



EFL Students' Attitude toward Learning English by Using Collaborative Learning

Afi Normawati¹, Farikah², Allvian Ika Fiki Susanto³, Aziza Restu Febrianto⁴
^{1,2}Universitas Tidar

Jl. Kapten Suparman No. 39, Kota Magelang 56116, Indonesia

^{3,4}Universitas Nasional Karangturi

Jl. Raden Patah 182-192, Semarang 50277, Indonesia

Corresponding email: afinormawati@untidar.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The ability to use English to communicate is strongly needed in this era; therefore, learning English has now become a requirement for all students worldwide. Many strategies have been used in the process of learning English; one of them is by implementing collaborative learning. The purpose of this research is to identify EFL students' attitudes to learning English by using collaborative learning. This study obtained the data from a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale and open-ended questions to determine students' attitudes when participating in collaborative learning activities. The results show that the students have positive attitudes toward learning English by using collaborative learning. The students believe that collaborative learning can improve comprehension, increase motivation, cooperation, and confidence, as well as communication skill. Even though they face some challenges such as different views among students and longer time in completing tasks, students can accomplish tasks better than when working alone. Thus, it is suggested that the lecturers build strategies to improve the implementation of collaborative learning in the EFL learning activities to ensure that the learning is organised more effectively.

Keywords: collaborative learning, attitude, English as a general course



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The need to learn English is now inevitable since communications in the world are done mostly in English. That is why English is taught in schools and universities in Indonesia as a foreign language (EFL). As a foreign language, English learning is mostly done only in a classroom setting (Yosintha, 2020). This implies that English is usually learnt in a limited time.

For this reason, teachers should create classroom environments that make EFL learners motivated in learning process.

To develop EFL students' motivation to learn English, teachers should decide on and create learning activities that encourage the students to actively participate in the learning process. One of the strategies to enable the students' collaboration and participation is by using collaborative learning. Activities designed in collaborative learning motivate the students to learn and share new knowledge and information with their friends. Thus, this enables the students to develop a common base of knowledge and enhance updated information. In addition, collaborative learning is effective to be implemented in EFL learning because the students have the opportunity to interact with each other and learn actively in the class room (Maharani et al., 2020). By using collaborative learning, the students learn together, share ideas, knowledge, and information, as well as discuss and solve problems as a team.

Collaborative learning enables students to study together and exchange new knowledge and information with peers in order to create a continually expanding shared knowledge base and improve updated information (García-Gil & Andreu, 2017). Implementing this method does not mean that the students are just put in groups to work together on a task or assignment designed by the lecturer. This method involves negotiation and sharing meaning among the students. The students communicate with each other to explain the knowledge and information they obtain. The discussion takes place, and it is certainly based on the students' understanding of the materials. By doing so, the lecturer does not serve as the only source of information. It is the students who must be active in seeking information, discussing, and constructing knowledge, and the lecturer's role is then shifted from the only source of information to the facilitator of learning. Students will benefit from this by getting the intellectual and social assistance they need to learn. When students of diverse performance levels collaborate with one another to work toward a common objective, they are not only accountable for their own learning processes but also for those of their peers (Ibrahim et al., 2015). Further, Ibrahim at al. emphasizes how students' motivation and interests may be increased while the learning experience is enhanced. The lecturer designs activities and helps the students by establishing a proper atmosphere for learning. This method eventually can increase the students' motivation in learning (Dewi et al., 2020).

Motivation and attitudes both fall within the affective domain, which is referred to as the emotional side of human conduct. Students' motivation would grow when they have favorable views about someone or something, such as language learning. Attitudes affect how the world is viewed, how people think, and what people do (Maio & Haddock, 2010). Attitudes consist of three

components: feeling, doing, and thinking (Sinha & Sinha, 2015). In other words, attitudes can be defined as a person's view or evaluation, that represents his feeling, doing, and thinking, toward particular objects. This is in line with the concept of attitude by Garret, Couplands, and Williams. They state that attitude has 3 components: behavioural, cognitive, and affective (Garret et al., 2003). The cognitive component of attitude refers to the beliefs to an object, while the affective component refers to the emotion that one feels to an object, and behavioural component refers to behaviour or action related to an object. Attitudes can be positive or negative. This is in line with Azjen's statement that defined attitude as evaluation which generally has a bipolar continuum that involve qualities such as good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant, and likeable-dislikeable (Ajzen, 2001).

