Nhận thức của sinh viên Anh ngữ về hiệu quả của hoạt động thực hành kĩ năng viết theo nhóm

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TÓM TẮT

Bài báo này nhằm tìm hiểu nhận thức của sinh viên chuyên ngữ về hiệu quả của hoạt động thực hành kĩ năng viết theo nhóm tại các lớp Viết tiếng Anh. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện với sự tham gia của 120 sinh viên năm thứ ba ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh, Trường Đại học Quy Nhơn. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua phiếu khảo sát và phỏng vấn, sau đó được phân tích định tính và định lượng. Kết quả nghiên cứu nhìn chung cho thấy nhận thức tích cực của sinh viên về hoạt động này. Đa phần ủng hộ việc sử dụng hoạt động viết theo nhóm vì việc này góp phần phát triển không chỉ kỹ năng viết mà còn ảnh hưởng tích cực đến các kĩ năng ngôn ngữ khác. Ngoài ra dạng hoạt động viết theo nhóm còn giúp sinh viên thêm động lực và tự tin trong học tập, giúp hoàn thiện kĩ năng giải quyết vấn đề, trao đổi kiến thức và cải thiện quá trình học của bản thân. Tuy nhiên, đôi khi sự phân chia nhiệm vụ cho các thành viên trong nhóm khi triển khai hoạt động này không được đồng đều làm giảm hiệu quả quá trình học và dạy.

Từ khóa: *Nhận thức, hoạt động viết theo nhóm, bậc đại học, sinh viên chuyên ngữ.*

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English majors' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing in tertiary academic writing classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to explore students' perceptions towards collaborative writing in the academic writing classrooms. The study was carried out with the participation of Quy Nhon University's 120 third-year English Language majors. The data were collected through questionnaires and interview and then analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings of the study revealed that the students' views on the effects of collaborative writing in writing classrooms were positive. Specifically, the students were in favor of the use of collaborative writing in writing classrooms as it significantly contributed to their knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, uneven work division during collaborative writing activities needs to be taken into consideration for the desired outcomes in the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: *Perception, English majors, collaborative writing, tertiary classroom.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is regarded as a compulsory subject in many schools, colleges, and universities. Of the four skills, writing is considered to be one of the most necessary academic skills, especially at the tertiary level. To find an effective way of teaching and learning English writing skill in the ESL classroom, researchers have examined the effectiveness of various pedagogical methods, one of which is collaborative writing. Although research about the efficacy of collaborative writing in foreign language teaching has proliferated in recent years (Eloba & Oskoz;[1] Grufron & Hawa;[2] Kim[3]), little prior research has been done to explore students' perceptions of collaborative writing and their classroom practices. In Vietnam, some studies have been conducted to explore students' perceptions of collaborative writing or its effect on students' performance (Pham;[4] Trinh & Nguyen;[5] Le[6]). However, there is a lack of investigation into the effects of this type used academic classrooms from students' perspective. Hence, more research should be done into students' perceptions to gather a better understanding of the use of collaborative writing in the academic field, especially at the tertiary level. Also, previous studies on students' perceptions of collaborative writing focused mainly on pair work, with little attention paid to writing in small groups. All the above reasons show that there is a need for a research to be conducted to explore students' perceptions of collaborative writing in the academic writing classroom. The study is qualitatively and quantitatively conducted with the participation of 120 third

