Perception of Students about Collaborative Strategies Employed by Teachers for Enhancing English Vocabulary and Learning Motivation

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Abstract

Perception and cognitions play vital role in learning process. Learning is improved through collaboration and students becomes more satisfied with entire process of learning. The ability to write and communicate in English is a crucial skill for academic success of students. Therefore, improving one's command on the vocabulary knowledge is essential for advancing English language skills. This study used qualitative technique to explore students' perceptions about the collaborative strategies their teachers employ to improve English vocabulary learning among them and how this experience affects the learning motivation and academic performance of students. Enrolled students in the high schools of Karachi were population for this study. By using convenient sampling technique, 20 students were taken to collect data through conduction of semi structured interviews. The findings of the study indicate that teachers incorporate various helpful collaborative techniques in their teaching practices that enable students reinforce their motivation to learn and enhance their vocabulary knowledge. These approaches include shared learning, feedback and assessment, and collaborative writing tasks. It improves learning satisfaction and motivates students to promote the culture of collaborative learning. However, teachers do their best to lend a hand for incorporating collaborative techniques in their teaching practices to help their students improve vocabulary knowledge in the classroom. Yet, the management authorities must give support for the faculty members to ensure their success.

Keywords: Collaborative strategies; English vocabulary; feedback and assessment; shared learning; collaborative writing tasks.

1. Introduction

In today's highly interconnected world, English has become the global language of communication. Internet and other technologies are adopted worldwide and it made convenient for people from different cultures and countries to connect and collaborate, which has led to an

increased demand for effective communication in English (Akram et al., 2021). Whether it is for personal or professional purposes, being able to write and communicate effectively in English has become essential in order to succeed in today's globalized economy (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023). Effective communication in English requires more than just a basic understanding of grammar and vocabulary. It involves the ability to express oneself clearly, concisely, and persuasively, while also being able to understand and interpret the nuances of the language. This is especially important when dealing with people from different cultures and backgrounds, as communication styles and norms can vary widely depending on the context. Moreover, with the increasing importance of digital communication, being able to write effectively in English has become an essential skill for anyone who wants to succeed in the global marketplace. Whether it is through emails, social media, or online messaging platforms, the ability to convey ideas clearly and concisely in English is critical in today's digital age (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022).

Student interaction is key element to make class room environment friendlier to learn and provide teachers to show their competencies regarding application of different techniques of collaborative learning (Kaendler et al., 2015). English language teaching (ELT) focuses on student centered trainings like the Collaborative Learning Approach (CLA) which promotes innovative, active, practical, realistic, authentic, communicative, critical, and interpersonal/social skills among English as second language (ESL) learners (Bonsu, 2022; Khan & Mansoor, 2020).

The literature on collaborative learning often highlights that not only students working in groups is the key but how they work with teacher to produce better outcomes and seeking knowledge. Bruffee (1993), a believer of collaborative learning, terms knowledge as "something people construct by talking together and reaching agreement" (p. 3). His efforts revolutionized learning criteria in higher education by introducing and inculcating collaborative learning. He argues that collaborative learning is in nature interpretivist, which focuses on how individuals try to understand and act accordingly in the world around them (Bruffee, 1993). Collaborative learning describes the achievement of common learning goal by students working in groups making everyone equally responsible for outcome (Gokhale, 1995).

Cooperative and Collaborative learning has visible differences as former works on model where learning tasks are further divided to be solved by team mates independently whereas collaborative learning encourages to solve problem by interacting. Thus collaborative techniques requires adjustment of cognition for the students working together (Curtis and Lawson, 2001).

Therefore, the ability to write and communicate effectively in English is not just a useful skill, but also a key component of cultural literacy and global citizenship. It allows individuals to engage with the world around them, connect with people from different cultures and backgrounds, and participate in the global conversation. One key component of effective writing and communicating abilities is having sound vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2019). Without a strong vocabulary, individuals may struggle to convey their ideas and thoughts clearly and accurately. Vocabulary knowledge enables individuals to choose the right words to express their ideas and convey the appropriate tone and meaning in their writing. It also allows individuals to understand and interpret the writing of others, enhancing their ability to engage with a variety of texts and ideas.

