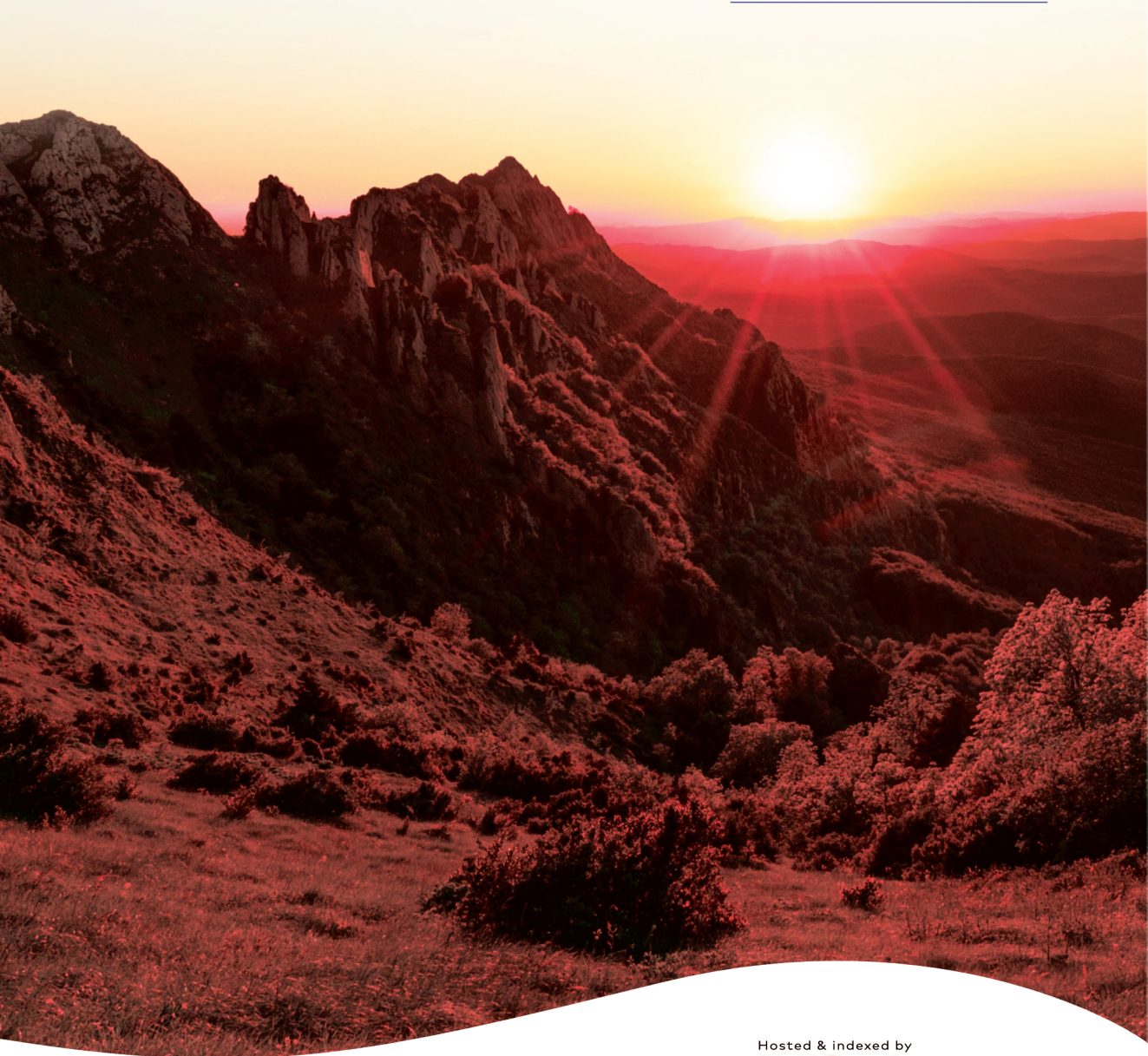


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## Student Perceptions of the Effectiveness and Appropriateness of the Process Writing Approach in Collaborative Writing.