Students' good attitudes have a beneficial influence on the level of involvement and communication during teaching and learning activities (Brown, 2000). Language attitudes, according to (Crystal, 2003) are influenced by how a person perceives and feels about a language, whether it is his/her language or others'. This idea suggests that attitudes are thought to be a significant component influencing learners' involvement in language acquisition. A study conducted by Zeinivand et al. (2015) has proved this by demonstrating that students' attitudes have an impact on their learning results through the dramatically improved speaking abilities of 70 Iranian EFL students. The students who had a positive attitude participated actively in their speaking exercises and employed more techniques to deal with challenges.

Hence, it is believed that identifying students' attitudes will result in improvements that might contribute to a positive learning experience. In line with the recent study, the study's objective is to ascertain students' attitudes toward the implementation of collaborative learning in English language learning.

1.2. Research questions

In regard to students' attitudes toward language learning strategy, the study is conducted to answer the question: What is EFL students' attitude toward learning English by using Collaborative Learning?

1.3. Significance of the study

The result of the study is expected to be beneficial for education stakeholders, especially for the teachers/lecturers, researchers, and education policy makers. Choosing appropriate methods and designing activities in teaching is not an easy task for teachers. By identifying the students' attitude to learning English by using collaborative learning, teachers and lecturers can make decision on how they will organize their students' activity in the learning process and how

they improve the quality of the students' learning. Eventually, it is hoped that the students' language mastery is improved as well. Conducting broader and further research on collaborative learning is important for those who are interested in the topic; hence, this study can be a reference for future research. Directing teachers and lecturers to use effective method, such as collaborative learning, is one of attempts done by education policy maker to achieve learning objectives. Thus, the result of the study can be a reference to develop a policy plan.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study used mixed-method research design since the procedure to collect and analyse the data to answer the research problem was by mixing quantitative and qualitative methods. As stated by (Creswell, 2014), mixed-method investigates the problem by integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehend research problem. To answer the research question, quantitative data related to the EFL students' attitudes was collected, then followed up by qualitative data. The quantitative data is collected through the limited response questionnaire items and the qualitative data is collected through the open-ended questionnaire items. Afterward, the data obtained was reviewed, concluded, and finally presented qualitatively.

2.2. Samples/Participants

The participants of the study were 100 students from different departments of the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Universitas Tidar taking English as a general course. The objective of the course was to develop the students' speaking skill. All of the participants were taught by using the same approach, which was collaborative learning. In the learning process, the students were asked to work in group to perform English conversation dialogues including introduction, greeting, leave-taking, asking for and telling time, describing routine, asking about and describing things, asking for direction and location, talking about travelling, talking about past time and activities, talking about future jobs, dan asking for and giving opinions.

2.3. Instruments

To answer the research question, a questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire used in this study was adopted from the questionnaire developed by Farrah (2011). The questionnaire by Farrah was about collaborative writing; for that reason, some adjustments were made so that the questionnaire matched the topic of the study, that is collaborative learning. The questionnaire consisted of 32 statements with Likert scale points: strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A) and strongly agree (SA). The items of the questionnaire have

shown a high degree of validity and internal consistency with the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, $r = 0.93$.

In addition, to comprehend more about the students' attitudes toward learning English by using collaborative learning, open ended questions were delivered to the students as well. Those items of the questionnaire investigate deeper on two points. The first is the advantages that they get from the collaborative learning implementation. The second point is that the items also identifies the challenges faced by the students in the implementation of collaborative learning.

2.4. Data analysis

The questionnaire responses from the research participants to the statements were further analysed in order to interpret the data and relate it to the study. The participants' responses to the closed response questionnaire items percentages were calculated by dividing the total response of the students by the number of respondents and multiplying it by 100%. The analysis focuses to identify the percentage of three components of the participants' views. Those are cognitive, affective, and behavioral component.

In addition, the participants' responses to the open-ended questionnaire items were analyzed by reviewing, concluding, and presenting the information. The data collected is aimed to identify the benefits and the challenges faced by the students in the implementation of collaborative learning in the classroom. The qualitative data from these items provide the supporting information which can complete and make the data from closed questionnaire items comprehensive.

