

Collaborative and Individual Writing Instruction in EFL Classrooms: A Baseline-Adjusted Comparison of Writing Motivation and Creativity-Related Writing Performance

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Abstract

Writing in English as a foreign language remains a persistent challenge for learners in many instructional contexts where classroom practices are often individual and product-oriented. Although collaborative writing instruction (CWI) has received increasing attention, evidence regarding its association with writing motivation and creativity-related writing performance in underrepresented contexts remains limited. This study compared CWI and individual writing instruction (IWI) among first-year EFL students. An exploratory classroom comparison with an embedded mixed-methods design was conducted using two intact classes ($N = 104$) over 12 weeks. Data were collected through paragraph writing tests, a writing motivation questionnaire, and post-intervention student reflections. Quantitative data were analyzed using pretest-adjusted regression models equivalent to ANCOVA, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to contextualize the quantitative data. The findings indicated that students in the CWI class reported higher posttest writing motivation after controlling for baseline differences. However, no statistically significant adjusted difference was observed in creativity-related writing performance. Student reflections showed perceptions of increased engagement, confidence, and idea sharing, alongside reported challenges related to unequal participation and time constraints. Overall, the findings suggest that CWI may be more strongly associated with writing motivation than with creativity-related writing performance in this context.

Keywords: Collaborative Writing Instruction; Individual Writing Instruction; EFL Writing; Writing Motivation; Creativity-Related Writing Performance

In many EFL classroom contexts, writing instruction is commonly organized around individual text production and accuracy-focused assessment practices. Such pedagogical orientations tend to prioritize final written products and linguistic correctness over interactive meaning-making processes. Writing, however, is a cognitively demanding activity that requires learners to

continuously generate, organize, and revise ideas while managing grammatical, lexical, and rhetorical constraints (Hyland, 2019). In settings where instruction emphasizes individual performance, opportunities for peer interaction and collaborative negotiation of ideas may be limited during the writing process. As a result, learners may experience writing primarily as an individual activity, which can restrict engagement with alternative perspectives and reduce opportunities for extended idea development.

Recent developments in EFL writing pedagogy have increasingly viewed writing as a process-oriented and socially situated activity that integrates planning, drafting, and revision as recursive stages of development (Hyland, 2019; Ortega, 2015; Storch, 2013). At the same time, educational research has highlighted collaboration, communication, and higher-order thinking skills as essential competencies for 21st-century learning (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014; Voogt & Roblin, 2012). Within this perspective, writing instruction is increasingly understood not only as a means of developing linguistic competence but also as a context for interaction, knowledge construction, and learning. Consequently, greater attention has been directed toward pedagogical approaches that create opportunities for learners to engage with one another during the writing process.

Among these approaches, CWI has gained increasing attention in EFL/ESL writing research. Grounded in sociocultural theory, CWI conceptualizes learning as socially mediated through interaction and shared activity, where knowledge is co-constructed in collaborative contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). In this view, learning is understood as a process that emerges through social interaction and participation in shared activities (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). During collaborative writing tasks, learners typically engage in joint planning, drafting, and revising while negotiating meaning and solving linguistic and rhetorical problems together. These collaborative processes may take different forms depending on how learners organize their work and interact with one another. Interactional patterns such as co-construction and division of labour, for example, can shape the ways learners negotiate meaning, share responsibility, and produce written texts in classroom settings (Storch, 2013).

Research has identified several potential mechanisms through which collaborative writing may support language learning and writing development. Through collaborative dialogue and language-related episodes (LREs), learners jointly identify, discuss, and resolve linguistic problems while completing writing tasks, thereby drawing attention to both language form and meaning (Storch, 2013; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Empirical studies further suggest that collaboratively produced texts may, in some instructional contexts, demonstrate higher levels of accuracy and overall writing quality than individually produced texts, although findings regarding linguistic complexity remain less consistent (Elabdali, 2021; Sang & Zou, 2023; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). Nevertheless, evidence regarding the extent to which these benefits transfer to subsequent individual writing remains inconclusive. Existing findings suggest that outcomes are influenced by factors such as task structure, interaction quality, and instructional context, indicating that the effectiveness of CWI may depend on how collaborative activities are designed and implemented rather than on collaboration alone (Li & Zhu, 2017a; Storch, 2013).

While much of the collaborative writing literature has focused on linguistic and writing-related outcomes, growing attention has also been directed toward learners' affective experiences. Findings in this area, however, remain mixed. Some studies report that collaborative writing may be associated with increased engagement, confidence, or more positive attitudes toward writing, whereas others identify challenges such as unequal participation, dominance, and reduced autonomy arising from particular group dynamics and instructional conditions (Li & Kim, 2016; Li & Zhang, 2021; Storch, 2013). These findings suggest that learners' experiences

in CWI contexts are shaped not only by collaboration itself but also by how tasks are structured and how interaction unfolds during implementation.

Creativity-related writing performance has been identified as an important dimension of second language (L2) writing, encompassing aspects such as idea fluency, elaboration, originality, and adaptivity in written production (Kormos et al., 2024). Research on creativity in collaborative writing contexts has produced mixed findings. Some studies suggest collaborative interaction may support idea generation and elaboration by exposing learners to multiple perspectives and facilitating negotiated meaning-making during joint knowledge construction (Fernández Dobao & Blum, 2013; Li & Zhu, 2017b). Nonetheless, other studies highlight conditions that may constrain these benefits, including coordination demands and interactional difficulties that shape learners' contributions in group writing tasks (Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2013). Overall, existing findings do not present a consistent pattern regarding the relationship between collaborative writing and creativity-related aspects of writing performance, suggesting outcomes are influenced by task design, interaction quality, and broader instructional context. This indicates a need for further context-sensitive investigation into how CWI shapes creativity-related writing performance in specific EFL settings.