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined students' perceptions of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the process writing approach in collaborative writing (CW). To gather insights, the researcher administered questionnaires to 55 students who had completed two collaborative writing tasks. Of the 55 students surveyed, 40 returned completed questionnaires. The findings revealed that brainstorming was perceived as the most effective stage in collaborative writing, followed by planning, editing, research, and drafting. Conversely, the study identified research as the most challenging stage for students to execute collaboratively, followed by editing, brainstorming, drafting, and planning. The results suggest that group members might benefit from conducting research individually before convening to brainstorm and draft collectively. The study further highlighted that while certain stages of the writing process, such as brainstorming and reviewing, were well-suited to collaboration, others, such as editing, were less effective when performed collaboratively. The editing stage, which focuses primarily on grammatical structures and mechanics, proved particularly challenging in a group setting. Overall, the research suggests that effective collaborative writing requires a balance of individual and collective efforts across different stages of the writing process. These findings contribute to the development of more effective writing instruction in higher education and provide valuable guidance for researchers and educators seeking to refine collaborative writing practices..

**Key Words:** collaborative writing, process writing approach, pre-writing stage, post-writing stage



## Introduction

Collaborative writing (CW) has garnered significant attention in English as a Second Language (L2) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts over the past decades due to the wide range of pedagogical benefits it offers both teachers and students (Storch, 2013, 2019; Dobao, 2012; Pham, 2021). CW facilitates peer-provided corrective and positive feedback, introduces students to new vocabulary, enhances methods of conveying ideas, fosters critical thinking, and supports L2 acquisition (Storch, 2005). Eliciting student perceptions of classroom activities is crucial for designing effective learning experiences. As Abahussain (2020, p.34) asserts,

*...it is essential for teachers, writing course designers, and textbook planners to recognise students' perspectives, perceptions, experiences, and attitudes towards classroom activities such as group work in deciding what activities to focus on and what to avoid.*

The above calls for the need for writing instructors and curriculum developers to align language teaching strategies with students' insights for more effective learning outcomes. This study, therefore, investigates students' perceptions of collaborative writing activities.

Collaborative writing is a process in which group members collectively contribute and interact throughout the writing process, engaging in activities such as planning, generating ideas, deliberating on text structure, editing, and revising (Storch, 2019). The application of CW in language learning is underpinned by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which posits that cognitive and higher mental functions develop through social interactions and participation in activities requiring mental and interactive engagement (Vygotsky, 1978). Berndt (2011) contends that CW encompasses more than just writing as it incorporates cognitive, social, and linguistic dimensions. Researchers have identified seven key stages of the writing process notably brainstorming, conceptualising, outlining, drafting, reviewing, revising, and editing. These stages provide a structured framework that supports the collaborative learning environment. Brown (2001) emphasised that the writing process offers students a platform to reflect and engage deeply with their work, improving their ability to organise and articulate ideas effectively. Martinez et al. (2020) also observed that the 'process writing approach' enhances students' focus on textual quality, such as coherence and topic sentence structure, ultimately leading to improved writing performance.

Recent studies note the importance of integrating CW within the writing curriculum. For example, Khatib and Meihami (2022) found that collaborative writing promotes a sense of ownership, accountability, and mutual respect among peers, fostering a supportive learning environment. Meanwhile, Li and Kim (2023) demonstrated that CW help bridge linguistic and cultural gaps in diverse classroom settings making it a valuable tool in fostering inclusivity and intercultural communication skills. By situating this study within the broader theoretical and empirical landscape, it aims to shed light on students' perceptions of CW processes, particularly regarding their efficacy and challenges in language learning contexts. This exploration is critical for informing pedagogical practices and ensuring the effective implementation of CW strategies in L2 and EFL classrooms..

## Review of Literature

### *Collaborative writing and the process approach*

'The process writing approach' emerged as a response to the product-oriented method of writing instruction, which primarily focused on the final written product rather than the steps involved in its creation (Miller, 1991). By contrast, the process approach emphasises how a text is constructed, underscoring the importance of iterative stages such as brainstorming, planning, researching, drafting, revising, and editing (Nordin & Mohammad, 2017; Storch, 2013; Hedge, 2005). This cyclical approach encourages students to engage deeply with their writing, allowing for reflection and improvement at each stage. Kroll (2001 as cited in Hassan & Akhand, 2010, p.79), describes the process approach as:

*An umbrella term for many types of writing courses.... What the term captures is that student writers engage in writing tasks through a cyclical and recursive approach rather than a single-shot approach. Students are not expected to produce and submit a complete and polished response to their writing assignments without going through stages of drafting and receiving feedback on their drafts.*

The process writing approach promotes structured engagement across multiple stages from prewriting (planning and brainstorming), to drafting, reviewing, revising, editing, and publishing (Matsuda, 2003; Seow, 2002). These stages provide a framework for both individual and collaborative writing efforts, making the approach particularly well-suited for CW activities.

