Research Article

Fostering Student Engagement in English Language Teaching through Collaborative Learning and Digital Integration

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Abstract

This study examines collaborative learning approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT) classes and their impact on student motivation and academic achievement. A standardized questionnaire was administered to 60 graduate students in English Education, revealing a strong positive response to collaborative learning activities, with 92% of participants expressing enjoyment. The research emphasizes the alignment of these techniques with modern educational trends that emphasize active learning, as 61.66% of respondents strongly agree on their effectiveness in promoting engagement. Despite some neutral and opposing views, the majority supports the integration of collaborative methodologies in English Language Teaching courses, highlighting the importance of social interaction in improving learning environments. The study emphasizes the need to incorporate diverse group activities and digital technology to enhance collaboration, while also calling for further exploration of individual preferences. These findings are valuable for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance English language instruction through collaborative methods.

Keywords: Collaborative learning. Digital technologies. Engagement. English language teaching. Student motivation.

1 Introduction

Collaborative learning has arisen as a potent and dynamic pedagogical method, wherein students and educators participate in collective intellectual endeavors. It encompasses a wide array of educational methodologies that facilitate collaborative learning, idea exchange, and comprehension enhancement through interaction. In collaborative learning, students actively participate in many activities including information sharing, concept reflection, task cooperation, and mutual support. As 21st-century learners grow more interconnected, knowledgeable, and adept at utilizing extensive resources through improvements in social media and information technology, collaborative learning provides a structure for significant involvement and enhanced comprehension. D. W. Johnson and Johnson's (1975) defines collaborative learning as a collection of pedagogical practices that facilitate student engagement within small groups, generally including two to five participants. This approach seeks to enhance the learning of each student and

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their peers. By fostering cooperation, students are motivated to assume increased responsibility for their education, while the teacher adopts the position of facilitator, mediating interactions and directing students towards common learning goals Chakraborty et al.'s (2021). According to Hsiung's (2012), this strategy converts students into active participants in the learning process, cultivating a sense of ownership about their education.

In the contemporary, swiftly changing environment, it is essential for students to acquire 21st-century skills, making collaborative learning particularly relevant. Students must cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication skills, which are fundamental qualities highlighted in this methodology. Perlman's (2006) asserts that students acquire knowledge most effectively through hands-on, experiential activities, which are essential to collaborative learning. The amalgamation of these abilities equips learners to confront the intricate issues of contemporary society, allowing them to excel in varied settings that necessitate adaptability and inventiveness. Notwithstanding the prospective advantages of collaborative learning, conventional educational practices in Nepal frequently emphasize teacher-centered approaches, wherein knowledge is transmitted unidirectionally from instructor to student, hence allowing minimal opportunity for active participation or cooperation. This traditional method obstructs the advancement of language and social skills, along with the critical thinking capabilities vital for accomplishment in the 21st century. Therefore, there is an increasing necessity for educators in Nepal to use collaborative learning practices that enhance student engagement, elevate academic performance, and promote positive social behaviors (Gupta, Akhtar, & Mittal, 2024).

The implementation of collaborative learning in education has a historical precedent, originating in the 1970s when scholars in Israel and the United States initiated the design and examination of collaborative learning frameworks. Terdal and Kessler's (1993) emphasizes that the technique has subsequently garnered acclaim for its efficacy in fostering both academic mastery and social development. Collaborative learning fosters academic achievement while also cultivating vital social and communication skills through student cooperation, information sharing, and mutual support in the learning process.

This study examines the perspectives and practices of collaborative learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) at Mid-West University in Nepal, specifically among Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Master of Education (M.Ed.) students. It aims to reconcile traditional, teacher-centered methodology with contemporary, learner-centered approaches, providing insights into how collaborative learning may tackle the issues of 21st-century education in Nepal. The project seeks to demonstrate the effective application of collaborative learning approaches to enhance student engagement, critical thinking, and social interaction, thereby equipping learners to address the challenges of a progressively interconnected world.