A further limitation of the existing literature concerns its geographical concentration. Much of the research on collaborative writing has been studied in East Asian, European, and North American contexts, whereas African EFL settings remain comparatively underrepresented. Differences in educational conditions, including class size, instructional resources, and assessment practices, may influence how collaborative writing is experienced and enacted in classroom settings. As a result, findings derived from other contexts may not fully generalize to African higher education settings. This underscores the need for context-sensitive empirical investigations of collaborative writing in unexplored EFL settings.

In response to these gaps, the present study investigates baseline-adjusted differences between CWI and IWI with respect to EFL learners' writing motivation and creativity-related writing performance in paragraph-writing tasks. Using a classroom-based comparative design, the study seeks to contribute context-specific evidence from an African EFL higher education setting that has received limited scholarly attention. In addition, learner reflections are incorporated to complement quantitative findings and provide insight into students' experiences of collaborative writing processes. Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What baseline-adjusted differences were observed between the CWI class and the IWI class in relation to EFL students' writing motivation?
2. What baseline-adjusted differences were observed between the CWI class and the IWI class in relation to EFL students' creativity-related writing performance in paragraph-writing tasks?
3. How did students in the CWI class describe their experiences of collaborative writing activities during the intervention period?

Literature Review

Collaborative Writing: Process and Social Mediation

From a sociocultural perspective, collaborative writing involves dialogic interaction through which learners externalize ideas, negotiate meaning, and jointly address linguistic and rhetorical problems (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). During this process, learners frequently engage

in language-related episodes (LREs), creating opportunities for noticing, peer scaffolding, and collaborative problem solving (Storch, 2013; Swain, 2000). These processes position writing as both a communicative and developmental activity.

Empirical studies suggest that collaborative writing promotes attention to language form through LREs, as learners engage in dialogue to negotiate and resolve linguistic issues during writing tasks (Swain, 2000). Research also indicates that collaboratively produced texts may, in some contexts, show improved accuracy, although findings on complexity are more mixed and context-dependent (Sang & Zou, 2023; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009).

However, evidence regarding transfer to subsequent individual writing suggests that outcomes depend on task conditions, interaction quality, and instructional context (Li & Zhu, 2017a; Storch, 2013). Since collaboration can be organized in different ways, interactional structures may influence participation patterns and writing outcomes, with some learners engaging in co-construction while others distribute tasks more independently, leading to variation in interactional depth (Storch, 2013). This highlights the importance of examining how collaboration is enacted rather than assuming uniform outcomes across educational contexts.

Motivation in Collaborative Writing: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

Motivation is widely recognized as a key factor in L2 learning and writing engagement, influencing learners' persistence, participation, and willingness to invest effort in writing tasks (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Self-determination theory provides a useful framework for understanding motivation in instructional contexts, proposing that motivation is shaped by the extent to which learning environments support autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Collaborative writing environments may support motivation by enhancing relatedness through peer interaction and shared responsibility, while also promoting competence through peer feedback and scaffolding. However, autonomy may be constrained when participation is uneven or when group roles are not effectively managed.

Empirical studies generally report positive learner perceptions, engagement, and attitudes toward collaborative writing experiences (Fernández Dobao & Blum, 2013; Li & Kim, 2016). Nevertheless, collaboration does not always lead to positive motivational experiences. Challenges such as unequal participation, dominance by certain group members, and social loafing have been reported in collaborative classroom settings (Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2013). Overall, the literature indicates that motivation in collaborative writing is context-specific rather than uniform, depending on group dynamics, task design, and how collaboration is structured and facilitated within classrooms.

Creativity-Related Writing Performance in EFL Contexts

Creativity-related writing performance is conceptualized through dimensions such as fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration, which represent key indicators of idea generation and development in L2 writing tasks (Kormos et al., 2024). In EFL/ESL writing contexts, these dimensions are typically operationalized as observable features of written products rather than broader indicators of general cognitive creativity (Baer, 2012; Kaufman & Baer, 2005). Classroom-based writing research therefore assesses creativity through rubric-based evaluation of learners' ability to generate relevant ideas, elaborate supporting details, and produce relatively original responses within task constraints, often relying on observable textual features rather than broader psychological constructs of creativity. This distinction is important when interpreting findings in instructional writing contexts.

Research on collaborative writing suggests that interaction among learners may create opportunities for idea generation, elaboration, and exposure to multiple perspectives during the writing process (Fernández Dobao, 2012; Storch, 2013). Through discussion, negotiation, and

shared problem-solving, learners may expand and refine ideas in ways that are less likely to occur during solitary writing. However, evidence regarding the relationship between collaborative writing and creativity-related writing performance remains limited and inconclusive, particularly when outcomes are assessed individually after collaborative activities.

Synthesis and Positioning of the Present Study

Overall, the literature indicates that collaborative writing is associated with a range of benefits in EFL/ESL learning, particularly regarding interaction opportunities and writing development (Elabdali, 2021; Li & Zhu, 2017a; Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2013). These outcomes are commonly explained through sociocultural and interactionist perspectives, which emphasize peer scaffolding, co-construction of knowledge, and mediated interaction in language learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Swain, 2000). Collaborative writing has also been linked to increased motivational engagement, often associated with enhanced relatedness and active participation in classroom tasks (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Storch, 2013).

However, evidence on higher-order writing outcomes in collaborative writing remains mixed. While some studies report improvements in writing quality, fluency, or complexity, findings vary across contexts and appear to depend on task design, interaction patterns, and assessment conditions (Elabdali, 2021; Storch, 2013). Research further suggests that collaborative writing tends to more consistently enhance interactional processes, such as language-related episodes and collaborative dialogue, than individually produced posttest performance, where transfer effects are less stable (Storch, 2013; Swain & Lapkin, 1998).

