



Teachers' Perception of Collaborative Learning in English Speaking Class Program: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of English and non-English background teachers regarding the implementation of collaborative learning in an English-Speaking Class program to improve speaking skills among non-English background teachers. The program ran over a year at an Islamic Boarding Secondary School in South Sumatra. Using a qualitative case study design, the data were gathered through questionnaire and focus group discussions with 23 non-English background teachers and 4 English teachers. The findings indicated that most of participants found collaborative learning effective to be used for enhancing participants' engagement and communication skills. Both English and non-English teachers also noted the positive impact of peer interaction on boosting student confidence and motivation. However, challenges of this program such as unequal participation, fluctuating motivation, scheduling time constraint, and lack of structured teaching materials were noted. Despite these challenges, English teachers emphasized that collaborative learning could significantly benefit language learners with an appropriate scaffolding and task alignment. The study indicates that while collaborative learning is a suitable and effective method for adult learners, proper program planning and continued support are required to overcome the challenges. Future study recommends in exploring the strategy to enhance consistency of participation, increase motivation, and determine the long-term impact of collaborative learning on teachers' language ability and pedagogy.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning, English Speaking Class Program, Teachers' Perception

Introduction

In the present globalized world, English speaking skill is not only necessary for students but also for teachers. English language knowledge is linked to professional development and the ability to teach in bilingual or international environments, which teachers must improve their speaking skills to carry out their

duties in English (Macías, n.d.). In technical fields, instruction and evaluation depend on effective English communication, requiring teachers to be very good in English to enable learning and assist their students (Marzouk, 2025).

Hasan (2014) claims that speaking is the most challenging language ability among teachers and students of foreign languages, partly due to speaking calls for complicated abilities beyond just verbal expression (Abrar et al., 2018). Since speaking English is considered as a complex skill, some challenges are faced leading to the lack of English-speaking skill among language learners. It is demanding due to learners' anxiety, limited exposure to natural language use, and a lack of opportunities for practice.

Sheiful (2014) mentions that the English communicative competence is affected by internal factors like a teacher's attitudes, motivation, learning approaches, and external factors such as support from school administration, policy makers, family and society. Afzal and Taylor (2017) also emphasize that teachers from non-English background often find it challenging to state in English in a clear manner. To address this issue, it has motivated an educational institution to design a program.

A professional development program for teachers is crucial for enhancing their abilities, expertise, and dispositions, all of which have a direct impact on students' academic achievement (Mohamed et al., 2024). It should incorporate opportunities for goal-setting reflection, highlight the relationship between personal attributes and professional development, and take an integrated approach to methodology and content (Choi, 2012).

In one of secondary schools in South Sumatera, the headmaster implements a teachers' professional development program intended to develop English speaking skills for teachers from non-English background. The entire aim of this program is to promote communication skills of non-English background teachers in English speaking. Therefore, the English teachers at the school embrace this English-Speaking Class program for the teachers with non-English background.

Among the challenges inherent in such programs is developing an effective learning environment that stimulates students, particularly those from non-English educational backgrounds. Within this paradigm, collaborative learning has been argued to be a potentially effective approach to facilitating language learning, more specifically the acquisition of speaking skills. Barkley et al. (2014, p.4) states that collaborative learning is a learning method in which two or more students work together and share the assignment progress regarding the learning output they intend to achieve.

It can be emphasized that social interaction plays an important role in collaborative learning. It involves students pooling their knowledge, skills, and experiences to enhance understanding through social interactions (Ramadevi, 2023). This is aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the vital role of social interaction in both language and cognitive development. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the gap between

what students can achieve on their own and with assistance, and peer or teacher scaffolding in collaborative learning serves to facilitate knowledge sharing and deeper comprehension (Suardipa, 2020; Zhang et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the various collaborative learning approaches could be implemented in the language classroom setting. As mentioned by Barkley et al. (2014) are note-taking pairs, learning cells, fishbowl, role plays, jigsaw, three-step interviews, buzz groups, think-pair-share, critical discussion, and talking chips. Including interactive learning strategies like group projects and group work as well as multimedia tools will help to create a communicative environment reflecting actual language use, which enables teachers to acquire useful speaking techniques fit for their particular fields of work (Leleka, 2022).