2 Literature Review

This section presents the review of relevant studies, articles, and reports to establish the foundation for further exploration into collaborative learning practices, particularly in English language teaching (ELT).

University of Wisconsin's (2014) conducted an insightful study titled "Collaborative Learning for English Language Learners," aiming to highlight the potential of group-based learning in fostering key skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity among English language learners (ELLs). Using a descriptive survey design, Lee found that while collaborative learning demands significant planning, preparation, and continuous refinement, it significantly enhances both social and academic engagement among ELLs. Teachers reported improvements in students' content knowledge and language proficiency, confirming the

effectiveness of collaborative learning in English classrooms. This study underscores the importance of well-structured collaborative activities in promoting both language skills and social interaction in diverse learning settings. Similarly, Poudel's (2015) explored "Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Collaborative Learning" in secondary-level English classrooms in Taplejung district, Nepal. Through questionnaires and classroom observations of 20 teachers, Poudel discovered that collaborative learning promotes effective communication and learning strategies, with 70% of teachers agreeing that pair and group work enhances students' speaking fluency. Despite its benefits, only 66.67% of teachers were actively interested in fostering collaborative environments, indicating a gap between recognition of its value and actual implementation. This suggests that while collaborative learning is valued, further support is needed to encourage its practical adoption.

Dangi Chhetri's (2015) both examined student perceptions of co-operative learning in Bachelor-level English Language Teaching (ELT) programs. Dangi Chhetri's study in Bajura district focused on third-year Bachelor students, using a survey design and purposive non-random sampling. The findings revealed that students had a positive perception of co-operative learning and favored its use in ELT classrooms. D.C.'s study, conducted in the same context, echoed similar findings, with students demonstrating familiarity with co-operative learning theories and principles. However, it was noted that students were more knowledgeable about the theoretical aspects than the practical application of co-operative learning in classrooms. Both studies emphasize the potential of co-operative learning to enhance engagement but also highlight a need for more practical guidance in implementing this approach effectively.

Paul's (2016) investigated the challenges faced by teachers in organizing collaborative learning in Bangladeshi universities. His study revealed that while students benefit from collaborative learning, teachers face significant hurdles in managing content and skill areas, particularly when it comes to summarizing, paraphrasing, and essay writing. These tasks, often conducted on the spot, present difficulties for both students and teachers. Paul's findings highlight the complexities involved in implementing collaborative learning, suggesting that teachers require more support and resources to overcome these challenges, especially in higher education settings.

Gutiérrez's (2016) introduced a novel approach to collaborative learning through an inquiry-based process in an EFL classroom. The study focused on fifth-grade students examining a local topic, "school snacks," through collaborative inquiry. This action research demonstrated that collaborative inquiry not only promoted language learning but also fostered reflection, critical thinking, and the development of digital, visual, oral, and written literacies. The findings emphasized the role of collaborative learning in developing life competencies, moving beyond traditional grammar lessons to integrate meaningful, context-based language learning. Gutiérrez's research provides a model for incorporating real-world, student-centered inquiry into language education, offering a holistic approach to learning.

Sanud's (2018) conducted an ethnographic study titled "Collaborative Learning Practices in Teacher Education," exploring the effectiveness and challenges of collaborative learning in teacher education programs in Nepal. The study involved 10 student teachers and two teacher educators from Tribhuvan University and utilized interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and observation diaries. Sanud found that collaborative learning practices such as research projects, presentations, critical feedback, workshops, and seminars played a crucial role in developing personal, social, and professional skills among teachers. This study highlighted that collaborative learning in teacher education fosters a spirit of professionalism and enhances the overall quality of teacher development programs.

The reviewed studies collectively emphasize the positive impacts of collaborative learning on

both teachers and students across various educational contexts. From fostering key skills in English language learners to promoting reflective inquiry and enhancing teacher professionalism, collaborative learning emerges as a valuable instructional strategy. However, challenges remain, particularly in terms of practical implementation and teacher preparedness. These findings suggest that more comprehensive support systems, including professional development and resource allocation, are necessary to optimize the benefits of collaborative learning in ELT and beyond.