### *The Prewriting Stage*

The 'prewriting stage' is a critical phase in the writing process that encourages students to explore and engage with the topic. It fosters idea generation and removes the intimidation of a blank page, paving the way for productive writing (Nordin & Mohammad, 2017; Seow, 2002). This stage often involves group brainstorming, where spontaneity is highly valued as students share their thoughts on the topic without fear of judgment (Seow, 2002; Steele, 2004). Techniques such as clustering, listing, outlining, and free writing are commonly used in brainstorming. Clustering, as described by Proett and Gill (1986), involves forming word associations related to the topic and visually connecting them to identify patterns. Students can also use WH-questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how) to delve deeper into the topic. Multimedia resources, such as videos, internet searches, and printed materials, can further enrich the brainstorming process (Widodo, 2013; Seow, 2002).

### *The Writing Stage*

The writing stage follows prewriting and involves creating the first draft. Collaborative writing during this stage often occurs in pairs or groups, with students working together to compose a shared text, either on paper or digitally (Widodo, 2013). However, different strategies for group participation have been identified, which may influence the level of involvement by individual members (Lingard, 2021). These strategies include:

- *One-for-All Writing: A single member writes the draft on behalf of the group.*
- *Each-in-Sequence Writing: Members contribute specific sections sequentially.*
- *All-in-Parallel Writing: Members divide the task into discrete units and work simultaneously.*
- *All-in-Reaction Writing: Members jointly create the text, making real-time adjustments without pre-planning.*
- *Multi-Mode Writing: A combination of the above strategies.*

The choice of strategy often depends on the group's preferences, time constraints, and members' language competencies (Widodo, 2013). Lingard (2021) suggests that group dynamics and task complexity play a significant role in determining the success of the writing stage.

### ***The Revision Stage***

The revision stage is a key element of the process approach, focusing on refining content, improving coherence, and enhancing grammatical accuracy. Students edit their peers' work for grammar, punctuation, diction, and sentence structure, often using checklists to address common issues like subject-verb agreement and tense consistency (Seow, 2002; Adula, 2018). According to Lee and Schallert (2008 cited in Widodo 2013, p. 204), revision involve "activities such as reading the text, detecting problems, selecting strategies, and revising the content." Revision goes beyond correcting surface-level errors; it addresses global issues, including the organisation of ideas and overall textual clarity, ensuring that the writer's intent is effectively communicated (Peregoy, 1997). The collaborative aspect of revision fosters meaningful peer interactions, which have been shown to improve the quality of writing in terms of vocabulary, organisation, and content (Storch, 2005). Seow (2002) argues that group revision raises students' awareness of structural and syntactical elements that they might overlook individually.

### ***The Post-Writing Stage***

The final stage, post-writing, involves activities such as publishing, sharing, or performing the completed text. This stage validates students' efforts, providing a sense of accomplishment and motivation to continue writing (Seow, 2002). Displaying written works or adapting them for presentations enhances the authenticity of the writing task, demonstrating its real-world applicability and reinforcing the value of collaborative writing (Widodo, 2013).

### ***Student Perceptions of CW Activities***

Several studies have explored student perceptions of CW activities. Mutwarasibo (2013), in a study involving 34 undergraduate students in Rwanda, investigated their experiences with different stages of the writing process. The study found that planning and organisation were the most challenging activities, with students struggling to agree on a unified direction for their essays. Conversely, brainstorming and revising were identified as the easiest stages, as these activities encouraged creativity and interaction. Similarly, Pham (2021) examined how CW influenced writing fluency and proposed a framework where group members collaborated throughout all writing stages but worked individually on specific sections of the draft. The study revealed that CW significantly improved writing fluency and task efficiency. Winarti

and Cahyono (2020) investigated the integration of CW with the process writing approach in an EFL context. Their findings indicated that students who engaged in collaborative writing using the process approach produced higher-quality texts than those who worked individually. However, the study lacked an analysis of how specific stages benefited students, a gap addressed by the present research.

