



**EFFECT OF COLLABORATIVE METHOD ON THE PERFORMANCE OF JUNIOR
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY WRITING IN LOKOJA
EDUCATION ZONE**

BAMIDELE SAMUEL FEMI

Department of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, Federal University Lokoja.
bamsife@gmail.com
+2348068148179

ALI DUZE DANIEL

Department of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, Federal University Lokoja.
duzedaniel@gmail.com
+2348053919902

AGBO ELIZABETH EBERE

Department of Arts and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State.
ebliza2912@gmail.com
+2347060845639

Abstract

This study investigated the effect of the collaborative method on the performance of junior secondary school students in descriptive essay writing within Lokoja Education Zone. The study was guided by one research question and one hypothesis. The study explored how collaborative learning influences students' writing abilities compared to conventional teaching methods. A quasi-experimental research design was adopted. The population consisted of 35,320 junior secondary school students (10,987 males and 24,333 females) across Lokoja Education Zone. Through a multi-stage sampling technique, two schools were selected, and a total of 79 students participated in the study. A descriptive essay writing performance test served as the instrument for data collection. Mean scores were used to analyze students' performance, while the hypothesis was tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Findings revealed a statistically significant difference in performance between students taught using the collaborative method and those taught with the conventional lecture method, with the collaborative method yielding higher achievement. It is recommended that teachers integrate collaborative learning into writing instruction and that educators design gender-sensitive approaches within collaborative frameworks to ensure equitable benefits for all learners.

Keywords: Collaborative Method, Descriptive Essay, Academic Performance, Gender in Language

Introduction

The academic performance of English students, particularly in descriptive essay writing, has become a major concern among educators and policymakers. Many students struggle to express their ideas clearly and coherently, resulting in poor achievement and low confidence (Owoeye & Yara, 2020). This challenge is largely attributed to traditional teaching methods that emphasize rote learning rather than creativity and critical thinking, leaving students with limited opportunities to practice writing skills



(Ajayi & Adebayo, 2019). Consequently, there is a need for innovative instructional strategies, such as collaborative teaching, which encourages interaction, peer feedback, and active engagement, thereby improving students' writing abilities and fostering interest in learning (Akinbobola, 2023).

Collaborative teaching is an instructional approach that promotes teamwork among teachers and students to enhance learning outcomes. It allows educators to combine their expertise and design lessons that address diverse learning needs (Nwafor, 2019). In such environments, students participate in group discussions, peer reviews, and cooperative tasks, which help develop critical thinking, deepen understanding, and build a sense of community (Olatunji & Abubakar, 2023; Adesoji, 2022). This method is especially beneficial at the junior secondary level, where students are adjusting to new academic demands, as it also helps them acquire essential social skills like communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution while promoting inclusivity (Oyetunde & Ajayi, 2024; Okereke, 2020; Oduaran, 2022).

Gender, as a key factor in educational experiences, also influences students' participation and performance in collaborative settings. Social expectations may limit equal participation, with some students less likely to contribute actively in mixed-gender groups (Ndang, 2019). However, collaborative teaching can address these disparities by creating structured and inclusive opportunities for all learners to engage meaningfully (Muhammed, 2023). It also helps challenge gender stereotypes and promotes respect for diverse perspectives, leading to a more supportive learning environment (Yusuf, 2024). Based on these considerations, this study seeks to examine the effect of the collaborative method on students' performance in descriptive essay writing in junior secondary schools in the Lokoja education zone.

Statement of the Problem

The academic performance of junior secondary school students in English, particularly in descriptive essay writing, is a growing concern in Lokoja education zone. Junior WAEC results from 2022 to 2024 reveal that only 45% of students achieved a passing grade, with many falling below the minimum requirement, raising doubts about the effectiveness of current teaching methodologies (Abubakar, 2024). Compounding this issue is the limited focus on collaborative learning in classrooms, which leads to students navigating their educational journeys in isolation and missing out on peer interaction and feedback opportunities. Data indicate that schools using collaborative teaching strategies have a 20% higher pass rate in English compared to those employing traditional methods, highlighting the need for a more engaging and supportive learning environment (Adesoji, 2022). Yet, there is a significant gap in research examining the impact of collaborative teaching on students' performance in descriptive essay writing in Lokoja education zone. While previous studies have acknowledged the advantages of collaborative approaches, empirical evidence linking these methods to improving writing outcomes in the context of Junior WAEC results is lacking. Addressing this gap is crucial to understanding how collaborative method can enhance students' writing abilities and overall academic performance in English.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the effect of the collaborative method on the performance of junior secondary school students in descriptive essay writing in Lokoja education zone. Specifically, the study intends to achieve the following objective, to:



