups to elaborate ideas and choose among alternatives. This collective brainstorming was especially useful for students who found it difficult to start writing. The resulting sense of progress may also explain the higher motivation reported by participants.

The findings concerning organization indicate that discussion can externalize the decisions involved in constructing a coherent text. Students talked about sequence, relevance, and the relationship between ideas before and during drafting. Such metacognitive dialogue encouraged them to consider the structure of the whole text rather than compose disconnected sentences. This supports Hyland's (2003) process-oriented view of writing and Storch and Wigglesworth's (2010) conclusion that collaboration can promote deeper engagement with language and text. Peer feedback played a particularly important role in language use. Feedback was immediate, contextualized, and connected to a text that group members jointly understood. Students could ask why a form was corrected and observe how a revision changed meaning or clarity. Giving feedback also required reviewers to apply their own knowledge, which reinforced attention to grammar and vocabulary. These findings align with Shehadeh (2011), who found that collaborative writing can improve performance while being perceived positively by learners. This is important because qualitative error analysis has shown that grammar difficulties continue to affect the quality and clarity of students' written production (Hikmah et al., 2025).

Affective benefits were evident in students' descriptions of feeling happier, less burdened, and more confident. Shared responsibility reduced the fear of facing a difficult writing task alone, while peer encouragement made participation safer. Nevertheless, the challenges reported by participants show that collaboration requires instructional design. Differences of opinion can stimulate reflection, but unmanaged disagreement may consume time. Unequal participation may also allow some learners to benefit without contributing. Clear roles such as idea generator, drafter, language checker, and reviewer can help distribute responsibility, while rotating roles can prevent dependence on stronger members. The motivational pattern also corresponds with studies reporting that interactive platforms and student-centered activities make English learning more engaging (Azis et al., 2026; Kasman et al., 2026).

CONCLUSION

This study found that collaborative learning at English House Language Center was implemented through teacher explanation, small-group formation, discussion, idea sharing, collaborative text construction, and peer feedback. Students participated actively in planning, drafting, reviewing, and revising their writing, while the teacher acted as a facilitator who monitored interaction and provided support when necessary. Collaborative learning therefore functioned as a structured writing process involving shared decision-making rather than merely placing students into groups. Collaborative learning played a meaningful role in developing students' writing skills. It supported idea generation by exposing learners to multiple viewpoints, strengthened text organization through shared outlining and discussion, and improved grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction through peer correction. It also increased students' motivation, confidence, comfort, and engagement, making writing activities more interactive and enjoyable. However, differences of opinion, weak coordination, and unequal participation could reduce its effectiveness. Teachers should therefore establish clear objectives, form appropriate groups, assign roles, provide peer-feedback criteria, monitor group interaction, and maintain individual accountability. The findings are limited to six eighth-grade students in one non-formal language center and focus on perceptions and classroom processes rather than statistical improvement. Future studies should involve larger and more diverse participants, use pre- and post-writing assessments, examine different grouping strategies, and investigate the use of digital collaborative tools. Overall, collaborative learning is recommended as an alternative strategy for EFL writing instruction because it integrates cognitive, linguistic, social, and affective support. When carefully structured and facilitated, it enables students to improve their writing through dialogue, shared responsibility, peer feedback, and reflection.

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