



Local and international prospective teachers' perception on collaborative learning



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Abstrak

Banyak pelajar *English for Young Learners* (EFL) menunjukkan prestasi yang lebih tinggi merasa lebih puas dengan pengalaman belajar mereka, dan menunjukkan motivasi yang lebih tinggi untuk mengembangkan bahasa Inggris mereka saat terlibat dalam pembelajaran kolaboratif. Namun, tidak dengan sebagian yang lain. Penelitian bertujuan untuk mengungkap perspektif siswa terhadap pembelajaran kolaboratif. Sampel yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini sebanyak 7 mahasiswa asing Thailand dan 7 mahasiswa lokal (Indonesia) yang menempuh pendidikan Bahasa Inggris UMM tahun ajaran 2015. Instrumen pengambilan data menggunakan angket (skala likert dan pertanyaan terbuka) serta wawancara yang dianalisa menggunakan kedua film kuantitatif. dan metode kualitatif. Metode campuran ini membantu peneliti memperoleh data yang lengkap dan informasi yang dibutuhkan. Data yang diklasifikasikan dianalisis dengan menghitung setiap item menggunakan statistik deskriptif untuk pertanyaan tertutup dan interpretasi deskriptif untuk pertanyaan terbuka dan item wawancara. Penyelidikan menemukan bahwa para siswa sepenuhnya menyadari efek positif dari kerja kelompok untuk meningkatkan kinerja akademis mereka dan mengembangkan sikap pribadi mereka. Oleh karena itu, menerapkan pembelajaran kolaboratif sebagai bagian dari aktivitas pengajaran dalam konteks EFL sangat dianjurkan untuk membantu peserta didik tampil lebih baik baik secara akademis maupun individu.

Abstract

Local and international prospective teachers' perception on collaborative learning. Many EFL learners show higher achievement, feel more satisfied with their learning experiences, and display higher motivation to develop their English when they are engaged in collaborative learning. However, others display lack of contribution, low commitment, bad time management, and passive membership during the collaboration with other learners. In this case, teachers' role is paramount to provide constructive feedback and supervise the learners to eliminate these potential issues. This research implemented a mixed method by involving both local and international EFL students in Indonesian context and addressing how local and international students of English Education at University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) perceived group assignment. The study involved seven international (Thailand) students and seven local (Indonesian) students, studying at English Education of UMM, academic year 2015. The instruments were questionnaires (likert scale and open-ended questions) and interview, which were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative method. The classified data was analyzed by calculating each item using descriptive statistic for close ended questions and descriptive interpretation for open ended questions and interview items. The investigation found that the students completely realized the positive effects of group work advancing their academic performance and developing their personal attitudes. Therefore, applying collaborative learning as a part of teaching activity in EFL context is highly encouraged to help learners perform better both academically and individually.

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Introduction

In EFL pedagogical setting, teachers can apply collaborative learning, in which they are required to divide students in pairs of small groups. The class activities may include presentation, role play, discussion, debate, and storytelling (Huang & Hu, 2016; Moore & Hampton, 2015). EFL teachers also utilize games (where students are working in groups) as part of classroom instruction to create fun and meaningful activities while developing learners' English skills (Huang & Hu, 2016).

Group assignment refers to collaborative learning requiring at least two (or three, four, or even more) students working collaboratively or in groups to meet particular goals (Kudek, 2016; Marks & O'Connor, 2013). A group work requires learners to complete their project, assignment or work in a group, which has been determined, and the marks will be shared among them (Daba, Ejersa, & Aliyi, 2017). Thus, it helps them develop their collaborative competence and indirectly facilitate their English skills. The implementation of Group assignment in an English learning activity is categorized as an active learning requiring learners to learn the material cooperatively with others, so the expected effective learning outcome could be gained if the students can learn by doing [working together with others] (Forehand, Leigh, Farrell, & Spurlock, 2016). Furthermore, through group assignment, they will unconsciously enhance their independent learning while, at the same time, improving intercommunication and teamwork skills inside and outside the classroom (Li & Campbell, 2008). In other words, they could strengthen their individual, professional, and social competences.

