Collaborative Note-taking and Its Impact on Writing Performance and Recall of Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners

Mahan Yaghobi[1], Abbas Pourhosein Gilakjani[2*]
[1]MA, Department of English Language Translation, Lahijan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Lahijan, Iran
[2*]Assistant Professor, Department of English Language Translation, Lahijan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Lahijan, Iran

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Abstract

Within the pedagogical framework of higher education, note-taking is recognized as a crucial instrument, aiding learners in their pursuit of acquiring knowledge. As higher education paradigms shift towards interactive learning, collaborative note-taking has been posited as a potential enhancer of content engagement and understanding. However, the specific advantages of this collaborative approach remain unclear in practical terms. Our research, which included a group of 200 EFL students, aimed to methodically compare the outcomes of collaborative note-taking against traditional individual note-taking. We closely investigated measures of content retention and proficiency in academic writing as our primary indicators. The data revealed that, while students participating in collaborative note-taking displayed heightened content retention, their counterparts in the individual note-taking group exhibited superior skills in academic writing. These findings underscore a pivotal nuance: while collaborative note-taking can significantly improve memory retention, it may not inherently cultivate enhanced writing capabilities. This research contributes significantly to the discourse, suggesting that the efficacy of collaborative note-taking could depend on particular learning goals or the wider educational framework of a course.

Keywords: Collaborative note-taking, Writing Performance, Memory Retention, Educational Technology, Academic Achievement, Interactive Learning, Pedagogical Strategies, Comparative Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The evolving landscape of educational research has more and more recognized the pivotal role of collaboration in shaping learning outcomes, highlighting its growing importance in educational settings (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). Defined as a key component of 21st-century skills (Bruns, 2007), collaboration is credited with not only enhancing group dynamics but also individual learning outcomes, such as retention and understanding (Hung et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2014). However, despite its widespread adoption and documented benefits (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012; Terenzini et al., 2001), the effectiveness of collaboration remains inconsistent across different contexts (Kester & Paas, 2005; Zambrano et al., 2019). Within this broader canvas of collaborative learning, note-taking stands out as a

key area of focus. While traditional note-taking has been studied for its impact on student performance (Luo et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2020), the advent of collaborative note-taking presents a new dimension. Collaborative note-taking allows for the division of cognitive labor and potential co-construction of knowledge (Dillenbourg, 1999; Petko et al., 2019).

As technology has facilitated easier sharing through various platforms (Steimle et al., 2009), the interest in this pedagogical tool has only grown (Laudari, 2019). Nonetheless, questions surrounding the actual advantages of collaborative note-taking remain, specifically its impact on learning gains and student performance (Adeniran et al., 2019). While substantial research has been conducted on the individual benefits of collaborative learning and note-taking, there remains a gap in understanding how these two practices interact within an educational setting. This interplay between collaboration and note-taking could offer invaluable insights into the most effective teaching strategies for the 21st century. The present study aims to contribute to this discourse by investigating the comparative effectiveness of individual and collaborative note-taking on students' academic performance. By employing rigorous methodology and drawing from diverse educational theories, we hope to provide a detailed viewpoint that will guide future educational practices.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: *Does collaborative note-taking enhance the performance of EFL students on weekly quizzes in a writing course as compared to individual note-taking?*

RQ2: *Does collaborative note-taking improve the writing assignment scores of EFL students in an Iranian university as compared to individual note-taking?*

RQ3: *Do individual note-takers in an EFL writing course produce a greater volume of notes as compared to those in collaborative note-taking groups?*

Each research question was addressed in the form of its respective null hypothesi.

