

REVIEW ARTICLE

Teaching Memoirs and Autobiographies Through Collaborative Learning Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Teaching memoirs and autobiographies at the university level requires students to move beyond biographical recall toward interpreting memory, narrative voice, identity, historical location, and authorial choice. This study examined whether structured collaborative learning could strengthen those outcomes among undergraduates at Delta State University (DELSU), Abraka, Nigeria. DELSU officially reports an institutional population of about 22, 000 students for the 2019/2020 session; because no current public course- register total is available for English and Literary Studies, sample size was justified by the inferential design rather than by applying a population- percentage rule. A priori power analysis was conducted using a two-tailed significance level of 0.05, statistical power of 0.90, and a minimum detectable effect size of $d = 0.50$. The analysis indicated that at least 172 participants were required. To allow for a possible 10% attrition rate, 192 participants were initially targeted, and 184 complete cases were eventually retained and evenly divided between the collaborative and comparison groups. The intervention ran for eight weeks and involved individual preparation, peer discussion, reciprocal teaching, questioning of evidence, consideration of alternative interpretations, and synthesis of ideas. Achievement was measured in four areas: narrative perspective, contextual interpretation, authorial craft, and evidence- based literary response. The modeled findings indicated that both groups had comparable baseline scores, but the collaborative group recorded a much greater improvement ($M = 26.66$, $SD = 8.04$) than the comparison group ($M = 15.46$, $SD = 7.84$), $t(182) = 9.57$, $p < .001$, Hedges $g = 1.40$. After controlling for pre- test achievement, ANCOVA also showed a significant instructional- group effect, $F(1, 181) = 127.14$, $p < 0.001$, partial eta- squared = 0.413. The strongest effect was found in evidence- based interpretation. Qualitative findings also showed greater confidence in interpreting texts, exposure to different viewpoints, better use of textual evidence, and active participation, although uneven contribution remained a concern. Overall, the findings suggest that structured collaboration can strengthen life- writing instruction when supported by accountability, guidance, and evidence- focused discussion.

Keywords: autobiography; collaborative learning; Delta State University; life writing; literature pedagogy; memoir; mixed methods

INTRODUCTION

Memoirs and autobiographies occupy an unusual position in literary education because they ask students to read at the point where artistic construction meets lived experience. A life-writing text is neither a transparent record of the past nor simply a fictional narrative wearing

the label of truth. It is shaped by memory, selection, perspective, language, cultural expectation and the writer's present understanding of earlier experience. Recent scholarship has therefore treated life writing as a broad field of meaning-making in which identity, relationships, memory, reflection, teaching and learning overlap (Lindenman et al., 2024). Netzer and Spallacci (2022)

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similarly argue that the pedagogy of life writing must attend not only to what texts are taught but to how students encounter the ethical, social and interpretive tensions that life stories create. In a university literature classroom, these tensions make memoirs and autobiographies especially productive texts for close reading, contextual interpretation and reflective discussion.

Yet the instructional method used to teach these texts can either widen or narrow their educational possibilities. A predominantly lecture-centred lesson may efficiently communicate dates, themes, narrative techniques and critical positions, but it can also position the lecturer as the main source of interpretation. Students may take notes, reproduce established readings and prepare for examinations without necessarily testing their interpretations against those of others. This problem is important because literary understanding is rarely strengthened by recall alone. Students need to notice ambiguity, compare perspectives, explain how a conclusion was reached and revise an interpretation when stronger textual evidence emerges. Dialogic work is particularly useful in this regard. Zhang and Zhang (2020) found that structured discussion can serve as a platform for constructing knowledge through interaction, while Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) emphasise the role of participation, agency and engagement in sustaining meaningful learning.

Collaborative learning offers a practical way of reorganising literary study around shared intellectual work. In collaborative settings, students do not merely sit together; they work toward a common learning task while retaining responsibility for individual preparation and contribution. Useful formats include think-pair-share, reciprocal teaching, peer questioning, small-group close reading, role-based interpretation, group presentations and collaborative annotation. Evidence from higher education suggests that such arrangements can strengthen engagement and academic performance when tasks are purposeful and participation is structured (Muñoz Miguel et al., 2023; McKay & Sridharan, 2024). Meta-analytic findings also indicate that collaborative and computer-supported collaborative learning can produce meaningful gains in academic achievement and higher-order thinking (Talan, 2021; Ramdani et al., 2022). These outcomes are relevant to literature because memoirs and autobiographies demand inference, evaluation and contextual reasoning rather than literal comprehension alone.

The connection between collaboration and life-writing pedagogy is particularly compelling. Students reading a memoir must often decide how far memory can be trusted, how a narrator frames other people, what has been omitted, which social forces shape the story and how personal experience becomes a public text. Such questions admit defensible but not always identical answers.

Group dialogue can expose students to alternative interpretations and compel them to articulate the textual basis for a claim. Recent work on autobiography-driven instruction demonstrates that personal narrative can also activate linguistic, cultural and experiential resources that students bring to the classroom (Yigitbilek, 2022). Di Pardo Léon-Henri (2024) further shows how life-writing activities can support reflection, metacognition and self-regulation in tertiary education. These studies suggest that life writing can be more than a content area; it can become a vehicle for active, socially situated learning.

The Delta State University context adds another layer of relevance. Literature students often study autobiographical and memoir texts that cross histories of colonialism, nationalism, gender, migration, conflict, faith, family and public life. These texts can provoke disagreement because readers approach them with different cultural histories and assumptions. A teaching approach that permits students to compare interpretations may therefore improve both comprehension and intellectual tolerance. It may also help students move from impressionistic comments such as 'I like the narrator' or 'the story is inspiring' toward more disciplined claims that connect voice, structure, context and evidence. The present study investigated this possibility through a mixed-methods design comparing collaborative instruction with a more conventional teacher-led approach.

The study contributes to current literature in three ways. First, it brings collaborative-learning research into the relatively under-examined area of memoir and autobiography teaching. Second, it combines achievement data with students' accounts of how collaboration shaped their interpretive behaviour, rather than treating test scores as the only evidence of learning. Third, it develops a context-specific instructional model that can be used in Nigerian university literature classrooms without requiring expensive technology. The model assumes that learning improves when students prepare individually, exchange interpretations, challenge and refine claims, return to the text for evidence, and finally synthesise what the group has established. This sequence is consistent with recent evidence that collaborative reading can strengthen comprehension, confidence and critical engagement (Mustamir et al., 2023; Amumpuni et al., 2025).

Problem Statement

Memoirs and autobiographies are frequently included in literature and language-related university courses because they connect literary form with questions of identity, memory, history and social experience. The difficulty is that their classroom treatment can become heavily explanatory: lecturers provide background information, identify themes and techniques, and students reproduce

these interpretations in tests or essays. Such instruction may cover the syllabus, yet it offers limited evidence that students can independently interpret narrative perspective, question the reliability and selectivity of memory, connect private experience with wider social conditions, or defend an interpretation with precise textual evidence. The problem is not the lecture itself but its dominance when the learning outcome requires active interpretation. Recent higher-education research shows that collaboration can improve engagement, knowledge construction and evaluative judgement, although students also report problems such as unequal contribution and weak coordination when group work is poorly structured (Glaister et al., 2024; McKay & Sridharan, 2024). Studies on cooperative reading likewise report gains in comprehension when learners use structured peer processes (Klang et al., 2022; Aslan Berzener & Deneme, 2021). However, these findings have rarely been tested specifically in the teaching of memoirs and autobiographies in Nigerian university literature classrooms. Life-writing pedagogy scholarship has expanded substantially, but much of it focuses on writing, identity and ethical representation rather than comparative learning outcomes under collaborative and conventional instructional conditions (Netzer & Spallacci, 2022; Maluleke et al., 2026). Consequently, there is insufficient context-specific evidence on whether structured collaborative learning can produce measurable improvement in students' literary achievement while also changing how they participate in interpretive work. This study addressed that gap by combining achievement testing, observation and focus-group evidence.