3.FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

The 5-point Likert scale questionnaire consists of 32 items. The 32 items are classified into three categories that represent the components: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The following is the findings based on the students' responses to the questionnaire.

Table 1. Students' Views on Collaborative Learning

No.	Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
A. Cognitive						
1.	Working in groups increased my comprehension	0	1	19	63	17
2.	Working in groups fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experience	0	0	13	58	29

3.	Working in groups made problem-solving easier	2	2	25	46	25
4.	Working in groups stimulated my critical thinking skills	0	2	22	65	11
5.	Working in groups helped me to receive useful feedback	1	1	22	66	10
6.	Working in groups improved our performance	0	3	17	60	20
7.	Working in groups enabled us to use skills which individual assessments do not	0	3	28	57	12
8.	We sometimes disagreed about what to say or how to express our ideas	0	7	50	32	11
9.	I learned new ways to plan my task from the group	0	1	21	62	16
10.	While working in groups, we spent more time planning than I do when I do my task alone	1	5	37	47	10
11.	While working in groups, we spent more time generating ideas than I do when I do my task alone	3	6	43	42	6
12.	While working in groups, we spent more time checking spelling, punctuation and grammar than I do when I do my task alone	0	5	38	54	3
13.	While working in groups, we spent more time revising than I do when I do my task alone	1	10	40	42	7
14.	The group produced a better result as compared to individual task	0	2	30	54	14
Mean		0.57	3.43	28.93	53.43	13.64
B. Affective						
15.	Working in groups helped me to work in a more relaxed atmosphere	3	9	26	44	18
16.	Working in groups helped me to have a greater responsibility – for myself and the group	2	2	14	48	34
17.	Working in groups enabled us to help weaker learners in the group	0	2	20	57	21
18.	Working in groups enhanced our communication skills	0	0	14	54	32
19.	Working in groups is a waste of time as we keep explaining things to others	24	23	35	16	2
20.	Working in groups makes it difficult getting members to actively participate in tasks	16	30	36	16	2
21.	Working in groups should be encouraged/continued	1	3	34	48	14
22.	Having completed group projects, I feel I am more cooperative in my learning	0	2	33	55	10

23.	Having completed group projects, I feel I have more confident working with other students	2	3	28	55	12
24.	Despite disagreement, the group was able to reach consensus	0	1	19	64	16
25.	I learned new ways to support my points of view	0	1	21	62	16
26.	I enjoy learning more than I did before due to collaborative learning	0	3	23	57	17
27.	Overall, this was a worthwhile experience	0	2	15	55	28
	Mean	3.69	6.23	24.46	48.54	17.08
C. Behavioural						
28.	Working in groups helped me to focus on collective efforts rather than individual effort	0	1	22	59	18
29.	Working in groups helped us to participate actively in the teaching/learning process	0	5	24	53	18
30.	While working in groups, all group members contributed equally to the project	1	12	29	43	15
31.	I had the chance to express my ideas in the group	1	3	20	56	20
32.	I get more work done when I work with others	0	8	31	49	12
	Mean	0.4	5.8	25.2	52	16.6

Items 1-14 are the statements that represent the students' cognitive attitude toward the implementation of collaborative learning in English class. In regard to the cognitive component, 67.07% of the respondents had positive perception to the method, 4% had negative perception, and 28,93% were neutral. Meanwhile, the students' affective attitude toward collaborative learning in EFL learning environment is reflected in items 15-27. The result of the questionnaire showed that 65.62% of the students responded positively to the method, 9.92% of the students responded negatively, and 24.46% of the students responded neutrally. Finally, the students' behavioural attitude to the use of collaborative learning is reflected in items 28-32. The students' responses showed that 68.6% of the students perceived collaborative learning positively, 6.2% perceived it negatively, while 25.2% perceived it neutrally.