~~(H1): Collaborative note-taking significantly enhances the performance of EFL students on weekly quizzes in a writing course as compared to individual note-taking.~~

~~(H2): Collaborative note-taking significantly improves the writing assignment scores of EFL students in an Iranian university as compared to individual note-taking.~~

~~(H3): Individual note-takers in an EFL writing course produce a significantly greater volume of notes as compared to those in collaborative note-taking groups.~~

LITERATURE REVIEW

Note-taking has long been considered a lone activity designed to help students remember and later retrieve lecture material (Biggers & Luo, 2020). This strategy is broadly recognized as enhancing the educational experience (Wu et al., 2020). Although individual note-taking is mentally demanding because students must keep up with the teacher’s pace (Chen, 2013), the collaborative approach holds several benefits. These include improved academic writing (Wilson & Devereux, 2014) and enhanced performance in essays that require high levels of reasoning (Waite et al., 2018). Kiewra (1989) found that those who borrowed notes could perform as well in exams as those who took their own, although this

raises ethical considerations. Collaborative note-taking is particularly promising. When students team up to refine their notes, they record information that is both more original and more comprehensive (Luo et al., 2016). Sharing notes adds value by compensating for missing information and offers different note-taking techniques for improvement (AbuSeileek, 2008, 2011; Kauffman et al., 2011). Technology, like Google Drive, supports this approach by allowing multiple people to edit documents simultaneously (Kennedy et al., 2008), which correlates with better educational results (Costley & Lange, 2016). For example, Orndorff (2015) discovered that using Google Docs for note-taking corresponded to better grades. However, a drawback in these studies is that they only focused on the collaborative aspect, neglecting to consider how much note-taking the control groups may have undertaken (Fanguy et al., 2023; Orndorff, 2015).

Extensive research suggests that the completer and more extensive the notes, the better the quality of those notes tend to be (Luo et al., 2016). There's a well-established link between the quantity of written words in student notes and educational outcomes (Haynes et al., 2015; Kiewra, 1987). Mueller and Oppenheimer (2014) add complexity to this by showing that not all lengthy notes are beneficial; transcribing a lecture can be less effective than critically engaging with the content. When students collaborate, the collective notes usually end up being more voluminous, although individual contributions might be fewer (Costley & Fanguy, 2021). However, the increased motivation and engagement in group settings can potentially lead to more significant contributions compared to individual note-takers (Kam et al., 2005). This kind of collaboration has been connected with higher exam scores (Kam et al., 2005) and more effective brainstorming (Adeniran et al., 2019; Doberstein et al., 2019). Past research like that by Benton et al. (1993) and Slotte and Lonka (2001) underlines the importance of thorough note-taking for producing coherent and well-structured essays.

The effectiveness of collaborative learning depends on multiple factors and can vary widely. Research has shown that smaller collaborative groups can have a positive impact on academic performance and learning outcomes (Lee et al., 2014; Menekse & Chi, 2019). However, when juxtaposing individual and group performance, the findings become less clear-cut, with some studies suggesting equivalent or even lesser performance for group activities (Leidner & Fuller, 1997; Nokes-Malach et al., 2015; Retnowati et al., 2017). These ambiguities persist despite generally favorable attitudes toward group work. One specific aspect where collaborative learning has shown potential is in the realm of group note-taking, which may improve the quality of subsequent essays (Tatiana, 2021). However, evidence also points toward individual note-takers outperforming their collaborative counterparts in academic writing tasks (Fanguy et al., 2023). The literature offers several explanations for this disparity such as personal preferences for Individual work (Retnowati et al., 2017), cognitive costs linked to collaboration (Kirschner et al., 2009), discomfort related to collective editing of documents (Blau & Caspi, 2009; Terenzini et al., 2001), and inadequate writing practice within collaborative settings (Fanguy et al., 2023).

Retention of information is significantly influenced by the mode of learning, and collaboration plays a crucial role. Studies abound suggesting that group work can boost retention rates (Johnson et al., 2014; Tindale & Winget, 2017). Interestingly, collaboration enhances both short-term and long-term recall, particularly when students pair up to review notes (Ruhl et al., 1987). However, it's not a universal win; some theories such as the Retrieval Strategy Disruption Hypothesis suggest that collaboration might hinder individual retention in certain circumstances (Basden et al., 1997). Moreover, the quality of notes

also affects retention. Students who take more detailed notes, whether individually or in groups, tend to retain more (Haynes et al., 2015; Kiewra, 1987). However, an excessive focus on note-taking can be a pitfall, potentially decreasing retention by diverting focus from the actual learning process (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014). The role of technology can't be ignored either. With the advent of wireless internet and portable electronic devices, electronic note-taking is on the rise. The advantage here lies not just in the efficiency of note-taking but also in the facilitation of collaboration through platforms like Google Drive, which have been shown to improve retention outcomes (Orndorff, 2015).

