

# Insight into Students' Perceptions of Collaborative Learning in an English Classroom: English for Digital Technology Course

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**Abstract:** *Collaborative learning has become an essential part of modern methodology in teaching and learning because it offers teachers an effective method to engage students and provides opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning. This study aimed to investigate the practice of collaborative learning from the perspective of students taking English for Digital Technology subject. A survey design involving 125 Diploma in Digital Technology course students was conducted upon completing the English for Digital Technology course. Data were collected through a questionnaire including four indicators. The collected data were analysed using SPSS V26 and descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation). Findings revealed that despite minor challenges in collaborative learning among students, the overall perception remains positive. This study underscores the importance of integrating collaborative learning strategies in English for Digital Technology courses, highlighting its potential to create a more engaging, inclusive, and effective learning environment. The findings also suggest that with appropriate support and scaffolding, the challenges associated with collaborative learning can be mitigated, making it a valuable approach for enhancing students' learning experiences in the digital era. It is clearly revealed that collaborative learning significantly enhances students' academic performance, social engagement and lifelong skills.*

**Keywords:** Collaborative Learning, Students' Perceptions, English Classroom, English For Digital Technology Course

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## 1. Introduction

### Definition of collaborative learning

According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, the word collaborative means involving two or more persons working together for a special purpose. In the context of learning, it is presumed that collaborative learning is one of the approaches or strategies applied in classrooms where two or more students work together in their respective groups to complete a task or accomplish a common set of goals. Laal and Laal (2012), define collaborative learning as an effective educational approach to teaching and learning that involves a group of learners where they have to work together to solve problems, complete specific tasks or create products. Panitz and Panitz (1998) however argue that collaborative learning is more than just a classroom technique; it embodies a personal philosophy. Respectful interactions and values of each group member's abilities and contributions are among the key elements in collaborative learning. Thus, cooperation involving a shared authority and

collective responsibility for the group's actions is the core principle behind the success of collaborative learning practice.

Educators and teachers have applied collaborative learning in classrooms since the late 1980s and it is still relevant until the present technologically advanced era. This is because most educators and teachers believe that collaborative learning can enhance students' engagement and foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This is achieved through peer interaction and cooperative problem-solving, which are the key elements in the collaborative learning approach. Mallipa (2018), claimed that collaborative learning can encourage students to be more independent and take ownership of their learning and the attention is diverted from teacher-centred to more student-centered learning. Moreover, the collaborative learning approach also encourages students to rely on one another in their quest for knowledge, enhancing the learning process and making it more engaging and meaningful (Ibrahim et al., 2015). Oftentimes, it is observed that students enjoy themselves when it comes to doing activities collaboratively in groups if compared to working alone. This is because they are aware that they have other members in the group to discuss with and to rely on especially when facing problems in completing certain tasks given to them. Chandra (2015), highlighted several other benefits of collaborative learning including enhancing higher-level thinking, oral communication, self-management, and leadership skills. This further adds to the various benefits of collaborative learning particularly in classrooms.

Despite the potential benefits collaborative learning has to offer, students' perceptions toward this approach might differ based on individual preferences, past experiences, and the specific challenges presented by the subject matter. Mallipa (2018), found that students had a positive perception of the implementation of group work namely in English with insignificant challenges and barriers. Therefore, applying collaborative learning in the classrooms is considered one of the effective teaching and learning strategies due to the positive perceptions and outcomes by students.

### **MPU 22053 English for Digital Technology Course Information and Assessments**

English for Digital Technology (MPU 22053) is one of the elective courses that must be taken by semester one students of the Diploma in Digital Technology program at Malaysian Polytechnics. The clusters of learning involved are interpersonal, communication and personal skills. Four types of assessments need to be completed by the students namely presentation, product pitching, assignment, and role-play. All four assessments are required to be done in group or pair work. The varying levels of English proficiency among students in this course may result in challenges when completing assessments. In an ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom, having students with varying levels of English proficiency can present several challenges that may affect the learning experience for both students and instructors. These problems can be broadly categorized into issues related to communication and instructional pace. In terms of communication barriers, students with lower English proficiency may struggle to comprehend instructions, follow classroom discussions, or express their thoughts clearly. This can lead to feelings of frustration, anxiety, or embarrassment, resulting in decreased participation. On the other hand, higher-proficiency students may dominate discussions, leaving less space for their peers to practice speaking, which can create an imbalanced learning environment. Teachers may find it challenging to ensure that all students are equally engaged and that language use is accessible to everyone. Additionally, managing a class with diverse proficiency levels often means that the instructional pace becomes difficult to balance. If the teacher moves too quickly, lower-level students may feel overwhelmed and left behind. Conversely, if the pace is too slow, higher-level students may feel bored or