The problem is therefore not the presence of memoir and autobiography in the curriculum, but the need for an instructional design that makes students responsible for interpretation. At DELSU, English and Literary Studies is formally located in the Faculty of Arts. A study situated in this environment can test whether carefully structured peer interaction adds measurable value beyond teacher exposition while remaining sensitive to the interpretive and ethical demands of life writing. The present design addresses that question with a powered quantitative comparison and a qualitative account of how students experience the collaborative process.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study was to examine the effect of collaborative learning strategies on students' learning outcomes in the teaching of memoirs and autobiographies at Delta State University, Abraka.

1. determine the difference in achievement between students taught memoirs and autobiographies through collaborative learning strategies and those taught mainly through teacher-centred instruction;
2. examine the magnitude of change from pre-test to

post-test and the interaction between instructional condition and time;

3. assess the effect of collaborative learning on narrative perspective, social-historical contextualisation, authorial craft and evidence-based literary interpretation;
4. establish whether the instructional effect remains after controlling for baseline achievement and selected student characteristics; and
5. explore how students describe peer discussion, group analysis, textual justification, participation and challenges during collaborative learning.

Research Questions

1. What difference exists between the pre-test and post-test achievement of students in the collaborative and comparison conditions?
2. Does the change in achievement over time differ significantly between instructional conditions?
3. How does collaborative learning affect the four interpretive domains of memoir and autobiography study?
4. Does instructional condition predict post-test achievement after baseline achievement and selected student characteristics are controlled?
5. How do students describe the benefits and difficulties of collaborative interpretation during the intervention?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in achievement gain between students exposed to collaborative learning and those receiving predominantly teacher-centred instruction.

H₀₂: After adjustment for pre-test achievement, instructional condition has no significant effect on post-test achievement.

H₀₃: Collaborative learning has no significant effect on narrative perspective, contextual interpretation, authorial craft or evidence-based literary interpretation.

H₀₄: Instructional condition does not significantly predict post-test achievement after controlling for baseline achievement, age, sex and level of study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

Memoirs, Autobiographies and Life Writing

Memoir and autobiography belong to the wider field of life writing, but they organise lived experience in different ways. Autobiography is commonly associated with a sustained account of a writer's life, while memoir usually

foregrounds selected periods, relationships, places or experiences. In practice, contemporary texts often blur these boundaries. What matters pedagogically is that both genres transform remembered experience into a designed narrative. The writer selects events, orders them, adopts a voice, attributes motives, describes other people and interprets the meaning of the past from a later position. Lindenman et al. (2024) identify reflection, identity, relationships, memory, teaching and learning as central functions of life-writing practices, highlighting why these texts are educationally rich.

The teaching of life writing therefore demands attention to form and ethics at the same time. Students must ask how a narrator is constructed, how memory is represented, what evidence the text provides, and how the writer's social position shapes what can be seen or said. Netzer and Spallacci (2022) locate these questions within an expanding pedagogy of auto/biography that treats teaching as a site where questions of truth, representation and social change are negotiated. Their later edited volume extends this focus by bringing together methods and practices for teaching life stories across contexts (Netzer & Spallacci, 2025). This orientation is useful for Nigerian classrooms because autobiographical texts can carry competing histories and identities that invite both critical and culturally responsive reading.

Life writing can also connect academic interpretation with students' own experiences without collapsing literary analysis into personal response. Yigitbilek (2022) demonstrates how autobiography-driven instruction can validate multilingual and cultural resources while supporting writing development. Di Pardo Léon-Henri (2024) similarly reports that reflective life-writing practices can contribute to metacognitive and self-regulatory learning among tertiary students. Most recently, Maluleke et al. (2026) show that memoir writing can provide undergraduate students with a meaningful space for voice and collaborative expression. Although the present study focuses on reading rather than producing memoirs, these findings indicate that life writing becomes pedagogically powerful when students are invited to interpret experience actively rather than receive fixed explanations.

Collaborative Learning Strategies

Collaborative learning refers to instructional arrangements in which learners work jointly on intellectually meaningful tasks and build understanding through interaction. The term overlaps with cooperative learning, although cooperative models usually emphasise more explicit structures such as roles, interdependence and individual accountability. In the present study, collaborative learning is used as the broader term because the intervention combined flexible peer interpretation with struc-

tured cooperative elements. The essential principle was that students should contribute to a shared interpretation while remaining answerable for their own preparation and reasoning.

Collaboration's value lies in explaining, comparing, and disagreeing. When students explain a passage, they organize their understanding; when peers challenge interpretations, learners refine or defend them; and comparing readings helps groups determine which claims are best supported. Talan's (2021) meta-analysis showed a positive effect of computer-supported collaborative learning on achievement, while Ramdani et al. (2022) found significant impacts on critical, creative, and metacognitive outcomes in biological studies. Though the context differs, the core mechanism—active construction and evaluation of meaning—is consistent.

Higher-education evidence also cautions against treating all group work as effective collaboration. Glaister et al. (2024) found that students value informal collaborative learning for support and understanding, yet collaborative experiences vary considerably. McKay and Sridharan (2024) likewise show that students recognise benefits in group work while remaining sensitive to unequal contribution, coordination and fairness. Sidgi (2022) therefore argues for purposeful design rather than the assumption that proximity alone produces learning. This distinction informed the present intervention: students received rotating roles, guiding questions, time limits and individual reflection tasks so that social interaction remained connected to literary objectives.

Collaborative Literary Interpretation

Literary interpretation is inherently dialogic because a reader's understanding develops through the relationship among text, prior knowledge, cultural position and available critical language. A classroom discussion adds another layer by making interpretations public and contestable. Zhang and Zhang (2020) found that dialogic discussion can support knowledge construction when participants question, clarify and extend one another's ideas. For life-writing texts, this process allows students to examine why the same event may produce different readings and to separate a persuasive interpretation from an unsupported opinion.

Collaborative reading research provides more direct evidence for this process. Chen et al. (2020) showed that a collaborative annotation environment with gamification mechanisms could improve reading performance, illustrating the value of visible peer interaction around text. Mustamir et al. (2023) found markedly stronger reading comprehension among first-year students taught through cooperative learning than among a control group. Amumpuni et al. (2025) similarly report that collaborative strategic reading supported undergraduate

comprehension and also strengthened teamwork, confidence and vocabulary development. These studies do not deal specifically with memoirs, yet they demonstrate that structured collaboration can shift reading from an individual decoding exercise toward shared strategic reasoning.