Collaboration in educational settings offers both advantages and challenges. On the plus side, collaborative efforts facilitate learning through mechanisms like scaffolding and peer guidance (Doo et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2020; Vygotsky, 1978). These methods not only help learners absorb the material but also aid in the transfer of learning—a fundamental goal of education (Pan & Rickard, 2018; Kuo et al., 2020). Moreover, digital advancements such as online collaborative note-taking provide unique opportunities to share and compare notes, thus augmenting individual efforts and even boosting literacy skills (AbuSeileek, 2011; Kauffman et al., 2011; Makany et al., 2009). However, collaboration isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. For example, the division of tasks within groups can sometimes be counterproductive, as seen in areas like second language learning and academic writing (Robb et al., 1986). Collaboration may also introduce a cognitive load that manifests as stress, errors, or conflicts within the group (Chen, 2013; Kirschner et al., 2009). Learners with poor self-regulation could struggle in collaborative settings, despite the benefits of peer feedback. And while the completeness of notes is generally beneficial, simply transcribing lectures word for word can be counterproductive (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014).

Present Study

The present study aims to thoroughly examine the effectiveness of note-taking strategies within the context of an EFL writing course at an Iranian university. While collaborative learning paradigms have been consistently endorsed by studies such as Johnson et al. (2014) and Tindale & Winget (2017), the landscape is nuanced with factors that could attenuate its effectiveness (Basden et al., 1997; Kirschner et al., 2009). Our focus narrows down to two prominent methods of note-taking: individual and collaborative. The former approach allows each student to create their own scaffold of notes, whereas the latter involves collective effort in a shared space. Previous literature has separately praised the advantages of both methods (Ruhl et al., 1987), but comprehensive comparative data are limited. To enrich this discourse, our study employs a two-pronged metric for assessing student performance. The first facet involves weekly quiz scores, a reliable quantitative gauge for immediate retention of course material. The second dimension analyzes writing assignment scores, thereby offering a more qualitative insight into the nuanced capabilities such as expression and structure. This design enables us to not only measure the absolute efficacy of each note-taking strategy but also to examine potential variations in note volume produced, thereby incorporating findings of volume's impact on retention from Haynes et al. (2015) and Kiewra (1987). By bridging these focal areas, we intend to contribute a more holistic understanding of note-taking in EFL educational contexts, informing future pedagogical strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Educational Context

The study encompassed 200 EFL students at an Iranian university, majoring in Linguistics. They were distributed across 11 separate course sections with each section housing 8-26 students. Participants were divided into two arms: individual note-taking (70 students) and collaborative note-taking (130 students). Within the latter arm, there were 28 groups with 3-5 students each. The demographic comprised 140 undergraduates and 60 Ph.D. candidates, 53 females and 147 males, averaging an age of 24 years (SD = 3).

Course Design and Material

The university's writing course consisted of 11 weeks, each with 5-9 online lecture videos. Students were required to take notes using Microsoft Word. The course concluded weekly with an online quiz contributing to 35% of the final grade.

Procedure

Upon completing the participant recruitment, individuals were systematically allocated to either the individual note-taking group or the collaborative note-taking group. The study then proceeded in a series of clearly defined steps designed to explore the effects of collaborative versus individual note-taking on learning outcomes among Intermediate-Level Iranian EFL Students. In the case of collaborative note-taking, additional stratification was employed to create 28 groups, each consisting of 3-5 students. Stratification criteria included gender, educational level, and age to ensure a balanced representation in each subset. This meticulous grouping was an attempt to control for confounding variables that might otherwise impact the study outcomes. The 11-week writing course was carefully designed to include a range of 5-9 online lecture videos each week. These were hosted on the university's secure Learning Management System (LMS). Guidelines for the note-taking process were distributed via email and also archived on the LMS for convenient student access.