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year English majors at Quy Nhon University, aiming at finding out what the students think about the effects of collaborative writing in six areas, namely writing skills, other skills, motivation and confidence, collective efforts and responsibility, problem solving and knowledge exchange, and their academic improvement.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Collaborative writing, which has its roots in collaborative learning, has grown in importance in the teaching of writing in EFL classrooms since the 1980s. In fact, several studies on collaborative writing have been published in the last several years, and each author or scholar defines the concept of collaborative writing in different ways. However, collaborative writing is sometimes confused with cooperative writing. According to Storch[7], collaborative writing is an activity that requires the co-writers to be involved in all stages of the writing process, sharing the responsibility for and ownership of the entire text produced. Then, based on these traits, he clearly distinguishes collaborative writing from cooperative writing. While cooperation involves a division of roles and responsibilities for completing one section, like collecting information or editing the final draft, learners in collaborative activities work together throughout the entire writing process, sharing decision-making and responsibility for the text. Given that these two terms have been used by researchers interchangeably, what the researcher focuses on in this study is collaborative writing, not cooperative writing. As collaboration means the process of working with others in order to achieve something, collaborative writing can be defined as a process in which two or more individuals collaborate to create a single text (Storch[8]). To put it another way, students work together, complete the task, and create a product based on their discussion.

According to Lowry et al.,[9] collaborative writing is a social process that helps group members focus on a common goal that requires negotiation, cooperation, and discussion throughout the process of creating a common text. Galegher and Kraut[10] share the same perspective on collaborative writing and emphasize the social nature of collaborative writing. They view collaborative writing as a social interaction process that involves negotiation about the meaning of facts, a demand for consensus as to an appropriate solution, division of labor based on concerns for fairness and quality of work, coordination of individual contributions, and resolution of questions about authority within the group. Similarly, others have emphasized that collaborative writing can be seen as a social practice that has different meanings for different participants. Rice and Huguley[11] offer yet another definition that emphasizes the primary activities of collaborative writing: Collaborative writing is any writing performed collectively by more than one person that is used to produce a single text; and we define writing as any activity that leads to a completed document, including brainstorming or idea-generating, gathering research, planning and organizing, drafting, revision, and editing.

In addition, Barkley et al.[12] suggest stages of the writing process that learners go through during collaborative writing activities, including brainstorming ideas, gathering information and organizing the ideas into an outline, drafting the writing, revising, and revising and editing the writing. The main core of collaborative writing is a process in which a pair of students or a group of students work together to produce a piece of writing, so the cooperation and contributions of the group members play an important role. In the collaborative writing process, instructors as facilitators will demonstrate how a group or pairs of students provide feedback to each other, search for assistance from others, and discuss and negotiate strategies for the concerns of writing (Kessler et al.[13]). Consequently, the writing product will be better than before, as there is social interaction between teachers and students.

Given the fact that there are many different viewpoints on the definitions of collaborative writing, each scholar or author has their own way of defining this term based on their field of research and their experience. In this article, however, the researchers choose to describe collaborative writing as a process in which students engage in pairs or groups to produce a single written text. In this process, students are asked to brainstorm, discuss, generate, and deliberate on ideas for the text together. As it is a joint product of the whole group, each group member has to share equal responsibility for contributing to and completing a shared piece of writing.

A number of teachers have implemented collaborative writing in their writing classes using a variety of strategies. In other words, they have different points of view dealing with the strategies of collaborative writing. The followings are the types of collaborative writing strategies proposed by Lowry et al.[9] First, group single-author writing is a kind of writing conducted by one individual that involves planning, drafting, and reviewing. Even though it is done by one person, it is still collaborative writing since it involves a team that works toward a coordinated consensus that is reflected in a document written by one of the team members. It occurs when one team member writes on behalf of the entire group. If the writing assignment is easy, this type of writing might be used. Second, sequential single-author writing involves one group member writing at a time. Each group member is given a part of the text to write, and then the text is passed on to the next group member. Third, parallel writing happens when a group splits an assignment or composition into separate parts and each member works on their assigned part simultaneously. There are two types of parallel writing: horizontal division parallel writing, used when group members divide the task into sections, with each member responsible for the development of his or her assigned section;

and stratified division parallel writing, used when group members divide responsibility for the product's creation by assigning different members with different roles. Author, editor, facilitator, or team leader are some examples of roles that a member might be given. The fourth type of writing is reactive writing, which arises when members of a team work together in real-time to develop a written text. Members of the team react to and adjust each other's contributions in the process.