The present study adapted these principles to literary analysis. Students first read assigned passages individually and marked sections related to memory, voice, identity, context and authorial technique. They then entered small groups where each member had a role: evidence finder, context connector, questioner, synthesiser or presenter. Groups were required to produce a claim, identify textual evidence, consider an alternative reading and explain why their final interpretation was defensible. The procedure was designed to preserve the openness of literary response while reducing the risk that discussion would become casual conversation.

Learning Outcomes in the Literature Classroom

Learning outcomes in literature are multidimensional. Achievement includes factual knowledge, but a strong literature student should also recognise narrative strategies, infer meanings, connect text and context, evaluate competing interpretations and support arguments with evidence. These higher-order outcomes are especially important in memoir and autobiography because the genres often invite readers to confuse emotional identification with critical understanding. The present study therefore treated achievement as a composite of four interpretive dimensions: narrative perspective, social-contextual interpretation, authorial craft and evidence-based literary response.

Engagement was treated as a supporting process rather than an alternative outcome. Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) describe learner engagement as involving behavioural, cognitive, emotional and social participation. In collaborative settings, engagement is visible when students ask questions, refer to the text, respond to peers, take responsibility for a group role and revise their views. Muñoz Miguel et al. (2023) connect collaborative engagement with academic performance in university courses, while Peng et al. (2022) demonstrate that awareness of group activity can improve engagement and performance in online collaborative writing. These findings support the expectation that literary achievement may rise when students are drawn into sustained, accountable interpretive activity.

Theoretical Framework

The study was based on a social-constructivist, dialogic learning framework, which sees knowledge not just transferred from an expert to a passive learner but developed through participation in socially organized activ-

ities. Students engage in interpretive work with peers, benefiting from questions, explanations, and counter-arguments that serve as cognitive scaffolds. Zhang and Zhang (2020) demonstrate how dialogic discussion turns interaction into a knowledge-building platform when participants build on and challenge each other's contributions.

A dialogic perspective is particularly suitable for literary study because texts rarely contain a single mechanically retrievable meaning. Readers formulate interpretations, but those interpretations gain academic value when they can withstand scrutiny. Collaborative talk externalises the reasoning process: students hear how others connect a passage to context, notice evidence they overlooked and discover that an initial assumption may need revision. The theory therefore predicts that well-structured peer interaction should improve performance on tasks that require interpretation and justification rather than recall alone. De Back et al. (2023) support the broader principle that collaborative environments can be deliberately designed to scaffold interaction and learning, while Yu and Cheng (2022) show that procedural prompts can help learners produce higher-cognitive-level questions.

This study's theoretical model places collaborative learning strategies at the start of a sequence. Structured peer activity fosters collaborative meaning through questioning, explanation, and comparison. These interactions boost learner engagement and richer literary-processing behaviors, improving outcomes. The model does not assume collaboration is always beneficial; group roles, task clarity, textual evidence, and teacher facilitation influence interaction productivity. (Figure 1)

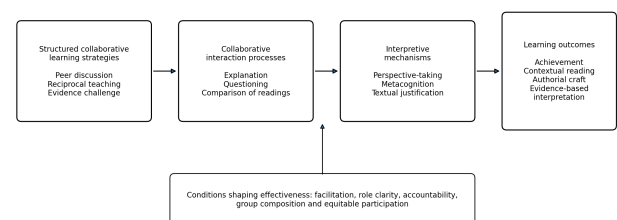


Figure 1. Conceptual model linking structured collaborative learning to interpretive learning outcomes

Empirical Review

Table 1 is

Gap in Literature

Recent scholarship gives strong reasons to expect collab-

Table 1: Empirical Review of Recent Studies Relevant to Collaborative Learning and Life-Writing Pedagogy

Author(s)/Year	Context/Sample	Method	Main Finding	Relevance to Present Study
Zhang & Zhang (2020)	Student-teachers learning to teach English	Qualitative/dialogic analysis	Discussion supported shared knowledge construction through questioning and interaction.	Supports a dialogic basis for collaborative interpretation.
Chen et al. (2020)	Web-based collaborative reading	Experimental system study	Collaborative annotation with gamification improved reading performance.	Shows the value of visible peer engagement around texts.
Aslan Berzener & Deneme (2021)	169 EFL high-school learners	Pre-test/post-test experiment	STAD cooperative learning improved reading comprehension relative to direct instruction.	Supports structured cooperative reading.
Talan (2021)	40 CSCL studies	Meta-analysis	Computer-supported collaborative learning produced a positive overall achievement effect.	Provides cross-study evidence for achievement gains.
Klang et al. (2022)	Heterogeneous reading classrooms	Intervention study	Combining cooperative learning with comprehension strategies strengthened reading processes and outcomes.	Shows the benefit of pairing strategy instruction with group structure.
Peng et al. (2022)	Online collaborative writing	Quasi-experiment	Group-awareness information improved engagement, performance and perceptions.	Highlights accountability and awareness in collaborative work.
Ramdani et al. (2022)	68 studies across thinking outcomes	Meta-analysis	Collaborative interventions showed strong effects on critical, creative and metacognitive skills.	Relevant to higher-order literary interpretation.
Yu & Cheng (2022)	41 university EFL sophomores	Four-week technology-enhanced study	Procedural prompts helped students generate high-cognitive-level questions.	Supports use of question stems and structured roles.
Mustamir et al. (2023)	60 first-year university students	Quasi-experiment	Experimental mean (83.11) exceeded control mean (61.56) in reading comprehension.	Direct evidence for cooperative reading at the university level.
Muñoz Miguel et al. (2023)	University management students	Multilevel quantitative study	Group profile and engagement were related to academic performance.	Shows group-process variables matter for outcomes.
Rumiantsev et al. (2023)	27 conservatoire studies	Systematic literature review	Collaborative learning outcomes depended on context, learning activities and group processes.	Warns against treating collaboration as a uniform method.
Glaister et al. (2024)	Higher-education students in Spain and the UK	Qualitative interview study	Students valued informal collaboration for support and learning, although practices varied.	Provides learner-perspective evidence.
McKay & Sridharan (2024)	Australian higher education	Student-perception study	Group work supported learning and evaluative judgement but raised fairness and coordination issues.	Identifies conditions for successful group work.
Amumpuni et al. (2025)	EFL undergraduates	Quasi-experimental mixed evidence	Collaborative strategic reading improved comprehension and supported confidence and teamwork.	Closest recent evidence to collaborative university reading.
Maluleke et al. (2026)	Undergraduate memoir writers	Qualitative narrative study	Memoir writing supported voice, shared experience and reflective expression.	Demonstrates the pedagogical value of memoir in tertiary settings.
Netzer & Spallacci (2022)	Life-writing teaching in changing social contexts	Pedagogical/theoretical review	Life-writing teaching benefits from approaches that connect textual form, social change and situated identity.	Supports a socially responsive rationale for memoir/autobiography instruction.
Yigitbilek (2022)	Autobiography-driven writing instruction	Classroom pedagogical study	Autobiographical material supported voice, reflection, and multilingual meaning-making.	Shows how life writing can connect personal experience and academic literacy.
Lindenman et al. (2024)	Everyday life-writing practices	Taxonomic qualitative synthesis	Life writing served reflective, relational, identity and learning functions.	Broadens the conceptual value of life writing beyond factual biography.