Furthermore, having sound vocabulary knowledge is essential for success in academic and professional settings. Students who have a strong vocabulary are better equipped to comprehend and analyze complex texts, leading to better academic performance. In the professional world, strong vocabulary skills are crucial for effective communication with colleagues, clients, and

stakeholders. Despite the importance of vocabulary in English classrooms, many students in Pakistan struggle with this. A study discusses perspective of English language teaching with particular emphasis on spoken proficiency of English among students whose L1 is Urdu (Nawaz et al., 2020). Previous research has identified a range of factors that contribute to this challenge, including Limited exposure to English (Akram et al., 2020), lack of interest among students (Hambali, 2018), Inadequate teaching methods (Cojocnean, 2016), and Insufficient practice (Fareed et al., 2016).

Perception and cognitions play vital role in learning process. Recently a measurement scale is constructed to check the perception of Pakistani undergraduates and teachers about collaborative learning approaches in learning English (Khan et al, 2023). Further it was described that if ideas are exchanged actively in groups, it will eventually enhance not only interest but it promotes critical thinking as well. Along with upgrading level of thinking, collaborative learning improves memory to store information for longer (Gokhale, 1995).

Tuckman and Jensen (1977) explained four stages group members go through in terms of interpersonal relationship. When group members doesn't know much each other is called formation stage. In next stage group undergoes transition in form of growth and adapting to new environment and people. This is called conflict stage. Then comes balance, where groups reach a consensus in cohesion stage. Lastly in execution stage tasks are completed and goals are achieved.

Learning is improved through collaboration and students becomes more satisfied with entire process of learning (Hertz-Lazarowitz et al., 2013). Interviews of students taking Statistics course at university revealed that they encourage collaborative and innovative learning than traditional teaching (Strayer, 2012). The European Higher Education Framework proposed student-centered learning rather than using one way teaching (Schreus & Dumbraveanu, 2014).

In Educational psychology, learning satisfaction is an important indicator. A study by Ko and Chung (2014) found that learning satisfaction and academic performance has significant positive correlation. Another study while predicting learning effectiveness explains that learning satisfaction boosts academic performance of students (Lee, 2011). In collaborative learning, teacher process is changed which affects motivation of students to learn and it enhances active learning. Along with teaching content learning in group setting foster better communication, critical thinking ability and discussions (Ferreira & O' Connor, 2013). Another study explored the effect of environmental factors on student satisfaction. Results revealed that curriculum planning and employability development have impact on student satisfaction (Corts et al., 2000).

Sàiz Manzanares et al., 2017) explored blend learning affects the learning outcomes of students. The results revealed that varied learning patterns has impact on student learning outcomes. Further, another study explored the effect of learning performance in a blended learning environment in China and examined the factors of self-efficacy, perceived precision teaching, social presence and learning motivation (Zheng et al., 2021). The results explained that all the predictors had significant effect on learning performance, whereas self-efficacy seen as the most important factor to predict learning performance. Furthermore, yet another study studied how self-and peer-assessment affects the growth of learning goal orientation. Experimental study results showed that the growth of learning goal orientation was largely enhanced through effective peer assessment (Yokoyama & Miwa, 2021).

A study conducted by Fareed et al. (2018) revealed that students at the SSC (Secondary School Certificate) level in Pakistan lack the necessary vocabulary knowledge to write effectively in English. The study found that students often struggle with grammar, sentence structure, and academic vocabulary, which are essential components of writing proficiency. To address these challenges, the study recommended several strategies, including incorporating interactive activities into lessons, providing regular feedback and reinforcement, and using peer feedback and collaborative learning techniques.

Collaborative learning techniques refer to various methods and approaches that involve students working together in groups to learn from each other (O'Donnell & Hmelo-Silver, 2013). Collaborative learning techniques are an effective way to support English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in improving their language skills. These techniques provide learners with opportunities to practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing English in a supportive and interactive environment (Rao, 2019). Through group work and discussions, ESL learners can improve their speaking and listening skills by engaging in conversations, debates, and discussions with their peers. Collaborative activities such as word games and word mapping can also help learners expand their vocabulary and improve their understanding of English words and phrases (Ismail & Al Allaq, 2019). Psychological discursiveness affects perception (Ramzan et al., 2023). Working in groups also provides opportunities for ESL learners to receive feedback on their grammar and syntax. Peer correction is often less intimidating than correction from a teacher, which makes learners more comfortable in correcting their errors and learning from their mistakes (Wu & Miller, 2020).