Based on different educational aims and writing tasks, how collaborative activities are used in teaching writing differs from one educator to another. Collaborative writing for big assignments or projects entails several processes (from pre-writing to post-writing stages) as proposed by Widodo.[14] Specifically, collaboration is applied in every stage of the writing process. Students brainstorm the ideas together before writing. Then they together write the drafts, give peer feedback, edit and revise the drafts. Last, the writings are assessed holistically or analytically, depending on the teachers' decisions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants and research setting

One hundred and twenty third-year English majors at Quy Nhon University were asked to reply to the questionnaire. Research participants were assumed to be similar in terms of required proficiency level and background knowledge. The subjects for the study were selected for the two following reasons: (i) they had previously taken 4 writing courses (Writing 1, 2, 3, and 4) in which collaborative writing has been used as a strategy to help them develop writing skills; (ii) they had previously written essays in small groups, and some of them were already aware of the efficacy of collaborative writing activities. There were 114 females and only 6 males engaged in the study, which accounted for 95% and 5%, respectively. As for time spent studying English,

over four-fifth (85.8%) of the participants have been learning English for more than seven years. Regarding their self-assessment of English writing skills, 117 participants assessed their writing ability as being at the average level, making up nearly 98%, whereas only 3 students, with 2.5%, admitted that they were good at English writing. Specifically, none of the participants was confident enough to assess that they were excellent at this skill. In terms of their previous experiences with collaborative writing, all of the participants reported that they used to do the writing tasks in pairs or small groups. Of 120 participants, only 9 students consented to do the interviews.

3.2. Data collection instruments

The study employed mainly quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. The relevant data was collected through questionnaire and interview.

The questionnaire is designed with 32 questions grouped into 2 main parts. Part I consists of 5 questions aimed to collect personal information including age, gender, years of learning English, their assessment of their writing skills, and whether they are familiar with the concept of collaborative writing. Part II is designed in a multiple-choice format with a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). Participants would respond to each item on a 5-point Likert Scale, which represented the extent to which a given statement applied to them. This part has twenty-seven statements regarding students' perspectives on the effects of collaborative writing in six aspects: writing skills, other skills, motivation and confidence, collective efforts and responsibility, problem solving and knowledge exchange, and academic improvement.

As for the interview, six questions were designed to ask the participants how collaborative writing affects their writing learning in six above aspects. The information obtained from the interview helped to confirm the results from the questionnaire.

3.3. Data analysis

Once the data collection had been accomplished, the data analysis was initiated. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were employed in order to attain the objectives. The quantitative data was collected, coded, tabulated, analyzed, described, and interpreted in a manner that supports the findings. First, the data gathered through the questionnaire in the form of five-point Likert scales was tabulated in terms of frequency (F), percentage (P), mean scores (M), and standard deviation (D). Hence, all students' responses were categorized, coded, and then analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). For qualitative data analysis, the data obtained through interview were transcribed and translated into English. Then the raw data from the interview was analyzed qualitatively to give further explanation of students' perceptions of collaborative writing.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, the questionnaire was designed with 27 items divided into six clusters to investigate students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on 6 sections: writing skills, other skills, motivation and confidence, collective effort and responsibility, problem solving and knowledge exchange, and academic improvement. The findings are presented and discussed in the parts that follow.

4.1. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their writing skills

Table 1 shows the students' high ratings on the value of collaborative writing in terms of its effects on their writing skills.

Table 1. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their writing skills

No	Effects of collaborative writing on their writing skills	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.
1	Working in groups helps me to know how to organize to have a better paragraph.	120	4	5	4.16	.368
2	Working in groups helps me develop the writing content focused on the topic.	120	4	5	4.16	.368
3	Working in groups helps me use sentence variation and transitions more effectively.	120	4	5	4.10	.302
4	Working in groups helps me identify errors in the use of speech.	120	3	5	3.97	.361
5	Working in groups helps me avoid grammatical errors.	120	3	5	4.10	.362
6	Working in groups helps me avoid errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.	120	4	5	4.07	.256