### *Theoretical underpinnings of CW and the Process Approach*

The connection between CW and the process approach is rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, which emphasises the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Collaborative writing aligns with this theory by facilitating scaffolding and peer learning, allowing students to construct knowledge through interaction and shared experiences. The cyclical and recursive nature of the process approach enhances its compatibility with CW, enabling iterative improvements and deeper engagement with the writing task (Mutswarasibo, 2013). Storch (2013) highlights the alignment between CW and social constructivism, which prioritises dynamic interactions and mutual knowledge construction. In sum, the process approach provides an effective framework for collaborative writing by combining structure with flexibility, enabling students to refine their writing skills while benefiting from peer input and interaction. This synergy enhances both the learning experience and the quality of the final written product.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is rooted in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and the principles of social constructivism, which take note of the interactive and collaborative nature of learning. These theories are complemented by the process writing approach, which emphasises the iterative stages of writing and supports collaborative practices in educational settings.

Vygotsky (1978) posited that learning is fundamentally a social process, where interaction with peers, teachers, and cultural tools plays a critical role in cognitive development. This theory highlights the importance of proximity and social inclusion in collaborative writing (CW). Vygotsky's ZPD refers to the difference between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with guidance or collaboration. In the context of CW, group members scaffold each other's learning, enabling the development of writing skills that may not be achieved individually. Vygotsky further stressed that

social interactions are essential for learning. Through CW, students engage in dialogue, negotiate ideas, and provide mutual feedback, which facilitates both language acquisition and the improvement of writing quality.

Inspired by Vygotsky's work, social constructivism (Dewey, 1970) emphasised knowledge construction through collaborative and experiential learning. Within this framework, CW is viewed as a dynamic process where. For Dewey (1978), group members contribute unique perspectives and build upon one another's ideas, leading to richer and more nuanced written outputs. Writing collaboratively also involves continuous dialogue, critical thinking, and problem-solving, which enhance comprehension and creativity.

### *'Process Writing Approach'*

The process writing approach aligns seamlessly with the socio-cultural framework due to its focus on the stages of writing and the recursive nature of the process. Key features include:

**I**terative Stages of Writing: Writing is conceptualised as a multi-phase process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and post-writing (Seow, 2002). Each stage allows for collaboration and scaffolding, particularly during brainstorming, planning, and reviewing.

**F**or Collaborative Learning Opportunities (CLC), the The of approach creates opportunities for peer feedback, co-construction of knowledge, and joint problem-solving, which are integral to improving writing quality and fostering learner autonomy. The concept of scaffolding underpins the collaborative nature of CW. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) define scaffolding as a process where learners receive temporary support to accomplish tasks they would otherwise find difficult. In CW, scaffolding occurs when:

*More proficient students guide less experienced peers through complex writing tasks.*

*Group members provide mutual support during challenging stages, such as research and drafting. Teachers facilitate by offering strategic interventions and resources.*

In addition, to the socio-cultural and process-oriented elements, CW is informed by cognitive and affective considerations. CW enhances critical thinking, problem-solving, and organisational skills as students collectively brainstorm, plan, and structure their texts (Storch, 2013). Further development, or affemative development utilise collaborative activities to foster a sense of belonging, reduce writing anxiety, and increase motivation, as students share responsibilities and celebrate collective achievements (Pham, 2021).



This theoretical framework used in this study as summarised above, underpins the investigation of student perceptions of CW within the process writing approach. It provided a lens to examine how collaborative practices align with the stages of the process approach to enhance writing quality. It also noted how the extent to which socio-cultural interactions within groups foster cognitive and linguistic development. In this case, the role of scaffolding in overcoming challenges associated with specific writing stages, such as research, drafting, and editing become well defined.

## **Methodology**

The study employed a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore student perceptions of collaborative writing (CW) activities. A purposive sequential sampling technique was utilised, targeting participants who had engaged in CW tasks to ensure relevant insights. According to Campbell (2020), purposive sampling involves selecting individuals with pertinent knowledge and experience related to the research focus.

The participants comprised 55 first-year students from a public university in Zimbabwe studying in an ESL (English as a Second Language) context. They were requested to complete a questionnaire following a pre-test individual writing task and two collaborative writing assignments. Of the 55 students, 40 (72.7%) returned completed questionnaires, which formed the primary dataset for this study. The study also employed a questionnaire that included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather detailed insights.