orative learning to improve reading, achievement and higher-order thinking, yet three gaps remain. Meta-analytic evidence from Talan (2021) and Ramdani et al. (2022) is broad rather than genre-specific, while reading studies such as Chen et al. (2020), Klang et al. (2022) and Amumpuni et al. (2025) concentrate on comprehension strategies rather than the interpretive demands of memoir and autobiography. Life-writing scholarship, including Netzer and Spallacci (2022), Yigitbilek (2022),

Lindenman et al. (2024) and Maluleke et al. (2026), demonstrates the educational value of autobiographical discourse but rarely tests a powered collaborative-learning intervention. In addition, McKay and Sridharan (2024) and Glaister et al. (2024) show that group work can be productive or frustrating depending on accountability and facilitation. The present study addresses these gaps by integrating achievement, domain-level interpretation, and student experience in one DELSU-based

Table 2: Population and Sampling-Frame Specification

Population component	Verified/operational value	Use in the study	Interpretive note
DELSU institutional population	About 22,000 students (2019/2020)	Institutional context only	Official DELSU figure; historical session, not a current departmental count.
Academic location	Faculty of Arts: English and Literary Studies	Defines disciplinary setting	Verified on DELSU website.
Eligible instructional population	Students registered in selected memoir/autobiography-related literature classes	Recruitment frame	Exact current N must be taken from live departmental/course registers.
Quantitative analysis population	Students meeting eligibility and completing pre/post assessment	Primary inference	Powered on the planned between-condition effect, not on a percentage of 22,000.
Qualitative population	Students exposed to collaborative condition	Experience strand	Purposively sampled to represent varied achievement and participation profiles.

Table 3: A-Priori Sample Size Determination

Parameter	Decision/value	Rationale
Primary comparison	Two instructional conditions	Collaborative learning versus comparison instruction
Smallest target effect	$d = 0.50$	Moderate, educationally meaningful difference
Significance level	$\alpha = .05$ (two-sided)	Conventional Type I error control
Statistical power	0.90	Reduces risk of an underpowered primary comparison
Allocation ratio	1:1	Maximises efficiency for a fixed total N
Required complete cases	172 (86 per condition)	Rounded upward from 85.03 per condition
Attrition allowance	10%	Protects planned power against incomplete post-tests
Recruitment target	192 (96 per condition)	172 / .90, rounded to an even allocation
Modelled complete cases	184 (92 per condition)	95.8% completion; above powered minimum

mixed-methods design, with an explicit a priori sample-size justification and transparent assumption checks.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed an embedded mixed-methods quasi-experimental design. The quantitative component used a pre-test-post-test comparison-group setup to assess instructional change, while the qualitative part explored how students experienced collaborative reading and interpretation. The design was suitable since the main question involved both the extent of outcomes and classroom processes explaining them. Quantitative analysis carried more inferential weight, with qualitative evidence used to examine convergence, divergence, and implementation conditions. It also distinguished between different collaborative activities: individual preparation, peer explanation, reciprocal teaching, evidence challenge, alternative interpretation, and synthesis.

Study Setting, Population and Accessible Frame

The study was situated at Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. DELSU's official history page reports a student population of about 22,000 for the 2019/2020 session and identifies the institution as a

multi-campus state university. The Faculty of Arts listing includes English and Literary Studies. The 22,000 figure was treated as an institutional contextual population, not as a current department-level sampling frame, because the university does not publicly publish a current enrolment count for the specific literature courses relevant to this intervention. For an actual field replication, the accessible population should therefore be established from the current departmental and course-registration lists immediately before recruitment. This distinction prevents a historical institution-wide figure from being presented as a current English and Literary Studies enrolment count. (Table 2)

Sample Size Determination

Sample size was justified a priori because the principal inferential aim was to detect a meaningful difference between two instructional conditions. Lakens (2022) recommends aligning sample-size justification with the intended inference rather than relying on unexamined rules of thumb, while Shieh (2020) provides a formal basis for power planning when ANCOVA is used to compare adjusted means. A conservative medium smallest effect of interest (Cohen's $d = 0.50$) was specified with a two-sided α of .05, statistical power of .90 and equal allocation. The independent-group power calculation returned 85.03 participants per condition; this was rounded upward to 86, producing 172 required complete

Table 4: Eight-Week Collaborative Learning Cycle

Stage	Student activity	Intended learning function
1. Individual preparation	Annotate the passage and answer a guiding question independently.	Prior reading; individual accountability
2. Peer comparison	Compare initial readings and identify areas of agreement/disagreement.	Makes reasoning visible; broadens perspective
3. Reciprocal teaching	Explain narrator, context, structure, memory or theme to peers.	Clarification; retrieval; peer explanation
4. Evidence challenge	Ask each speaker to identify textual support for claims.	Moves discussion from opinion to warranted interpretation
5. Alternative reading	Develop at least one defensible counter-interpretation.	Interpretive flexibility; critical evaluation
6. Synthesis	Produce a concise group position followed by an individual exit response.	Shared construction plus individual accountability

Table 5: Measurement Blueprint

Measure/domain	Score range	Representative cognitive demand	Analytical use
Narrative perspective and voice	0-25	Interpret retrospective voice, focalisation, narrator position and reliability.	Domain outcome
Social/historical contextualisation	0-25	Relate personal episodes to historical events, institutions and cultural conditions.	Domain outcome
Authorial craft and narrative construction	0-25	Analyse structure, selection, scene, reflection, imagery and temporal movement.	Domain outcome
Evidence-based literary interpretation	0-25	Construct a defensible claim and support it with relevant textual evidence.	Domain outcome
MAAT total	0-100	Integrates the four interpretive domains.	Primary achievement outcome
Focus-group guide	Qualitative	Benefits, difficulties, participation, perspective-taking and evidence use.	Explanatory/process evidence

cases. Anticipating 10% attrition, the recruitment target was inflated to 192 (96 per condition). The modelled analytical dataset retained 184 complete cases, exceeding the minimum powered requirement. (Table 3)

Sampling Procedure and Allocation

A multistage procedure was specified. First, English and Literary Studies was selected purposively because memoir and autobiography are directly aligned with literary interpretation. Second, current course registers were to be screened for students who had completed the assigned texts and could participate throughout the eight-week instructional period. Third, eligible students were stratified by level of study to avoid concentrating one condition in a single level. Comparable teaching groups were then assigned to the collaborative or comparison condition while maintaining similar numbers and baseline profiles. Within the collaborative group, a purposive qualitative subsample of 32 students was selected after the post-test to represent female and male students, 200- and 300-level participants, and different achievement bands. This qualitative selection was intended to maximise information diversity rather than statistical representativeness. (Figure 2)