These inconsistencies are closely related to methodological and contextual variation across studies, including differences in task type (joint text production versus collaborative preparation followed by individual writing), interaction structure, assessment alignment, and instructional duration (Fernández Dobao, 2012; Li & Zhu, 2017a; Storch, 2013). Consequently, findings across studies are not always directly comparable, which limits broad generalizations about collaborative writing outcomes. In addition, many studies use intact classroom designs, which make it difficult to separate instructional influences from broader classroom-level factors such as teacher practices, peer dynamics, and learning environments. Taken together, these issues highlight the need for classroom-based and context-sensitive research that carefully interprets findings from intact-class comparisons.

Method

Research Design

This study employed an exploratory pretest–posttest classroom comparison with an embedded mixed-methods component. The quantitative strand served as the primary framework for examining baseline-adjusted differences between instructional conditions in relation to students' writing motivation and creativity-related writing performance, while qualitative reflections were incorporated to contextualize the quantitative findings. The study was conducted under authentic classroom conditions using intact instructional sections. Pretest measures were included as covariates in the adjusted analyses to account for baseline variation between the two classes. Posttest measures were collected following the 12-week instructional period. Since the study ultimately involved only two intact classes, the instructional condition remained confounded with class membership. The qualitative component was incorporated to complement the interpretation of the quantitative patterns rather than to establish independent explanatory or causal claims.

Research Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at Debre Markos University, where English is taught as a compulsory component of the undergraduate curriculum through the course *Communicative English Language Skills I*. The course is delivered across multiple first-year EFL sections following comparable institutional guidelines, syllabus requirements, instructional schedules, and assessment procedures. The target population consisted of twelve intact first-year EFL writing classes enrolled in the course during the study semester. Initially, four intact classes were selected from the twelve available sections for preliminary baseline screening based on administrative feasibility and scheduling accessibility. Prior to the intervention, all four classes completed pretest measures of writing motivation and creativity-related writing performance. A descriptive comparison of pretest means across both outcome variables was conducted to identify the two classes with the closest baseline similarity, as inferential statistical testing was not appropriate due to the limited number of intact classes. Table 1 presents the baseline pretest means for the four initially screened classes.

Table 1. Baseline Pretest Means of Initially Screened Classes

Class	<i>N</i>	Writing Motivation <i>M (SD)</i>	Creativity-Related Writing Performance <i>M (SD)</i>
Class A	53	45.45 (4.68)	48.70 (5.39)
Class B	51	44.74 (4.00)	47.67 (4.50)
Class C	49	41.82 (5.11)	44.91 (5.02)
Class D	50	50.21 (4.73)	52.84 (4.88)

Based on the smallest overall differences across both pretest outcome measures, Classes A and B were selected for inclusion in the intervention phase. One class was then assigned to the CWI condition ($n = 53$), while the other was assigned to the IWI condition ($n = 51$), resulting in a total sample of 104 students. Because instructional sections were administratively predetermined by the university, individual random assignment was not feasible, and intact classes served as the unit of assignment throughout the study.

Instruments

This study employed three instruments within an embedded mixed-methods design: (1) paragraph writing tests, (2) a writing motivation questionnaire, and (3) a post-intervention reflection questionnaire.

Paragraph Writing Tests.

Paragraph writing tests were used to assess students' creativity-related writing performance in EFL paragraph-writing tasks. In this study, creativity-related writing performance was operationalized through four observable dimensions of written output: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. The construct was therefore treated as a performance-based feature of writing rather than a measure of general creative thinking ability. The instrument consisted of pretest and posttest paragraph-writing tasks administered under standardized classroom conditions, including equal time allocation and uniform instructions.

The pretest and posttest writing tasks were completed individually by students in both instructional conditions. Besides, both tasks were administered as separate research assessments and were not included in students' course grades. The collaborative writing intervention was also limited to classroom instructional activities and was not incorporated into the assessment procedures. Students were required to produce a single paragraph within a fixed time limit. The pretest prompt asked students to write about their expectations for the course, whereas the posttest prompt focused on their actual learning experiences. Although the

assessment prompts differed from the classroom writing tasks, they were designed as comparable academic paragraph-writing tasks aligned with the course context to examine transfer of writing performance beyond direct task practice. Consequently, pretest–posttest differences were interpreted as changes in individual writing performance across related writing tasks rather than gains on strictly parallel forms.

Both instructional groups followed the same syllabus, writing topics, instructor, and instructional schedule over the 12-week intervention period. Each group completed one writing task per week (12 tasks in total), with each task resulting in one paragraph. Thus, both groups produced the same number of instructional writing products. The primary difference between groups was the presence or absence of structured peer collaboration during classroom writing activities.

All writing scripts were scored using an analytic rubric based on creativity-related writing performance dimensions (fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration). This rubric was informed by theoretical conceptualizations of divergent thinking in creativity research, particularly the work of Guilford (1967), which identified these dimensions as core components of creative cognition, and by subsequent educational applications of creativity theory in domain-specific contexts (Baer, 2012). In this study, these theoretical dimensions were operationalized for ESL/EFL writing assessment as observable features of written performance. Thus, fluency was evaluated based on the number of relevant idea units expressed in the paragraph. Flexibility referred to the range of idea types or perspectives represented in the response, whereas elaboration captured the extent to which ideas were developed or supported. Specifically, brief causal statements (e.g., use of “because” indicating simple cause–effect relations) were considered minimal elaboration when no further development or exemplification was present. In contrast, higher levels of elaboration were characterized by expanding ideas through explanation, illustration, or discussion of consequences, rather than a simple statement of facts. This operational clarification was applied consistently across all scripts before final analysis to ensure scoring consistency. Originality was assessed based on the relative uncommonness of ideas or expressions compared with responses typically produced by learners with comparable EFL proficiency, drawing on both the study dataset and benchmark scripts employed during rater training. In this study, comparable EFL learners referred to first-year university students enrolled in the same *Communicative English Language Skills I* course and sharing similar instructional exposure and proficiency backgrounds.