Psychological factors affects learning capability of ESL students (Ikramullah et al., 2023). Cognitive needs has impact on academic performance. Students with higher cognitive needs has ability to process things more efficiently (Sadowski & Gülgös, 1996). Social support and adjustment helps students achieve academically (Maqbool et al., 2021). A study was conducted in high school students of China to explore relationship between learning adaptability and English language academic engagement. English learning self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety plays role of mediator between these variables. Therefore parents and teachers should work to increase adaptability and self-efficacy whereas anxiety to learn foreign language should be decreased (Wang et al., 2023). A study on students revealed that emotions affects language skills significantly (Javaid et al., 2023). In Pakistan, all four types of internal motivational structure, i.e., learning situation, intrinsic interest, immediate achievement, and personal development, existed in students of English as second Language learners' motivation (Ramzan et al., 2023).

In Pakistan, higher educational institutions are working on development of classrooms to foster active learning for adequate educational outcomes and learning engagement. To achieve this, it was explored how social factors affects collaborative learning and along that influence of engagement on learning performance of students was investigated. In recent years, especially after pandemic online learning is promoted to larger extent so to see more comprehensive results tools to enhance this mode was also made part of study. Activities of learning are increased so situations in higher educational institutes should inculcate productive environment to have better academic development (Qureshi et al., 2021). Teachers play significant role in learning. Mindfulness of teachers gets affected by work stress (Javaid et al., 2023). That is why it's crucial to ensure attention of teachers towards learning of students.

Language classroom should have learner autonomy. Recently it caught much attention in research. A study conducted on autonomy of Pakistani learners employed collaborative techniques and saw the effect of collaborative task on promotion of different aspects of autonomy. It was done on teachers from engineering universities. Interviews revealed how collaborative learning plays its role and how teachers implement different strategies in the classroom environment. Results concluded that teachers believe collaborative learning improves motivation, skills, responsibility, confidence, positive independence and interdependence which eventually leads to promotion of autonomy. It was further explored that famous collaborative tasks in Pakistan can work as right source of autonomy development. Unfortunately in real time practice teachers have traditional teaching practices and there is dire need to use collaborative tasks in true spirits (Yasmin & Naseem, 2019). Social media usage plays positive role in academic motivation and academic achievement (Ramzan et al., 2023).

In recent years, researchers in Pakistan have conducted numerous studies to explore various aspects of vocabulary learning in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, such as (Fareed et al., 2018; Fatima & Pathan, 2016; Rahman & Iqbal, 2019). However, despite the growing body of research on vocabulary learning, there has been relatively little investigation into the potential benefits of collaborative learning strategies for ESL learners. Collaborative learning is a method of teaching that involves students who works in groups striving to achieve a common goal, and it has been shown to have numerous advantages in educational settings. One area where collaborative learning. By working together in groups, students can share their knowledge, experiences, and ideas, which can help to build their vocabulary knowledge and improve their overall language proficiency. To fill in these gaps, the purpose of this study was to look at the following objectives:

- 1. To investigate students' perceptions about the collaborative strategies, their teachers employ to enhance English vocabulary learning among them.
- 2. To check level of learning satisfaction and motivation of students based on their experience of collaborative learning.
- 3. To provide recommendations for alternative approaches to enable students enhance their English vocabulary.

2. Methodology

For the purpose of exploration of students' perceptions with reference to what and how their teachers use collaborative strategies to enhance their English vocabulary, qualitative approach was used by the researcher to collect data in the form interviews from the students. Semi structured interviews were conducted which included open and close ended questions having probing questions. It allows researcher to have in-depth information (Tenny et al., 2017). So it is taken as an appropriate approach to explore collaborative practices employed by teachers to improve English vocabulary and learning motivation among students.

2.1.Population and sampling

All of the students who were enrolled in the high school of Karachi city were included in this study's population. In order to acquire the data, researcher used a method called convenient sampling, and chose 20 students at random to do it. After that, researcher used the Zoom meeting

software to conduct all of the interviews after obtaining permission from the respective principals of the schools. In addition, in order to protect the privacy of the people who took part in the study, their real names were substituted with fictitious ones.

2.2.Trustworthiness of the instrument

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is the degree to which research questions are comprehended quickly and adequately. A useful instrument needs validity and dependability. Creswell and Creswell (2017) revealed that legitimate instruments accurately captured user purpose. Open-ended study questions require inter-coder reliability, according to Patton (2015). Three peers and two specialists were chosen to evaluate the study's coding approach and conclusions. Subject matter experts and independent researchers reached 80% consensus, which is lower than Creswell and Creswell's cutoff percentage and demonstrates adequate reliability (2017). Two pilot scheme interviews followed; however they were not included in the final interviews. After an examination of the reliability of the qualitative interview technique, qualitative data collection participants received a consent letter and interview procedure.

