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# An Analysis of the Use of Collaborative Learning Methods in Increasing Students' Motivation in Learning English

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the collaborative learning method in enhancing students' motivation to learn English, focusing on seventhgrade students at SMPN 7 SATAP MAIWA. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the study explores how collaborative learning techniques influence students' motivation and evaluates their role in improving the English learning process. The findings indicate that the collaborative learning method has a significant positive impact on students' motivation. Among the 20 students who participated, 16 (80%) reported increased confidence in using English, opportunities to assist each other in overcoming challenges, and improved problem-solving skills when completing assignments. Group interactions further encouraged students to participate actively in learning activities, making the process more engaging and enjoyable. Collaborative learning also fostered stronger peer relationships and provided a supportive environment where students felt more comfortable expressing their opinions and ideas. The study concludes that the collaborative learning method is an effective strategy for boosting students' motivation in learning English. By working together in groups, students not only gain confidence in communication but also develop essential social and cognitive skills. This method encourages students to be more responsible for their learning while promoting mutual support and cooperation. Therefore, collaborative learning can serve as an alternative approach to improving the quality of English instruction, particularly in encouraging student-centered learning and active participation in the classroom.

**Keywords:** Collaborative Learning; Motivation; English

#### INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid technological development, English has become a crucial skill in various fields, including education, business, science, and technology. Mastering English is essential as it serves as a global communication tool (Richards, 2015). In Indonesia, however, English is taught as a foreign language, meaning students rarely use it in daily life. This limited exposure to English poses a significant challenge for students in achieving language proficiency (Sulistiyo, 2016). Outside the classroom, students have minimal opportunities to practice their language skills, making it difficult for them to develop fluency and confidence in communication.

One of the primary obstacles in learning English is students' low confidence and anxiety when speaking. Many students fear making mistakes, which reduces their willingness to participate in classroom activities (Putri, 2019). This lack of confidence, combined with conventional teaching methods, often leads to low motivation and poor academic performance. Addressing this issue requires educators to adopt innovative teaching methods that foster a supportive and engaging learning environment.

Motivation plays a critical role in the success of language learning. Research shows that motivated students exhibit greater perseverance, focus, and enthusiasm in acquiring new language skills (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2020). Conversely, students with low motivation tend to struggle with maintaining interest and engagement in learning activities. Gardner and Masgoret (2018) highlight that motivation significantly influences language learning outcomes, particularly in enhancing students' speaking and listening skills.

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) emphasizes that English learning should not only focus on theoretical knowledge but also on the practical application of language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. However, many schools still rely on traditional teaching methods such as rote memorization and lecture-based instruction (Suryanto, 2021). These outdated practices often fail to meet students' diverse needs and lead to boredom and disengagement in learning English. Therefore, educators must explore alternative teaching methods that promote active participation and collaboration among students.

Collaborative learning is a promising approach to improving students' motivation and engagement. This instructional method encourages students to work together in small groups to achieve shared learning goals (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2018). Collaborative learning is grounded in socio-constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process (Vygotsky, as cited in Alsharo, Gregg, & Ramirez, 2017). By collaborating with their peers, students engage in meaningful discussions, exchange knowledge, and support each other in overcoming language difficulties.

Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, collaborative learning promotes active student participation and responsibility in the learning process. It has been widely recognized for its ability to enhance students' critical thinking, communication, and self-confidence (Gillies, 2016). Additionally, collaborative learning encourages peer-to-peer teaching, where students learn from each other's strengths and experiences. Weaker students benefit from the guidance of their peers, while advanced students deepen their understanding by explaining concepts to others (Rahman & Asad, 2020).

Collaborative learning also creates a supportive classroom environment that reduces anxiety and increases students' willingness to communicate in English (Mulyono, 2018). When students work in groups, they feel more comfortable practicing their language skills without the fear of being judged. This supportive atmosphere fosters greater engagement and participation, helping students develop confidence and positive attitudes toward learning English.