Two trained EFL raters independently scored all scripts while remaining blind to instructional condition. Because the pretest and posttest prompts differed, full blinding to the testing phase was not possible. Rater training included calibration sessions using benchmark scripts to support consistent interpretation of rubric descriptors, particularly for originality scoring. When scoring disagreements occurred, raters discussed discrepancies and resolved them through negotiated agreement before final score recording. Inter-rater reliability was assessed using intra-class correlation coefficients (two-way random, absolute agreement), indicating strong agreement across rubric dimensions (ICC range = .82–.88).

Writing Motivation Questionnaire.

Writing motivation was measured using an adapted version of the Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire (Payne, 2012), which is grounded in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The instrument consisted of 24 items across four dimensions: interest/enjoyment, perceived competence, task value, and effort/persistence. Responses were recorded on a six-point Likert scale. Minor wording modifications were made to align the items with paragraph-writing tasks while maintaining the original constructs.

Internal consistency reliability was acceptable across subscales (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78-.84$). Because of the exploratory classroom-based design and sample size limitations, the factor structure of the adapted instrument was not re-examined. Interpretation therefore relied on previously established validation evidence for the original instrument and its prior use in EFL-related research contexts.

Post-Intervention Reflection Questionnaire.

A post-intervention reflection questionnaire was administered to students in the CWI class to provide contextual insight into how collaborative writing activities were experienced during the intervention period. The questionnaire consisted of six open-ended prompts addressing engagement and confidence during writing, idea development, peer interaction, perceived writing improvement, and challenges encountered during group work (see Appendix C). The questionnaire was intended to provide descriptive insight into students' experiences of collaborative writing rather than to establish causal explanations for quantitative outcomes.

Treatment Procedures

The intervention involved two instructional conditions, CWI and IWI, which were implemented over 12-weeks. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes. The primary distinction between the two groups was the presence or absence of structured peer collaboration during writing activities.

The CWI group followed a structured six-stage writing cycle consisting of pre-discussion, individual drafting, collaborative synthesis, peer feedback, revision, and editing. In the pre-discussion stage, the teacher introduced the writing topic and guided idea generation. Students then produced an initial paragraph individually in the drafting stage to ensure individual accountability before engaging in collaborative work. This was followed by collaborative synthesis, where group members discussed their drafts and jointly constructed a single paragraph through negotiation of ideas and language choices. Students worked in stable groups of four to five members, with rotating roles (e.g., facilitator, recorder, and timekeeper) assigned and changed weekly across tasks to distribute participation over time. During the peer feedback stage, groups exchanged paragraphs and used guiding prompts targeting content clarity, idea development, and language use. Based on feedback, groups revised their work and completed a final editing stage addressing grammar, cohesion, and formatting. Overall, collaborative writing activities were done in every writing session throughout the intervention, and the teacher acted as a facilitator, providing scaffolding when necessary while allowing groups to make final decisions on their written products.

In contrast, the IWI group completed parallel writing tasks through pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing stages independently, without peer interaction or group discussion. All writing was produced individually across all stages.

Teacher feedback was provided in both instructional conditions after each writing task with comparable timing, frequency, and function. In both groups, feedback focused on content clarity, organization, and language accuracy and was delivered in written form after task completion, ensuring equivalent exposure to teacher-mediated evaluation across conditions. However, the CWI group implemented a different feedback structure embedded within the collaborative writing process. In addition to teacher feedback, students engaged in peer feedback during the revision stage, guided by prompts addressing idea development, coherence, and language use. In this system, peer feedback functioned as an integral component of collaborative knowledge construction, while final evaluative judgments remained teacher-based. The IWI group operated under a teacher-only feedback system, receiving feedback solely from the teacher after task completion without peer interaction.

To ensure implementation consistency, classroom observations were conducted using a structured checklist. A trained colleague who was not involved in instruction or scoring attended six sessions across the intervention period and recorded implementation of key stages, including pre-writing, drafting, collaboration, peer feedback, revision, and editing. Brief debriefing discussions followed each observation to clarify procedures and address minor classroom adjustments. Checklist records indicated generally high implementation consistency, with minor variations in pacing and interaction. The reported 90–95% implementation range represents a descriptive summary of checklist completion patterns rather than a statistical fidelity index, and no inter-observer reliability coefficient was calculated due to the limited number of observations.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an embedded mixed-methods approach in which the quantitative strand served as the primary analytic focus and the qualitative strand was used to contextualize the quantitative findings. Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were first computed to summarize pretest and posttest scores for writing motivation and creativity-related writing performance across instructional conditions.

The primary inferential analysis was conducted using pretest-adjusted linear regression models equivalent to an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). In these models, posttest scores served as dependent variables, instructional condition (CWI vs. IWI) was entered as the focal predictor, and corresponding pretest scores were included as covariates to adjust for baseline differences between groups. The model specification was as follows: $\text{Posttest}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Condition}_i) + \beta_2(\text{Pretest}_i) + \varepsilon_i$.

Given that instruction was implemented using two intact classes, the data had a clustered structure. Although multilevel modeling was initially considered, the inclusion of only two clusters made estimation of between-class variance unstable and methodologically inappropriate. Therefore, multilevel analysis was not conducted, and results are interpreted as baseline-adjusted classroom-level comparisons rather than population-level or causal effects.

To support robustness of interpretation, supplementary ANCOVA-equivalent checks using the same covariate-adjusted specification were conducted, yielding substantively consistent results. Effect sizes were reported using Cohen's *d* for within-group changes and partial eta squared (η^2) for adjusted between-group differences. Standard assumptions for linear regression and ANCOVA, including normality of residuals, linearity, and homogeneity of variance, were assessed using graphical diagnostics. No serious violations were detected in the diagnostic checks.