3 Materials and Methods

This study employed a survey methodology, incorporating structured inquiries to collect data from participants. The Central Department of English Education at Mid-West University was chosen as the research site because of its pertinence and accessibility. The sample comprised 60 English students, with 30 enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program and 30 in the Master of Education (M.Ed.) program, selected using non-random sampling. A questionnaire comprising both open-ended and closed-ended questions served as the data gathering instrument. The data collection procedure entailed securing authorization from departmental and campus officials, fostering relationships with participants, disseminating the surveys, and retrieving them after one week. The data was subsequently examined and displayed using tables, pie charts, and bar graphs. Ethical issues encompassed acquiring formal approval from the institution and receiving informed consent from both the students and the administration, so ensuring transparency and voluntary participation throughout the study.

4 Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the study areas. The primary objective of the research was to examine collaborative learning practices in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. The data was gathered using a structured questionnaire that included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The researcher analyzed the data using tables, pie charts, and bar graphs to provide visual representations. A total of 60 English students from the Graduate School of English Education participated in the study. The data was analyzed to identify how collaborative learning is implemented in ELT classrooms and how it impacts student motivation and achievement.

4.1 Classroom Activities for Collaborative Learning

Figure 1 provides a clear representation of participants' views on the subject, revealing a predominantly positive response. A significant 52% of respondents strongly agree, indicating a very high level of approval or satisfaction with the subject under consideration. Additionally, 40% of participants agree, bringing the total proportion of favorable responses to 92%. This overwhelming majority suggests a broad consensus and strong support for the topic being assessed.

On the other hand, a small percentage of respondents either remain neutral (5%) or express disagreement (3%). The neutral responses could indicate some uncertainty or ambivalence, where participants neither agree nor disagree. Meanwhile, the 3% of respondents who disagree represent a minority that may have reservations or concerns regarding the subject.Overall, the data points to a clear trend of widespread approval among participants, with only a minor fraction expressing dissent. The high level of agreement suggests that the subject resonates well with most participants, indicating it is either highly relevant, beneficial, or aligned with their perspectives. The small percentage of neutral and negative responses may provide an opportunity for further
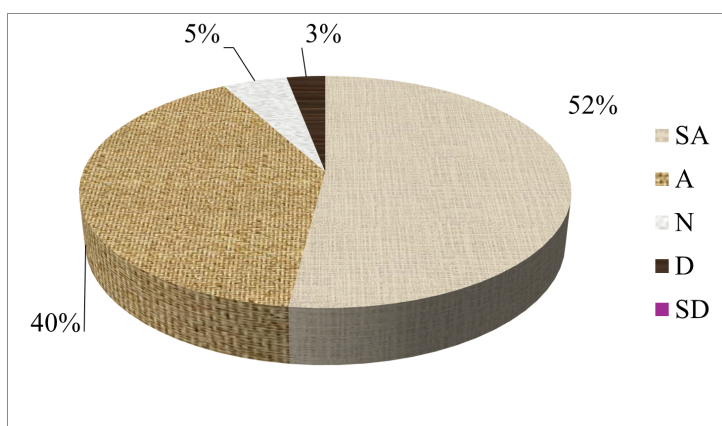
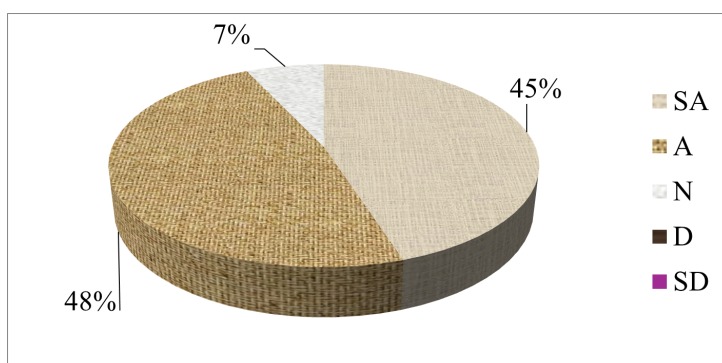Figure 1. Classroom Activities for Collaborative Learning

Figure 2. Learners' Views towards Collaborative Learning

investigation into the specific reasons behind these views, but they do not significantly affect the overall positive sentiment.