Another significant benefit of collaborative learning is its impact on problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Group activities require students to analyze information, discuss ideas, and find solutions collectively (Setiawan & Hamid, 2021). Through this process, students develop a deeper understanding of language concepts and enhance their ability to apply these skills in real-life situations. Collaborative learning also promotes lifelong skills such as teamwork, adaptability, and effective communication (Nasir & Wahyudi, 2022).

Despite its advantages, implementing collaborative learning in English classrooms presents certain challenges. One common issue is unequal participation within groups, where dominant students take over while quieter students remain passive (Pratiwi, 2021). To address this, teachers must carefully monitor group activities and encourage equal participation. Another challenge is the varying proficiency levels among students, which can create difficulties in maintaining balanced group discussions. Teachers should adopt appropriate grouping strategies and provide differentiated support to ensure all students benefit from the collaborative learning process (Sari, 2022).

In rural areas of Indonesia, where students have limited access to English resources and qualified teachers, collaborative learning can be particularly beneficial. Research indicates that rural schools often face challenges such as inadequate teaching materials, lack of exposure to the English language, and students' low motivation (Yulia, 2020). Implementing collaborative learning in these contexts can help bridge these gaps by creating a more interactive and student-centered learning environment.

This study investigates the impact of collaborative learning on students' motivation to learn English, focusing on seventh-grade students at SMPN 7 SATAP MAIWA. Given the unique context of this school, which integrates primary and secondary education in one location, the implementation of collaborative learning is expected

to enhance students' confidence and active participation in the classroom. By exploring the effectiveness of this method, the study aims to provide insights into how collaborative learning can improve English language education, particularly in rural Indonesian schools.

The findings of this study will address the following research questions: (1) How effective is collaborative learning in increasing students' motivation to learn English? (2) To what extent does collaborative learning influence students' attitudes and confidence in using English? The study's results are expected to offer practical recommendations for teachers and policymakers in improving English teaching strategies.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing body of research on language learning methodologies by providing empirical evidence on the benefits of collaborative learning. Teachers can use these insights to design more engaging and student-centered learning environments, while education policymakers can incorporate collaborative learning principles into teacher training programs and curriculum development (Halim & Sutopo, 2023). Collaborative learning is a promising instructional method that can significantly enhance students' motivation and learning outcomes, making it an essential strategy for modern language education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

## **Collaborative Learning in Language Education**

Collaborative learning is a teaching strategy that encourages students to work together in small groups to achieve shared learning objectives. This method is rooted in social learning theory and constructivist principles, which emphasize the importance of interaction in the learning process. Rather than passively receiving knowledge from teachers, students actively construct their understanding by discussing, explaining, and solving problems collaboratively. According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), collaborative learning promotes positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, and group processing. These elements help students develop essential skills such as critical thinking, communication, and teamwork, which are vital for both academic and professional success.

One of the main advantages of collaborative learning is its ability to enhance student engagement and motivation. When students work in groups, they feel a greater sense of responsibility for their learning and become more invested in their peers' success. Research indicates that students who engage in collaborative learning demonstrate higher levels of motivation, better retention of information, and improved problemsolving skills compared to those in traditional lecture-based classrooms (Slavin, 2011). Collaborative activities allow students to overcome challenges more effectively, build confidence in expressing their ideas, and develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

## **Challenges in Implementing Collaborative Learning**

Despite its advantages, implementing collaborative learning poses several challenges. One common issue is unequal participation among group members, where some students dominate discussions while others remain passive and contribute minimally. Teachers must ensure that all students are actively engaged by assigning specific roles or using structured discussion techniques. Another significant challenge is the variation in students' proficiency levels, particularly in language learning. In an English classroom, less proficient students may struggle to keep up with their more advanced peers, leading to frustration and disengagement. To address this, teachers should create mixed-ability groups and provide additional support to lower-performing students.

