

TEACHERS' PRACTICES IN PAIR AND GROUP WORK FOR PRIMARY ENGLISH CLASSES AT SDN 112306 AEK KORSIK

Najatamara¹, Rahma Puspita², Syifa Salsabila³, Eva Betty Simanjuntak⁴, Dea Yunita Nasution⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Universitas Negeri Medan

Email: najatamara378@gmail.com¹, rahmapuspita105@gmail.com²,
syifasalsabila29082006@gmail.com³

Abstract: *This study investigates the implementation of pair work and group work strategies in English language teaching at SDN 112306 Aek Korsik. It aims to explore how the teacher designs collaborative tasks, organizes groups, identifies challenges, and applies solutions to ensure effective learning. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with one English teacher and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's stages of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the teacher forms groups heterogeneously based on ability, learning styles, interests, and social dynamics. Pair and group work help students enhance communication skills, increase confidence, improve comprehension, and practice teamwork. Challenges identified include unequal participation, dominance by certain students, low motivation, and communication barriers. These issues are addressed through clear instructions, scaffolding, role assignment, close monitoring, and small-group structuring. The study concludes that collaborative learning strategies are effective in primary English classrooms, supporting both academic and socio-emotional development while aligning with current 21st-century educational demands.*

Keywords: *Pair Work, Group Work, Collaborative Learning, Primary English.*

Abstrak: Studi ini menyelidiki penerapan strategi kerja berpasangan dan kerja kelompok dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris di SDN 112306 Aek Korsik. Tujuannya adalah untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana guru merancang tugas kolaboratif, mengorganisir kelompok, mengidentifikasi tantangan, dan menerapkan solusi untuk memastikan pembelajaran yang efektif. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan seorang guru bahasa Inggris dan dianalisis menggunakan tahapan reduksi data, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan dari Miles dan Huberman. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru membentuk kelompok secara heterogen berdasarkan kemampuan, gaya belajar, minat, dan dinamika sosial. Kerja berpasangan dan kerja kelompok membantu siswa meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi, meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, meningkatkan pemahaman, dan melatih kerja sama tim. Tantangan yang diidentifikasi meliputi partisipasi yang tidak setara, dominasi oleh siswa tertentu, motivasi rendah, dan

hambatan komunikasi. Masalah-masalah ini diatasi melalui instruksi yang jelas, perancah, penugasan peran, pemantauan ketat, dan penataan kelompok kecil. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran kolaboratif efektif di kelas bahasa Inggris sekolah dasar, mendukung perkembangan akademik dan sosial-emosional sekaligus selaras dengan tuntutan pendidikan abad ke-21 saat ini.

Kata Kunci: Kerja Berpasangan, Kerja Kelompok, Pembelajaran Kolaboratif, Bahasa Inggris Dasar.

INTRODUCTION

English learning in the primary school context plays a crucial role in shaping students' early exposure to foreign language use. Children learn effectively through interaction, cooperation, and hands-on activities, making collaborative learning strategies—such as pair work and group work—highly relevant. These methods allow students to negotiate meaning, share ideas, and communicate in a low-anxiety environment.

However, implementing collaborative learning is not without challenges. Students differ significantly in ability levels, personalities, learning preferences, and readiness to participate. Some students become active contributors, while others remain passive or overly dependent on peers. Classroom management, time constraints, and material limitations also affect the success of collaborative strategies. Previous studies (Johnson & Johnson, 2021; Hastings, 2024) stress the need for structured planning, clear task instructions, and group roles to optimize participation.

Despite its potential, there is limited research focusing specifically on how primary English teachers in rural Indonesian schools design and manage collaborative activities. This gap makes the present study relevant. It aims to describe the teacher's practices in forming groups, designing collaborative activities, identifying obstacles, and applying strategies to overcome them. The findings are expected to contribute practical insights for teachers, schools, and policymakers to strengthen English learning at the primary level. Penggunaan istilah Pendahuluan untuk bagian pertama ini. Jenis huruf yang digunakan untuk menyusun pendahuluan adalah Book Antiqua ukuran 12, line spacing 1,5sp.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Collaborative learning is grounded in socio-cultural theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through social interaction. Pair and group work enable young learners to practice linguistic functions—including asking questions, describing, explaining, and negotiating—in meaningful contexts. Several factors influence the success of collaborative learning:

1. Clear instructions, especially for young learners who require concrete steps.
2. Purposeful group composition that considers ability differences, personality traits, and learning styles.
3. Task interdependence, where each member contributes meaningfully.
4. Teacher facilitation, which involves monitoring, supporting, and managing group dynamics.

Challenges such as noise, uneven participation, social conflict, and low engagement are frequently reported in primary classrooms (Maulida & Hasan, 2023). Solutions include structured roles (leader, recorder, presenter), brief modeling sessions, reward systems, simplified instructions, and the use of visual aids.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach. The study was conducted at MIS Ikhwanul Muslimin II, with one English teacher, Mrs. Sri Wahyuni, serving as the main participant. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews to capture authentic experiences concerning the use of pair and group work.

Data were analyzed using Miles & Huberman's framework:

1. Data Reduction – selecting meaningful statements and categorizing themes.
2. Data Display – organizing information into descriptive narratives.
3. Conclusion Drawing – synthesizing findings into insights about teaching practices.