Some researchers' findings positively acknowledged that group assignment has positive outcomes for learners. Those are categorized into three types of development; achievement (professional), social, and personal (Ho & Boo, 2007; Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Li, & Lam, 2013). Each form of development will be elaborated as follows: Firstly, a group assignment enhances students' academic performance, helps them to optimize a better comprehension about a particular material and make them having higher motivation in their learning activities (Ho & Boo, 2007). In addition to developing students' professional achievement, group work enhances students' social skills. So, they are able to develop their cultural understanding of others and guarantee the learners to create more spaces for making more friends (Li & Campbell, 2008). Also, it could lead, build, and eventually contribute to higher self-esteem and care through better tolerance to other despite differences (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Öntaş & Tekindal, 2015). Lastly, through a group assignment, students' personality is also positively affected. (Bentley & Warwick, 2013) mentioned that when having a group assignment, learners could strengthen their team work and raise their self-confidence. It means EFL indirectly develop their personal skills as they are actively involved in discussing a particular topic. Similarly, Burke, (2011) highlighted that a group assignment provides an opportunity for learners (in this case EFL learners) to dig better comprehension of their own (meaning that they can identify themselves better) and allow to be able to see others well.

It is clear that a group work creates outstanding positive outcomes (professional/ achievement, social, and personal) development for students as well as EFL learners. However, Some researchers found some students have low motivation to work collaboratively. First, the students have poor knowledge of the discussed topic, low confidence and less experience to work collaboratively. So they are not responsible to get the work done (Daba et al., 2017). Another issue is the students have less contribution and poor time management and commitment toward their group (Bentley & Warwick, 2013). Also, some teachers just show them their final scores (results) of their assignment without any feedback (Bentley & Warwick, 2013). In fact, feedback plays important role in the classroom instruction as it enables students to reflect their work and allow them to make a self-assessment. Lastly, some students feel under pressure from the group to agree with majority opinion. The reason is they do not like to be an opponent and avoid the group conflict if possible (Beebe & Masterson, 2012). As a result, they contribute less in their group work.

Nevertheless, the disadvantages can be minimized. Some approaches are suggested to help students them develop collaborative work: (1) Small group discussion may be applied. Here, lecturers can determine the group to avoid working just with their close friends. (2) Time management becomes essential matter in forming group assignment. So the work can be finished on time. (3) Clear and rigid scoring rubric must be developed as a guideline for marking. In addition, students may evaluate their own achievement. Students can remark their group work that is mostly determined by the marking criteria of the assessment (James, McInnis, & Devlin, 2002). (4) A periodic process reports, self-evaluation, or peer-evaluation must be provided to monitor the group work. Still, students could have various perception when asked about collaborative learning.

Perception is described as a feeling, thoughts, judgment and beliefs of one about a particular phenomenon. This is a process in which people organize and then interpret the impressions of their sensory input to provide meaning to the environment (Robbins & Judge, 2013). They added that it is a fundamental process in all interpersonal communication encounters, stimulation, organization, interpretation-evaluation, memory and recall. Campbell and Li (2006) conducted an investigation about students' perceptions of collaborative work in a New Zealand University. The study found that students enjoy group discussion since they can communicate with their friends from different cultures and background. However, the negative perception appears when the assignment requires students to complete a project collaboratively with shared scores based on the group performance. Other research conducted by (Hassanien, 2006) also found that students have negative perception about collaborative work because they have to deal with some issues (i.e., lack of communication and regular meetings) although they considered group work gave positive learning activities if not used for assignment. Furthermore, Burke (2011) explained students' dissatisfaction if their teachers ask them to work in groups to complete an assignment. However, they say that group work is crucial to create better team work and enhance communication skills. Other researchers, Daba et al (2013) proclaimed that the students see group work negatively. It is due to poor comprehension of content, lack of confidence and experiences as well as irresponsible to do their work. They considered collaborative work is a way to get a mark not a means of learning collaboratively with others.

The investigations led to different various perceptions regarding group work. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, it was not found a specific research investigating local and international EFL learners' perception towards collaborative work in Indonesian context at university level. Researchers' investigations were carried out merely in foreign countries contexts and no previous research investigated the perception specific in EFL context. Therefore, this study is intended to fill the gap by investigating how local and international students of English Education at University of Muhammadiyah Malang perceive group assignment, Burke (2011) and Bantley et al (2013) found students' dissatisfaction if their teachers ask them. By conducting this current research, it is expected that students' perspective toward collaborative learning, which may include benefits and challenges, is identified so teachers can play their role to maximize the use of collaborative learning and help students effectively resolve the problems that might arise during the collaborative work.

Method

Quantitative research was implemented to analyze the close-ended questions. On the other hand, qualitative design was applied to interpret the open-ended questions and interview questions. This mixed design would guarantee the researchers to gain required information and in-dept and comprehensive data since mixed method research design summarizes methods, plans, and procedures in collecting and analyzing the data (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine, & Walker, 2018). Additionally, research design contributes in framing procedure for researcher to collect the data, analyze, and interpret the data from wide assumption to specific methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2012). This research attempts to find out the local (Indonesian) students and international (Thai) students' perception of collaborative learning.