unchallenged. Finding a middle ground that meets the needs of all students is a significant challenge, particularly when lesson content or tasks are not easily adaptable to multiple proficiency levels. These differences can affect their ability to understand instructions, engage with course material, and effectively express their knowledge, potentially impacting their overall performance.

### **Purpose of Research**

This study seeks to explore collaborative learning practices from the viewpoints of students enrolled in an English for Digital Technology course.

### **Research Question**

To explore the perceptions of students on various beneficial aspects of collaborative learning in English classrooms.

### **Significance of the Research**

This study is significant because it reveals the diverse benefits and minor challenges associated with such pedagogical approaches. This study also highlights the broad academic, social, and lifelong skill advantages perceived by students. Collaborative learning offers a supportive framework that can significantly benefit students with varying levels of English proficiency in the *English for Digital Technology (MPU 22053)* course. By working in groups or pairs, students with lower proficiency levels gain the opportunity to interact with peers who are more fluent, facilitating **language acquisition through peer modelling**. This exposure to more proficient language use helps them develop vocabulary, improve sentence structure, and enhance overall communication skills in a natural, low-pressure environment. In addition, collaborative learning can also be a tool for **differentiated learning**, where tasks are scaffolded to meet the needs of students at different proficiency levels. For instance, more proficient students can mentor their peers, while less proficient students can be given simpler, yet meaningful tasks that build their skills incrementally. This approach ensures that all group members are engaged and contributing, fostering a more inclusive learning environment. Hence, collaborative learning creates a balanced and inclusive classroom environment where students with varying levels of English proficiency can thrive. It enables students to learn from one another, promotes equal participation, and nurtures both language skills and interpersonal competencies, ultimately enhancing their overall performance in assessments and boosting their confidence in using English.

## **2. Literature review**

Teaching and learning strategies are vital elements of the educational process, influencing how information is conveyed and understood in the classroom. Some of the well-known strategies that have been commonly used for years by educators and teachers around the globe are blended learning, experiential learning and problem-based learning. These strategies aim to foster the development of knowledge, skills and critical thinking in students, advocating a comprehensive and effective learning experience. One of the approaches is blended learning. It is an innovative approach that combines the benefits of traditional classroom teaching with ICT-supported learning, incorporating both offline and online methods. It encompasses collaborative learning, constructive learning, and computer-assisted learning (CAI) (Lalima & Dangwal, 2017). Experiential learning on the other hand is the process of learning by doing. Roberts (2003), interpreted Dewey's experiential learning theory (1938) where all learning occurs within a social context. To provide meaningful information, the knowledge which is socially constructed and derived from experiences should be organised into real-life contexts.

In this approach, the teacher's role is to structure this content and facilitate the experiential process, considering the learners' capabilities and readiness. Additionally, problem-based learning or PBL is an instructional method that has been effectively utilised for over 30 years and is increasingly embraced across various disciplines. According to Savery (2015), this learner-centred approach involves learners conducting research, integrating theory with practice, and applying their knowledge and skills to devise practical solutions to well-defined problems. Apart from the above-mentioned strategies, one strategy that has been also widely used and applied is collaborative learning. Collaborative learning has been extensively studied as an educational strategy that promotes student engagement, enhances understanding, and fosters a supportive learning environment. In the collaborative learning environment, learners face social and emotional challenges as they listen to different perspectives and must articulate and defend their ideas. Through this process, they begin to develop their own unique conceptual framework rather than relying solely on an expert's or a textbook's framework (Laal & Laal, 2012).

