

Exploring Collaborative Learning from Teachers' and Students' Perspectives in Secondary ELT Classrooms

Koshal Raj Gautam¹; Baburam Bhandari²

^{1,2}Department of English Education
Bhairahawa Multiple Campus

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Abstract: This study explores collaborative learning from the perspectives of teachers and students in secondary English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. Adopting a survey research design, data were collected from 30 teachers and 60 students in institutional schools within Siddharthanagar Municipality through a close-ended questionnaire. The study aimed to investigate their perceptions of collaborative learning and identify commonly practiced activities that promote it. The findings revealed that group work, project work, think-pair-share, role play, and simulation were the most frequently employed techniques. Both teachers and students acknowledged that collaborative learning enhances students' understanding, communication skills, and active participation in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers emphasized the importance of creating supportive and inclusive learning environments, while students highlighted the value of meaningful engagement and teamwork. The study concludes that collaborative learning is a vital approach for improving language learning outcomes at the secondary level and recommends its wider adoption in ELT classrooms.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning, English Language Teaching, Teachers' Perspectives, Students' Perceptions, Secondary Education.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Collaborative learning is an educational strategy in which learners engage in group activities to pursue common academic objectives. This approach highlights active participation, collective responsibility, and the co-construction of knowledge through interaction and cooperation among students (Jonassen, 1995). The essence of collaborative learning lies in fostering an environment where learners can actively reflect on and develop their understanding with the support of peers.

In contemporary education, collaborative learning has become a highly effective method for fostering active participation and placing students at the center of the learning process. Fasawang (2011) explains that it involves students engaging in problem-solving tasks, completing assignments, or producing shared outcomes collectively. Unlike traditional methods, collaborative learning allows learners to take ownership of their educational experiences, promoting higher-order thinking, motivation, and interpersonal communication.

Johnson and Johnson (1999) state collaborative learning is an instructional method in which students with varying abilities participate in small groups to work toward a shared objective.. Gerlach (1994) also highlights the social nature of learning, suggesting that collaboration encourages dialogue, negotiation, and peer-supported development of ideas.

This approach can take many forms—peer instruction, group discussions, co-authoring tasks, and joint problem-solving—where learners not only engage with the content but also help one another progress. The effectiveness of collaborative learning in enhancing academic performance and interpersonal skills has been well-documented (Slavin, 1996).

Despite its potential, the practical implementation of collaborative learning strategies in Nepalese classrooms, particularly in English Language Teaching (ELT), remains inconsistent. Many classrooms still rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction. Challenges such as large class sizes, diverse student abilities, and lack of resources often hinder the meaningful integration of collaborative techniques.

Moreover, not all students are equally comfortable with group activities, creating further challenges for teachers to implement this approach effectively.

Theoretical perspectives from Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bandura support collaborative learning. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) underscores the importance of peer interaction in learning. Similarly, Piaget and Bandura emphasize social interaction and the role of environment in cognitive development, reinforcing the value of collaborative engagements in the classroom.

In the context of Nepal, collaborative learning has gained some ground, especially within the semester system of Tribhuvan University, where students often engage in group projects, presentations, and joint assignments as part of internal assessments. These activities are designed to promote critical thinking, teamwork, and professionalism. Teachers, in this setting, act more as facilitators, guiding students through reflective and experiential learning processes.

Collaborative learning activities such as seminars, workshops, critical reading sessions, group discussions, and co-research projects are being increasingly promoted to support students' academic, personal, and social growth. These practices aim to reduce competition and foster a spirit of mutual support, cooperation, and professional integrity.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

Despite English being taught from the early grades through higher education in Nepal, many ELT classrooms continue to face persistent challenges. Teacher-centered methodologies, limited classroom resources, and heterogeneous student populations often obstruct the adoption of innovative, learner-centered approaches. Although collaborative learning is widely acknowledged as an effective pedagogical method, its implementation in the Nepalese secondary school context is limited and inconsistent.

Several theoretical models advocate for the integration of student-centered methods such as group work, field studies, and collaborative tasks. However, a noticeable gap exists between these theoretical frameworks and actual classroom practices. Teachers often lack the resources, training, or institutional support needed to implement collaborative techniques effectively. Therefore, this study aims to examine the perceptions and practices of secondary-level English teachers regarding collaborative learning in their classrooms.

➤ *Objectives of the Study*

This study had following objectives :

- To examine secondary-level English teachers' perceptions and implementation of collaborative learning in ELT classrooms.
- To identify and categorize the collaborative learning activities commonly used by teachers and students in secondary ELT classrooms.