Each week, an online quiz was released on the LMS upon the completion of the final lecture video. These quizzes were intentionally constructed to measure both comprehension and retention of the course material and were a significant component of the students' final grade, contributing 35%. The study also incorporated individual writing assignments, which were clearly outlined in the course syllabus as well as the LMS. To operationalize the measures for note-taking volume, students were required to upload their Microsoft Word documents containing their notes to a dedicated portal on a weekly basis. Word counts were automatically calculated using the Word Count feature in Microsoft Word and subsequently recorded. Student interaction with the lecture videos was monitored through the LMS's in-built analytics tools, capturing metrics such as frequency and duration of video views and video replays.

For a nuanced understanding of the semantic quality of the notes, Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) was employed on anonymized notes extracted from the students. Following a meticulous process of data cleaning and screening for inconsistencies or missing entries, statistical analyses were conducted. Initial assessments of normality and variance were determined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Brown-Forsythe tests. Subsequent analyses, including independent t-tests, Mann-Whitney U tests, and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests, were tailored to suit the characteristics of the data. LSA was then applied to evaluate semantic depth. This detailed procedural account serves not only as a comprehensive record of the methodology employed but also as a robust framework for future researchers aiming to replicate or expand upon the study.

Measures

To fully evaluate the impact of individual versus collaborative note-taking strategies on EFL students, the study employed a multifaceted approach. Initially, the volume of the notes taken was examined as a key metric. To measure this, the study used LaTeX combined with Git version control, allowing for precise tracking of word counts, modifications, and even the time spent on the document.

This offered an enhanced view of both the quantity and evolution of the note-taking process. Student engagement was measured using a combination of survey responses and digital timestamps gathered from the course's Learning Management System (LMS). This provided detailed information on the frequency and duration of video interactions and identified instances where students replayed specific video segments. Two indicators assessed academic performance. The average scores on weekly quizzes, which formed 35% of the final grade, were analyzed. In addition, individual writing assignments were evaluated using a standardized rubric, and their scores were incorporated into the dataset for a well-rounded understanding of student learning outcomes. Lastly, a Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) technique was applied to analyze the depth of content in students' notes. Utilizing this advanced linguistic computational tool, the study was able to examine the complexity and richness of the captured information. By employing these nuanced and specialized measures, the research aimed to present a rich, multidimensional picture of the comparative benefits and drawbacks of individual and collaborative note-taking in an EFL academic setting.

RESULTS

The research methodology incorporated the use of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests to determine the normality of data distribution, augmented by histograms to visually depict the distribution of scores for quizzes and writing assignments. The table below presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality for quiz and writing scores. These tests are essential in verifying whether the distributions of the two sets of scores depart from a normally distributed data set.

Table 1

Tests of Normality for Quiz and Writing Scores among EFL Students

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Quiz score	.170	60	.000	.931	60	.002
Writing score	.192	60	.000	.903	60	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

For quiz scores, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic is .170 with a significance (p-value) of .000, and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic is .931 with a significance of .002. Despite the Shapiro-Wilk test having a slightly higher p-value, both p-values are less than the conventional alpha level of .05, indicating a statistically significant deviation from normality. This is contrary to what the histogram might suggest at a glance, showing a somewhat skewed distribution with most of the data congregated between 80 and 87.5, with fewer students achieving scores at the higher end of the scale. The statistical tests, however, confirm that the distribution of quiz scores is not normal.

Similarly, for writing scores, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic is .192 with a p-value of .000, and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic is .903 with a p-value of .000. Both p-values indicate a statistically significant deviation from normality. The histogram for writing scores confirms this, exhibiting a distribution that is not symmetrical with multiple peaks, suggesting that certain scores are more frequent. This multimodal distribution is reflected in the test results and visual evidence from the histogram.