### **Benefits of collaborative learning**

Rutherford (2014), in his book stated that there is strong evidence that collaborative learning is beneficial to educational development. Through collaborative learning, learners utilise each other's perspectives and experiences to solve problems and develop a shared understanding of meanings by engaging in collaborative activities. Research has also consistently shown that collaborative learning is one way of improving quality learning if carried out with proper instructions. Ferdouse (2015), found that students of the experimental group became more confident and enthusiastic about their participation and contribution in the group thus it clearly shows that students were much more motivated to learn. Moreover, M. Laal and S.M Ghodsi (2012) summarised the benefits of collaborative learning into four major categories namely social, psychological, academic and assessment. In terms of social benefits, collaborative learning aids in developing a social support system for learners. Through the implementation of collaborative learning, cooperation among group members reduces anxiety and at the same time increases students' self-esteem through student-centred instruction. Collaborative learning also encourages **active engagement and participation**, which can be especially beneficial for students who may otherwise be reluctant to speak in a traditional classroom setting. Group work provides a safer space for these students to practice speaking, ask questions, and clarify misunderstandings without fear of judgment. This interaction fosters a sense of belonging and reduces the anxiety often associated with language learning, promoting a more positive attitude toward English usage. Moreover, the cooperative nature of collaborative learning helps to develop **essential soft skills**, such as teamwork, problem-solving, and negotiation, which are invaluable for all students regardless of their proficiency level. By working together to achieve common goals, students learn to listen actively, respect diverse perspectives, and offer constructive feedback, all of which enhance their communicative competence. More importantly collaborative learning benefits learners academically as it promotes critical thinking skills and involves students actively in the learning process. Gokhale (1995), found that most participants in the collaborative learning group had a positive view of group work, as it enhanced their understanding of the material and stimulated their thought processes. Furthermore, sharing responsibility within the group helped reduce the anxiety typically associated with problem-solving. Chandra (2015), asserted that the methodology of learning impacts achievement in English, noting a significant difference in the English achievement scores of undergraduate students using collaborative learning methods compared to those using individual learning methods. The study by Nair et al., (2012), on students' perceptions of group work in the secondary ESL classroom also indicates positive outcomes, with most students finding group work activities to be interesting and enjoyable.

Additionally, these activities foster interaction among team members. In addition, Mallipa (2018), further researched the perceptions of students in the implementation of group work in ESL classrooms. Findings have shown that most students had positive perception on the implementation of group works in the process of learning.

### **Challenges and barriers**

Despite the potential benefits, the implementation of collaborative learning in English classrooms presents several challenges. Ibrahim et al., (2015), outlined some limitations in using collaborative learning in the classrooms. Issues such as the difficulty faced by the teacher or instructor in merely being a guide and the difficulty faced by the students in being independent thinkers should be considered when using collaborative learning strategies in the classroom. If these issues are not properly taken into consideration, the students might end up not gaining and even worse not learning anything throughout the classroom sessions. As mentioned earlier, although working in groups has evidently shown positive results, there are also problems or barriers that might hinder the success of collaborative learning strategies. Situmorang (2012), in her study, found out some students viewed certain members' unwillingness to participate as a problem and some feel unfair when their group members still obtained good marks without doing the same amount of work. The finding of research done by Mallipa (2018), also revealed that students admit problems regarding collaborative learning came from themselves such as difficulty in interaction, lack of confidence, low level ability, lack of interest and lack of motivation. Meanwhile, low and dominant participation from group members were some of the highlighted issues of collaborative work. Al Ajmi and Ali (2014), noted that while the majority of teachers and students favour the use of collaborative learning in writing, there are challenges such as dealing with unproductive members, conflicting opinions, and dominant group members. (Brown & Lara, n.d.) in their annotated webliography differentiate the advantages and disadvantages of applying collaborative learning whether in small groups or large groups. Some of the disadvantages of collaborative learning in a large group are more time required in decision-making and the group will face more difficulty achieving consensus. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximising the effectiveness of collaborative learning in educational settings.