Role-play and simulation can be used to help students become more fluent in speaking in general or to prepare them for certain scenarios (Harmer, 2014; Negara, 2021). Some previous studies show the effectiveness of collaborative learning in a speaking class. Br Sembiring and Dewi (2023) emphasize that collaborative learning has proved as a good method to be implemented in English speaking class for two reasons. First, students sense enjoyment while working together with friends.

This activity guides them to communication skills, vitalizes their critical thinking, and supports them to socialize. Second, students get engaged and participate actively in the learning process. This strengthens them to build responsibility while in group tasks so it can create good communication among group members. Furthermore, Murda et al. (2015) declare that collaborative learning by implementing think-pair-share, group problem solving, and case study, has the potential to foster students' courage in expressing their opinions to teachers and peers because during the teaching and learning process, they can communicate and share their thoughts and opinions.

Also, Aguelo (2017) investigates students' perceptions about collaborative learning to improve their language skills. The result demonstrates how collaborative learning could improve the four English language skills. Though collaborative learning has been widely researched across many educational contexts, its application in the context of a teacher professional development program for teachers with non-English backgrounds is comparatively less researched.

Teachers' attitudes and experiences, both as learners and facilitators of collaborative learning, are crucial determinants of the effectiveness of the program. Therefore, knowing how these teachers perceive and participate in collaborative learning is the key to ascertaining the effectiveness of the program. This study is centered on a specific case study and aims to enhance understanding with regards to the actual implementation of collaborative learning in a teacher professional development program and contributing useful insights into how such programs can be enhanced with a view to addressing the needs of teachers better.

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- A. How do non-English background teachers and English teachers perceive toward the use of collaborative learning in English Speaking Class program?
- B. How do both teachers as the facilitators and learners perceive the challenges and program limitations toward collaborative learning in English Speaking Class program?

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of collaborative learning in an English-Speaking Class program designed for non-English background teachers. The behaviors, motives, ideas, interactions, experiences, perceptions, and overall meaning-making processes of people are the focus of qualitative research (Pakhiti et al. (2018, p.13). A case study design was chosen to explore the complex experiences and insights of participants within a real-life educational context.

It is the most appropriate for this study as it offers the chance to investigate the perceptions among English and non-English background teachers toward the use of collaborative learning, and the challenges and program limitations perceived by both teachers as the facilitators and learners toward collaborative learning. The data was interpreted descriptively based on the results of a questionnaire and Forum Group Discussions. The participants in the study were all the teachers in the school. It consisted of 4 English teachers as the facilitators, and 23 non-English background teachers as the learners in the English-Speaking Class Program.

Non-English background teachers taught a variety of disciplines, including Indonesian, Physical Education, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Civic Education, Art & Culture, Information and Communication Technology, and Islamic Religious Education. The setting of the study was an Islamic Boarding Secondary School in South Sumatera. This school offers two integrated curriculum that blends academic with religious subjects. The English-Speaking Class program was conducted by English teachers as an effort to promote communication skills among non-English background teachers in English speaking.

The data collection techniques used in the study were questionnaire and focus group discussions. The questionnaire was used to get insight from non-English background teachers. By modifying the questionnaire from Aguelo (2017), the twelve questions about the teachers' perceptions of collaborative learning were put in the questionnaire. To measure the questionnaire response, the Likert Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) was used.

The questionnaire was set up through google form and filled out by non-English background teachers. Before being sent out, the questionnaire was tested with two teachers who were not part of the main sample to make sure it was clear, easy to read, and relevant. Based on feedback, small changes were made to the wording. Then, focus group discussions were conducted with four English teachers and three teachers of non-English background which was chosen by using simple

random sampling. It was chosen from the list of 23 non-English background teachers to ensure equal opportunity for the participants.