2.3.Data Analysis

Each interview was recorded and transcribed in a semi-structured fashion. The researcher heard and studied all the recorded interviews to assess how appropriately it fit into the categories of student interviews. The researcher conducted follow-up interviews to obtain a rich, comprehensive picture of students' perceptions of the difficult aspects of academic writing. As part of the technique, the qualitative analysis involved the generation, processing, and further categorization of transcriptions. It was necessary to locate the data, define it clearly, categorize, and expand it. Themes from interviews as well as motifs from literature were examined. Once the coding was finished, each theme was given a full description. After the principal themes were clarified, organized, and integrated, the key components and maybe a range of findings were revealed. Finally, it gave direction for the development of ideas having deeper meaning (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

3. Results and Discussion

The participants' comments, guided by the study's research objectives, indicated various helpful collaborative strategies their teachers utilize to develop English vocabulary learning among them, which are outlined below:

3.1.Shared learning

The method of collaborative learning technique given by the teachers was the one that was found very affective according to the students. According to them, it is the best practice that provide them opportunities to share their knowledge, experiences, and ideas with each other. Collaborative learning is an approach to education that emphasizes the active participation of students in the learning process (O'Donnell & Hmelo-Silver, 2013). In this approach, students work together in groups to achieve shared learning goals. One of the key benefits of collaborative learning is that it allows for shared learning, where students can share their knowledge, experiences, and ideas with each other (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012).

In a collaborative group, each student brings their own unique perspectives and experiences to the group. By sharing these perspectives and experiences, students can learn from each other and build upon each other's vocabulary knowledge. For instance, one of the students mentioned:

"In Collaborative learning, we become familiar with new vocabularies when my group fellows share their knowledge with each other. In this way, we learn different vocabularies".

In this regard, ESL teachers should incorporate brainstorming sessions in their classrooms, where students can share their ideas and vocabulary knowledge on a specific topic. This can help to build upon each other's vocabulary knowledge and to learn new words from each other. In addition, teacher may ask students to create personal vocabulary lists and share them with the group. This can help to introduce new vocabulary words to the group and provide an opportunity for discussion and clarification of meanings.

Findings of the study also informs that sharing ones learning also enable learners recognize their errors and weaknesses. A student mentioned:

"Our teacher encourages us to share our learning experiences with other classmates, by doing so, I become able to recognize my mistakes and avoid repeating them in the next tasks".

Vakilifard et al. (2020) also elaborate that collaborative learning allows for students to work together to solve problems and answer questions. This can lead to deeper learning and better retention of vocabulary knowledge. When students work together, they are able to participate in discussions and debates, that eventually result in greater understanding of the subject matter. In this regard, ESL teachers should encourage peer feedback and assessment in collaborative group work activities. This can help students to recognize their errors and weaknesses, and to receive constructive feedback from their peers to improve their language skills. In addition, teachers can also incorporate reflection activities into collaborative group work activities, where students can reflect on their learning process, identify areas for improvement, and set goals for future learning.

Collaborative learning also allows for students to practice their communication skills, which is essential for developing their vocabulary knowledge. As mentioned by a student:

"Our teacher incorporates discussion sessions in the classroom, in which students share their views. In this way, we not only learn new vocabulary knowledge but it also enhances our English-speaking quality".

This finding shows consistency with the finding of Crisianita and Mandasari (2022), accordingly through group discussions and interactions, students can practice speaking, listening, and writing in English. This can help to improve their confidence and fluency in using English, which in turn can help them to acquire new vocabulary words. It is thereby important for ESL teachers to encourage the use classroom discussion sessions to promote English-speaking skills in the classroom. These sessions can provide opportunities for students to share their ideas and opinions with each other, as well as to practice their English-speaking skills. ESL students generally experience a moderate level of enjoyment in their learning environments (Ramzan et al., 2023). In addition, teacher can also assign collaborative writing tasks that require students to work together to create a written piece, such as a story or a report. This can help students to develop their writing and speaking skills, as well as to learn new vocabulary words.

3.2.Feedback and assessment

Feedback and assessment play a major role in the learning process of ESL students. In a collaborative group work setting, students have the opportunity to provide each other with feedback and assessment, which can be valuable for improving vocabulary learning outcomes. In this regard, Feedback and assessment method for identifying students' mistakes was indicated as the most affective technique by the students. Regarding feedback and assessment, a student, mentioned:

"I find it very helpful when group fellows and teacher point out my mistakes in the assigned tasks."