## **3. Methodology**

### **Research Design and Instrument**

The study employed a quantitative method using a set of questionnaires to gather information from respondents. Eyisi (2016), highlighted the efficiency, scientific nature, and objectivity of quantitative research, which aids in generalization, replicability, and reduced bias, making it a reliable data collection and analysis method. The "Students' View on Collaborative Learning" questionnaire, adapted from Brown (n.d), was designed to derive students' perceptions of collaborative learning, specifically in an English classroom i.e. English for Digital Technology course. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A, which included a demographic profile item, and Section B, which comprised 20 collaborative learning questions. A four-point Likert Scale was used, with responses ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

### **Population and Sample**

The study's respondents were 125 students from the Information Technology and Communication Department, enrolled in the English for Digital Technology (MPU 22053) course in their first semester. These students, selected via convenience sampling, varied in gender and age. The selection was based on their experience with collaborative learning

throughout the semester, meeting criteria such as accessibility, proximity, and willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2016)

### Procedure and Data Collection Method

The researcher created the questionnaire using Google Forms and shared the link with the students. After collecting the responses, the data was transferred to SPSS V26 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for more detailed statistical analysis.

### Data Analysis Method

The data collected were analyzed using SPSS V26, employing descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation to gain detailed insights.

## 4. Findings and discussion

### Respondent’s Profile

Table 1: Programme

Programme	Frequency	Percent
DDT1S1	34	27.2
DDT1S2	30	24.0
DDT1S3	31	24.8

Table 1 displays the distribution of students across different sections of the English for Digital Technology course, providing valuable data for analyzing collaborative learning practices. Among the 125 students surveyed, 34 (27.2%) are in section DDT1S1, 30 (24.0%) are in section DDT1S2, 31 (24.8%) are in section DDT1S3, and another 30 (24.0%) are in section DDT1S4.

### Beneficial Aspects of Collaborative Learning

Table 2: Mean score interpretation (adapted from Hamzah et al., 2016)

Means score	Interpretation of mean score
1.0 – 1.80	Very low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.20	Medium
3.21 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very high

This study uses the mean score to explore perceptions of collaborative learning in the English for Digital Technology course. The Mean Score Interpretation Table adapted from Hamzah et al (2016), is employed for this measurement, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 3: Academic Benefits**

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Working in pairs and groups helped understanding / comprehension.	44.0%	55.2%	0.8%	0.0%	3.43	0.513
2. Working in pairs and groups fostered exchange of knowledge, information and experiences.	46.4%	52.8%	0.8%	0.0%	3.46	0.516
6. Working in pairs and groups offered useful/helpful feedback.	45.6%	50.4%	4.0%	0.0%	3.42	0.571
7. Working in pairs and groups gave fresh insight.	41.6%	55.2%	3.2%	0.0%	3.38	0.550
10. Working in pairs and groups enabled me to help weaker learners in my group.	40.0%	56.0%	4.0%	0.0%	3.36	0.559
12. Working in pairs and groups improved performance.	54.4%	41.6%	4.0%	0.0%	3.50	0.577
13. Working in pairs and groups made me actively participate in the teaching and learning process.	51.2%	45.6%	3.2%	0.0%	3.48	0.562

The data on academic benefits highlights the positive impact of collaborative learning in the English for Digital Technology course. A significant majority of students expressed strong agreement or agreement with various statements regarding the benefits of working in pairs and groups. Regarding item No. 1, 44.0% of students strongly agreed, and 55.2% agreed that collaborative work helped enhance their understanding and comprehension, resulting in a mean score of 3.43 (SD = 0.513). For item No. 2, 46.4% strongly agreed and 52.8% agreed that working in pairs and groups facilitated the exchange of knowledge, information, and experiences, with a mean score of 3.46 (SD=0.516). Referring to item No. 6, 45.6% of students strongly agreed, and 50.4% agreed that collaborative learning provided useful and helpful feedback, reflected in a mean score of 3.42 (SD=0.571). 41.6% of students strongly agreed, and 55.2% agreed that working in groups provided fresh perspectives, resulting in a mean score of 3.38 (SD=0.550) for item No. 7. Meanwhile for item No. 10, 40.0% strongly agreed, and 56.0% agreed that collaborative learning enabled them to assist weaker peers, with a mean score of 3.36 (SD=0.559). The result for item No. 12 shows 54.4% strongly agreed, and 41.6% agreed that working in groups enhanced their performance, leading to a mean score of 3.50 (SD=0.577) which is the highest mean score among academic benefits. Finally for item No. 13, 51.2% of students strongly agreed, and 45.6% agreed that collaborative learning encouraged active participation in the teaching and learning process, resulting in a mean score of 3.48 (SD=0.562).