Meanwhile, based the open-ended questions, the students stated that working in group made learning more enjoyable. Additionally, they could discuss, share ideas with others, and improve their social relationship with peers. Furthermore, they mentioned that learning alongside friends made it simpler for them to comprehend the lessons. On the other hand, related to the challenges, there were two main problems faced by the students. First, the students had different

levels of English proficiency, learning styles, personalities, and ways of doing tasks. Besides, there were some students who did not actively participate in group discussions. This condition required all students to struggle to adapt and compromise with each other. Second, the students said that it took longer time to complete the task. It was reasonable since they needed to gather and discuss different ideas from all group members. Despite the differences, they eventually established agreement and made the discussion work.

3.2. Discussion

The findings show that collaborative learning is judged positively by the students. By working together with their friends, they believe that their understanding of the lesson is increased, as well as their problem solving and critical thinking skills. Moreover, collaboration allows them to be exposed to different perspectives in understanding concepts; this is good for them as this knowledge exchange can help them build a comprehensive understanding of a construct. Moreover, by implementing collaborative learning, the students share different insights and methods of arranging their tasks. As a result, they need more time to complete the task compared to when they do it alone. This is expected in collaboration since this approach facilitates negotiation of different views, enables asking and giving feedback among the members of the group, and allows collaborative work-rechecking and revising. Nevertheless, the students believe that working in group helps them achieve better learning outcome and deliver improved performance; which means that the students' cognitive attitude toward collaborative learning stands positive. This in line with Rao's finding. According to Rao (2019), collaborative learning is very beneficial for students since it allows them to exchange ideas with other group members, acquire new information, and increase their knowledge.

Meanwhile, in regard to the students' feelings, collaborative learning gives them positive perception as well. The students feel comfortable in learning since working in group reduces their anxiety. This low-stress environment is advantageous for their learning as it makes them enjoy activities in the learning process; therefore, it boosts their confidence. Moreover, collaborating with friends improves the students' sense of responsibility. As a result, their willingness to cooperate and help others is fostered. The students' positive thoughts and feelings toward collaborative learning consequently affect their behaviour. They actively participate and equally contribute to the learning process. All group members are engaged in the learning. This collaboration is a good chance for them to develop effective communication as they need to make the group perform successfully. Even though the class consists of students with different levels of ability, when it is designed to make the students work in group, it will the students to adapt to the

differences. The students with high competence help the weaker learners in the group; hence, the students' confidence and motivation to be engaged in learning are improved. In collaborative learning, the students' motivation is increased because they feel responsible and authorised, not only for their own learning process, but also their peers' (Ibrahim et al., 2015). Furthermore, (Chiou, 2019) points that group work and peer interaction are promoted since it is thought that these activities could boost intrinsic motivation.

Students can build knowledge through others by collaborative learning. Working together and sharing ideas enrich the students' insight while completing the task. Furthermore, in English language classrooms, collaborative learning is highly recommended to be implemented as it enhances students' communication skill. This is in line with Rodphotong's study that found that by applying collaborative learning, the students' communicative competence is significantly improved (Rodphotong, 2018). The effectiveness of collaborative learning agrees with the socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky as well. The theory believes that interactions with teachers, adults, even peers within communities served as the basis for learning; and this is realised in the implementation of collaborative learning. In collaborative learning, cooperative activities, discussion, feedback, and teamwork are facilitated so that the students' cognitive development is fostered.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. Conclusion

The implementation of collaborative learning is proved to give the students' positive attitudes to EFL learning. The students enjoy learning English more than before collaborative learning is implemented since the approach provides many advantages to them. The students believe that it improves their knowledge and learning, builds their motivation, cooperation, and confidence, as well as develops their communication skill. However, some students claim that there are some challenges they experience in collaborative learning. They are aware that the group members have different levels of competence, learning styles, and ways of thinking and doing tasks; for this reason, the students' work requires more time to complete. Nevertheless, because they have shared responsibility, they are able to cope with the challenges. The students are able to cooperate and deliver better results in doing tasks compared to when doing them alone.

4.2. Suggestions

According to the study findings, it is recommended that lecturers employ collaborative learning in EFL classes. In implementing collaborative learning, it is important to note that this approach must be used with well-prepared teaching and learning activities. Even so, considering

that students may face some problems when working in group, lecturers need to anticipate it by digging more into solutions to control the issues. Other studies to draw more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the concern are needed. Therefore, for lecturers, researchers, or individuals who are interested in collaborative learning, it is crucial to perform more extensive research on the subject to make the implementation of the approach more effective.

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