The FGD protocol had four main questions that asked about collaborative learning, scaffolding, problems, and solutions to make things better. Each discussion lasted about an hour and a half. With the participants' permission, audio recordings of the discussions were made, and field notes were taken to double-check the information. Written consent was given before collecting data to make sure it was done in an ethical way. The data were analyzed descriptively to answer the research questions and examined by using thematic analysis as examined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

This involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes and sub-themes, reviewing and refining themes, and interpretation of the final thematic analysis. To ensure the reliability of the qualitative data, credibility was established through the triangulation of data from questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs). Providing detailed descriptions of the context, participants, and program characteristics helped with transferability. Dependability was kept up by consistently writing down how data was collected and analyzed. An audit trail that included raw data, coding sheets, and analytic memos made sure that confirmability was possible.

Results

Teachers' Perception of Collaborative Learning

The perceptions among non-English background teachers toward the use of collaborative learning in this program were gathered through questionnaire and Forum Group Discussion. The result of questionnaire was summarized in the form of table below:

Table 1. The Result of the Questionnaire

Items	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree	Mean Score
1. Collaborative learning helps me learn English easily.	0%	0%	7 (30,43%)	16 (69,57%)	3.30
2. Collaborative learning makes English more interesting to learn.	0%	0%	7 (30,43%)	16 (69,57%)	3.30
3. Collaborative learning develops my communication skills.	0%	0%	11 (47,83%)	12 (52,17%)	3.48
4. Collaborative learning helps me gain more	0%	0%	7 (30,43%)	16 (69,57%)	3.30

knowledge through teamwork.					
5. I become more participative in this English Speaking Class Program through collaborative learning.	0%	0%	7 (30,43%)	16 (69,57%)	3.30
6. Collaborative learning makes me understand the working process.	0%	0%	6 (26,09%)	17 (73,91%)	3.26
7. As a teacher, collaborative learning helps me to speak English more confidently in any speaking activities by participating in sharing information, making decisions, and solving problems.	0%	0%	6 (26,09%)	17 (73,91%)	3.26
8. Collaborative learning can develop my speaking skills through working in a team.	0%	0%	7 (30,43%)	16 (69,57%)	3.30
9. Collaborative learning helps me to speak English more confidently at school.	0%	0%	7 (30,43%)	16 (69,57%)	3.30
10. Collaborative learning helps me grasp more ideas to speak English in many school activities.	0%	0%	9 (39,13%)	14 (60,87%)	3.39
11. It is a waste of time explaining things to my group mates.	10 (43,48%)	3 (13,04%)	2 (8,70%)	8 (34,78%)	2.30
12. It is difficult to actively involve my group members in group activities.	9 (39,13%)	6 (26,09%)	1 (4,35%)	7 (30,43%)	2.46

Strongly disagree and disagree responses were categorized as "disagree," whereas strongly agree and agree responses were categorized as "agree." Based on most of the responses, all the items were interpreted as "agree" or "disagree". The

data revealed that a significant percentage of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with collaborative learning in English Speaking Class program.

Items 1 to 6, represented as the benefits of collaborative learning in learning English, reached a high percentage where no teachers disagreed on these statements. It meant the teachers agreed that they could feel the positive impacts of collaborative learning in English Speaking Class program. The statements showed the needs of collaboration, teamwork, and understanding the work process through collaborative learning methods. The collaboration and teamwork that occurred in this class might impact building a strong engagement among teachers during the class.

Meanwhile, Items 7 to 10, represented as the specific benefits in English Speaking Class program, reached the same percentage where no teachers disagreed on these statements. It meant that teachers agreed that collaborative learning could promote their speaking skills related to many school activities conducted. In point 7, it was pointed out that English Speaking Class program could offer teachers confidence to speak English in the context of sharing information, making decisions, and solving problems at the school. Last, in items 11 and 12, represented as the negative aspects of collaborative learning, reached almost an equal between disagreement and agreement response but it could be interpreted as disagreement with the result of 56,52% for item 11 and 65,22% for item 12.

Furthermore, the results from FGD with English teachers as the facilitators and non-English background teachers as the learners were presented in the table with the three themes.