**Table 4: Social Benefits**

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
5. Working in pairs and groups provided more relaxed atmosphere.	29.6%	60.0%	8.8%	1.6%	3.18	0.648
14. Working in pairs and groups was fun.	58.4%	34.4%	6.4%	0.8%	3.50	0.655
15. Working in pairs and groups helped me make new friends.	65.6%	32.8%	1.6%	0.0%	3.64	0.514

The survey data on social benefits further highlights the positive impacts of collaborative learning in the English for Digital Technology course. The responses demonstrate how working in pairs and groups fosters a supportive and enjoyable learning environment. Regarding item No. 5, 29.6% of students strongly agreed and 60.0% agreed that working in pairs and groups

provided a more relaxed environment, scoring a mean score of 3.18 (SD=0.648). Additionally, for item No. 14, a significant majority 58.4% strongly agreed and 34.4% agreed that collaborative learning was fun, resulting in a mean score of 3.50 (SD=0.655). Meanwhile, for item No. 15, 65.6% of students strongly agreed and 32.8% agreed that working in pairs and groups helped them make new friends, which is reflected in the highest mean score of 3.64 (SD=0.514) among the social benefits.

**Table 5: Lifelong Skills**

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
3. Working in pairs and groups made problem-solving easier.	50.4%	47.2%	2.4%	0.0%	3.48	0.548
4. Working in pairs and groups stimulated critical thinking.	28.0%	67.2%	4.8%	0.0%	3.23	0.526
8. Working in pairs and groups focused on collective efforts rather than individual effort.	36.8%	57.6%	5.6%	0.0%	3.31	0.574
9. Working in pairs and groups provided greater responsibility - for myself and the group.	49.6%	49.6%	0.8%	0.0%	3.49	0.518
11. Working in pairs and groups enhanced communication skills.	56.8%	41.6%	1.6%	0.0%	3.55	0.531
16. Working in pairs and groups fostered team spirit.	40.0%	58.4%	1.6%	0.0%	3.38	0.520

The data on lifelong skills highlights the significant role collaborative learning plays in equipping students with essential skills for their personal and professional development. The survey responses indicate a strong consensus on the numerous benefits of working in pairs and groups. For item No. 3, 50.4% strongly agreed and 47.2% agreed that participation in group settings significantly facilitated problem-solving, scoring a mean score of 3.48 (SD=0.548). Moreover, 28.0% strongly agreed and 67.2% agreed that collaborative work actively promoted critical thinking, resulting in a mean score of 3.23 (SD=0.526) for item No. 4. Additionally, for item No. 8, 36.8% strongly agreed and 57.6% agreed that group work prioritized collective efforts over individual contributions, leading to a mean score of 3.31 (SD=0.574). Regarding item No. 9, engaging in collaborative tasks instilled a heightened sense of responsibility, both personally and for the group, shares the same percentage of 49.6% with a mean score of 3.49 (SD=0.518). A significant majority, 56.8% strongly agreed and 41.6% agreed, collaborative learning enhance their communication skills, as reflected in the highest mean score of 3.55 (SD=0.531) for item No.11. Lastly the result for item No.16 indicates 40.0% strongly agreed and 58.4% agreed that collaborative work promoted team spirit, resulting in a mean score of 3.38 (SD=0.520).

**Table 6: Challenges**

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation
17. Working in pairs and groups wasted my time in explaining things to others.	4.0%	20.0%	40.0%	36.0%	1.92	0.848
18. Working in pairs and groups was difficult especially in getting members to actively participate in tasks.	7.2%	37.6%	44.8%	10.4%	2.42	0.774
19. Working in pairs and groups should be encouraged/continued.	37.6%	54.4%	8.0%	0.0%	3.30	0.609
20. Working in pairs and groups should be four (maximum group size).	47.2%	40.0%	8.0%	4.8%	3.30	0.813