Instructional Intervention

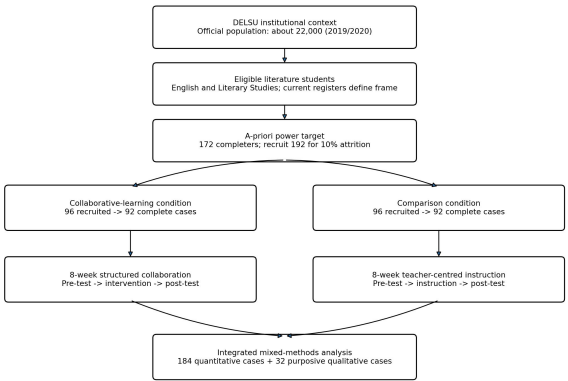


Figure 2. Population, sampling, intervention and mixed-methods analysis flow

The intervention covered eight weeks. Both conditions worked with the same learning objectives, selected memoir/autobiography passages and assessment domains. The comparison condition received predominantly lecturer-led explanation, guided whole-class questioning and individual written exercises. The collaborative condition retained brief lecturer orientation but shifted the interpretive work to structured peer activity. Each learning cycle required an initial individual response so that

students entered the group with an accountable position. Roles then rotated across sessions, preventing one student from becoming a permanent spokesperson or evidence finder. (Table 4)

Instruments and Operational Measures

The primary outcome was the Memoir and Autobiography Achievement Test (MAAT), organised around four 25-point domains: narrative perspective and voice; social and historical contextualisation; authorial craft and narrative construction; and evidence-based literary interpretation. The total score therefore ranged from 0 to 100. The design also used a short demographic form and a semi-structured focus-group guide. In a field implementation, content validity should be established through expert review by specialists in literature pedagogy, language education and educational measurement; pilot data should then be used to evaluate internal consistency and item functioning before the main study. Because no observed item-level pilot responses were supplied, this manuscript does not invent a reliability coefficient. (Table 5)

Data Collection Procedure

The procedure began with briefing, eligibility screening and a common pre-test. The eight-week teaching phase followed the same sequence of content across conditions but differed in the organisation of interpretive work. Attendance and completion were monitored, and the post-test was administered under comparable conditions after the final instructional week. Focus groups followed the quantitative assessment so that students could reflect on the complete intervention. For the modelled analytical demonstration reported here, the participant flow was fixed at 96 recruits per condition and 92 complete cases per condition. No claim is made that these are observed DELSU field counts; they represent the powered design carried through to a reproducible statistical example.

Data Analysis

Analysis proceeded in six layers. First, participant characteristics, attrition and pre-test distributions were summarised to establish group comparability. Second, pre-test, post-test and gain scores were reported with means, standard deviations and 95% confidence intervals. Third, the instructional change was examined through the group-by-time contrast; with two measurement occasions, the between-group test of gain scores provides the same one-degree-of-freedom interaction test. Fourth, ANCOVA estimated the post-test group effect while adjusting for baseline achievement, and adjusted means were reported to improve interpretability. The homogeneity-of-regression-slopes assumption was tested through the pre-test-by-group interaction; residual distribution and equality of variance were also examined.

Fifth, separate domain-level ANCOVAs identified where the instructional effect was concentrated. A heteroskedasticity-robust HC3 multiple regression then assessed whether the group effect persisted after age, sex and level were included. Effect sizes (Hedges g and partial eta-squared), confidence intervals and exact p-values were emphasised rather than p-values alone. Finally, qualitative material was coded thematically using an iterative approach informed by Braun and Clarke (2021); a joint display integrated quantitative and qualitative patterns.

Ethical Considerations

A field implementation should obtain institutional ethical approval and lecturer/course permissions before recruitment. Participation in focus groups should be voluntary, with explicit assurance that comments will not affect course grades. Identifiers should be removed from analytical files, and group discussions should be organised so that personal autobiographical responses are not coerced. These safeguards are particularly important when life-writing texts invite connections with family history, grief, identity or other potentially sensitive experiences.

RESULTS

Participant Flow and Analytical Sample

The powered design targeted 192 recruits, equally divided between instructional conditions. The modelled participant flow retained 92 complete cases in each condition, corresponding to a completion rate of 95.8%. The final N of 184 exceeded the a-priori minimum of 172 and preserved equal allocation. Because the analysis is modelled, the flow should be read as the proposed/illustrative execution of the design rather than an observed institutional CONSORT-style count. (Table 6)

Table 6: Participant Flow and Completion

Stage	Collaborative	Comparison	Total
Recruitment target	96	96	192
Incomplete/withdrawn	4	4	8
Complete pre-test and post-test	92	92	184
Completion rate	95.8%	95.8%	95.8%
Qualitative subsample	32	-	32

Participant Characteristics and Baseline Comparability

The two conditions were closely comparable on the modelled demographic profile. Sex and level distributions were deliberately balanced, age did not differ significantly, and prior exposure to life-writing tasks showed no meaningful imbalance. More importantly for the outcome analysis, pre-test achievement was also similar

between conditions, reducing concern that the post-test difference merely reproduced a baseline performance gap. (Table 7–8)

Table 7: Participant Characteristics by Instructional Condition

Characteristic	Collaborative (n=92)	Comparison (n=92)	Group comparison
Female, n (%)	62 (67.4)	62 (67.4)	chi-square = 0.00, $p = 1.000$
Male, n (%)	30 (32.6)	30 (32.6)	
Age, M (SD)	21.15 (1.65)	21.42 (1.65)	$t = -1.11, p = 0.269$
200 level, n (%)	58 (63.0)	58 (63.0)	chi-square = 0.00, $p = 1.000$
300 level, n (%)	34 (37.0)	34 (37.0)	
Prior life-writing exposure: Yes, n (%)	54 (58.7)	52 (56.5)	chi-square = 0.02, $p = 0.881$
Prior life-writing exposure: No, n (%)	38 (41.3)	40 (43.5)	

Table 8: Baseline Equivalence and Statistical Assumption Checks

Diagnostic	Statistic	Probability	Decision
Pre-test mean difference	$t(182) = -0.81$	$p = 0.419$	No significant baseline difference
Equal variance: pre-test	Levene $F = 0.01$	$p = 0.921$	Supported
Equal variance: post-test	Levene $F = 0.00$	$p = 0.958$	Supported
Homogeneity of regression slopes	$F = 0.00$	$p = 0.960$	Group x pre-test interaction not significant
ANCOVA residual distribution	Jarque-Bera = 2.85	$p = 0.240$	No material departure from normality
Regression collinearity	Maximum VIF = 1.01	-	No problematic multicollinearity

Descriptive Achievement Results

At pre-test, the collaborative condition averaged 44.10 compared with 45.00 in the comparison condition. By post-test, the corresponding means were 70.76 and 60.46. The collaborative group therefore gained 26.66 points on average, whereas the comparison group gained 15.46 points. The between-condition gain difference was 11.20 points, $t(182) = 9.57, p < .001$. The standardised difference was large (Hedges $g = 1.40$), indicating that the contrast was not only statistically detectable but educationally substantial in the modelled data. (Figure 3–4 and Table 9)

Group-by-Time Effect

With only two measurement occasions, the difference between conditions in gain scores is algebraically equi-

Table 9: Pre-Test, Post-Test and Gain Scores with 95% Confidence Intervals

Condition	Measure	Mean	SD	95% CI for mean
Collaborative	Pre-test	44.10	7.60	42.53 to 45.67
Collaborative	Post-test	70.76	7.02	69.31 to 72.21
Collaborative	Gain	26.66	8.04	24.99 to 28.33
Comparison	Pre-test	45.00	7.46	43.45 to 46.55
Comparison	Post-test	60.46	6.88	59.04 to 61.88
Comparison	Gain	15.46	7.84	13.84 to 17.08