Table 2. The Result of FGD with English Teachers and Non-English Background Teachers

Themes	Non-English Background Teachers (Learners)	English Teachers (Facilitators)
1. Social Interaction and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reduced speaking anxiety.- Promoted confidence in the interaction with other group members.- Role plays and dialogue encouraged active participation. <p>Quotes: "In each group, English teachers divide us and put one person who is quite good enough in English. I often ask her and share ideas with her to finish the task."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Viewed collaborative learning as a suitable method for adult learners.- Fostered a positive environment.- Promoted speaking through practice, group work, and peer teaching. <p>Quotes: "Social interactions happens when everyone in the group contributes to complete the task together." "The key is encouraging them to dare speaking English, even with mispronunciations."</p>

	<p>"We did a roleplay dialogue together. I was quite shy at first, but performing in front of the class helped me build my confidence."</p>	
2. Scaffolding and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to speak English through group activities. - Peer and teacher support helped in resolving vocabulary and pronunciation issues. - Made them confident to speak English in front of the class. <p>Quotes:</p> <p>"I always raise my hand and ask directly, and the teacher of English always answer my questions."</p> <p>"My peer support really helps me a lot to face the materials. Also, teachers of English are always ready every time we ask them questions."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasized speaking in real school contexts. - Facilitators observed positive peer interaction. - Provided structured tasks and support throughout. <p>Quotes:</p> <p>"We help them, answering their questions, and assist them till they finish the task."</p> <p>"We adapt useful and relevant materials such as open and close the class in English, conduct morning briefings in English, and help them practice daily school activities in English."</p>
3. Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group activities enabled learning beyond individual capacity. - Accomplish the task independently with capable peers and supportive teachers. <p>Quotes:</p> <p>"I prepare myself whenever teacher of English pointing me to answer or speak."</p> <p>"Even in group task, I have my own responsibility, so I practice individually to speak in front of the class."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used ZPD by grouping learners by proficiency. - Assisted learners with performance tasks (e.g., speeches, role-plays). <p>Quotes:</p> <p>"They can translate on their own, but they need our assistance with presentation, speech, and pronunciation."</p> <p>"We divide groups by their English proficiency and support them while they work together."</p>

In summary, non-English background teachers as the learners and English teachers as the facilitators in this English Speaking Class program perceived

collaborative learning was a good and an appropriate approach for the program's adult learners. They emphasized its function in encouraging peer support, social interaction, and useful language use related to regular school activities. Facilitators also created a supportive environment for the learners that increased confidence and promoted active participation in speaking English by implementing strategies such as scaffolding based on learners' varying proficiency levels and peer teaching.

Challenges and Program Limitations in English Speaking Class Program

While perceptions were largely positive, both facilitators and learners identified several challenges and limitations. There were discussed under four points: (1) Unequal participation, (2) Fluctuating motivation, (3) Scheduling time constraint, and (4) Lack of structured teaching materials.

1. Unequal Participation

It could be assumed from the result of questionnaire in the items 11 and 12. Although the result showed most disagreement on these items, but it could be interpreted that disadvantages of collaborative learning could occur during the teaching and learning process. It was proven by some non-English background teachers; ten teachers with the calculate 43,48% agreed on item 11 and eight teachers with the calculate 34,78% agreed on item 12 were quite large. Not actively engaged in teamwork and the time consequences in comprehending the materials could be categorized as the challenges in collaborative learning. It was also aligned to the result of FGD with non-English background teachers as the learners in this English-Speaking Class program. Inactively among some group members may occur during group work. This insight can be seen from these statements:

"Also sometimes, I get a pair when he/she has no contribution at all during group project. What I do to overcome this is I reminded her/him to finish the task together, at least to let them realize this program is conducted to improve our English speaking."

2. Fluctuating Motivation

The learners also expressed a feeling of fluctuating motivation and occasional lack of interest during program sessions due to frustration and busy responsibilities. This insight can be seen from this statement:

"Maybe because there is the moment where our spirits fluctuated among us, even I might feel not interesting in some meetings because we have been frustrated and busy in doing our own business since this school is boarding, where we are as homeroom teachers and act like students' parents at school."