The data on challenges associated with collaborative learning reveals several significant insights into the difficulties students encounter when participating in pairs and groups. Regarding item No.17, a minority of students, comprising 4.0% who strongly agreed and 20.0% who agreed, expressed the sentiment that working in pairs and groups led to time wastage in explaining things to others, resulting in a low mean score of 1.92 (SD=0.848), however, the majority disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Additionally, the result for item No.18 demonstrates 7.2% of students strongly agreed and 37.6% agreed that encountering participation difficulties among group members was challenging, resulting in a low level of agreement with a mean score of 2.42 (SD=0.774). For the statement of continuing group work in item No. 19, a significant majority, consisting of 37.6% who strongly agreed and 54.4% who agreed, supported the view that working in pairs and groups should be encouraged or continued, as reflected in a mean score of 3.30 (SD=0.609). Finally, regarding item No. 20, the optimal group size, 47.2% strongly agreed and 40.0% agreed that groups should consist of a maximum of four members, indicating a consensus reflected in a mean score of 3.30 (SD=0.813).

## Discussion

This study aims to investigate students' perspectives on collaborative learning practices in an English for Digital Technology course. Overall, the study showed positive feedback regarding collaborative learning across multiple elements, including academic benefits, social benefits, lifelong skills, and challenges. These findings emphasize the widespread recognition among students of the academic advantages derived from collaborative learning practices. Such methodologies are perceived to significantly enhance comprehension, facilitate knowledge exchange, improve the quality of feedback, generate insights, foster peer assistance, boost performance, and promote active engagement in the learning process. The outcomes align with previous studies, affirming that group work fosters substantial academic growth by facilitating discussions, concept clarification, and evaluation of peers' ideas. These results are consistent with those of (Hassanien, 2006), which indicated that students regard group work as highly effective for expanding their knowledge through discussions, clarification of concepts, and the evaluation of others' ideas. Likewise, Kwon, C. (2014), found that sharing and discussing with peers enriched students with additional ideas and perspectives, further supporting the benefits of collaborative learning.

Additionally, the social benefits of collaborative learning are equally significant. The findings suggest that group work fosters a relaxed atmosphere, enhances the enjoyment of learning, and facilitates the formation of new friendships. These findings correspond with (Nair et al., 2012) where students reported that group work is enjoyable, interesting, and conducive to interaction, and they also recognized it as an effective learning method. Similarly, they align with (Kondo, A., 2010) which demonstrates that students have a more favorable attitude towards group work compared to individual activities. Furthermore, Ferdouse (2015), claimed that collaborative learning through group work has become a widely adopted and effective strategy for engaging students in quality learning, especially in learning English. When learners collaboratively work in groups, indirectly their language practice opportunities, the quality of student talk and their motivation may increase. At the same time, group work also facilitates individualised instruction and promotes a positive affectionate climate among group members. The data further highlights advantages such as mutual support, reduced individual workload, and increased participation from lower-achieving students. Situmorang (2021), in her study found that group work or collaborative learning brings a positive impact on students' learning habits and attitudes personally and in groups. Hence increases the learners' commitment in completing assignments. Additionally, the study's results indicated that the technique helped students

develop their readiness to take responsibility, increased their confidence in sharing ideas with others, improved task completion, and nurtured their ability to respect others. Therefore, these social benefits significantly contribute to a holistic educational experience, enriching both academic and interpersonal development.

Moreover, the data on lifelong skills reveals the profound benefits of collaborative learning in the English for Digital Technology course. Students have identified several key areas where participation in pair and group activities has been crucial in fostering the acquisition of essential skills. These findings demonstrate the comprehensive impact of collaborative learning on students' lifelong skills, including problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, responsibility, and communication. In the context of language acquisition, namely in English classrooms, the implementation of collaborative learning strategies provides a dynamic method for students to enhance their linguistic proficiency and critical thinking skills. This finding corresponds with Gokhale (1995), who found that students who engaged in collaborative learning significantly outperformed those who studied individually on the critical-thinking test. In addition, Ibrahim et al. (2015), asserted that collaborative work reduces dependence on teachers and enhances learners' ability to actively participate in conversations through small-group interaction, which is beneficial for language acquisition. When students work collaboratively in groups, they can support one another and provide constructive feedback. This process fosters communicative growth and boosts self-confidence in both the group and individual students (Hay & Nilsson, 2016). Situmorang (2021), in her study, found that group work positively influenced students' attitudes and heightened their commitment to completing assignments. Based on videotaped classroom observations and semi-structured face-to-face interviews conducted by Kondo, A. (2010), there were several advantages of group work, such as fostering cooperative attitudes, reducing individual workloads, and encouraging participation from lower-achieving students. Nair et al., (2012), agreed that a collaborative learning environment also promotes interaction among group members and at the same time provides interesting and enjoyable English lessons. Hence, collaborative language learning is more favoured today than in the past, as research has demonstrated that students working together on problems or issues can generate more valid and practical solutions than working individually. Additionally, Orr (2010), stated that students valued group work, viewing it as an authentic and effective preparation for life after graduation in the creative sector. These findings align with the broader educational discourse, suggesting that collaborative learning enhances academic performance and prepares students for future professional environments. This preparation is particularly relevant for careers in the digital technology sector, where teamwork and collaborative problem-solving are important.