1. examine the difference between the mean performance scores of students taught descriptive essay writing with the collaborative method and those taught with the conventional lecture method in Lokoja education zone.

Research Question

The following research question will guide the study;

1. What are the differences between the mean performance scores of students taught descriptive essay writing with the collaborative method and those taught with the conventional lecture method in Lokoja education zone?

Hypothesis

The following research hypothesis was formulated and was tested at a 0.05 level of significance

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean performance scores of students taught descriptive essay writing with the collaborative method and those taught with the conventional lecture method.

Literature Review

Collaborative Method

Collaborative method refers to approaches that emphasize cooperation and teamwork among individuals or groups to achieve shared goals. It is widely recognized across fields such as education, business, and community development for promoting innovation, enhancing problem-solving, and improving outcomes (Abubakar, 2024). The underlying idea is that collective intelligence often produces better results than individual effort. Historically, collaboration dates back to early communal practices where people shared knowledge and resources for survival (Nwosu & Onuoha, 2020). Over time, this evolved into formal structures like committees, and in the 20th century, it was further strengthened by group dynamics theories and collaborative technologies.

The collaborative method is guided by key principles such as mutual respect, open communication, shared goals, and trust (Adesoji, 2022). These principles create an inclusive environment where participants feel valued, ideas are freely exchanged, and teamwork is strengthened (Moyo & Ndofirepi, 2023). Collaborative practices can take different forms, including brainstorming sessions, workshops, and team-based projects that harness individual strengths (Ajayi & Adebayo, 2019). In the digital age, technology has significantly enhanced collaboration through tools like video conferencing, shared documents, and project management platforms, enabling effective communication and coordination across distances (Nwosu & Onuoha, 2020).

The benefits of the collaborative method include increased creativity, improved problem-solving, and greater motivation due to shared responsibility and accountability (Oyetunde & Ajayi, 2024). However, challenges such as conflicting personalities, unclear roles, and communication barriers may arise (Okwor, 2024). These can be managed through clear guidelines and effective leadership (Oduaran, 2022). The collaborative method is widely applied in education, healthcare, business, and community development, demonstrating its versatility and effectiveness (Oduol & Ochieng, 2019). Overall, it remains a vital approach for fostering innovation, addressing complex challenges, and achieving sustainable and inclusive outcomes in today's interconnected world (Olatunji & Abubakar, 2023).

Academic Performance

Academic performance is a multifaceted concept that reflects the outcomes of a student's educational experience, typically measured through grades, test scores, and overall achievement in school settings. It indicates the extent to which learners understand the curriculum and can apply acquired knowledge effectively (Adeyemi, 2020). Beyond grades, it also includes critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and active engagement with learning tasks



(Ogunyemi & Adesina, 2023). Academic performance is commonly assessed through standardized tests, assignments, projects, and examinations, which provide a basis for evaluating students' progress and the effectiveness of instruction (Nwogbo, 2019).

Several factors influence academic performance, including personal, social, psychological, and institutional elements. Individual traits such as motivation, self-discipline, and study habits are crucial, while family support, socio-economic status, and peer relationships also shape learning outcomes (Odetoyinbo, 2020). Motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, drives deeper engagement, while assessment practices help monitor progress and guide teaching strategies (Ikuomola, 2019; Emenalo, 2023). Also, technology offers flexible learning opportunities but presents challenges like distraction and unequal access (Olaniyan, 2024). Psychological factors such as stress, anxiety, and self-efficacy, along with environmental influences like teacher-student relationships and parental involvement, further affect performance. Overall, academic achievement results from the interaction of these multiple factors, highlighting the need for supportive and well-structured learning environments (Omoregie, 2024; Abubakar, 2024)