The high percentage of participants who strongly agree (52%) and agree (40%) with the effectiveness of collaborative activities indicates a positive reception. This aligns with research by Gokhale's (1995), who found that collaborative learning significantly enhances students' engagement and satisfaction in classroom activities. The overwhelming approval rate suggests that the integration of collaborative tasks resonates well with the students, reflecting a broader trend in educational research emphasizing the value of active learning strategies.

4.2 Learners' Views towards Collaborative Learning

Figure 2 presents the distribution of responses among participants, reflecting their agreement or disagreement on a given topic. The largest section, representing 48% of participants, indicates that they agree with the statement or issue in question. A slightly smaller but still substantial 45% of respondents strongly agree, meaning that a combined total of 93% of the participants have a positive stance. This majority suggests that the subject matter is widely accepted or appreciated by most of the respondents.

However, there is a minor proportion of neutral responses (7%), indicating that a small group of participants neither agrees nor disagrees with the statement. Notably, there are no recorded
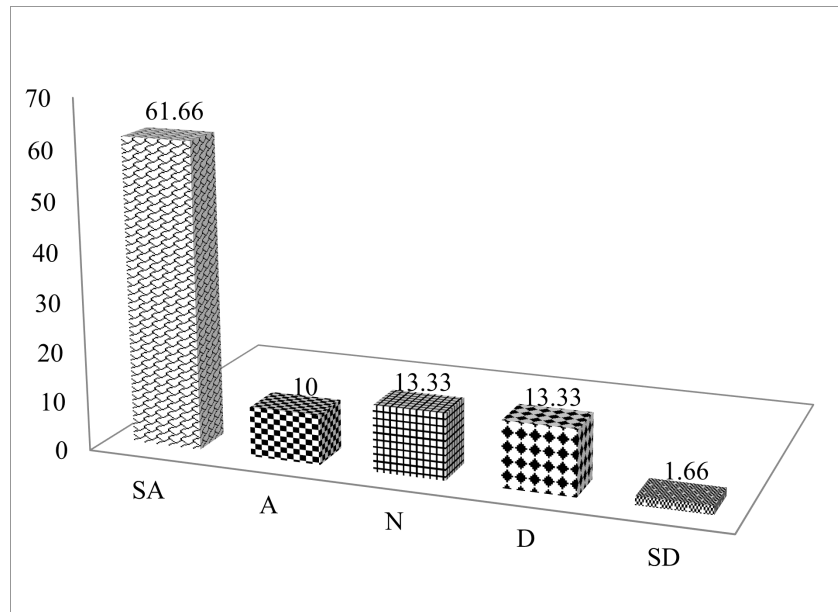
Figure 3. Collaborative Learning as Students-Centered Activities

responses for disagreement (D) or strong disagreement (SD), reinforcing the overall positive reception of the topic.

In conclusion, the chart highlights an overwhelmingly positive response from the participants, with a negligible amount of neutrality and no disagreement. This suggests that the subject being evaluated aligns well with the views or expectations of the majority. The results showing 93% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the benefits of collaborative learning reinforce previous findings that collaborative learning enhances learner engagement and promotes a positive learning environment (e.g., (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 2009)). The absence of disagreement among participants also highlights the effectiveness of collaborative approaches in fostering a supportive classroom atmosphere, as noted by Jones's (2000), who emphasizes the importance of social interaction in learning processes.

4.3 Collaborative Learning as Students-Centered Activities

Figure 3 presents a detailed overview of respondents' attitudes toward a specific statement, categorized into five distinct response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Notably, a striking 61.66% of participants selected the "Strongly Agree" option, indicating a robust endorsement of the statement being assessed. This figure suggests a prevalent consensus among the majority, highlighting a strong positive sentiment that may reflect a shared belief or agreement on the topic at hand.