## **Motivation and Language Learning**

Motivation is a key factor that significantly influences students' success in language learning. It determines the extent to which students are willing to invest effort and persist in learning activities. Gardner and Lambert (1972) classify motivation into two main types: instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation refers to students' desire to learn a language for practical benefits, such as improving career prospects or passing an exam. In contrast, integrative motivation reflects a genuine interest in the language and culture, leading to deeper and more intrinsic engagement with the learning process.

Several studies have highlighted the importance of motivation in improving English proficiency. Highly motivated students tend to persevere, take more risks in speaking, and actively seek opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. Conversely, students with low motivation often struggle to maintain interest and may experience anxiety or fear of making mistakes. Dornyei (2001) suggests that teachers can enhance motivation by creating a supportive learning environment, setting clear goals, and using engaging teaching methods such as collaborative learning.

## Reducing Anxiety and Building Confidence through Collaborative Learning

A major challenge in language learning is students' lack of confidence and fear of speaking English. Many students hesitate to participate in discussions due to the fear of making grammatical mistakes or being judged by their peers. This fear can significantly hinder their progress in developing fluency and communication skills. Collaborative learning addresses this issue by creating a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable practicing English with their peers. When students work in groups, they receive encouragement from classmates, reducing anxiety and boosting self-confidence.

According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, learning occurs through social interaction, where students scaffold each other's learning experiences. When students collaborate, they are more likely to stay engaged, as they feel a sense of responsibility

toward their group members. This method also encourages students to take ownership of their learning, making them more autonomous and proactive in their studies. Slavin (2011) emphasizes that collaborative learning fosters active participation and peer support, which are essential for building motivation and creating a positive classroom atmosphere.

## **Empirical Evidence on Collaborative Learning and Motivation**

Several studies have examined the impact of collaborative learning on students' motivation in learning English. A study by Kagan (1994) found that students who engaged in structured group activities showed significant improvements in their language skills and motivation. Collaborative learning helped students develop confidence in speaking, increased their willingness to communicate, and made learning more enjoyable. Similarly, Sharan and Sharan (1992) reported that students who participated in collaborative learning groups demonstrated higher motivation and academic achievement compared to those in traditional classrooms.

Gillies (2016) found that students involved in cooperative learning activities were more motivated, had better retention of knowledge, and displayed improved problem-solving skills. Another study by Ismail and Maasum (2019) explored the effectiveness of collaborative learning in increasing students' motivation to learn English. The findings indicated that students who worked in groups reported higher confidence levels, greater interest in learning, and increased willingness to participate in classroom discussions. These studies provide strong evidence supporting the use of collaborative learning to enhance motivation and engagement in language learning.

## **Factors Influencing the Success of Collaborative Learning**

The success of collaborative learning depends on several factors, including group dynamics, teacher facilitation, and the classroom environment. Group dynamics play a crucial role in determining whether students benefit from collaborative learning. Teachers must ensure that groups are well-balanced, with students of varying abilities and learning styles. Effective teacher facilitation is also essential in guiding discussions, resolving conflicts, and keeping students focused on their learning goals. Another important factor is the classroom environment. A positive and inclusive learning atmosphere encourages students to participate actively and express their ideas without fear of criticism. Teachers can create such an environment by establishing clear expectations, fostering mutual respect, and recognizing students' contributions. Additionally, the use of engaging learning materials, such as real-world case studies, interactive activities, and technology-based tools, can further enhance the effectiveness of collaborative learning.

#### **METHOD**

## **Design and Sample**

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to explore how collaborative learning methods influence students' motivation to learn English. Descriptive qualitative research focuses on understanding participants' experiences and behaviors in a natural setting (Creswell, 2014). This design is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth analysis of students' engagement and perceptions regarding collaborative learning. The study is conducted at SMPN 7 SATAP MAIWA, a school that integrates primary and secondary education in a single institution. The participants consist of 20 seventh-grade students and one English teacher, selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique is chosen to ensure the inclusion of participants who can provide rich and relevant data regarding the research topic. The teacher offers insights into the implementation and challenges of collaborative learning, while the students' experiences and motivation levels are observed and analyzed.