The subjects were international students (Thailand) and local (Indonesian) students of English Language Education Department of UMM, academic year 2015 that were randomly

selected as the questions were not related to academic or linguistic skills. They implemented and experienced group assignment in their classroom learning. There were fourteen learners (seven local and seven international learners). Later, four students (two local and two international students) were interviewed. Their ages range were between 20 and 23 years old. The close-ended questionnaire (consisting likert scale and essay questions) was adapted from the study of Daba et al., (2017). There were 22 questions in total. Interview was applied to result in more in-depth and comprehensive data. Then, four randomly selected participants were interviewed.

The data collection procedure included, first, planning. This stage covered the process of constructing, preparing, and validating the instrument through triangulation by consulting three people who have expertise in this field. Second was collecting the data. At this stage, the questionnaires were distributed to the participants then the completed questionnaires were collected, and followed by the interview. The last stage was data classification. The classified data would be analyzed by calculating each item using descriptive statistic (mean and standard deviation) for close ended questions and descriptive interpretation for open ended questions and interview items.

Results and Discussion

To know the local and international students' perception on group assignment, the students' perception was assessed into three groups. The first group produced statement 1 (learners' preference). Statement 2 up to 7 were part of the advantages of group work, and then statements 8 to 12 described the challenges in doing group assignment. To find out the learners' perception on group work, statement 1 was numerically calculated to know whether local and international students prefer group work of other types of assignment when in class as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' preference on group assignment

Statements	Students (N=14)			
	L (N=7)		I (N=7)	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
1. I prefer group assignment than other types of assignment	4.1	0.3	3.8	1.3

The result of the survey (see table 1) showed that the mean score is 4.1 for local learners and 3.8 (which is close to 4) for international ones. Therefore, both local and international learners consider group assignment more positively than other types of group when in class. The students' preference on group assignment can be observed in Table 1.

Additionally, during the interview, local and international learners commented on their belief that group work ease them to develop their academic achievement. Local learners claimed that group assignment provides them with opportunity to share their ideas and thoughts about the discussed topic to gain deeper comprehension and also let them to work collaboratively.

"I think group assignment is one of the types assignment that will help us to gain [and develop] our team work skill and help us to share our thoughts about the subject" (Local students/YA).

Similarly, international students mentioned that group assignment is very useful to share ideas and opinion with other students, especially the members of the same group. The added that by working in groups, they have the opportunity to learn from others about a particular subject.

"Group assignment helps us in our achievement to share the information that everyone knows as well as the knowledge in which some of the members in group did not know yet. We also can share with different point of view so that we can have more exploration in that knowledge" (International Students/WH).

In addition to the previous benefits, international students felt that group assignment helps them in developing their interpersonal skill and it makes them more confidence to work with

others. Indeed, the advantage of group work cannot be overlooked because the students are aware that in the future, they will meet and work with many people with diverse background.

“Group assignment also helps us in our future career to build the [good] characteristic [because] we will work with different people from different countries. Collaborative learning prepare our self to be ready to work with other people” (International students/WH).

The findings revealed that both local and international students enjoy working in groups since there are many advantages they gain while working collaboratively with other students. The next questions (item number 2 to 7) asked about the local and international students’ opinion about the advantages of group assignment. Table 2 shows that students had positive response in all question items.

Table 2. Students’ perception of the advantages of group assignment

Statements	Students (N=14)			
	L (N=7)		I (N=7)	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
2. It encourages me to learn more	4.1	0.3	3.7	1.2
3. It enhances my learning habit	3.7	0.7	3.5	1.1
4. It helps me increase my thinking skill and confidence	4.4	0.5	3.7	1.2
5. It provides me a chance to share thoughts with other members	4.4	0.5	3.8	0.8
6. I learn better from collaborative learning than class lecturer	4.1	1.0	3.8	0.8
7. Group assignment avoids workload	3.8	1.3	3.7	1.2

The positive response from the local students was shown by the mean score (3.7 to 4.4). Statement 2 and 6 showed the same mean score (see Table 2), indicating students’ positive perception toward group assignment since it encourages them to learn more. Also, the students feel that they learn better through group assignment. The mean score from statement 3 and 7 were 3.7 and 3.8, respectively. It was projected that students perceived group assignment positively as their learning is enhanced and their work load is minimized through collaborative learning. Statement 4 and 5 had the same mean score as statement 2 and 6, showing that local students feel the benefit of working in groups since it develops their cognitive skills and confidence and allows them to share their ideas with other students.