In addition to this overwhelming support, 10% of respondents indicated "Agree," which, while positive, conveys a slightly less intense level of approval compared to those who strongly agreed. This indicates that there is a substantial number of participants who, while not as fervent in their endorsement, still view the statement favorably.

On the other hand, a noteworthy 13.33% of respondents chose the "Neutral" option. This group's selection suggests a level of ambivalence or uncertainty regarding the statement, reflecting that some participants may not have a strong opinion or may be undecided. This neutrality could

stem from a lack of information, varying interpretations of the statement, or personal experiences that do not align strongly with either support or opposition.

Furthermore, the graph reveals that another 13.33% of participants expressed "Disagree," indicating a measurable level of opposition to the statement. This dissenting viewpoint is significant, as it underscores that there is a segment of respondents who may have differing perspectives or concerns related to the topic. Finally, the "Strongly Disagree" category received just 1.66% of the responses, indicating a minimal yet important fraction of the participants who are firmly against the statement.

The data revealing that 61.66% of respondents strongly agree that collaborative learning is student-centered supports the notion put forth by Hattie's (2008) that student-centered approaches lead to higher achievement levels. The presence of neutral responses (13.33%) and disagreement (13.33%) suggests a need for further investigation into the varying perspectives on collaborative practices. This finding aligns with Baker's (2002), who argued that while collaborative learning is effective, individual differences in student preferences and experiences should be considered to optimize learning outcomes.

4.4 Motivating Students in ELT through Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning plays a crucial role in motivating students in the ELT classroom. It provides opportunities for students to learn together, encouraging interaction and engagement. The following Table 1 summarizes responses related to student motivation through collaborative learning. Most respondents (91.67%) indicated familiarity with the concept, and 75% agreed that collaborative learning is an effective strategy. Additionally, 86% of the respondents strongly agreed that collaborative learning enhances student achievement.

Table 1. Motivating Students in ELT through Collaborative Learning

S.N.	Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
1	I'm familiar with the term collaborative learning.	91.67	8.34	-	-	-	100
2	Collaborative learning is an effective teaching strategy.	18.34	75.00	1.67	-	-	100
3	I benefit from collaborative learning.	25.00	75.00	-	-	-	100
4	Student achievement improves with the use of collaborative learning.	86.00	13.34	10.00	-	-	100

The analysis shows that 91.67% of respondents are familiar with collaborative learning, and 86% strongly agree that it enhances achievement. This mirrors findings from Lejk and Wyvill's (2001), who report that collaborative learning fosters motivation and improves academic performance. Additionally, the perception that collaborative learning improves motivation aligns with VYGOTSKY's (2019) social constructivist theory, which posits that collaborative learning enhances cognitive development through social interaction.

4.5 Students' Perceptions of Collaborative Learning in ELT Classrooms

The study also explored students' perceptions of collaborative learning's appropriateness in ELT classrooms. Findings from Table 2 show that most respondents (76.67%) believed that student

motivation improves through collaborative learning, while 78.34% agreed that it prepares students for future success. Moreover, 91.67% strongly agreed that technology facilitates collaborative learning, underscoring its importance in modern classrooms.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of Collaborative Learning in ELT Classrooms

S.N.	Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
1	Student motivation improves with the use of collaborative learning.	21.67	76.67	1.67	-	-	100
2	Student motivation improves with the use of collaborative learning.	18.34	80.00	1.67	-	-	100
3	Collaborative learning is important to prepare students for success in the future.	18.34	78.34	1.67	-	-	100
4	Technology makes collaborative learning easier.	91.67	1.67	5.00	1.67	-	100

The strong belief (76.67%) that collaborative learning improves student motivation further supports research by Slavin's (1995), who emphasized that cooperative learning strategies lead to enhanced motivation and academic achievement. Moreover, the recognition of technology's role in facilitating collaborative learning, with 91.67% of participants agreeing, resonates with Kirkwood and Price's (2014), who advocate for the integration of technology to support collaborative learning in modern classrooms.