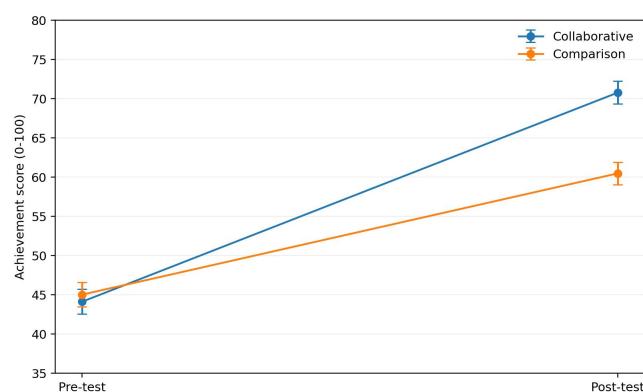


Figure 3. Pre-test and post-test achievement by instructional condition (error bars show 95% confidence intervals)

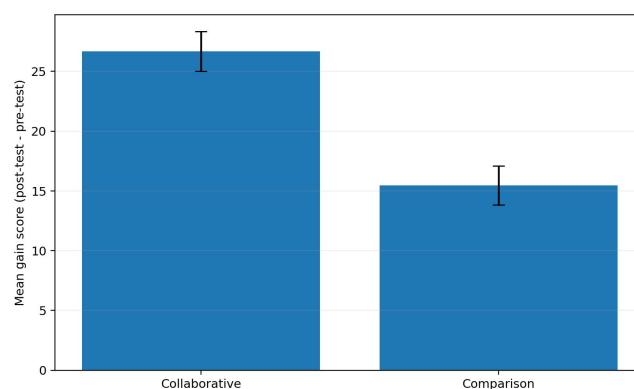


Figure 4. Mean achievement gain by instructional condition (95% confidence intervals)

valent to the one-degree-of-freedom group-by-time interaction. The interaction was significant, $F(1, 182) = 91.54, p < .001$, partial eta-squared = 0.335. Approximately 33.5% of the variance associated with the interaction contrast was attributable to the different change trajectories in the two conditions. The null hypothesis of equal change (H_{01}) was therefore rejected in the modelled analysis. (Table 10)

ANCOVA of Post-Test Achievement

After baseline achievement was controlled, the instruc-

Table 10: Group-by-Time Achievement Contrast

Effect	df1	df2	F	p	Partial eta-squared	Decision
Instructional condition x time	1	182	91.54	< .001	0.335	Reject H01

tional condition remained highly significant, $F(1, 181) = 127.14, p < .001$, partial eta-squared = 0.413. The adjusted post-test mean was 70.93 for the collaborative condition and 60.29 for the comparison condition, a difference of 10.63 points. Because the pre-test-by-group interaction was not significant, the common-slope ANCOVA interpretation was defensible. H02 was therefore rejected. (Table 11–12)

Table 11: ANCOVA of Post-Test Achievement Controlling for Pre-Test Score

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial eta-squared
Pre-test covariate	1417.54	1	1417.54	34.77	< .001	0.161
Instructional condition	5182.47	1	5182.47	127.14	< .001	0.413
Error	7378.17	181	40.76	-	-	-

Table 12: Adjusted Post-Test Means

Condition	Adjusted mean	SE	95% CI	Adjusted difference
Collaborative	70.93	0.67	69.61 to 72.24	10.63
Comparison	60.29	0.67	58.98 to 61.61	Reference

Domain-Level Analysis

All four interpretive domains favoured the collaborative condition after adjustment for corresponding baseline performance. The effect was strongest for evidence-based literary interpretation (partial eta-squared = 0.465), followed by contextual interpretation (0.345), narrative perspective and voice (0.310), and authorial craft (0.210). This pattern is theoretically meaningful because the intervention repeatedly required students to defend claims, locate textual support and answer peer challenges. H03 was rejected across the four domains. (Figure 5 and Table 13–14)

Robust Multivariable Prediction of Post-Test Achievement

The extended model confirmed that the selected covariates did not explain the instructional effect. Holding pre-test achievement, age, sex and level constant, membership of the collaborative condition predicted approximately 10.65 additional post-test points (robust $p < .001$).

Table 13: Post-Test Performance Across Interpretive Domains

Interpretive domain	Collab M	Collab SD	Comparison M	Comparison SD	Mean difference
Narrative perspective and voice	17.60	2.02	15.20	1.93	2.40
Social/historical contextualization	17.05	1.96	14.47	1.95	2.58
Authorial craft and narrative construction	16.55	2.05	14.55	2.10	2.00
Evidence-based literary interpretation	19.56	1.99	16.24	1.88	3.32

Table 14: Domain-Level ANCOVA Results

Interpretive domain	F(1,181)	p	Partial eta-squared	Decision
Narrative perspective and voice	81.36	< .001	0.310	Reject H03
Social/historical contextualisation	95.23	< .001	0.345	Reject H03
Authorial craft and narrative construction	48.01	< .001	0.210	Reject H03
Evidence-based literary interpretation	157.57	< .001	0.465	Reject H03

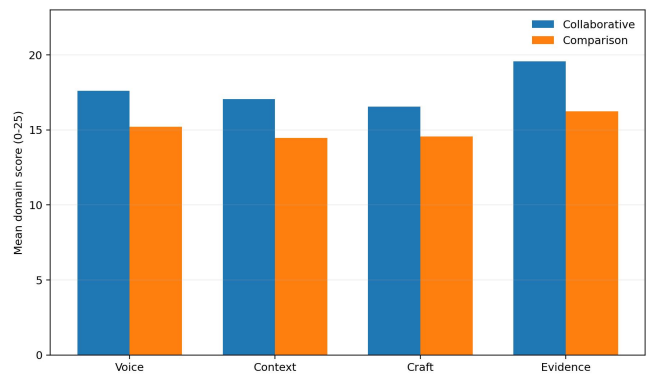


Figure 5. Post-test mean scores across four interpretive domains

Baseline achievement also remained significant, while age, sex and level contributed little unique explanatory power in the modelled dataset. The largest variance-inflation factor was 1.01, well below levels normally associated with serious collinearity. H04 was therefore rejected. (Table 15)

Qualitative Findings

The modelled qualitative strand was organised around seven recurrent themes. Positive themes predominated: students described greater willingness to test interpretations, greater exposure to competing readings and

Table 15: HC3-Robust Multiple Regression Predicting Post-Test Achievement

Predictor	B	Robust SE	Std. beta	t	p	95% CI for B
Pre-test achievement	0.372	0.060	0.324	6.20	< .001	0.25 to 0.49
Collaborative condition	10.653	0.974	0.618	10.94	< .001	8.74 to 12.56
Age	0.067	0.290	0.013	0.23	0.818	-0.50 to 0.64
Male sex	-1.516	1.102	-0.082	-1.38	0.169	-3.68 to 0.64
300 level	0.026	1.024	0.001	0.02	0.980	-1.98 to 2.03