Meanwhile, the mean score for international students was between 3.5 and 3.8 (see Table 2). Although the mean is not as high as that of local students, it shows that international students have positive perception toward group assignment by responding to all statements in the questionnaire positively. Statement 2, 4 and 7 showed that group assignment encourages international students to learn more, develops their thinking skills, increases their confidence, and lessen their workloads. In statement 3, it was reported that international students feel that group assignment improves their learning habit. Statement 5 and 6 had the same mean score, indicating that international students believed that group work enhances their thinking skills and confidence, and allows them to share their ideas and opinion with group members. It can be concluded that international students perceive group assignment positively. Item 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 were related to some challenges of group assignment (see Table 3).

Table 3. Students’ perception of the challenges of group assignment

Statements	Students (N=14)			
	L (N=7)		I (N=7)	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
8. Group score is unfair	3.4	1.3	2.1	0.8
9. It adds more work burden on me	2.2	1.2	3	1.2
10. It is difficult to gather all members outside the class	4.2	0.4	3.8	0.1
11. It is difficult to find related references	3	0.8	2	1.4
12. It is difficult to share workload equally among members	3.4	0.9	3.7	1.3

Based on the data displayed in Table 3, students had different responses to these items. Item 8, 11 and 12 showed average score for local students, indicating that local students had neutral opinion regarding the three statements (difficult to find related references, difficult to share workload and equal scores among members). Item 9 had low mean score, showing that local students do not feel any burden when working in groups. In contrast, item 10 had very high score, indicating that local students have difficulties to invite other members to work together outside the class. On the contrary, international students had different opinion. It can be seen from item 8 and 11, which had low score. It means that the international students assumed that the scoring system in a group assessment is fair, and it is easier for them to find related references when working in groups. As for item 9, international students believed that a group work may or may not increase their burden. On the other hand, item 10 and 12 showed higher score, indicating that it is difficult for the international students to get together with other group members outside the class. Similarly, it is hard for them to share the workloads among them when working in groups.

The results above are supported by the qualitative data from the interview. According to the local students, some group members did not do their task because they had poor knowledge, low confidence, and were demotivated.

"I think maybe they don't understand about the topic that she/he handles or she/he is not confident to work in a group. So, they think that they are not capable of finishing the work. Also, maybe they are lazy in doing the task so they need more motivation from the other members" (Local students/YA).

The international students even considered it a big problem when there were group members avoiding the task. According to these students, every group member had to work together and was accountable for the group task. Otherwise, they should not have been included in the group.

"I think it is really a big problem in being a team work because everybody must have their job so everyone can go together. Bu if there is a person who did not work, he must give a punishment by deleting his name in group" (International students'/WH).

Furthermore, the interview asked the students' opinion about the situation where a group assignment is finished by only one student group because other group members are irresponsible. In response to this question, local students said that the student chooses to finish the assignment on her own because she is capable of completing it, but at the same time does not trust other students.

"I think it is because she is capable of doing the task and also she does not want to take any risk about their task so she wants to finish the task well. Also, because she does not believe with the other members" (Local students/RP)".

This idea is supported by the international students. They explained that they sometimes, only one member of the groups finishing the assignment because the there is lack of communication among the group members.

"That person is working alone because he has a problem in dealing with members in group to do the task, maybe he is lazy to talk with others so he takes all of the assignment" (International student/WH)

Additionally, both local and international students assumed that it is not right to depend only on one person to do the group task because it is a group assessment, and therefore the mark received goes to all the members. In this case, either local or internal students said that it is essential to divide the jobs where every member has different task or role, such as leader,

secretary and presenter so that all members can share the work equally and complete the assignment punctually.

"I think it is very important because if we divide the job to some divisions as like presenter, secretary and leader, it can help us a lot in doing the job based on the deadline" (Local students/RP).

"Ya actually it is important. It is really easy to collect the data and easy to finish the work early" (International students/WW).

Findings showed that both local and international students perceive group assignment positively. The local students mentioned that by working in groups allows them to express their ideas and opinion about particular topic, work collaboratively to complete the assignment earlier. It is through group assignment do they achieve better understanding about specific topic, feel motivated to learn more, and have higher self-confidence and better ability to work in team.