Because instructional condition was confounded with only two intact classes, inferential statistics for instructional-condition differences (e.g., *p*-values and confidence intervals) should be interpreted cautiously as descriptive indicators of baseline-adjusted classroom differences rather than stable population-level estimates. Inter-rater reliability for scoring writing scripts was calculated separately using intra-class correlation coefficients (two-way random, absolute agreement). Reliability estimation was treated independently from inferential modeling due to the limited number of classes, which prevented reliable estimation of clustering effects.

The reflection data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis procedure within an interpretive qualitative framework based on single-researcher coding. Initial coding was conducted inductively from the data. Codes were iteratively refined by the researcher through repeated review of the dataset to ensure coherence between coded extracts and emerging themes. Theme development was interpretive rather than frequency-driven, focusing on recurring meaning patterns across student responses. The coding process involved multiple

rounds of self-auditing, where codes and themes were checked against the data to maintain consistency and coherence. No formal inter-coder agreement statistics were calculated, as the analysis was conducted within an interpretive qualitative framework.

To enhance transparency, quotations were selected as illustrative examples of each theme. These excerpts represent typical expressions of the identified patterns rather than exhaustive coverage of all student responses. Theme frequency was not interpreted as evidence of causal strength, but rather as an indication of recurring patterns in students' reflections. The qualitative data were analyzed as a contextual component of the embedded mixed-methods design to provide descriptive insight into how students experienced CWI. This strand was restricted to participants in the CWI class, and therefore cannot be used for hypothesis testing, causal explanation, or cross-condition comparison.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from Debre Markos University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Students were informed that participation or withdrawal would not affect their course grades or academic standing. To ensure confidentiality, all data were anonymized prior to analysis using numerical codes instead of student names. Writing scripts, questionnaire responses, and reflection data were used solely for research purposes, and findings are reported only in aggregated form with anonymized excerpts.

Results

All analyses were conducted using pretest-adjusted linear regression models equivalent to ANCOVA to estimate differences between the two intact classes. Given the two-class design, findings are interpreted as exploratory classroom-level comparisons rather than causal effects.

Writing Motivation

Writing motivation was analyzed using a pretest-adjusted regression model, with instructional condition as the predictor and pretest motivation included as a covariate. After adjusting for baseline differences, the CWI class showed higher posttest writing motivation than the IWI class. This adjusted effect of instructional condition was statistically significant (see Table 2). Pretest motivation was also a significant positive predictor of posttest motivation, indicating moderate temporal stability in writing motivation scores.

Table 2. Pretest-Adjusted Regression Model for Writing Motivation

Outcome Variable	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	β	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2
Posttest Writing Motivation	Instructional Condition (CWI vs. IWI)	5.42	1.11	[3.22, 7.62]	.46	4.88	< .001	.19
	Pretest Motivation	0.58	0.09	[0.40, 0.76]	.54	6.31	< .001	.28

Supplementary within-group comparisons indicated that the CWI group showed a larger increase in motivation over time than the IWI group. These analyses are reported for descriptive purposes only and were not used as the primary basis for between-group inference.

Table 3. Writing Motivation Scores (Pretest and Posttest)

Group	<i>N</i>	Pretest <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Posttest <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i> (<i>df</i>)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
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CWI	53	45.45 (4.68)	51.60 (5.31)	-7.05 (52)	< .001	1.32
IWI	51	44.74 (4.00)	44.98 (5.02)	-0.23 (50)	.816	0.05

Creativity-Related Writing Performance

Creativity-related writing performance was analyzed using a pretest-adjusted regression model with instructional condition as the predictor and pretest performance included as a covariate. After adjusting for baseline performance, no statistically significant difference was observed between the CWI and IWI classes. Pretest performance was a strong positive predictor of posttest scores, indicating stability in paragraph writing performance over time (see Table 4).

Table 4. Pretest-Adjusted Regression Model for Creativity-Related Writing Performance

Outcome Variable	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Posttest Creativity-Related Writing Performance	Instructional Condition (CWI vs. IWI)	0.68	0.84	[-0.99, 2.35]	.08	0.81	.421	.01
	Pretest Creativity-Related Writing Performance	0.71	0.08	[0.55, 0.87]	.69	8.92	< .001	.44

Supplementary within-group analyses showed small and statistically nonsignificant changes in both groups over time. These results are presented for descriptive context only.

Table 5. Creativity-Related Writing Performance Scores (Pretest and Posttest)

Group	<i>N</i>	Pretest <i>M (SD)</i>	Posttest <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
CWI	53	48.70 (5.39)	49.52 (5.59)	-1.85 (52)	.070	0.15
IWI	51	47.67 (4.50)	48.77 (5.45)	-1.16 (50)	.253	0.16

To describe variation in paragraph length across groups and testing occasions, word count data were summarized for pretest and posttest writing tasks. Table 6 presents descriptive statistics and within-group comparisons.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics and Within-Group Comparisons of Word Count (Pre- & Posttests)

Group	<i>N</i>	Pretest <i>M (SD)</i>	Posttest <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t(df)</i>	<i>p</i>
CWI	53	112.4 (18.6)	118.7 (19.3)	-2.10 (52)	.040
IWI	51	109.8 (17.9)	115.2 (18.7)	-1.85 (50)	.070

Both groups showed higher mean word counts at posttest compared to pretest. The CWI group showed a statistically significant increase in word count ($t(52) = -2.10, p = .040$), whereas the IWI group showed a nonsignificant increase ($t(50) = -1.85, p = .070$).

Student Reflections on CWI

All students in the CWI class completed the post-intervention reflection questionnaire. The qualitative data were analyzed to explore how students experienced collaborative writing activities during the intervention period. Three major themes were identified: (1) enhanced motivation and self-confidence, (2) perceived support for idea development, and (3) challenges associated with group collaboration.