Closed-ended questions were used where participants were requested to select at least two stages of the writing process where they found CW most helpful and identify stages they believed should be done independently. These stages included planning, brainstorming, researching, drafting, editing, and revising. Open-ended questions used allowed target students to elaborate on their experiences, providing nuanced perspectives on CW activities. The dual approach indicated the strengths of both question types. While closed-ended questions are efficient and easier to analyse (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989), open-ended questions foster discovery and deeper understanding (Gillham, 2000).

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative analysis techniques to process and interpret the data. Under qualitative analysis, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns and themes within the data. As

Norton (2009) noted, thematic analysis involved data immersion, categorisation, and relinking of components before interpretation. The researcher followed the stages of data immersion, generating categories, deleting and merging categories, linking themes, and presenting findings. Themes were derived from evidence, researcher intuition, and participant perspectives (Grbich, 2007). This approach allowed for the systematic organisation of data into meaningful groupings. Regarding quantitative analysis, descriptive statistical techniques, such as frequency analysis, percentage calculations, and mode identification, were employed to summarise numerical data. Frequency analysis involved counting responses by categories, while percentages were calculated to determine proportions of responses.

Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research and their rights to participate or withdraw at any stage without penalty. Personal data was anonymised, and responses were securely stored to protect participant privacy. Participants were not coerced into participation, and signs of disinterest were respected, contributing to the variation in participation rates (55 in CW activities versus 40 in questionnaire responses). The ethical safeguards ensured compliance with institutional standards and prioritised participant welfare throughout the study.

Thus, this mixed-method approach, combining thematic and descriptive statistical analysis, provided a comprehensive understanding of university student perceptions regarding CW activities. By employing purposive sampling and rigorous ethical practices, the study ensured that the findings were both reliable and reflective of participant experiences. This robust methodology emphasised the value of integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques in educational research, particularly in examining collaborative learning dynamics.

## Findings

The findings revealed that students identified brainstorming as the most effective stage in collaborative writing, with 20 out of 40 respondents (50%) selecting it. Students appreciated this stage as it allowed group members to generate ideas collectively, fostering creativity and interaction. Following closely was the planning stage, selected by 19 out of 40 students (47.5%), which highlights the importance of organising ideas and structuring content collaboratively before drafting.

The editing stage ranked third, with 17 out of 40 students (43%) identifying it as effective. This reflects the collaborative benefits of peer feedback in refining grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics. Interestingly, the drafting stage was perceived as the least beneficial, with only 8 out of 40 students (20%) selecting it. This finding suggests that students may face challenges in composing drafts collaboratively, such as balancing individual contributions or agreeing on text structure.

These findings are illustrated in Figure 1 below:

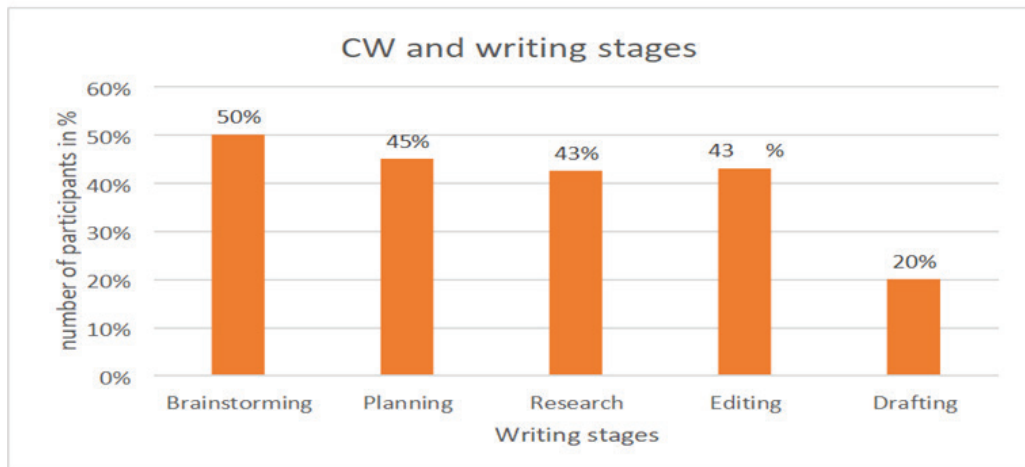


Figure 1: Student perceptions of the effectiveness and appropriateness of CW process writing stages

### *Effectiveness of Collaborative Writing Stages*

The study findings revealed significant insights into the students' perceptions of the stages of collaborative writing (CW). These stages were ranked in terms of their effectiveness and appropriateness, with brainstorming identified as the most beneficial, followed by planning, editing, researching, and drafting.