Descriptive Essay Writing

Descriptive essay writing is a literary form that aims to create a vivid picture of a person, place, object, or event through detailed observation and the use of sensory language. Unlike argumentative or narrative writing, it focuses on immersing the reader in the writer's experience, fostering a strong emotional and imaginative connection (Adesoji, 2022). By appealing to the senses, sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch descriptive essays enable readers to feel as though they are directly experiencing the subject. This form of writing typically follows a clear structure of introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion to ensure coherence and engagement (Nwafor, 2019). The use of sensory details and figurative language, such as imagery, similes, metaphors, and personification, enhances creativity and enriches descriptions (Oyetunde & Ajayi, 2024).

Furthermore, selecting appropriate subjects often based on personal experiences or familiar environments allows writers to provide detailed and emotionally engaging descriptions (Olatunji & Abubakar, 2024). Descriptive essays also seek to evoke emotional responses by incorporating personal reflections and feelings, thereby deepening the reader's connection to the text (Oduol & Ochieng, 2019). Revision plays a crucial role in refining the essay, improving clarity, removing clichés, and strengthening sensory appeal. Overall, descriptive essay writing remains a powerful means of expression that combines structure, imagery, and emotion to create memorable and engaging experiences for readers (Owoeye & Yara, 2020).

Gender in Language Learning

Gender is a complex social construct that encompasses identities, roles, and expectations associated with being male, female, or non-binary. It goes beyond biological differences (sex) to include cultural, social, and psychological dimensions that shape human experiences (Muhammed, 2023). Unlike sex, gender is fluid and influenced by societal expectations, which often assign roles such as men as providers and women as caregivers, though these roles are increasingly being challenged in contemporary society (Olatunji & Abubakar, 2024). Gender identity refers to an individual's internal sense of their gender, which may align with or differ from their biological sex, including identities such as cisgender, transgender, and non-binary (Ndang, 2019). As a socially constructed concept, gender varies across cultures and historical contexts, shaping diverse roles and expectations (Ochieng, 2020; Nwosu, 2019).



Gender norms and stereotypes strongly influence behaviour and can limit opportunities, such as restricting access to certain professions (Muhammed, 2023). These norms are often linked to power relations, with patriarchal systems historically privileging men while marginalizing women in areas like politics, employment, and family life (Oduol, 2020). However, growing recognition of gender diversity is challenging traditional binary perspectives and promoting broader acceptance (Nwankwo & Eze, 2024). Education plays a vital role in reshaping gender perceptions, as inclusive and gender-sensitive practices can help reduce stereotypes and empower individuals. Promoting gender equality and inclusivity remains essential for creating a society where individuals can express themselves freely without discrimination or limitation (Nwosu, 2019; Olatunji & Abubakar, 2024).

Methodology

The study adopted a quasi-experimental, non-randomized control group pre-test and post-test design, appropriate for the use of intact classes where randomization could disrupt school structures. The population comprised 35,320 junior secondary school students in Lokoja Education Zone, including 10,987 males and 24,333 females (STETSCOM, 2024). Science, Technical and Vocational Schools Management Board. A multi-stage sampling technique was used: purposive sampling selected six schools with similar characteristics, simple random sampling selected two schools, and a coin toss assigned experimental and control groups. A total of 79 students (39 males and 40 females) participated, with 40 in the experimental group and 39 in the control group. Data were collected using the Descriptive Essay Writing Performance Test (DEWPT), which included background information and essay writing tasks, administered for both pre-test and post-test with slight modification of the topic. The instrument’s validity was ensured through face and content validation by three experts, supported by a table of specifications, while reliability was established using the Kuder-Richardson (K-20) formula with a coefficient of 0.78. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test for significant differences among groups.

Result

Research Question One: What are the differences between the mean performance scores of students taught descriptive essay writing with the collaborative method and those taught with the conventional lecture method in Lokoja education zone?