Regarding vocabulary learning, a student mentioned:

"I think feedback improves my knowledge regarding vocabulary, and enable me to use them in speaking and writing."

This finding shows consistency with the finding of Wu and Miller (2020), who identified that when students provide feedback to each other, they are able to give a different perspective on their peers' work than a teacher might give. This allows for students to see the weaknesses and strengths of work produced by them and also by other members working in team, and to learn from each other's mistakes. In this regard, ESL teachers should assign error correction exercises that require students to identify and correct errors in written or spoken English. This can help to reinforce their language knowledge and to improve their accuracy and fluency in English.

In terms of pronunciation, students can learn from each other by receiving feedback and help them do self-correction which build upon their vocabulary knowledge. For instance, one of the students mentioned:

"I often struggle with pronouncing certain words correctly, by doing group discussions, my peers provide feedback and guidance, which help me improve my pronunciation."

Evers and Chen (2022) also identify that when students receive feedback from their group fellows, it helps them recognize their errors and weaknesses with respect to their pronunciation. It is thereby vital for ESL teachers to push students working together in small groups, students and practice their pronunciation skills and provide each other with feedback on their pronunciation. During group feedback sessions, students can listen to each other's pronunciation and provide feedback on areas that need improvement. This can help students to recognize their own errors and weaknesses, as well as those of their peers.

3.3.Collaborative writing tasks

The method of collaborative writing tasks technique given by the teachers was emerged as another technique that enhance students learning of vocabulary. Collaborative writing task is a technique that teachers can use to enhance their students' learning of vocabulary. This technique involves assigning students to work together in groups to write a piece of text using a specific set of vocabulary words. According to participants of the study, this practice provides them opportunities to share their knowledge and ideas with each other by working together to create a written piece, such as a story or a report. This can help students to develop their writing and speaking skills, as well as to learn new vocabulary words. For instance, one of the students mentioned:

"Our teacher assign us writing tasks that are supposed to be done in groups. By working in a group, I learn a lot in terms of vocabulary acquisition and pronunciation."

Storch (2019) also mention that collaborative writing tasks gives an opportunity to students for working together to create something, which can increase their motivation and engagement with the material. One benefit of collaborative writing tasks according to Talib and Cheung (2017) is that they allow students to learn from each other. When students work together, they can share their ideas and vocabulary knowledge, which can help to build upon each other's vocabulary knowledge. This can also provide an opportunity for students to receive feedback from their peers on their language use, pronunciation and grammar, which can help to improve their overall language proficiency. Another reason why to use collaborative writing task is that it can help to reinforce vocabulary learning in context. By using vocabulary words in a meaningful and relevant way, students can gain a deeper understanding of the words and how to use them in different contexts.

Findings of the study also informs that sharing ones' writing tasks also enable learners recognize their errors and weaknesses. A student mentioned:

"We share our assigned writing tasks with group members, by doing so, I become able to recognize my mistakes and avoid repeating them in the next tasks".

Lindberg et al. (2022) also specify that collaborative writing tasks can also give an opportunity for students to receive feedback from their peers on their language use, pronunciation and grammar, which can help to improve their overall language proficiency. It is thereby important for ESL teachers to encourage peer review and feedback in collaborative writing tasks. This can help students to recognize their errors and weaknesses, and to receive constructive feedback from their peers to improve their writing skills. In addition, teachers can also assign revision and editing tasks that demands students to identify and correct errors in their own writing, as well as in their peers' writing. This can help to reinforce their language knowledge and to improve their accuracy and fluency in English.

3.4.Conclusion

Collaborative learning has vast implication in the field of educational psychology as it affects the cognition, motivation and achievement outcomes of students working in groups largely. In view of the presented findings, the study indicates that ESL teachers incorporate various helpful collaborative techniques in their teaching practices that enable students reinforce their language knowledge and enhance their vocabulary knowledge. These approaches include shared learning, feedback and assessment, and collaborative writing tasks. It improves learning satisfaction and motivates students to promote the culture of collaborative learning. However, ESL teachers do their best to lend a hand in incorporating collaborative techniques in their teaching practices to help their students improve vocabulary knowledge in the classroom. Yet, the management authorities must give support for the faculty members to ensure their success.

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