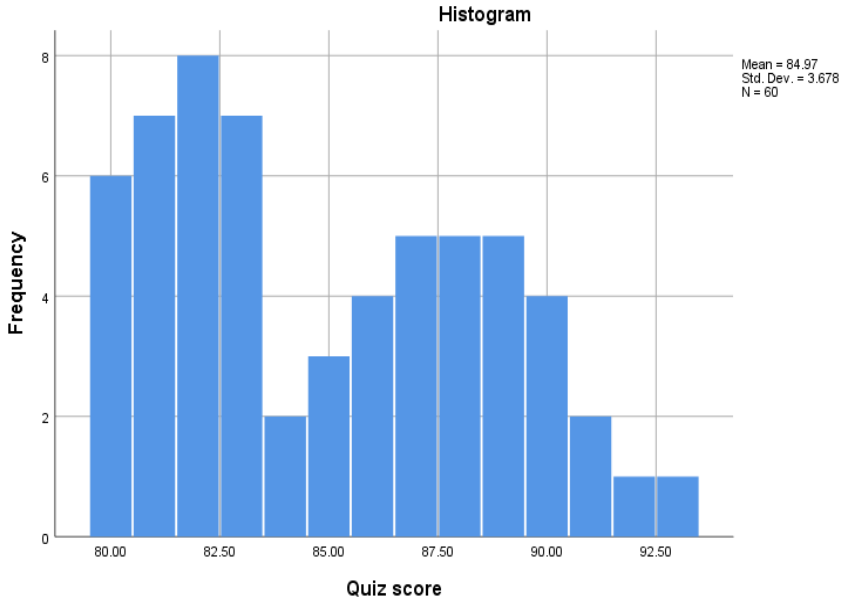

Figure 1 Histogram of Quiz Scores for EFL Students

Quiz Score

The histogram for quiz scores depicts a distribution with a significant skewness towards the lower end of the score range, challenging the assumption of normality. This observation is supported by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test results, which indicate a significant deviation from normality with p-values firmly below the alpha level of .05.

Writing Score

The histogram for writing scores displays an irregular distribution with several peaks, indicating a non-uniform distribution across the score range. This is corroborated by the normality tests, which both yield p-values of .000, strongly suggesting a non-normal distribution.