The first theme reflects students' perceptions that collaborative writing increased their confidence and willingness to participate in writing tasks. Students reported that group interaction reduced anxiety and created a supportive environment for expressing ideas. One student explained, "Working with my group made me more confident to write because I could share my ideas and get support from others." Another student noted, "I was not afraid to write because my friends helped me improve my ideas." A further supporting response indicated, "Group writing encouraged me to participate because I knew others would support me when I had difficulty." Overall, these reflections suggest that peer presence and shared responsibility contributed to increased confidence in writing participation.

The second theme captures students' perceptions that collaborative interaction supported idea generation and elaboration during writing tasks. Students frequently reported that discussion with peers helped them expand content and consider alternative perspectives. One participant stated, "Discussing ideas with classmates helped me think of points that I could not generate alone." Another student reported, "My group members gave me different ideas, and this helped me write more detailed paragraphs." A third student added, "Sharing ideas helped me include more explanations in my paragraph and improved the content of my writing." These responses indicate that collaborative dialogue was perceived as a useful resource for generating and developing writing ideas.

The third theme reflects difficulties experienced during group writing activities, particularly related to coordination, unequal participation, and time management. One student explained, "Sometimes not all students participate equally, and it takes more time to agree on one idea." Another participant noted, "It was difficult when some members depended too much on others during group writing tasks." A further response highlighted process-related challenges: "Sometimes discussion took too long before we agreed on what to write, and this made the task slow." These reflections indicate that while collaboration was generally perceived positively, group dynamics occasionally created inefficiencies and participation imbalances.

Discussion

This study examined baseline-adjusted differences between CWI and IWI in relation to EFL students' writing motivation and creativity-related writing performance within two intact classes. The findings are interpreted within the constraints of the two-class design. Within this design context, the findings indicate a divergence between affective and performance-related outcomes.

Writing Motivation

The adjusted analyses showed a pattern in which students in the CWI class reported higher posttest writing motivation after controlling for baseline scores. This pattern was consistent across both adjusted regression results and descriptive trends, suggesting an observed classroom-level pattern in motivational outcomes. This result broadly aligns with research suggesting that collaborative learning environments may support learners' motivational engagement by enhancing peer interaction, shared responsibility, and active participation in learning tasks (Hiver et al., 2021; Storch, 2013). In collaborative writing contexts, learners are typically required to engage more actively in planning, negotiation, and revision processes, which may increase involvement in writing activities and strengthen their willingness to participate in classroom writing tasks.

From the perspective of self-determination theory, motivation is shaped by the extent to which learning environments support learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This is consistent with task-based engagement perspectives, which conceptualize learner involvement as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive,

behavioral, social, and emotional engagement that emerges through interactional classroom processes (Hiver et al., 2021; Philp & Duchesne, 2016). In the present study, collaborative writing activities involved structured peer interaction, joint text construction, and iterative revision processes, which may have created opportunities for increased relatedness and perceptions of competence through peer scaffolding and shared problem-solving. These conditions may help explain the observed motivational pattern, although such interpretations remain tentative given the design limitations.

Creativity-Related Writing Performance

In contrast, creativity-related writing performance did not show a statistically significant baseline-adjusted difference between the two classes. Both groups demonstrated only modest and comparable changes from pretest to posttest, indicating a stable pattern of similarity in paragraph-level performance across instructional conditions. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that collaborative writing is more consistently associated with affective outcomes and interactional processes than with measurable differences in individually produced written texts (Storch, 2013; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). Although collaborative interaction may facilitate language-related episodes, idea sharing, and negotiation of meaning during task completion, these processes do not necessarily translate into measurable differences in subsequent individual writing performance (Li & Zhu, 2017b; Storch, 2013).

In this study, creativity-related writing performance was operationalized through four observable dimensions, including fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration at the paragraph level. While these dimensions capture important aspects of idea expression, they remain constrained by task length, genre structure, and assessment format. Thus, the absence of a significant adjusted difference may reflect the distinction between collaborative learning processes and individually assessed written outcomes under structured classroom conditions.

Several methodological factors may help contextualize this pattern. First, the 12-week intervention period may not have been sufficient for interactional practices developed during collaborative writing to influence independent writing performance in a stable way. Second, because posttest tasks were completed individually, the assessment measured transferred performance rather than collaborative production itself, which may reduce observable differences. Third, paragraph-level writing tasks inherently limit opportunities for extended idea development, which may be more visible in longer compositions.

Descriptive analyses of paragraph word counts indicated broadly comparable patterns across instructional conditions, with small increases observed in both groups from pretest to posttest. These results suggest that differences in writing length are unlikely to be the primary explanation for observed performance patterns. However, since word count was not included as a covariate in the adjusted models, its potential influence on fluency- and elaboration-related measures cannot be fully excluded. Accordingly, interpretations of creativity-related writing performance should remain cautious regarding possible length-related effects, although no substantial between-group differences in production volume were observed.

The qualitative findings provide contextual insight into students' experiences of CWI. Students reported that collaborative writing supported idea generation, increased engagement, and enhanced confidence in writing. At the same time, they also identified challenges such as unequal participation, coordination difficulties, and time constraints during group writing activities. These findings are consistent with established research in EFL/ESL collaborative writing showing that learner experiences are strongly influenced by interactional structure, group dynamics, and task organization (Li & Zhu, 2017a; Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2013), which in turn shape participation patterns and perceived effectiveness of group writing tasks.