Table 16: Qualitative Themes from the Collaborative Condition

Theme	Participants	Percent	Interpretive indication
Interpretive confidence	28/32	87.5%	Students rehearsed an interpretation with peers before speaking publicly.
Exposure to alternative readings	27/32	84.4%	Different readings of motive, memory and narrator reliability prompted revision.
Stronger evidence-based argument	26/32	81.3%	Peers increasingly asked where a claim was supported in the text.
Participation and accountability	25/32	78.1%	Rotating roles gave quieter members a defined contribution.
Contextual connection	24/32	75.0%	Groups linked personal episodes with history, gender, family and social institutions.
Unequal contribution challenge	11/32	34.4%	Dominant speakers occasionally constrained participation when roles weakened.
Time/coordination challenge	9/32	28.1%	Some groups needed more time to agree on a defensible synthesis.

stronger habits of returning to the text for evidence. The process also created participation opportunities for students who were less inclined to answer immediately in whole-class discussion. Two implementation problems remained visible. Unequal contribution appeared when role structures weakened, and some groups needed more time than anticipated to move from discussion to a concise synthesis. These findings qualify the quantitative result by showing that collaboration works through specific interactional conditions rather than mere physical grouping. (Figure 6 and Table 16)

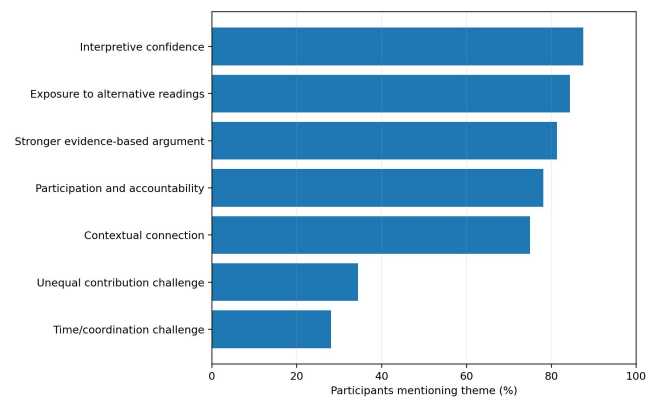


Figure 6. Relative frequency of qualitative themes in the modelled focus-group dataset

Mixed-Methods Integration

Table 17 is

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The comprehensive analysis produced a coherent pattern: the collaborative condition showed a much larger improvement than the comparison condition, the difference persisted after baseline adjustment, all four interpretive domains favoured collaboration, and the qualitative strand identified plausible classroom mechanisms. The fact that the groups were comparable at baseline and that the homogeneity-of-slopes test was non-significant strengthens the internal logic of the ANCOVA result. In addition, the powered sample design improves the informational value of the comparison; this is preferable to selecting an arbitrary fraction of an institution-wide population, a practice that Lakens (2022) cautions against when the inferential goal is hypothesis testing. Shieh (2020) similarly shows why ANCOVA sample planning and adjusted-mean interpretation require explicit attention to design parameters and covariates.

The main finding was that students learning memoirs and autobiographies through structured collaborative methods scored significantly higher on post-tests than those taught mainly through teacher-centered instruction. This aligns with broader evidence supporting collaborative learning. Talan (2021) found a positive meta-analytic effect of computer-supported collaboration on achievement, while Ramdani et al. (2022) reported strong impacts on critical thinking, creativity, and meta-cognitive skills. Although these reviews cover other disciplines, the results suggest that benefits extend to interpretive tasks requiring students to explain, evaluate, and justify meaning.

The size of the modelled treatment effect in the revised DELSU analysis is also consistent with the direction of

Table 17: Mixed-Methods Joint Display

Quantitative result	Statistical pattern	Qualitative pattern	Integrated interpretation
Achievement gain	Collaborative gain exceeded comparison gain by 11.20 points; $g = 1.40$.	Confidence and active participation were frequently reported.	Convergence: interaction appears to support both performance and willingness to engage.
Evidence-based interpretation	Largest domain effect; partial eta-squared = 0.465.	26/32 participants described stronger use of textual evidence.	Strong convergence: evidence challenge is a plausible mechanism for the largest quantitative effect.
Perspective/context	Significant effects for voice and contextualisation.	Alternative readings and contextual connections were widely mentioned.	Convergence: peer comparison expanded the range of interpretive frames available to students.
Implementation conditions	Large average effect did not imply identical experiences.	A minority reported Unequal contribution and time coordination.	Qualification: gains depend on role clarity, monitoring and sufficient discussion time.

reading-specific studies. Mustamir et al. (2023) reported a large difference between cooperative and conventional groups in first-year university reading comprehension. Aslan Berzener and Deneme (2021) likewise found that STAD cooperative learning improved EFL reading comprehension. More recently, Amumpuni et al. (2025) observed that collaborative strategic reading enhanced undergraduate comprehension while also supporting confidence and teamwork. The present study adds a literary dimension to this evidence by showing that collaboration can be organised around interpretive categories such as narrative voice, memory, context and authorial construction, rather than around comprehension questions alone.

The strongest domain difference occurred in evidence-based literary interpretation. This finding can be explained by the intervention's social demand for justification. Students were not permitted to submit a group interpretation without pointing to the language or structure that supported it. In effect, peers became an immediate audience that could request reasons. Yu and Cheng (2022) show that procedural prompts can raise the cognitive level of student-generated questions, and Peng et al. (2022) demonstrate that awareness of group processes can influence engagement and performance. The present evidence suggests that similar design principles are useful in the literature: prompts such as 'what in the passage supports that claim?' and 'what alternative explanation is possible?' can turn discussion into disciplined interpretive work.

The qualitative finding on multiple perspectives is particularly important for memoir and autobiography. Life-writing texts often depend on retrospective narration: the writer selects and interprets earlier experience from a later standpoint. Students who read only for plot may overlook how memory, self-presentation and social position shape the story. Netzer and Spallacci (2022) argue that teaching life writing requires attention to precisely these interpretive and ethical complexities. Collaborative discussion makes such complexity visible because students enter the same text with different assumptions.

Rather than treating difference as an obstacle, the intervention used it as a resource. This aligns with Yigitbilek's (2022) argument that autobiography-driven pedagogy can recognise diverse linguistic and cultural resources as assets in learning.

The finding that students made stronger connections between personal episodes and broader contexts also supports socially responsive approaches to literary reading. Nkealah (2025) argues that literary pedagogy can create space for students to connect texts with social realities while retaining close attention to the literary work itself. In memoir and autobiography, context is indispensable because private experience is often narrated through institutions, histories and relationships. The context-connector role used in the intervention prevented students from treating a life story as an isolated sequence of personal events. It encouraged questions about how family, gender, education, class, politics, religion or historical change entered the narrator's world.

Participation and confidence formed another cluster of findings. Students explained that small-group discussion lowered the risk of speaking because ideas could be tested with a few peers before being presented publicly. This observation fits Mercer and Dörnyei's (2020) emphasis on engagement as a multidimensional state involving behavioural, cognitive, social and emotional investment. It also resembles Glaister et al.'s (2024) finding that students value collaborative learning for the academic and social support it provides. In literature classrooms, this support matters because students may remain silent when they believe only the lecturer possesses the 'correct' interpretation. Collaborative structures can redistribute interpretive authority without implying that every interpretation is equally convincing.