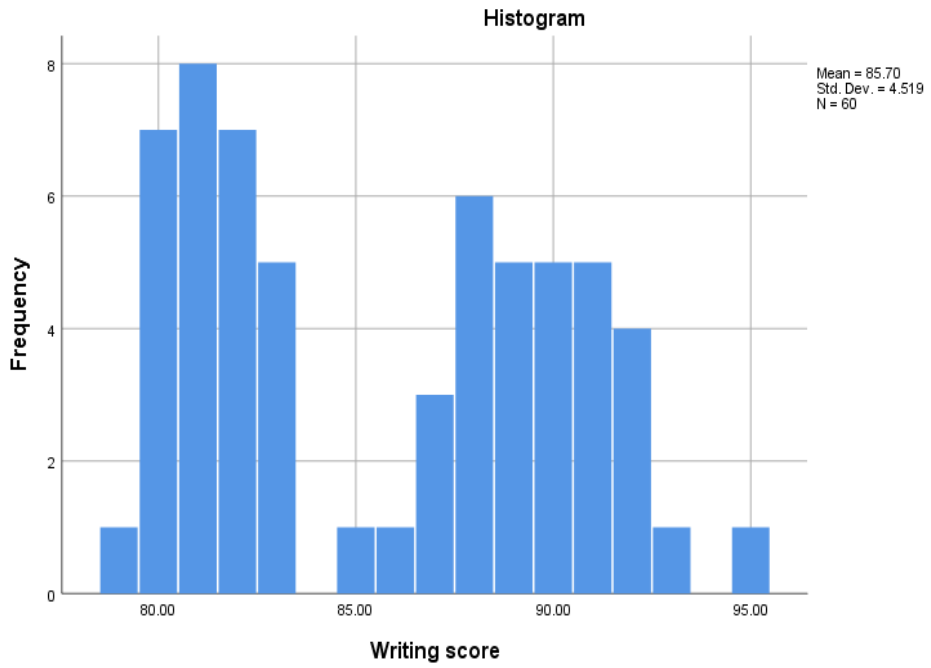

Figure 2 Histogram of Writing Scores for EFL Students

Assessing Variance and Mean Differences in EFL Student Performance

The statistical analysis progressed with tests for the homogeneity of variances and robust tests of equality of means to further understand the differences between individual and collaborative note-taking strategies on EFL student performance. Initially, the Brown-Forsythe test was conducted to assess the equality of variances between the two groups. As seen in Table 2, the quiz scores show a Levene Statistic of 6.374 based on the median with a significant p-value of .014, indicating that variances are not equal for quiz performance. Similarly, the test based on the trimmed mean yielded a p-value of .012, reinforcing the finding of unequal variances.

Table 2

Brown-Forsythe Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Quiz score	Based on Mean	7.174	1	58	.010

	Based on Median	6.374	1	58	.014
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	6.374	1	47.413	.015
	Based on trimmed mean	6.772	1	58	.012
Writing score	Based on Mean	1.977	1	58	.165
	Based on Median	1.843	1	58	.180
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.843	1	57.993	.180
	Based on trimmed mean	2.101	1	58	.153

For writing scores, the test yields p-values above the .05 threshold, suggesting no significant difference in variances between the groups based on these criteria.

Subsequent to the variance analysis, robust tests of equality of means were conducted, utilizing both the Welch and Brown-Forsythe adjustments due to the identified variance inequalities for quiz scores. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Robust Tests of Equality of Means

Robust Tests of Equality of Means

		Statistic[a]	df1	df2	Sig.
Quiz	Welch	213.173	1	46.920	.000
	Brown-Forsythe	213.173	1	46.920	.000
Writing	Welch	331.158	1	55.152	.000
	Brown-Forsythe	331.158	1	55.152	.000

a. Asymptotically F distributed.

As depicted, both tests indicate highly significant differences in means between the groups for both quiz and writing scores ($p < .001$), which implies that the collaborative note-taking strategy and individual note-taking strategy led to different outcomes.

After The Brown-Forsythe test, The Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to evaluate the differences between individual and collaborative note-taking methods in terms of their impact on quiz and writing scores among EFL students.

Table 4

Mann-Whitney U Test Results for Quiz and Writing Scores

Ranks

Group		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Quiz score	Individual	30	45.50	1365.00
	Collaborative	30	15.50	465.00
	Total	60		

Writing score	Individual	30	45.50	1365.00
	Collaborative	30	15.50	465.00
	Total	60		

Test Statistics[a]

	Quiz score	Writing score
Mann-Whitney U	.000	.000
Wilcoxon W	465.000	465.000
Z	-6.682	-6.683
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000

The Mann-Whitney U test generated statistically significant results for both quiz and writing scores, with a U value of .000 and remarkably negative Z-scores, indicating a robust difference between the two note-taking conditions. The asymptotic significance values ($p < .001$) underscore the highly significant disparities in performance outcomes.

The examination of quiz scores revealed that individual note-takers (Mean Rank = 45.50) outperformed their collaborative counterparts (Mean Rank = 15.50), aligning with the hypothesis that individual note-taking strategies may foster superior quiz performance in EFL contexts. Similarly, for writing assignments, individual note-takers exhibited a higher mean rank (45.50) than collaborative note-takers (15.50), reinforcing the supposition that individual note-taking potentially enhances writing performance as well. These findings are substantial, given the large negative Z-scores, which speak to a pronounced effect size and the improbability that these differences arose by chance. The results compellingly suggest that, within the context of this study, individual note-taking strategies are associated with enhanced performance on both quizzes and writing tasks among EFL students.