The international students believed that group assignment helps them explore a particular topic deeper, and develop their knowledge and critical thinking. According to Jameson (2013), students practice thinking in English and understand what others think through group assignment. Also, these students feel the advantage of group work by building their interpersonal skills in preparing their future career. Indeed, group assignment allows them to work with people from diverse background and personalities, which prepares them to deal with differences when achieving their goals. Li and Lam (2013), Johnson and Johnson (2000) and Ho and Boo (2007) confirmed that group work benefits the students both in academic achievement and personal development. It was believed that group assignment enhances students' academic achievements, hone their knowledge, and develop their communication skills. Burke (2011) added that by working in groups, students gain better understanding about themselves and at the same time have clearer picture of how others perceive them.

Besides, lower level students are encouraged to learn more about the subject when they are assigned to work in groups, as it makes them feel more comfortable and more open-minded. Porter (2006) stated that both higher and lower level students who work collaboratively has better accomplishment and feel happier about their learning experiences. In a similar vein, Jacobs (2006) maintained that collaborative learning promotes more student-centred activities, helps increase learners motivation, and makes them feel individually accountable. In a recent study by Chen (2018), students even displayed higher confidence in solving problems when they worked collaboratively and felt satisfied with the peer review and coaching they received. Besides the advantages mentioned above, group assignment actually has some drawbacks. Sometimes, students prioritize the score rather than the collaborative learning experience when working with others. Either local or international students mentioned that group assignment is often done by only one student instead of the entire group members. It shows that sometimes, students set unrealistic goal of achieving excellent score without willing to contribute in the group assignment.

International students also mentioned another drawback of group work. They stated that it is often difficult to invite other members to work together outside the class, thus the workload is not equally shared. Some students are reluctant to do the task and do not share the same responsibility in the group assignment. This finding is similar to Hassanian's (2006), which found that students perceive group work negatively because they face various challenges, such as lack of communication and irregular attendance at group meetings. Similarly, Roskam (1999) mentioned that some students did not feel comfortable working with other students and perceived the collaboration as a learning task rather than learning experience. Jung, Kudo and Choi (2012) also found while many advantages of collaborative learning were identified, it might cause unnecessary stress to some students. Some of the cause include instructional design and collaborative process.

Likewise, local students argued that group assignment includes students with diverse background, where members are often challenged to work with those who have low competence, low confidence and lack of motivation. As a result, more active students may prefer to work alone when doing the assignment so it can be finished on time. Daba et al (2017) found that when

students are incompetent, unconfident, irresponsible, and lack experiences, they tend to have low interest in accepting responsibility to complete their task, feel reluctant to contribute in group assignment, and choose to depend on more dominant students to complete the task. This pattern of groupwork was also found in previous study by Storch (2002). Besides showing collaborative style while all members work equally in groups, the investigation showed that some groups dominant-passive pattern of interaction in which more pasive students depend too much on the dominant ones.

Different academic ability of students may not be an issue in group assignments, but communication can be a primary key to a successful collaborative learning. In this case, the importance of group work based on social skill theory cannot be overlooked. According to this theory, "group assignment allows the students to spend their time together working in group to build, to lead, and contribute to higher self-rating with their group members, helping one another, understanding and strengthening people despite differences" (Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Burke, 2011; Öntas & Takindal, 2015). Similar advantage of collaborative learning can also be seen in Momtaz and Garner (2010), who conducted a study on how collaborative learning improve students' reading comprehension. The results showed that students who read collaboratively achieve higher score in reading than those who read individually. Another study involving group assignment was conducted by Jeong (2016). The study focused on web-based collaborative learning in writing task and found that the students benefited from the collaborative writing by increasing their communication skill, learning autonomy, mutual collaboration and vibrant interaction with their peers.

Based on the discussion above, there may be some challenges faced by students when working in groups. However, the advantages of group work clearly outweigh the drawbacks. Therefore, group work can be used as an effective learning approach that allows students to work collaboratively in an English class. By working collaboratively, both local and international students can improve their academic achievement and be involved in a fun, engaging and meaningful learning.

Conclusion

The learners were totally aware of positive effects of this kind of assignment. For instance, higher level of competency students discussed the task with the lower ones. Therefore, both group of students will eventually develop their understanding. As a result, they strongly believe that collaborative learning/group assignment produces an effectiveness in EFL learning in classroom. Additionally, both local and international students found the positive value that could enhance their personal characteristics, such as developing their self-confidence, increase team work skills and prepare them to get ready to step up into their professional life, related to jobs, in the future.

Referring to the findings, group assignment is found to have essential positive impacts to local and international students, but it also produces a negative impact for learners, particularly for international students. Therefore, in pedagogical context, lecturers are highly encouraged to make sure every single student has equal responsibility when doing group assignment. Furthermore, they are highly suggested to apply this type of learning strategy (group assignment) more often considering its benefits for students improvement academically and non-academically.

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