#### **Instrument and Procedures**

To collect comprehensive data, three primary instruments are used: observation, interviews, and documentation. The researcher conducts classroom observations to examine students' interactions and engagement during collaborative learning sessions. The focus is on participation levels, peer interactions, and overall involvement in English language activities. Detailed field notes are taken to record students' behaviors, expressions, and reactions. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with students and the English teacher to gain deeper insights into their experiences with collaborative learning. Students are asked about their perceptions of group learning, its impact on their motivation, and their confidence in using English. Meanwhile, the teacher is interviewed to explore their views on the benefits, challenges, and strategies used to facilitate collaborative learning in the classroom. Additionally, the researcher collects supporting documents such as lesson plans, students' written assignments, and recorded group discussions to analyze how collaborative learning is structured and its effect on student motivation.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis framework, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction stage, the collected data is filtered, organized, and categorized based on key themes related to collaborative learning and student motivation. Irrelevant or redundant data is removed to focus on the most significant findings. The data is then presented through narrative descriptions, tables, and thematic categorizations to provide a clear and organized representation of the results. This approach helps visualize patterns of engagement,

participation, and motivational changes among students. Finally, the researcher interprets the data and draws conclusions that address the research questions. The conclusions are continuously refined through triangulation by cross-referencing data from observations, interviews, and documentation.

#### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings from classroom observations, student interviews, and teacher feedback at SMPN 7 SATAP MAIWA show that collaborative learning effectively increases students' engagement, confidence, and participation in English lessons.

#### Classroom Observations

During classroom observations, students were noticeably more engaged and active when working in groups compared to individual tasks. Collaborative learning created a dynamic environment where students shared ideas, helped one another solve problems, and encouraged each other to participate. Students were more willing to speak English in a group setting, which reduced their anxiety and boosted their confidence. The teacher observed that quieter students, who rarely participated in traditional classroom settings, became more involved during group activities. They were more likely to ask questions and contribute ideas when they felt supported by their peers. However, challenges such as uneven participation were noted, where some students dominated discussions while others remained passive. To mitigate this, the teacher assigned specific roles to each student within the group, such as note-taker, presenter, and timekeeper, which encouraged balanced participation.

#### **Student Interviews**

The interviews with students revealed that most preferred collaborative learning over traditional teacher-centered methods. They expressed that working in groups made learning English more enjoyable and less intimidating. One of the key benefits highlighted was increased confidence. Many students reported that they felt more comfortable speaking English in a group because they could rely on their peers for support and clarification. Additionally, peer explanations often helped students understand complex concepts better than teacher explanations alone. Several students mentioned that group activities motivated them to participate actively because they felt a sense of responsibility toward their group's success. However, a few students voiced concerns about unequal contributions, with some group members contributing more than others. A small number of students also indicated that they preferred working individually, as they believed it helped them concentrate better.

#### **Teacher Feedback**

The English teacher at SMPN 7 SATAP MAIWA confirmed that collaborative learning had a significant impact on students' engagement and motivation. According to the teacher, students were more eager to participate in discussions and less hesitant to express their ideas. Collaborative learning also helped build students' social skills, as they learned to listen to others, negotiate ideas, and solve problems together. The teacher noted that students' confidence in speaking English improved over time as they became accustomed to group-based activities. Despite these positive outcomes, the teacher emphasized the need for structured group activities to ensure all students contributed equally. To address varying levels of ability, the teacher often formed mixed-ability groups, which allowed stronger students to support their peers while ensuring that everyone had a chance to learn. The results of this study confirm that collaborative learning significantly enhances students' engagement, confidence, and participation in English lessons at SMPN 7 SATAP MAIWA. These findings align with current research highlighting the positive impact of collaborative learning in language education. Collaborative learning creates a supportive environment that encourages students to actively engage, reduces anxiety, and builds their confidence in using English (Gillies, 2016; Alghamdi & Gillies, 2019).