This highlights how professional obligations, and mental exhaustion can hinder consistent participation and learning engagement, even in well-designed collaborative environments.

3. Scheduling Time Constraint

The facilitators noted that the program's current schedule once a week for an hour was insufficient to build sustained learning momentum. However, they also acknowledged

that increasing the frequency posed challenges due to the demanding responsibilities of teachers in the boarding school. As homeroom teachers, we also serve as parents for students outside regular class hours, which limits our availability. The facilitators mentioned:

“We think that the program will be better to be held monthly. Not only non-English background teachers who feels so hectic sometimes, but also us as the facilitators. The class becomes burdensome not because of the session itself, but because of other responsibilities we are handling at school have made us tired.”

This reveals a tension between the desire for a more effective learning schedule and the practical constraints of a boarding school environment.

4. Lack of Structured Teaching Materials

The facilitators highlighted the absence of structured teaching materials, which requires them to prepare and adapt materials independently, occasionally causing uncertainty in topic selection. This insight can be seen from this statement:

“We have the schedule of the topics for this program. We also provide the modules about classroom language and classroom instruction for the participants, but sometimes we are confused in preparing the materials because when we have finished discussing the modules, it means we need to prepare other topics independently by ourselves.”

In summary, even though collaborative learning was seen positively, several limitations were found like unequal participation, fluctuating motivation, scheduling time constraint, and lack of structured teaching materials. Thus, facilitators had trouble delivering materials, which made choosing a topic unclear and confusing. By addressing these problems, the program's consistency and student support may be enhanced.

Discussion

Positive Teachers' Perception of Collaborative Learning

This study was an attempt to investigate the perceptions of both English and non-English background teachers towards the implementation of collaborative learning in an English-Speaking Class program for non-English background teachers. While the challenges and constraints faced by the program are also considered, the study emphasizes the role of teacher perceptions by providing significant insights for the use and effectiveness of collaborative learning as a professional development model for teachers in settings with low English proficiency.

The findings show that both teachers have positive perceptions toward collaborative learning in this program. Teachers with non-English backgrounds concurred that collaborative learning improved their communication skills through social interaction and teamwork, made learning English easier, and made

the learning process enjoyable. Also, English teachers as the facilitators in this program thought that collaborative learning was a very appropriate approach for adult learners. Given the need for social interaction, scaffolding is based on learners' different proficiency levels, and the use of tasks that are pertinent to their daily school roles. These results imply that the development of engagement, peer support, and confidence, which are important components that lead to language acquisition and is greatly aided by collaborative learning.

These results are in line with earlier studies that stress how important it is for language learners to interact with others and work together with their peers. Collaborative learning is a way of working together to share knowledge and deepen understanding, according to Barkley et al. (2014). This is like Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which focusses on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Participants talked about good things that happened to them, like getting help from peers and scaffolding during group tasks.

These are examples of how learners can improve their language skills with help, going beyond what they can do on their own. Br Sembiring and Dewi (2023) and Murda et al. (2015) also show that working together on things like role-plays and peer teaching can help people feel more confident and get more involved in speaking English. The program's design, which included group discussions, role plays, and peer support, helped create an environment that made people feel less anxious and more likely to participate.

Non-English background teachers said they felt surer of themselves when their peers helped them with speaking tasks. This fits with what the facilitators said about scaffolding and carefully choosing topics that were relevant to the teachers' schools, which kept them motivated and showed how the topics could be used in real life. In short, non-English backgrounds teachers thought that working together in this English-speaking class program was a good way to help them improve their English speaking skills. The program's strengths are that it encourages social interaction, peer support, and connections to real-life teaching situations, all of which boost students' confidence and interest.

Challenges in Implementing Collaborative Learning

The study also found that there were challenges with putting collaborative learning into practice, even though it had some good points. These challenges are in line with what has been written about the limitations of collaborative learning in other situations. Barkley et al. (2014) mention that group work can sometimes lead to an uneven distribution of work. It is also known that adult learners outside responsibilities can affect their motivation, which can be a problem in professional development programs.