As can be seen from Table 1, most of the mean scores for these items above were high (from 3.97 to 4.16), which implies that many students agreed that their writing skills benefited much from collaborative writing. Specifically, in terms of organization (item 1), the students agreed that working in groups helped them know how to organize to have a better paragraph (M = 4.16; SD =.368). In terms of content, the participants agreed that working in groups aided them in developing topic-specific writing content (M = 4.16; SD =.368). Besides, most of them showed agreement on the positive effect of collaborative writing on the use of sentence variation and transitions (M = 4.10; SD =.302), the identification of parts of speech errors (M = 3.97; SD =.361), and the identification of grammar errors (M = 4.10, SD =.362). Furthermore, the majority of students stated that group work helped them avoid spelling, punctuation, and capitalization errors (M = 4.07, SD =.256).

The data from the interview also supported these findings. More specifically, all the students interviewed agreed that collaborative writing had a positive effect on their writing skills. Six out of nine students stated they learned better than they did before, and the other three showed their interest in writing lessons since collaborative writing was implemented in the classrooms. When five students were asked about the possible reasons for getting better results in writing skills, three out of nine said that while working in groups, other members helped them realize their own mistakes and avoid making the same mistakes in the future. Additionally, some students shared the same opinion that with collaborative writing, they learned many good things from others in order to produce a good essay. For instance, one mentioned that *"writing collaboratively helped our group know how to organize ideas, choose the appropriate words and phrases for the given topic, and helped us to avoid making common grammatical mistakes"* (student 7). Moreover, three out of nine students interviewed insisted that collaborative writing help them create new ideas for their essays as it helped them with brainstorming ideas. Student 2 said that *"when we write in groups, we come up with more good ideas and save a lot of time in organizing our ideas as well as making an outline for our group's writing than when we work individually."*

These findings are in line with other studies (Dobao & Blum;[15] Shehadeh;[16] Storch;[9] Storch[17]) that found that their participants

expressed a preference for collaborative writing due to the opportunities that it offered not only to learn from each other about writing, but also to practice their English with peers without being afraid of making mistakes. In addition, the use of collaborative writing helped students learn how to organize a good paragraph, write the content of the paragraph focused on the given topic, and use sentence variation and transitions more effectively, which has already been found in previous research (Kim[3]; Shehadel[16]). These researchers stated that practicing writing essays using collaborative writing is found helpful for students to enhance content generation and organization; enrich vocabulary and language use; upgrade mechanics; and improve EFL students' writing performance. Besides, they also mentioned the benefits of collaborative writing in helping students avoid making mistakes when using parts of speech, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

4.2. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on other skills

The quantitative data in conjunction with the qualitative data revealed that students perceived the positive effect of collaborative writing on other skills. The results of the second part of the questionnaire, consisting of 3 items, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on other skills

No	Effects of CW on other skills	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
E7	Working in groups stimulates my critical thinking skills.	120	3	5	3.89	.345
E8	Working in groups enhances our communication skills.	120	3	5	4.00	.318
E9	Working in groups enables us to use skills which individual assessments do not.	120	3	5	3.99	.266

Table 2 reveals the students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on other skills. The students affirmed that the use of collaborative writing stimulated their critical thinking skills (M = 3.89; SD =.345). Furthermore, the students agreed that collaborative writing improved their communication skills (M = 4.00; SD =.318) and allowed them to use other important skills when completing a writing task collaboratively (M = 3.99; SD = 2.66). 55 Also, these findings were strongly supported by the qualitative data as the interview revealed that the students' perceptions of the stimulation of critical thinking skills, the improvement of communication skills, and other skills were generally positive. Many students, in particular, stated that collaborative writing had a significant impact on stimulating their critical thinking skills, which they considered important for their learning process. Student 9 stated that