The observations revealed that students were more engaged and participative during group activities compared to individual tasks. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that collaborative learning increases student involvement by promoting interaction and mutual support among peers (Zarei & Keshavarz, 2021). According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, learning is enhanced through social interaction, as students can internalize knowledge by working collaboratively with their peers. In the context of this study, students showed higher levels of engagement because they felt a sense of belonging and shared responsibility in group activities. This finding also echoes recent studies by Kohn and Khan (2020), which found that cooperative learning environments lead to increased student motivation and active participation.

The interviews with students revealed that collaborative learning helped boost their confidence in speaking English. Many students reported feeling less anxious and more comfortable expressing themselves in a group setting. This outcome is supported by research conducted by Ismail and Maasum (2019), which demonstrated that collaborative learning reduces language anxiety and encourages students to take risks in using a foreign language. Peer support plays a critical role in building confidence, as students can rely on their group members for clarification and assistance. Similarly, Dörnyei's (2001) motivation theory emphasizes the importance of a supportive learning environment in fostering students' willingness to participate and use the target language.

Teacher feedback emphasized the importance of structured group activities to ensure equal participation and individual accountability. This is consistent with

Johnson and Johnson's (2017) study on cooperative learning, which highlights the need for assigning specific roles within groups to prevent dominance by a few students and to promote balanced participation. The teacher in this study used strategies such as rotating group leaders and assigning mixed-ability groups to create a more inclusive learning environment. According to Slavin (2015), structured group roles help students develop essential social and communication skills, which are crucial for long-term academic success.

Despite its numerous benefits, collaborative learning is not without challenges. Unequal participation was one of the most common issues observed, with some students dominating the discussion while others remained passive. Similar findings were reported by Tran (2016), who argued that passive participation is a common challenge in collaborative learning and requires careful monitoring by teachers. Providing clear guidelines and fostering individual accountability are essential strategies to address this issue. Teachers must also offer additional support to struggling students to ensure they can keep up with group discussions and contribute meaningfully (Sharan & Sharan, 2018).

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for English language instruction, particularly in rural settings like SMPN 7 SATAP MAIWA. Integrating collaborative learning into classroom practice can enhance student motivation, engagement, and confidence in using English. Teachers should prioritize designing group activities that are well-structured, with clear roles and expectations for each participant. Additionally, differentiated instruction and mixed-ability grouping can help address the diverse needs of students, ensuring that both high- and low-performing students benefit from the collaborative learning experience (Tomlinson, 2017).

In summary, the findings confirm that collaborative learning is an effective strategy for improving student engagement, confidence, and participation in English language learning. This study reinforces the existing literature and provides further evidence that collaborative learning creates a positive and interactive learning environment, particularly for rural students with limited exposure to English. Future research could explore the long-term impact of collaborative learning on students' language proficiency and investigate how technology-based collaborative tools can further enhance language learning outcomes.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that collaborative learning is an effective strategy for enhancing students' engagement, confidence, and participation in English lessons at SMPN 7 SATAP MAIWA. Classroom observations, student interviews, and teacher feedback indicate that students are more motivated and willing to participate when learning in groups. Collaborative learning not only fosters a positive learning environment but also helps reduce language anxiety and builds students' confidence in using English. The findings show that collaborative learning encourages students

to take risks, express their ideas, and actively contribute to discussions. Increased peer interaction allows students to improve their understanding of the material through explanation, discussion, and mutual support. However, challenges such as unequal participation and varying learning speeds must be addressed to maximize the benefits of collaborative learning. Structured group roles, mixed-ability grouping, and teacher facilitation are critical strategies for ensuring balanced participation and individual accountability. These results align with previous studies that highlight the significant role of collaborative learning in promoting motivation and improving language learning outcomes. Given the positive impact observed, integrating collaborative learning into English language instruction is highly recommended, particularly in rural areas where opportunities to practice English are limited. Future research could explore the long-term impact of collaborative learning on students' language proficiency and investigate how technology-based collaborative tools can further enhance learning experiences. Collaborative learning has great potential to transform English language education by making it more interactive, engaging, and student-centered, ultimately helping students become more confident and motivated learners.

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