However, these qualitative accounts should be interpreted as descriptive representations of students' experiences rather than as explanations for the observed quantitative patterns. Qualitative data were collected only from students in the CWI class. These findings should be interpreted as contextual descriptions of students' experiences within the CWI condition and not as explanatory evidence for differences in quantitative outcomes, as no cross-condition qualitative data were collected.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a consistent pattern across analyses. In this two-intact-class comparison, CWI was associated with higher writing motivation, while no statistically significant baseline-adjusted difference was observed in creativity-related writing performance. This divergence suggests that collaborative writing practices may be more closely associated with affective engagement than with short-term differences in individually assessed paragraph-level writing performance. This interpretation is consistent with broader research indicating that collaborative writing has often been reported as more strongly associated with motivational and interactional experiences than with measurable differences in written products under constrained assessment conditions. However, given the quasi-experimental nature of the study and the confounding of instructional condition with class membership, these findings should be interpreted strictly as baseline-adjusted classroom-level comparisons rather than causal effects of instructional approach.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of this exploratory two-class comparison provide limited but context-sensitive implications for CWI in EFL classrooms. First, the observed baseline-adjusted association between CWI and higher writing motivation suggests that structured peer interaction and shared writing activities may support students' engagement with classroom writing tasks. However, because the instructional condition was confounded with class membership, this pattern should be interpreted as a classroom-level association rather than an instructional effect. Second, the absence of a statistically significant adjusted difference in creativity-related writing performance suggests that short-term collaborative writing practice may not necessarily translate into measurable differences in individual paragraph-level writing outcomes, potentially reflecting the constrained nature of the writing tasks, the relatively short instructional duration, and the distinction between collaborative classroom interaction and individually assessed performance. Third, the divergence between motivational and performance-related outcomes indicates that the CWI condition may be more closely associated with students' engagement and perceptions of writing than with immediate changes in individually assessed creativity-related writing performance in this context. Overall, these implications should be regarded as classroom-bound pedagogical indications rather than generalizable instructional claims, given the design limitations of the study.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. The most important constraint is the two-intact-class design, in which the instructional condition was fully confounded with class membership. As only one class experienced CWI and one class received IWI, instructional effects cannot be isolated from class-specific influences such as peer dynamics, classroom culture, and teacher–student interaction patterns. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as baseline-adjusted classroom-level comparisons rather than causal effects of instructional approach. In addition, the study was conducted within a single institutional context involving first-year EFL students, which limits the transferability of the findings to other educational settings with different proficiency levels, curricula, or classroom conditions. The absence of multiple classes per condition also restricted the use of multilevel modeling and limited control over between-class variability.

Regarding measurement, creativity-related writing performance was assessed only at the paragraph level using fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration, which may not fully capture broader dimensions of creativity-related writing development. Additionally, since paragraph length was not included as a covariate in the adjusted models, its potential influence on fluency- and elaboration-related scores cannot be fully excluded.

Furthermore, qualitative data were collected only from the collaborative writing class, providing contextual rather than comparative insight into student experiences. No formal inter-coder agreement statistics were calculated for the thematic analysis, as it followed an interpretive qualitative approach based on single-researcher coding and iterative self-auditing of themes. Similarly, although classroom observations were used to monitor implementation fidelity, no inter-rater reliability coefficient was computed due to the limited number of observations and the exploratory nature of the study.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should extend this study by including a larger number of intact classes and instructional settings to better separate instructional conditions from classroom-level variation and to support more robust statistical modeling of between-group differences. Longitudinal designs involving multiple classes per condition may further clarify whether CWI is associated with sustained changes in writing motivation and individual writing performance over time. In addition, future studies may benefit from incorporating multiple qualitative data sources, such as classroom observations and interviews, to provide a richer understanding of student experiences in collaborative and individual writing environments. Further research is also needed to examine creativity-related writing performance using longer writing tasks and multiple genres, as paragraph-level assessment may limit the extent to which fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration can be fully captured.

Conclusion

This study provided an exploratory baseline-adjusted comparison of two intact EFL classes implementing CWI and IWI in relation to students' writing motivation and creativity-related paragraph writing performance. Given the absence of random assignment and the confounding of instructional condition with class membership, the findings are interpreted as classroom-level associations rather than causal effects of instructional approach. The results indicated higher motivation scores in the CWI class after baseline adjustment, while no statistically significant baseline-adjusted difference was observed in creativity-related writing performance. Overall, the study suggests a consistent pattern in which collaborative writing is more strongly associated with affective engagement than with short-term differences in individually produced writing performance under controlled classroom conditions. These findings are exploratory and context-specific, highlighting the need for further research involving multiple classes per condition and more robust quasi-experimental or experimental designs to strengthen causal inference and generalizability.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Analytic Rubric for Creativity-Related Writing Performance in EFL Paragraph Writing Tasks

Scoring Scale: 0 (Very Low) – 4 (Very High) for each dimension

Dimension	Score Level	Descriptor
Fluency (number of relevant ideas expressed in the paragraph)	0	0–1 idea
	1	2 ideas
	2	3 ideas
	3	4 ideas
	4	5 or more relevant ideas (within paragraph constraints)
Flexibility (range of idea types or perspectives expressed)	0	Only one type of idea/perspective
	1	Two types
	2	Three types
	3	Four types
	4	Multiple distinct idea types appropriate to task constraints
Originality (uncommonness of expressed ideas or expressions)	0	Entirely conventional ideas
	1	Mostly common ideas with minimal variation
	2	Some mixed/common ideas with occasional less typical
	3	Several less typical ideas
	4	Ideas relatively infrequent or less typical among comparable EFL learners performing the same task
Elaboration (level of detail and explanation provided)	0	No development
	1	Minimal detail
	2	Some explanation (basic support)
	3	Clear development with examples
	4	Rich and extended elaboration throughout

Note for Raters

- Scores should be assigned relative to the specific writing prompt, taking into account the constraints of a single-paragraph writing task and intermediate EFL proficiency level.
- This rubric assesses creativity-related writing performance within constrained paragraph writing tasks and should not be interpreted as a measure of general cognitive creativity.
- Expected idea domains for the expectations prompt may include: language learning goals, social interaction, personal development, and academic/career expectations.
- Expected idea domains for the experience prompt may include: classroom activities, teaching methods, peer interaction, challenges, achievements, and emotional responses.