DISCUSSION

The current study's investigation into the comparative effectiveness of individual versus collaborative note-taking strategies in an EFL context has yielded insights that are both congruent and divergent with existing literature. Despite the anticipation that collaboration enhances learning outcomes, underscored by Johnson and Johnson (2002), the results from this study, particularly those from the Mann-Whitney U test, suggest a different narrative. Individual note-taking strategies may offer superior benefits in certain academic tasks such as quizzes and writing assignments. This finding is particularly noteworthy in the context of retention and recall of course content, where individual strategies seemed to have an edge. This aligns with Kiewra's (1989) findings on the effectiveness of borrowed notes, and Luo et al.'s (2016) observations that, while collaborative note-taking can be thorough, it is not always more effective.

These findings offer a detailed perspective on the collaborative learning paradigm. While the advantages of collaborative efforts have been extensively documented (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012; Terenzini et

al., 2001), the variability of these advantages in different settings is highlighted in the current study (Kester & Paas, 2005; Zambrano et al., 2019). This indicates that although collaborative note-taking can provide potential benefits, such as co-construction of knowledge (Dillenbourg, 1999; Petko et al., 2019), its effectiveness in boosting memory and understanding is not a given and may vary based on particular circumstances that merit further investigation. Additionally, the findings challenge the premise that collaborative note-taking, enabled by digital tools (Steimle et al., 2009) consistently leads to enhanced academic results. Interestingly, the literature review highlighted that the quantity of notes might not directly translate to quality or improved outcomes (Costley & Fanguy, 2021; Haynes et al., 2015), a point that is substantiated by the current study's data showing individual note-takers outperforming their collaborative counterparts in terms of recall.

In addition, a pivotal aspect of this research involved analyzing the quantitative aspect of note-taking, namely, the volume of notes produced in both collaborative and individual settings. The findings revealed a nuanced dynamic in the context of collaborative note-taking. It was observed that collaborative environments typically yielded a more voluminous collection of notes. This increase in volume, however, did not equate to a decrease in the individual contributions' quality or significance. On the contrary, the collaborative setting seemed to create a positive environment that boosted student motivation and engagement. This atmosphere, characterized by collective endeavor, was crucial in facilitating contributions that were potentially more substantial in comparison to those produced in individual note-taking situations. Furthermore, the study's results align with the current academic discourse, as demonstrated by the research of Costley and Fanguy (2021) and Kam et al. (2005), showing the effectiveness of collaborative efforts in academic contexts.

These studies collectively suggest that collaborative note-taking not only leads to a greater quantity of notes but also enhances the quality of academic performance, as evidenced by higher exam scores and more effective brainstorming sessions. The implications of these findings are substantial, particularly in the realm of EFL education. They suggest that while individual note-taking may be advantageous in certain aspects, the collaborative approach, with its tendency to produce a larger volume of notes, can play a pivotal role in enhancing learning outcomes. Furthermore, the implications for educational practice are significant. While collaborative strategies are advocated in the literature and the appeal of digital collaborative platforms is strong (Costley & Lange, 2016; Kennedy et al., 2008), educators should be cautious not to overemphasize these strategies at the expense of individual learning activities, especially in contexts where individual note-taking may be more effective for retention and recall.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current study contributes to the varied field of educational research on note-taking strategies. This underlines the importance of understanding precisely when and how collaborative learning techniques can be most effective, highlighting that teaching methods need to be specifically tailored to match the unique needs of each learning scenario and objective. As educational paradigms continue to evolve, so too must our understanding of the diverse tools and strategies at our disposal. This research enriches the discourse on note-taking within the EFL domain, shedding light on the nuanced efficacy of individual versus collaborative approaches. The findings underscore the necessity for educators to critically appraise both the context and the pedagogical goals when integrating note-taking methodologies into their curricula. The noticeable differences in how individual and collaborative

strategies impact various academic results in this study highlight the need for a tailored approach to teaching and learning practices.