"...we can develop critical thinking skills through discussion, clarification of ideas, and evaluation among group members..." Furthermore, they also claimed that they could improve their teamwork skills and social relationships when they collaborated with other group members. Student 1 agreed that *"...we might develop our social skills because we are given opportunities to communicate and interact with others in collaborative writing classrooms..."* On top of that, collaborative writing also allowed students to *"employ skills which do not happen in individual work"* (Student 4). In general, most of the above-mentioned items got high to moderate ratings, which indicates that the students highly valued collaborative writing in promoting their critical thinking, communication skills, and other skills that individual assessment does not. This is in line with a number of studies (Gokhale;[18]

Farrah;[19] Barkley et al.;[12] Wong et al.[20]). For example, Gokhale[18] reported that students who participated in collaborative writing performed significantly better on the critical thinking test than when they wrote an essay on their own. The results also bring into line with a study conducted by Brown,[21] who found that more than three-third of her participants confirmed that the collaborative writing enhanced their communication skills.

4.3. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their motivation and confidence

The students' positive perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their motivation and confidence were explored by both questionnaire and focus group discussion data. The results of the third cluster, with 4 items, are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their motivation and confidence

No	Effects of CW on students' motivation and confidence	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
10	I enjoy writing more than I did before due to collaborative writing.	120	3	4	3.92	.273
11	Working in groups helps me to work in a more relaxed atmosphere.	120	3	4	3.90	.256
12	Working in groups helps us to participate actively in the learning process.	120	3	5	4.00	.246
13	Having completed group projects, I feel I have more confidence in working with other students.	120	3	4	3.87	.338

According to Table 3, students agreed that collaborative writing increased their enjoyment of writing (M = 3.92; SD =.273). Many students (M = 4.00; SD =.246) strongly agreed that collaborative writing enabled them to 57 actively participate in the learning process. Additionally, collaborative writing enabled students to work in a more relaxed setting (M = 3.90; SD =.256). Furthermore, many of them reported feeling more confident in English writing when working collaboratively (M = 3.87; SD =.338).

The results are correlated with those in the interview. All nine students interviewed reported that collaborative writing made them more interested, motivated, and engaged in writing classrooms. They supposed that in collaborative writing classrooms, they *"got more engaged and had less pressure in learning writing"* since they could collaborate and work with their team. Besides, the use of collaborative writing in writing classrooms also helped increase the students' interest in learning writing, which is considered the most difficult skill for many students. In support of this, student 8 confirmed that writing in groups *"gave us opportunities to discuss, exchange knowledge with other members, and especially learn a lot of new things from others*." As a result, they felt more confident and more active in learning to write than ever before. In addition, three students added that group discussion created a positive learning environment and improves their critical thinking. For instance, student 5 stated that *"the group discussion helped us develop communication and critical thinking skills… When learning to write in groups, we often argue and exchange ideas with each other, so the learning atmosphere is very lively…"* In short, from students' points

of view, motivation and confidence to learn in writing classrooms increased thanks to the use of collaborative writing. As collaborative writing is a student-centered approach, students are enabled to take control over their learning process. It might be a good condition for them to actively participate in the writing classrooms as they felt their role was crucial to the success of the whole learning process. As a result, the students felt working in groups helped to create a more relaxed atmosphere so that they could freely express their ideas and actively engage in their group work. This conforms to the study by Alhabeedi[22] which asserted that the students were actively involved while working in a cooperative atmosphere, resulting in effective learning and teaching. Besides, the results of the present study confirm Yang, et al.[23]'s findings that most students who participated in their studies found that collaborative writing was helpful in enhancing their confidence and motivation in learning.

4.4. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their collective efforts and responsibility

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data highlighted that the students positively perceived the effects of collaborative writing on their collective efforts and responsibility. The results of the fourth part of the questionnaire with 5 items are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their collective efforts and responsibility

No	Effects of CW on students' collective efforts and Responsibilities	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
14	Working in groups helps me to focus on collective efforts rather than individual efforts.	120	4	5	4.08	.273
15	Having completed group projects, I feel I am more cooperative in my writing.	120	3	4	3.96	.197
16	Despite disagreement, the group is able to reach consensus.	120	4	5	4.05	.219
17	Working in groups teaches me to take more responsibility for myself and the group.	120	4	5	4.10	.302
18	Working in groups enables us to help weaker learners in the group.	120	3	5	3.93	.383