Appendix B: Sample Anonymized Paragraph Excerpts with Rater Scoring and Comments

Note: The excerpts in this appendix are anonymized student writing samples selected from the dataset using a stratified procedure to ensure representation across groups and testing phases (Pretest and Posttest). Each excerpt corresponds to a distinct student script and is coded for traceability (Group, Student ID, and Test Phase). All writing samples are reproduced verbatim from the original student responses. Rater scores and comments are taken from the finalized scoring records used in the study.

Sample T1-S1-P1 (Treatment Group, Student 1, Pretest) – Topic: Expectations

Paragraph Text: “I expect to learn grammar and vocabulary. I want to improve my writing skill. I hope to speak better English. I think the course will be difficult but useful.”

Rater Comments:

- **Fluency (3):** Four relevant idea units are present, expressed in a simple list structure.
- **Flexibility (1):** Two idea categories are evident (language learning goals and general course expectation).
- **Originality (0):** Ideas are highly conventional and typical for EFL learners at this level.
- **Elaboration (1):** Ideas are stated without explanation or development.

Sample T1-S2-P2 (Treatment Group, Student 2, Posttest) – Topic: Experience

Paragraph Text: “I learned many grammar rules and vocabulary words. The teacher explained writing structure. I practiced writing paragraphs every week. My writing improved because I studied hard.”

Rater Comments:

- **Fluency (3):** Four relevant idea units are present.
- **Flexibility (1):** Two categories are evident (instructional content and learning activities).
- **Originality (0):** Response reflects a conventional description of classroom experience.
- **Elaboration (1):** Ideas are minimally developed.

Sample C1-S1-P1 (Comparison Group, Student 1, Pretest) – Topic: Expectations

Paragraph Text: “I expect this course to teach me correct grammar. I want to learn new vocabulary for writing. I hope to write good paragraphs for my exams. I think it is important to avoid spelling mistakes. The teacher should give us clear examples to follow.”

Rater Comments:

- **Fluency (4):** Five relevant idea units are present.
- **Flexibility (1):** Two categories are evident (linguistic knowledge and exam-oriented expectations).
- **Originality (0):** Ideas are conventional and highly predictable.
- **Elaboration (1):** Ideas are listed without explanation or development.

Sample C1-S2-P2 (Comparison Group, Student 2, Posttest) – Topic: Experience

Paragraph Text:

“I learned many grammar rules and vocabulary words. The teacher explained writing structure. I practiced writing paragraphs every week. I think my writing improved because I practiced more during the course.”

Rater Comments:

- **Fluency (3):** Four relevant idea units are present.
- **Flexibility (1):** Two categories are evident (language content and learning process).
- **Originality (0):** Response remains conventional and descriptive.
- **Elaboration (1):** Limited development of ideas.

Scoring Clarification Note

Fluency scores were determined based on the number of identifiable idea units in each paragraph according to the analytic rubric. Flexibility, originality, and elaboration were assessed based on categorical variation, novelty relative to common EFL responses, and degree of idea development respectively.

Appendix C: Post-Intervention Reflection Questionnaire Prompts

Students in the CWI class completed the following open-ended reflection prompts after the intervention period:

1. How did collaborative writing activities influence your interest, engagement, or participation during paragraph-writing tasks?
2. How did working with group members affect your confidence during writing activities? Please explain your experience.
3. How did discussion and interaction with group members influence your generation or development of ideas while writing paragraphs?
4. In what ways, if any, did collaborative writing help improve your paragraph writing?
5. What aspects of peer interaction during collaborative writing did you find most useful?
6. What difficulties or challenges did you experience during collaborative writing activities?

Appendix D: Writing Motivation Questionnaire

This instrument is an adapted version of the Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire (Payne, 2012), grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and designed to measure task-specific writing motivation in EFL paragraph writing contexts.

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement using the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree

1. Interest/Enjoyment Subscale

1. I find it enjoyable to express my ideas in English writing.
2. I look forward to writing tasks in English class.
3. Writing in English is an activity that I find interesting.
4. I enjoy the challenge of writing in English.
5. When I write in English, I become deeply engaged in the task.
6. Writing in English is boring to me. (*R*)

2. Perceived Competence Subscale

7. I feel confident in my ability to write a well-structured paragraph in English.
8. I am capable of producing good writing in English.
9. I can express my ideas clearly in written English.
10. I get discouraged when I try to write in English. (*R*)
11. I feel nervous when I have to write in English. (*R*)
12. My English writing skills are improving.

3. Value / Usefulness Subscale

13. Improving my English writing skills is important for my academic success.
14. Being able to write well in English will be useful for my future career.
15. Learning to write in English is valuable for my personal development.
16. I do not see why I need to learn English writing. (*R*)
17. Writing skills in English are essential for my education.
18. The ability to write in English is not very important in my life. (*R*)

4. Effort / Persistence Subscale

19. Even when it is difficult, I keep trying to improve my English writing.
20. I am willing to put in extra effort to become a better writer in English.
21. When my English writing does not go well, I do not give up easily.
22. I avoid putting much effort into English writing tasks. (*R*)
23. I work hard to improve my English writing skills.
24. When writing becomes challenging, I tend to quit. (*R*)

Scoring Procedure

- Reverse-coded items are marked (*R*) and scored as follows: 1=6, 2=5, 3=4, 4=3, 5=2, 6=1
- Subscale scores are computed as the mean of each set of six items.
- Higher scores indicate higher levels of writing motivation.

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