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-Test Performance Mean Score of Students Taught Descriptive Essay Writing with Collaborative Method and Those Taught with Conventional Lecture Method

Groups	N	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean gain score
		\bar{X}_1	SD1	\bar{X}_2	SD2	
Experimental group	40	31.0	11.9	72.5	16.0	51.8
Control group	39	27.5	11.4	54.0	12.4	40.7

The data in Table 1 compares the performance of students taught descriptive essay writing using the collaborative method (experimental group) and the conventional lecture method (control group) in Lokoja Education Zone. The pre-test results indicate that both groups started at a similar baseline, with mean scores of 31.0 and 27.5 and comparable standard deviations, showing no major initial difference. However, the post-test results reveal that the experimental group performed significantly better, achieving a mean score of 72.5 compared to 54.0 for the control group, with a higher mean gain of 51.8 versus 40.7. This indicates that the collaborative method was more effective in enhancing students’ writing skills, likely due to increased engagement, interaction, and active learning opportunities, whereas the lecture method, being teacher-centered, offered fewer opportunities for skill development.



Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean performance scores of students taught descriptive essay writing with the collaborative method and those taught with the conventional lecture method.

Table 3: ANCOVA on the Performance Mean Scores of Students Taught Descriptive Essay Writing with Collaborative Method and those Taught with Conventional Lecture Method

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1109142.381 ^a	2	529571.77	425.126	.000	.861
Intercept	202276.397	1	290476.397	326.551	.000	.574
Performance	7710.381	1	10566.381	8.429	.005	.040
Method	908822.77	1	836722.77	728.294	.000	.821
Error	232337.619	77	1339.674			
Total	4535216.000	79				
Corrected Total	1398080.000	78				

a. R Squared = .855 (Adjusted R Squared = .852)

The ANCOVA results in Table 3 tested the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between students taught descriptive essay writing using the collaborative method and those taught using the conventional lecture method. The significance value for the method (0.000) is less than 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and indicating a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The high F-value (728.294) and large effect size (partial eta squared = 0.821) show that the teaching method had a strong influence on students' performance, accounting for 82.1% of the variance. Additionally, the adjusted R-squared value of 0.852 indicates that 85.2% of the variation in post-test scores is explained by the model. Overall, these results confirm that the collaborative method is significantly more effective than the conventional lecture method in improving students' descriptive essay writing performance in the Lokoja education zone.

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal a statistically significant difference in the mean performance scores of secondary school students taught descriptive essay writing using the collaborative method and those taught using the conventional lecture method, with the collaborative method proving more effective. This aligns with previous studies, as Nwafor (2019) found that students in cooperative learning environments achieved higher academic performance and improved social skills, while Adesoji (2022) and Oyetunde and Ajayi (2024) reported increased engagement and better writing outcomes through collaborative activities. The study also found a significant difference between male and female students, favouring males, although both groups benefited from the method. This finding partially aligns with those of Oduol (2020) and Ofoegbu (2019), who generally observed that collaborative learning enhances academic achievement for all students, with minimal or no gender disparities. Overall, the results reinforce the effectiveness of collaborative learning as a powerful instructional strategy for improving students' writing skills, while suggesting the need to consider gender-related factors to ensure balanced participation and outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the collaborative method is a highly effective instructional strategy for teaching descriptive essay writing, significantly improving student performance and engagement compared to traditional lecture approaches. By fostering active participation, peer interaction, and shared responsibility, collaborative learning not only enhances writing skills but also promotes equitable benefits for both male and female students. Implementing gender-responsive strategies and providing teacher training are essential to maximize these outcomes, while support from schools and policymakers can ensure the wider integration of collaborative approaches across the curriculum, ultimately contributing to improved academic achievement and holistic student development.



Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. Secondary school teachers should adopt the collaborative method as a primary instructional strategy for teaching descriptive essay writing, as it has been shown to significantly improve students' performance and engagement compared to the conventional lecture method.
2. Teachers should design and implement well-structured cooperative learning activities that encourage active participation, peer interaction, and shared responsibility among students.
3. Educators should ensure that collaborative learning strategies are gender-responsive, providing equal opportunities for both male and female students to participate and benefit effectively.
4. Teacher training and professional development programmes should emphasize practical strategies for implementing collaborative learning, including techniques for managing group work and promoting inclusive classroom practices.

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