Ethical considerations included gaining permission from the school and ensuring participant confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How the Teacher Forms Pairs and Groups

The teacher uses a guided-random grouping system to ensure diversity in ability levels, learning styles, and social interaction patterns. This method enables stronger students to support weaker ones through peer scaffolding. Students are rotated periodically to prevent dependency and to help them develop wider social connections.

2. Factors Considered in Group Formation

Several considerations guide the teacher's decisions:

- Academic ability: Higher-level students help explain concepts to lower-level peers.
- Learning styles: Balanced groups ensure varied strengths—visual, auditory, kinesthetic.
- Interests and talents: Students with complementary skills (e.g., drawing, speaking, writing) enhance task outcomes.
- Social comfort: Avoiding conflict-prone pairings helps maintain harmony.

3. Benefits of Pair and Group Work

Pair and group work improve:

- speaking confidence, especially for shy students
- interaction and communication skills
- comprehension, as students explain concepts to each other
- cooperation and empathy, essential 21st-century skills
- motivation, since students enjoy working with peers

The teacher notes that students participate more actively in small groups than during whole-class activities.

4. Challenges Encountered

Key challenges include:

- unbalanced participation
- dominant students overshadowing others
- low engagement among less confident learners
- communication barriers

- increased classroom noise

These challenges align with findings from earlier research on collaborative learning.

5. Strategies Used to Overcome Challenges

To address challenges, the teacher:

- forms smaller groups for easier management
- assigns roles (leader, writer, timekeeper, presenter)
- gives clear step-by-step instructions
- monitors groups closely and provides guidance
- encourages equal participation through prompting and turn-taking

6. Researchers' Suggested Solutions

Researchers recommend additional strategies such as:

- using sentence frames to support low-proficiency students
- rotating roles regularly
- using group assessment rubrics
- incorporating games and storytelling to increase motivation
- conducting reflection sessions to build self-awareness.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of this study highlight that pair and group work constitute highly effective approaches in primary English learning, particularly in promoting meaningful interaction and student engagement. At SDN 112306 Aek Korsik, the teacher implements these strategies through careful consideration of learners' diverse abilities, personalities, and learning preferences. This thoughtful approach enables students to collaborate productively and support one another through peer scaffolding, which directly contributes to improvements in comprehension, fluency, confidence, and interpersonal communication.

Despite its effectiveness, the implementation of collaborative learning is accompanied by various challenges. Issues such as limited participation, dominance by certain students, communication barriers, and inconsistent motivation are recurring concerns in primary classrooms. However, the teacher's use of structured roles, simplified instructions, modeling,

and continuous monitoring demonstrates that these challenges can be mitigated effectively when appropriate pedagogical strategies are applied.

Overall, this study concludes that pair and group work are not merely supplementary techniques but essential components of student-centered learning. They help cultivate critical educational competencies, including cooperation, active communication, empathy, responsibility, and problem-solving—competencies that are highly relevant to 21st-century learning goals. Moreover, the findings reinforce that collaborative learning is feasible even in schools with limited resources, provided that teachers design activities thoughtfully and give consistent guidance throughout the process.

The study recommends that English teachers continue to explore varied forms of collaborative learning, integrate visual and game-based materials to sustain engagement, and conduct regular evaluations of group performance. Future research may extend this study by observing classroom implementation directly, comparing multiple schools, or analyzing student outcomes quantitatively to further strengthen the understanding of collaborative learning effectiveness in Indonesian primary education.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brown, H. D. (2020). *Teaching Young Learners: Language Learning Principles*. London: Routledge.
- Green, P., & Patel, R. (2023). "Think and Pair Before Share: Collaboration Effects in Early Childhood." *Education Journal*, 14(2).
- Halim, S., & Sari, D. (2021). "Peer Interaction and Cognitive Development in Primary Schools." *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar*.
- Hastings, S., & Schwieso, J. (2024). The Effects of Classroom Seating Layouts on Participation and Learning Achievement. *Journal of Learning Spaces*, 9(1).
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2021). *Cooperative Learning: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kim, S., & Lee, C. (2022). "Group Dynamics and Learning Outcomes in Elementary Education: A Meta-analysis." *Educational Psychology Review*.
- Lee, C., & Kim, S. (2022). "Meta-Analysis on Group Work Outcomes in Elementary Schools." *Educational Psychology Review*.

- Lestari, W. (2022). "Teacher Competence in Managing Collaborative Learning." *Jurnal Pembelajaran Inovatif*.
- Maulida, R., & Hasan, M. (2023). "Challenges in Implementing Group Work in SD." *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*.
- Nurhayati, I. (2022). "Student-Centered English Instruction in Indonesian Primary Schools." *Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*.
- Putri, A., & Ahsan, R. (2020). "Homogeneous Grouping Strategy in ESL Classes." *Language Teaching Review*.
- Putri, L. (2021). "Kendala Guru dalam Penerapan Pembelajaran Kolaboratif di SD." *Jurnal Inovasi Pembelajaran Dasar*.
- Rochmat, A. (2021). "Peer Scaffolding in Young Learners' Language Class." *Jurnal ELT Indonesia*.
- Simbolon, N., & Simanjuntak, E. B. (2025). *Pembelajaran Bilingual*. Medan: Universitas Negeri Medan.
- Slavin, R. E. (2019). *Cooperative Learning and Student Achievement*. Pearson.
- Smith, J., & Brown, A. (2024). "Improving Young Children's Peer Collaboration in Early Education Settings." *British Educational Research Journal*.
- Wibowo, L. (2023). "Game-Based Pair Activities in Language Learning." *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Anak*.