As illustrated in Table 4, many students agree that writing in groups helped them to focus on collective efforts rather than individual efforts (M = 4.08; SD =.273) and that was the reason that made them more cooperative in their writing (M = 3.96; SD =.197). According to the results of item E16, students confirmed that, while they occasionally disagreed when writing in groups, they were able to reach consensus (M = 4.05; SD =.219). Many students agreed they had more responsibility for themselves and the group, as revealed in item E17 (M = 4.10; SD =.302). This means that collaborative writing helped the students take on their own responsibility for their own language learning. Furthermore, the use of collaborative writing allowed them to assist weaker students in the same group (M = 3.93; SD =.383).

These findings are consistent with the students' perceptions gathered from qualitative

data. Actually, the vast majority of students said that collaborative writing helped them take on responsibility for their own language learning. One said, *"…when we collaborate, we learn to take responsibility because we share the same learning goals…"* (student 2). Another asserted that *"…collaborative writing offers us a chance to divide the responsibility among each group members, which creates the motivation for everyone to work and to stick to the required duty…"* (student 7). Furthermore, collaborative writing gave them opportunities to help weaker students in their group, and therefore, helped them realize their great responsibility for themselves and their groups. For instance, student 4 supported this view by saying that *"…during the time we collaborate, the students who are more proficient in English writing can share the knowledge and help the weaker students… and we feel like each individual contributes to the group work…"*. It can be seen that almost all the students supported the idea that collaborative writing enhanced their collective effort and responsibility. These were also found in Brown's[21] study when more than half of the participants in her study agreed with

the idea that insisting on collective efforts in collaborative writing gave the students greater responsibility for their learning. In addition, they mentioned that collaborative writing enabled them to help weaker students in the group and to focus on collective efforts rather than individual efforts. This is in line with Wong et al.[20] whose participants found collaborative writing to be useful and enjoyable as they could support each other regardless of their English proficiency. Therefore, they felt more cooperative in writing. Although disagreement might occur sometimes during their collaboration, they confirmed that their groups could eventually manage to reach an agreement.

4.5. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their problem solving and knowledge exchange

The qualitative and quantitative data discloses the students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their problem-solving and knowledge exchange. The results of the fifth part of the questionnaire with 5 items are indicated in Table 5, followed by the interpretation and discussion of the findings.

Table 5. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their problem solving and knowledge exchange

No	Effects of collaborative writing on students' problem solving and knowledge exchange	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
19	Working in groups makes problem - solving easier.	120	3	5	4.02	.317
20	Working in groups helps me receive useful feedback.	120	3	5	3.92	.367
21	Working in groups fosters the exchange of knowledge, information, and experience.	120	3	5	4.02	.284
22	I get the chance to express my ideas in the group.	120	3	4	3.92	.273
23	I learn new ways to support my point of view.	120	3	4	3.94	.239

As shown in Table 5, many students agreed that implementing collaborative writing made problem-solving easier (M = 4.02; SD =.317). Furthermore, when writing in groups, they received useful feedback from one another (M = 3.92; SD =.367). In addition, the students believed that collaborative writing fostered the exchange of knowledge, information, and experience (M = 4.02; SD = 2.84). Also, the students were in agreement with the view that collaborative writing gave them a chance to express their ideas in the group (M = 3.92; SD =.273) and they could learn new ways to support their points of view (M = 3.94; SD =.239). Additionally, these findings were strongly supported by the data collected from the interview. Overall, a large number of students expressed their support for collaborative writing. To be more specific, student 2 admitted that collaborative writing helps to *"… solve problems easily… as it gives us an opportunity to get useful feedback from other group members."* Student 6 expressed that the use of collaborative writing in writing classrooms is "*useful to foster the exchange of knowledge, information, and experience."* Besides, collaborative writing also provided students with a chance to *"freely express their points of view"* (Student 9). From what has been discussed, it could be seen that students benefited from collaborative writing as it made problem-solving easier and students could learn new ways to support their points of view. This had already been found in previous research, which reported that students participate constructively and work productively to solve common problems and get involved in a reasoning process and problem-solving activities through collaborative writing (Millis and Cottell;[24] Barkley et al.,[12]). For example, Millis and Cottell[24] reported that collaborative writing encouraged their students to work constructively and productively to solve problems. As for the effects of collaborative writing on students' knowledge exchange, their perceptions reflect the findings of previous research, which indicates the use of collaborative writing offers students the opportunity to pool their individual ideas and knowledge (Dobao;[25] Storch[26]).