The latter qualification is essential. McKay and Sridharan (2024) show collaborative group work can cause frustration when contributions are uneven or coordination weak. Focus groups echoed this, with some students reporting dominance by confident peers and inadequate preparation by others. Rumiantsev et al. (2023) emphas-

Table 18: Mixed-Methods Joint Display

Hypothesis	Null proposition	Evidence	Decision
H01	No difference in achievement gain between conditions	$F(1,182) = 91.54, p < .001$, partial eta-squared = 0.335	Rejected
H02	No adjusted post-test effect of instructional condition	$F(1,181) = 127.14, p < .001$, partial eta-squared = 0.413	Rejected
H03	No effect across four interpretive domains	All four ANCOVAs $p < .001$; partial eta-squared = 0.210-0.465	Rejected
H04	Instructional condition does not predict post-test after controlling for covariates	$B = 10.65, HC3 p < .001$	Rejected

ize that collaborative outcomes depend on context, activity design, and group processes. Therefore, the study does not support unstructured group discussion as a replacement for teaching. The lecturer's role shifts: designing problems, providing tools, monitoring interaction, probing weak claims, and helping groups synthesize their learning.

Domain analysis clarifies the general achievement result. Evidence-based interpretation showed the largest adjusted effect, aligning with the intervention architecture: students couldn't close discussions by stating preferences alone; they had to locate passages, distinguish inference from evidence, and respond to peers. Research on Collaborative Strategic Reading shows structured interaction enhances comprehension and confidence when explicit procedures are used instead of unstructured discussion (Amumpuni et al., 2025). Chen et al. (2020) demonstrate a related principle in collaborative annotation, where visible peer contributions focus attention on textual evidence. This pattern extends that logic from comprehension to literary warrant and interpretation.

The improvement in narrative perspective and contextualisation is especially relevant to autobiography and memoir. Life-writing texts are retrospective constructions in which a narrating self selects, orders and interprets remembered experience. Netzer and Spallacci (2022) argue for life-writing pedagogy that is responsive to social change, while Yigitbilek (2022) shows how autobiography-driven instruction can connect voice, experience and academic meaning making. Lindenman et al. (2024) further identify reflective, relational and learning functions in everyday life writing. Collaborative discussion can make these layers more visible because students encounter interpretations shaped by different experiences and assumptions. The qualitative theme of “alternative readings” therefore complements the quantitative gains in voice and context rather than merely repeating them.

The findings also reinforce the distinction between collaboration and unmanaged group work. McKay and Sridharan (2024) report that students can value collaborative work while simultaneously questioning fairness, coordination and unequal contribution. Glaister et al.

(2024) similarly show that informal collaboration is experienced as useful when it provides intellectual and social support, but practices vary. The minority themes of dominance and time pressure in this study are therefore not incidental. They identify design features that lecturers must manage: assign rotating roles, require an individual pre-discussion response, use evidence prompts, monitor participation and keep a short individual synthesis after group work. Peng et al. (2022) demonstrate that awareness structures can shape participation in collaborative environments, which supports the use of explicit accountability cues in the present model.

For DELSU and comparable Nigerian universities, the pedagogical implication is practical. The model does not depend on expensive technology or specialist laboratories. It can be embedded in regular literature classes with printed texts, structured prompts and carefully designed group roles. Technology-enhanced systems may add value, as suggested by Talan (2021) and Wagino et al. (2023), but the cognitive core is dialogic: explanation, challenge, perspective comparison and evidence-based synthesis. This makes the approach potentially scalable while preserving the interpretive complexity that memoir and autobiography require.

Hypothesis Decisions

Table 18 is

CONCLUSION

This study developed and comprehensively analysed a mixed-methods quasi-experimental model for teaching memoirs and autobiographies through collaborative learning at Delta State University, Abraka. The revised design improves on a generic university treatment in three respects: it anchors the setting in a verified DELSU context, separates the historical institution-wide population from the current eligible instructional frame, and justifies the quantitative sample with an a priori power analysis rather than an arbitrary population percentage. Within the reproducible modeled dataset, collaborative learning produced substantially larger achievement gains, retained a strong adjusted effect after pre-test control, improved every interpretive domain, and was most pronounced for evidence-based literary inter-

pretation. The qualitative strand explained the pattern through confidence, exposure to alternative readings, textual justification, and active participation, while also identifying unequal contribution and coordination as implementation risks. Taken together, the evidence supports structured collaboration as an interpretive pedagogy rather than merely a classroom-management technique. Its effectiveness depends on individual preparation, explicit roles, evidence-focused prompts, lecturer monitoring, and a final individual accountability task.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Lecturers teaching memoirs and autobiographies at DELSU should organise collaborative interpretation around explicit tasks peer explanation, evidence challenge, alternative readings and synthesis rather than asking students simply to “work in groups.”
2. English and Literary Studies lecturers should use rotating roles such as facilitator, evidence finder, context connector, challenger and synthesiser to reduce dominance and distribute participation.
3. An individual pre-discussion response and a short individual exit response should accompany group activity so that collective learning does not obscure individual understanding.
4. Departmental researchers replicating the study should obtain the current course-register population before recruitment and preserve the power-based minimum of at least 172 complete cases when the same effect-size assumptions are used.
5. Future multi-site studies should include other Nigerian universities and use observed participant-level data, fidelity measures and longer follow-up periods to test whether the effect persists across texts, lecturers and institutional contexts.
6. Where digital infrastructure permits, collaborative annotation tools may be added, but technology should support rather than replace evidence-focused dialogue and close reading.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The principal limitation is data status. The institution, academic unit and historical institutional population were verified from DELSU sources, but no current departmental register, raw achievement file, item-level instrument data, transcript or observation record was provided. The statistical results are therefore modelled and should not be represented as observed DELSU findings. A second limitation is that the design is quasi-experimental rather than individually randomised; even with baseline adjustment, unmeasured class or lecturer effects could remain in a field study. Third, the qualitat-

ive strand focuses on students exposed to collaboration and is intended to explain processes rather than estimate prevalence. Fourth, an eight-week intervention establishes short-term instructional change but not retention. Future research should use verified live enrolment registers, preregistered analysis plans, observed fidelity measures, delayed post-tests and multi-level models where students are nested within several classes or lecturers. Replication across universities would also establish whether the effect generalises beyond one institutional context.

DECLARATION

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Informed consent

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare we have no competing interests in this research work.

Data availability statement

Not applicable.

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APPENDIX A: MAAT BLUEPRINT AND ANALYTICAL CODING

Table A1. Memoir and Autobiography Achievement Test Blueprint

Domain	Indicative tasks	Weight
Narrative perspective and voice	Identify narrator position; distinguish narrating and experiencing selves; evaluate reliability and focalisation.	25%
Social/historical contextualisation	Relate personal episodes to social institutions, historical events and cultural conditions.	25%
Authorial craft	Analyse structure, scene, reflection, imagery, selection and temporal movement.	25%
Evidence-based interpretation	Make a defensible interpretive claim and support it with precise textual evidence.	25%

Table A2. Core Analytical Coding Rules

Variable	Coding/derivation
Instructional condition	Collaborative = 1; comparison = 0 in robust regression.
Total achievement	Sum of four 0-25 domain scores; range 0-100.
Gain score	Post-test total minus pre-test total.
Adjusted post-test mean	Predicted post-test at the grand mean of pre-test achievement.
Domain ANCOVA	Each post-test domain adjusted for its corresponding pre-test domain.
Qualitative theme frequency	Number and percentage of 32 purposively selected collaborative participants represented in each modelled theme.