Furthermore, despite some challenges related to time wastage and participation, the findings signify the overall perception of collaborative learning remains positive. Most students believe that group work should continue and that smaller group sizes may enhance the collaborative experience. These challenges are reflected in other studies, for instance, (Hassanien, 2006) identified poor communication and poor attendance at group meetings as the primary obstacles students encounter in group work. Additionally, Kwon (2014), highlighted another drawback, the efficiency of group work often depends on the group members. In addition, variations in education levels and proficiency among students were found to impact both group work and collaborative writing. Overall, the findings demonstrate the significant benefits of collaborative learning while acknowledging the challenges and emphasizing the need for strategies to optimize group dynamics and participation.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendation

The comprehensive analysis of students' perspectives on collaborative learning in an English for Digital Technology course underscores the significant benefits and minor challenges associated with such pedagogical approaches. This study highlights the broad academic, social, and lifelong skill advantages perceived by students who are involved in collaborative learning methods. They believe that collaborative learning enhances comprehension, promotes effective peer-assisted learning, and creates enjoyable learning environments which is very valuable in English classrooms. The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that collaborative learning helps close the gap between students with different levels of English proficiency. In diverse groups, students with stronger language skills often mentor their peers, offering support and guidance with language tasks. This process benefits lower-proficiency students by providing immediate help and boosts higher-proficiency students by reinforcing their own understanding. Collaborative learning promotes active listening, respect, and adaptability—key skills for multicultural and multilingual workplaces. The result indicates that engagement in pair and group activities not only enhances academic and social experiences but also equips students with essential skills for their future professional and personal lives. Students recognise that collaborative learning not only facilitates problem-solving and critical thinking but also promotes collective effort, responsibility, communication skills, and team spirit. These skills are crucial for their future endeavours, emphasizing the value of incorporating collaborative learning strategies in educational curricula. Therefore, these skills are particularly relevant for careers in the digital technology sector, where teamwork and collaborative problem-solving are essential.

Despite the positive feedback, students acknowledge certain challenges inherent in collaborative learning such as time wastage and uneven participation. However, these challenges are not overwhelming. The study suggests that optimizing group interaction through smaller group sizes and more structured group management could solve these issues, enhancing the overall collaborative experience. Overall, the findings underline the importance of incorporating collaborative learning strategies in English for Digital Technology course. Hence, it is affirmed that by fostering a collaborative environment, educators can enhance students' educational experiences and prepare them for future professional environments. Educators are encouraged to integrate and optimize collaborative strategies to maximize these benefits. Educators need to address challenges in collaborative learning effectively to prevent the student's withdrawal. Furthermore, the assessment methods should be designed to account for both individual and group contributions, ensuring a fair evaluation of collaborative efforts. These insights are essential for educators striving to create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that prepares students for the demands of the digital technology field and beyond. Additionally, educators should use strategies that match students' different skill levels. This can include providing support materials, adjusting task difficulty, and offering guidance to keep all students engaged. Regular feedback sessions can help students track their progress and build stronger teamwork skills. Teaching soft skills like communication, time management, and conflict resolution can also create smoother group interactions. These strategies not only enhance learning but also prepare students for working effectively in diverse teams in the future. Further research is needed to explore the benefits of collaborative learning in English classrooms. This study was limited by its small sample size of only 125 participants and did not include students from other departments within the polytechnic. As a result, its findings cannot be generalized to all students across other polytechnics in Malaysia. Future studies should involve a larger sample that includes students from various departments and

polytechnics throughout the country. With a broader sample, the findings could be generalized and validated more effectively.

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