By challenging the traditional advocacy for collaboration in all pedagogical scenarios, this study reveals that individual strategies can significantly outperform collaborative ones in enhancing quiz and writing performance. This serves as a pivotal reminder that while cooperative learning holds great potential for enriching educational experiences, its application should be judicious and contextualized. As the educational landscape transforms, driven by technological advancements and evolving cognitive theories, our pedagogical tools must also adapt. The study's revelations about note-taking strategies contribute to this ongoing transformation, advocating for a more dynamic and evidence-based approach to pedagogy. This involves recognizing the varied needs and learning preferences of students, the changing nature of educational content, and the shifting dynamics within the classroom.

In essence, the study's outcomes highlight the importance of choice and flexibility in educational strategies. In a time when the universal approach to teaching is fading away, recognizing when and how to deploy individual versus collaborative learning activities becomes ever more crucial. Teachers are advised to see note-taking not merely as a task to complete but as a vital skill that can be refined and adjusted to meet the varied and changing demands of students. The impact of this research extends broadly, laying the groundwork for further studies and shaping present educational methods. It advocates for a more selective method in applying collaborative learning, calling for a pedagogical move towards flexibility and focusing on the student's needs. In doing so, it paves the way for a more thoughtful, intentional, and ultimately effective utilization of note-taking as a pedagogical strategy in EFL settings and beyond.

Limitations

The study's exploration into the effects of note-taking methodologies on EFL students offers significant findings but faces various limitations. The single-institution sample, characteristic of a specific linguistic and educational setting, may not represent the diversity of the EFL learner population at large. This specificity limits the broader applicability of the findings. Moreover, the study's quantitative emphasis omits the qualitative aspects of the educational experience, such as student satisfaction or the subjective value of collaborative learning, which could provide a richer understanding of note-taking practices.

The technological uniformity, with students utilizing only Microsoft Word, neglects the potential influence of varied digital platforms that might offer different collaborative opportunities and challenges. The limited timeframe of the study, restricted to a single academic term, prevents an analysis of the long-term effects of note-taking strategies on learning. Furthermore, the focus on quiz performance and writing assignments as the sole metrics of academic success does not capture the full range of academic competencies, potentially overlooking areas where collaborative or individual note-taking might show differing levels of efficacy.

Future Research

The outlined limitations point towards a need for expanded research to deepen the understanding of note-taking strategies. Cross-cultural studies would bolster the universality of the study's conclusions, while the integration of qualitative methods could capture the complexities of student experiences and

perceptions surrounding note-taking. Investigating the impact of a variety of digital tools on collaborative learning could offer nuanced insights into the technological dimensions of EFL education. Long-term studies could reveal the sustained impact of note-taking methods on academic retention and application, thereby providing a temporal dimension to the understanding of effective learning strategies.

Broadening the scope of evaluation to include diverse academic tasks would offer a more comprehensive view of the educational benefits of note-taking strategies. Additionally, research into instructional interventions centered on note-taking could directly inform teaching methodologies, tailoring them more effectively to student needs. Finally, examining how note-taking strategies perform across different academic disciplines could reveal unique pedagogical needs and benefits, potentially leading to discipline-specific note-taking recommendations. Such research endeavors would contribute significantly to the pedagogical literature, offering educators nuanced guidance for fostering academic success in EFL contexts.

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Biodata

Mahan Yaghobi holds a master's degree in English language teaching from Lahijan Islamic Azad University. Her main research interests are CALL, motivation, and reading and speaking skills.

Dr. Abbas Pourhosein Gilakjani is an Assistant Professor of TESOL (USM, Malaysia) at Islamic Azad University, Lahijan, Iran where he teaches courses in English Language Teaching. His main research interests are human-computer interaction, CALL, language teaching methodologies, and research on English language teaching/learning. He is the member of the editorial board of Cogent Education (ISSN: 2331-186X), Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education (ISSN: 2363-5169), and Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties (ISSN: 1057-3569).