#### *Brainstorming: The Most Effective Stage*

The majority of participants (50%) selected brainstorming as the most effective stage in CW. Students highlighted its ability to foster critical thinking, explore diverse ideas, and provide direction for the writing task. The collaborative nature of brainstorming was seen as a platform for creativity and team building, with students expressing appreciation for the opportunity to share ideas and build trust within their groups. For instance Student 6 noted that "The

*brainstorming stage helps me to think an extra mile.*" While Student 24 emphasised that *"Brainstorming encourages critical thinking and builds trust within teams."*

The findings align with Pham (2021), who found that group brainstorming facilitated topic exploration and negotiation of ideas, and with Hussain (2017), who underscored the role of brainstorming in enhancing vocabulary, knowledge, and concept expansion in second-language writing.

### ***Planning: A Critical Pre-Writing Stage***

The planning stage was the second most selected, with 47.5% of students finding it beneficial. Students appreciated planning for its role in task organisation, understanding requirements, and structuring responses. For novice writers, planning provided a framework for articulating ideas and ensuring a coherent approach to writing. Excerpts from the questionnaire responses are illustrative. Student 7 remarked, *"At the planning stage, you get to know the criteria of finding how to answer"* While Student 10 succinctly stated that *"Planning: if you don't plan, you are planning to fail."* Such sentiments are supported by Seow (2002) and Steele (2004), who emphasise planning as a foundational activity in the writing process. Research by Dale (1997) further suggests that CW inherently fosters planning since group collaboration necessitates agreement on task logistics and content structuring.

### ***Editing and Researching: Mixed Utility***

Both editing and researching stages were regarded as useful by 43% of participants, with students noting the importance of these stages in refining grammar, enhancing content quality, and broadening knowledge. For editing Student 34 shared by noting *"Editing helps me learn correct spellings, grammar, and punctuation from other members."* For researching Student 20 said, *"Researching is important because every group member brings different information from various sources, which benefits the group."* The findings corroborate Storch (2005), who demonstrated that peer editing improves grammatical accuracy and content richness, and Berndt (2011), who advocates for individual research contributions to expand the collective knowledge base.

### ***Drafting: The Least Effective Stage***

The drafting stage received the lowest ranking, with only 20% of students finding it beneficial in CW. Students cited challenges such as time consumption,

unrefined contributions, and difficulty in balancing collaborative input during drafting. For instance Student 21 commented that, *"Drafting takes a lot of time when done collaboratively, so it's wise to draft individually first."* The challenges noted align with Mutwarasibo's (2013) findings, which identified drafting as one of the most difficult stages in CW due to its complexity and time demands. Research by Lingard (2021) suggests that alternative drafting strategies, such as "one-for-all writing" or dividing sections among group members, may mitigate these challenges and streamline the process.

### ***Difficult Stages in Collaborative Writing***

The study also explored which writing stages were deemed difficult to execute collaboratively. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of these findings, with researching (62.5%) and editing (45%) ranked as the most challenging. The majority of students indicated that researching should be done individually before regrouping for collaborative discussion. Individual research allowed group members to contribute diverse perspectives and ensure thorough exploration of the topic. For example, Student 40 said, *"Research stages help in finding information that others are failing to get so that you combine it for valid results."* These findings suggest that while researching may not traditionally fit into the CW framework, it serves as a vital preparatory activity. Berndt (2011) noted that CW typically begins with brainstorming, suggesting that research might be better suited to individual efforts.

### ***Editing: Collaborative but Challenging***

Editing was identified as a collaborative activity that can be difficult due to time constraints and the need for agreement on revisions. Students noted the importance of collaborative editing for improving grammatical accuracy and overall quality but also highlighted its complexity. For example Student 27 noted that, *"Editing was helpful as we eliminated content with less weight and corrected grammar, but it required a lot of effort."* Research by Storch and Wigglesworth (2007) supported these findings, suggesting that collaborative editing triggers discussions that enhance text quality.