4.6. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their academic improvement

A great number of students hold positive perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their academic improvement. The findings were supported by both quantitative and qualitative data. The results of the sixth part of the questionnaire with four items are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Students' perceptions of the effects of collaborative writing on their academic improvement

No	Effects of collaborative writing on students' academic improvement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
24	Working in groups improves our performance.	120	4	5	4.07	.256
25	I get more work done when I work with others.	120	3	4	3.89	.314
26	Working in groups increases my comprehension.	120	3	5	3.97	.332
27	Overall, this is a worthwhile experience.	120	3	4	3.94	.239

Table 6 indicates the results concerning students' thoughts on their academic improvement when using collaborative writing. The majority of students agreed that collaborative writing had a positive impact on their performance (M = 4.07; SD =.256). Besides, many of them agreed that they got more work done when they worked with others to write an essay (M = 3.89; SD =.314). Furthermore, collaborative writing helped them increase their comprehension (M = 3.97; SD =.332) and gave them a worthwhile experience (M = 3.94; SD =.239). In support of these findings, qualitative data from the interview point out that collaborative writing helps to improve students' academic performance since they can learn from each other and fill the gaps in each other's knowledge. Student 3 stated that *"...we enjoy writing collaboratively because we learn new words or new grammatical structures from other group members…"*. In addition, students get more work done when working collaboratively than when working individually. This is simply because in group work, students always *"support each other to complete the assigned task as required"*. Besides, most of the students perceived collaborative writing as a worthwhile experience and encouraged its use in the following writing classrooms. In fact, 7 out of 9 students shared this view in the qualitative data. For instance, one of them stated that *"...we hope that collaborative writing will be used more widely in this course because it has many benefits as we mentioned…"* (Student 2). Also, student 1 commented that *"writing should be done collaboratively because we can exchange ideas and learn from one another through each writing stage…"* All in all, it could be found from both quantitative and qualitative data that the majority of students have highly positive perceptions of collaborative writing in terms of its effects on their academic improvement. This is supported by the study conducted by Chiriac[27] who believed that collaborative writing not only promotes knowledge acquisition but also improves academic high performance. Moreover, the use of collaborative writing increased their comprehension. In fact, it was a worthwhile experience for them. It might be explained that collaborative writing helped students realize their own mistakes and avoid the same mistakes in the future. In addition, they also learned many good things from each other to produce a well-written essay. This is also in line with Brown[21] as the participants engaged in her study agreed that collaborative writing helped foster the exchange of knowledge, information, and experience, which contributed to students' better performance.

5. CONCLUSION

As revealed from the data analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire and the interview, the vast majority of English majors hold both positive and negative perceptions regarding the use of collaborative writing in the context of the study. The students supported the use of collaborative writing in writing classes as they benefited from this approach. It is perceived to help them improve their writing skills, motivation, confidence, collective effort and responsibility, problem-solving and knowledge exchange, and academic improvement. Specifically, the students highly evaluated its value as it helped them improve their writing performance, motivation for learning, and critical thinking. The results from the interview also strengthen this point, as most groups of students confirmed that collaborative writing helped them to write better, exchange knowledge, learn new things from others, and enhance critical thinking and communication skills as well. However, uneven work division in the writing class needs to be taken into consideration for the desired outcomes in the teaching and learning process.

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