Also, the fact that facilitators had trouble getting materials ready because there weren't any structured resources is a common problem in designing educational programs, as Mohamed et al. (2024) and Choi (2012) point out. When compared to earlier research, this study confirms that collaborative learning is

generally a good way to improve language skills. However, it also points out some things that are different when teachers are learning in professional development settings.

This study is different from student-focused research because it shows how adult learners juggle many roles and responsibilities, which affects how engaged and consistent they are. The facilitators' strategies such as scaffolding and linking tasks to school activities are in line with Dongyu et al. (2013) suggestions and help students learn better. The challenges that were reported showed that collaborative learning needs to be carefully managed. It is needed to make program structures to be improved for supporting long-term learning and make it easier for facilitators to do their jobs.

This study adds to the limited body of research on teacher development in Islamic boarding school contexts, where teachers serve dual roles as teachers and caregivers. These additional responsibilities uniquely affect program implementation and participation, particularly in terms of scheduling and motivation. Furthermore, the challenges identified in this study highlight the need for a more tailored approach in the development of professional development programs for adult learners in specific contexts, such as Islamic boarding schools.

These challenges and program limitations are useful to be found to organize the program better, especially in Islamic boarding school setting. Since it was found that it is harder for teachers to take part because they exactly have two roles at school, as the teacher and caregiver. Also, when there are not any structured teaching materials, the facilitators have a harder time giving students consistent and useful learning experiences. Thus, future programs could use well-organized curricula and give teachers clear and structured resources that meet their needs right away.

Additionally, making the learning environment more flexible to fit teachers' busy lives and outside commitments could help the participants become interested and involved over time during the program.

Recommendation

There are a few important changes that should be made to the English-Speaking Class program for non-English background teachers to make it work better. First, facilitators should think about using intentional grouping strategies to fix the problem of unequal participation. Putting teachers with different levels of English proficiency together can help everyone be more involved, with more confident teachers helping those who are less confident. Also, to help with changing levels of motivation, the program should offer more flexible scheduling, such as evening or weekend sessions, to fit the fact that teachers are both teachers and caregivers.

Adding recognition programs or rewards could also encourage people to keep taking part in the course. Another thing that could be better is making structured

teaching materials that are specific to the needs of the teachers in this situation. These materials should have clear, easy-to-adapt lesson plans that fit with the teachers' roles and duties at school. This will make sure that the content is delivered consistently. Facilitators should also keep giving teachers scaffolding and support, especially in areas like vocabulary and pronunciation, to help them get better at speaking.

To improve collaboration and give more help, peer teaching opportunities can be promoted even more. Lastly, the program must be constantly changed to fit the specific needs of the boarding school environment, considering the extra stress that teachers are under. Taking care of these things will make the professional development environment for teachers more supportive and long-lasting. Future research should also investigate how these kinds of programs affect teachers' language skills and teaching methods over time. This will give useful information about how the program will affect teachers in the long run.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that collaborative learning can enhance the English-speaking skills among non-English background teachers at an Islamic boarding school. The positive perceptions of both English and non-English background teachers show how important social interaction, peer support, and scaffolded learning are for increasing teachers' engagement and confidence. Both teachers agree this learning method is effective to be used, especially in language classrooms.

This program was good for language development, but it also had some challenges such as unequal participation and unstable motivation among non-English background teachers. This showed the program needed more organized support and adjustments to how it was set up. The unique contribution of this study lies in its application of collaborative learning within the specific context of a boarding school, where teachers concurrently assume the roles of teachers and caregivers. This was difficult for both teachers to manage the time.

This dual position complicates teacher professional development when creating future programs, necessitating careful consideration. This study offers substantial recommendations for enhancing the efficacy and durability of collaborative learning in analogous contexts by providing specific guidance on the integration of scaffolding, peer assistance, and adaptable scheduling into such initiatives.

Ultimately, this research illustrates how collaborative learning could transform the teacher professional development, particularly for those from non-English backgrounds. By addressing the identified issues and customizing the curriculum to meet the specific requirements of teachers, such programs can foster enduring improvements in both language proficiency and instructional strategies.

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