### ***Implications for Collaborative Writing Practices***

The findings suggest that certain stages of the process writing approach are more suited to collaboration, while others may benefit from individual efforts. Specifically, Collaborative activities: Brainstorming, planning, and revising were highly valued for their ability to foster interaction and build on group

dynamics. Individual activities involve, researching and drafting were better suited for individual effort, allowing group members to work more efficiently and contribute diverse insights. The insights align with Pham (2021), who proposed a framework for CW that integrates collaborative pre-writing and post-writing stages with individual drafting.

## Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into students' perceptions of collaborative writing (CW) within the process writing approach. The results highlight the differential utility of various writing stages in CW, with some stages being more suited to collaborative efforts while others are better executed individually. This discussion integrates the findings with the theoretical framework, the reviewed literature, and the concepts presented in the introduction.

As posited in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978), learning is a social activity that emerges through interaction and collaboration. Collaborative writing aligns with this theory by enabling students to engage in meaningful interactions during the writing process. The theoretical framework suggests that CW fosters scaffolding, wherein students support each other to enhance their cognitive and linguistic abilities. The findings of this study corroborate this perspective, particularly in the stages of brainstorming and planning, where students collaboratively generated ideas and mapped the writing process. The positive feedback from students regarding these stages reflects the value of CW in fostering collective reasoning and critical thinking, as also noted by Storch (2013, 2019) and Pham (2021). The collaborative interactions during these stages demonstrate the potential of CW to transcend individual limitations, supporting the socio-constructivist model of learning.

Brainstorming emerged as the most effective stage in CW, with 50% of students identifying it as beneficial. Students highlighted brainstorming as a platform for critical thinking, idea generation, and trust-building within teams. This finding aligns with the literature, where brainstorming is recognised as a crucial pre-writing activity that stimulates creativity and group synergy (Seow, 2002; Steele, 2004). The process allows students to contribute diverse perspectives and build a shared understanding of the task, as illustrated by Hussain (2017), who emphasises brainstorming's role in vocabulary development and knowledge expansion.

The prominence of brainstorming in the findings underscores its importance in CW pedagogy. By encouraging spontaneity and inclusivity, this stage embodies the collaborative ethos of CW, where individual contributions are valued and integrated into a cohesive group effort.

Planning was ranked as the second most effective stage, with 47.5% of students recognising its utility. This stage was noted for its role in task organisation, identifying strong and weak points, and ensuring a structured approach to writing. These observations reflect the views of Seow (2002) and Steele (2004), who describe planning as essential for moving from tentative ideas to a clear outline. Interestingly, the findings challenge the literature that suggests novice writers often neglect planning (Dale, 1997). In this study, the collaborative nature of planning appears to have facilitated its adoption, with students reporting that group discussions clarified task requirements and enhanced their confidence. This aligns with Storch's (2005) observation that CW fosters explicit articulation of ideas, making planning a critical component of the process.

The editing and researching stages received mixed reviews, with 43% of students identifying them as beneficial but also challenging. Editing was praised for its role in improving grammar, punctuation, and content quality, consistent with findings from Hansen and Lui (2005) and Storch (2005), who highlight the value of peer editing in achieving superior revisions. However, editing was also identified as a time-intensive stage that could be frustrating in group settings. Students reported difficulties in reaching consensus on revisions, which echoes Lingard's (2021) findings on the challenges of collaborative editing. Similarly, researching was noted for its contribution to content development but was seen as better suited to individual efforts. Students argued that individual research allowed for thorough exploration and diverse perspectives, supporting the idea that research may not fit neatly into CW frameworks (Berndt, 2011).

Drafting was perceived as the least effective stage, with only 20% of students finding it beneficial in CW. This finding aligns with the literature that identifies drafting as a challenging activity due to its complexity and the time required (Mutwarasibo, 2013). Students expressed frustration with the inefficiency of group drafting, noting that it often resulted in uneven workloads and unrefined contributions. These challenges are consistent with Lingard's (2021) suggestion that alternative strategies, such as "one-for-all writing" or parallel drafting, may streamline the drafting process. Such strategies could mitigate the time

constraints and coordination issues associated with group drafting while preserving the collaborative essence of CW.