4.6 Providing More Opportunities through Collaborative Learning

The research also sought to identify whether collaborative learning provides more opportunities for students. Table 3 indicates that the majority (76.67%) of respondents agreed that collaborative learning requires respecting others' views, while 86.67% stated that it improves retention, self-esteem, and responsibility. Collaborative learning was also shown to enhance problem-solving skills, as evidenced by 70% of respondents who agreed.

Table 3. Providing More Opportunities through Collaborative Learning

S.N.	Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
1	Students need to respect and appreciate each other's views for it to work.	18.34	76.67	1.67	-	3.34	100
2	It increases student retention, self-esteem, and responsibility.	86.67	10.00	10.00	-	1.67	100
3	Collaborative learning enhances students' level of understanding and involves them in problem solving.	15.00	70.00	5.00	-	10.00	100

The finding that 86.67% of respondents believe collaborative learning improves self-esteem and responsibility aligns with Sharan and Shaulov's (1990), who demonstrated that cooperative learning activities can significantly enhance students' social skills and emotional well-being. The

insights regarding respect for others' views reflect the need for fostering an inclusive classroom environment, which is critical for effective collaborative learning (Slavin, 2009). Developing Communication Strategies through Collaborative Learning

Finally, the study explored how collaborative learning fosters communication strategies. Table 4 demonstrates that collaborative learning promotes natural second-language acquisition, as indicated by 43.33% of respondents who strongly agreed. Additionally, 51.66% agreed that working in pairs and groups improved fluency in speaking skills, while 55% agreed that collaborative activities can focus on both language forms and functions.

Table 4. Developing Communication Strategies through Collaborative Learning

S.N.	Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
1	Collaborative learning provides opportunities for naturalistic second language acquisition through the use of interactive pair and group activities.	43.33	48.33	5.00	1.66	1.66	100
2	Working in pairs and groups, students can increase their fluency and command over speaking skills.	41.66	51.66	6.66	-	-	100
3	Collaborative learning activities may be used to focus on language forms as well as to practice particular language functions.	30.00	55.00	10.00	5.00	-	100

The positive perceptions regarding the promotion of communication skills through collaborative activities support research by Logmans's (2020), who argue that collaborative learning fosters language acquisition and fluency. This underscores the importance of interactive pair and group activities in language education, as noted by Jafar et al., 2022; Mandal, Saxena, and Mittal, 2022, who emphasizes the role of collaborative dialogue in second language development.

5 Conclusions

This study offered an in-depth examination of collaborative learning methodologies in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms, emphasizing the importance of these methodologies in improving student motivation and academic performance. The study, conducted throgh a structured questionnaire distributed to 60 graduate students in English Education, indicated predominantly favorable replies concerning collaborative learning activities. Ninety-two percent of participants reported pleasure with collaborative classroom practices, indicating that these activities are well-received by students and conform to modern educational trends that prioritize active learning methodologies. The results align with prior studies demonstrating that collaborative learning improves student engagement, contentment, and overall educational outcomes. The research suggested that collaborative learning is perceived as a student-centered approach, with 61.66% of respondents strongly agreeing that these methods enhance engagement and effectiveness in learning experiences. Despite some neutral and dissenting perspectives, the prevailing consensus emphasizes the necessity of integrating collaborative techniques into English Language Teaching courses. This result corresponds with current literature that highlights the significance of

social contact in fostering optimal learning settings and cognitive development. The participants' evaluations of the beneficial effects of collaborative learning on motivation, retention, and communication skills underscore its significance in language education.

This study indicates that educators ought to promote collaborative learning tactics in their English Language Teaching practices to cultivate a more engaging and successful learning environment. Considering the substantial proportion of respondents acknowledging the advantages of collaborative learning, educators ought to integrate diverse group activities and interactive tasks to augment student engagement and motivation. Furthermore, the significance of technology in promoting collaborative learning was emphasized, suggesting that instructors had to utilize digital technologies to augment and improve collaborative activities. This technological integration facilitates collaborative efforts and equips students for future success in a progressively digital landscape.

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