The findings also highlighted stages that students found difficult to execute collaboratively, with researching (62.5%) and editing (45%) ranked as the most challenging. The preference for individual research reflects the complexity of synthesising diverse sources and the time-intensive nature of the activity. This aligns with Pham's (2021) framework, which recommends individual research followed by collaborative integration during brainstorming or planning. Editing, while essential for refining the text, was seen as a stage that required individual focus. The challenge of reaching consensus during editing supports the idea that CW may benefit from a balance of collaborative and individual efforts. This hybrid approach aligns with Daiute (1986) and Shehadeh (2011), who advocate for flexibility in CW to accommodate the strengths and limitations of both approaches.

The findings of this study have significant implications for CW pedagogy, particularly in Higher Education settings. They suggest that:

- *Pre-writing activities such as brainstorming and planning should be prioritised in CW, as they foster group interaction and set a strong foundation for subsequent stages.*
- *Drafting may benefit from individual efforts or alternative strategies to enhance efficiency and manage group dynamics.*
- *Editing and revising should be approached with clear guidelines and structured feedback mechanisms to mitigate the challenges of consensus building.*
- *Researching could be designated as an individual preparatory activity, with group discussions serving as a platform for integrating findings.*

The findings demonstrate that the process writing approach, when integrated with collaborative writing, provides a structured framework for engaging students in meaningful interactions. While certain stages, such as brainstorming and planning, thrive in collaborative contexts, others, like researching and drafting, may require individual focus. These insights align with the socio-cultural theory of learning, which emphasises the importance of interaction and scaffolding in cognitive development.



## Conclusions

The study provided valuable insights into the perceptions of students regarding the effectiveness and appropriateness of collaborative writing (CW) activities within the process writing approach. The findings highlight the potential of CW to enhance the writing experience through collective engagement and interaction while also identifying stages where individual effort may be more effective. These conclusions reflect the nuanced nature of CW and its applicability in different stages of the writing process. The study thus makes the following conclusions that:

- *Brainstorming and Planning are Critical in CW* The study established that brainstorming and planning are the most effective stages in CW, with a significant majority of students valuing these stages for their ability to foster critical thinking, explore diverse ideas, and ensure task organisation. This aligns with socio-cultural learning theories, which emphasise the role of interaction and scaffolding in enhancing cognitive development. The participatory nature of these stages promotes inclusivity and encourages collaboration, making them indispensable in CW.
- *Challenges in researching and editing, collaboratively researching and editing were identified as stages that are challenging to execute collaboratively.* Students found that individual research allows for the gathering of diverse and thorough information, which can then be shared and integrated into the group effort. Editing, on the other hand, was perceived as requiring focused attention, which is better suited to individual effort. These findings suggest that a hybrid approach, where certain stages are conducted individually and others collaboratively, may optimise CW practices.
- *Drafting was perceived as less effective in CW.* Drafting emerged as the least effective stage in CW, with students citing its time-consuming nature and the difficulty of integrating contributions from multiple members. This suggests that drafting might benefit from strategies like "one-for-all writing," where one member drafts the document while the group contributes ideas and feedback. Such an approach preserves the collaborative spirit while addressing the inefficiencies associated with group drafting.
- *CW enhances focus on overlooked writing stages* the study found that CW encouraged students to engage with stages such as planning and revising, which are often neglected in individual writing. This highlights CW's potential to foster a comprehensive approach to writing by instilling accountability and thoroughness among group members.

- *The findings imply that CW is most effective during the pre-writing (brainstorming and planning) and post-writing (revising) stages, while individual effort may be better suited for researching and editing. Educators should structure CW tasks to align with these insights, incorporating collaborative strategies where they are most beneficial and allowing individual autonomy where necessary.*

The study, thus reinforces the value of CW in the process writing approach, demonstrating its ability to promote collaboration, critical thinking, and enhanced writing outcomes. By addressing the identified challenges, educators can further optimise CW practices to support student learning and improve writing competencies.

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*Nelson Mandela University, SA*

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from the Nelson Mandela University Faculty of Arts Ethics Subcommittee (reference number: H/19/ART/ALS-002/04/22) and the Midlands State University Ethics Committee 04/22. This study adhered to the following ethical practices:

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