- To provide pedagogical recommendations for enhancing collaborative learning practices in secondary-level English language teaching.

➤ *Research Questions*

The study had the following research questions:

- How do secondary-level English teachers perceive and implement collaborative learning in ELT classrooms?
- Which collaborative learning activities are most frequently used by teachers and students in secondary ELT classrooms?
- Why are certain collaborative learning practices more effective, and how can they be applied to enhance English language teaching at the secondary level?

➤ *Significance of the Study*

This study holds significance for multiple stakeholders in the field of English language teaching at the secondary level. Firstly, it provides insights into teachers' and students' perceptions of collaborative learning, helping educators understand how such practices influence classroom interaction, engagement, and learning outcomes. Secondly, by identifying the types of collaborative activities employed in ELT classrooms, the study offers practical guidance for teachers seeking to implement effective student-centered learning strategies.

Furthermore, the findings can inform curriculum developers and policymakers about the relevance of collaborative approaches in enhancing English language proficiency and fostering critical thinking skills among learners. The study also contributes to the academic literature on collaborative learning in ELT, particularly in the context of secondary education in Nepal, where research on classroom-based collaborative practices remains limited.

Finally, the pedagogical recommendations derived from this research may help teachers design more inclusive and interactive classroom environments, thereby promoting shared responsibility, peer learning, and a deeper understanding of the English language. Overall, the study aims to bridge theory and practice by highlighting how collaborative learning can be effectively integrated into secondary-level ELT classrooms.

➤ *Delimitations of the Study*

The study had the following delimitations;

- The study delimited to a specific geographical area—Siddharthanagar Municipality, Rupandehi.
- The research included only thirty secondary-level English teachers as participants.
- A survey method research design was adopted, and the teachers were selected using purposive sampling.
- The research tools used were limited to questionnaires (both open- and closed-ended) and classroom observations.
- The focus was restricted to ELT classrooms at the secondary level, particularly in relation to collaborative learning practices.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Collaborative learning is based on socio-constructivist theory, which views learning as a social activity in which learners jointly construct knowledge through interaction and shared experiences. Oxford (1997) describes it as a transformative process enabling learners to integrate into new knowledge communities, while Smith and MacGregor (1992) highlight its role in engaging groups to construct meaning and solve problems collectively.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) serves as a fundamental basis for collaborative learning, especially through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights that learners can accomplish more with guided support and collaborative interaction than on their own. In ELT, peer tutoring, group discussions, and scaffolded tasks directly reflect this principle.

Dewey's Experiential Learning (1938) reinforces the idea of "learning by doing," where activities such as project-based and inquiry-driven tasks enable language learners to transfer theoretical knowledge into authentic communication.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986) further explains how observation, modeling, and interaction foster learning in group contexts. In language classrooms, imitation, peer modeling, and feedback promote speaking, listening, and self-regulation skills.

Kearsley and Shneiderman's Engagement Theory (1999) extends these ideas by highlighting technology-enhanced collaboration. Their model—Relating, Creating, Donating—demonstrates how meaningful, project-based activities supported by ICT tools can enhance learner engagement in ELT.

Johnson and Johnson (1990, 1999) state five key elements form the foundation of effective collaborative learning: positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive face-to-face interaction, social skills development, and group reflection or processing. These components ensure that group tasks are both cooperative and equitable. Richards and Rodgers (1986) similarly emphasize balancing individual accountability with collective outcomes to foster communicative competence in language learning.

Collaborative learning manifests through various strategies that encourage interaction and shared responsibility. Key approaches include Think-Pair-Share (Lyman, 1981), Jigsaw (Aronson, 1978), problem-based learning (Barrows, 1986), peer editing, simulations, and small group discussions. These methods align closely with communicative language teaching, as they promote active engagement, negotiation of meaning, and authentic use of language.

Empirical research finds out the positive impact of collaborative learning in ELT. Wee and Jacobs (2006) demonstrated improved engagement and confidence in secondary ELT classrooms using Think-Pair-Share and

Jigsaw activities. Lotfi (2009) highlighted the role of collaborative software tools in enhancing communication and critical thinking. Pichet (2011) reported gains in fluency and learner motivation in Thai universities, while Spear (1994) cautioned against challenges such as unequal participation.

Within Nepal, several studies have examined collaborative learning. Regmi (2011) found strong positive perceptions among teachers and students, particularly for vocabulary acquisition. Poudel (2015) identified group discussions and role-plays as effective in developing speaking fluency, though large classes and limited training impeded full implementation. Rai (2024) emphasized that collaborative learning not only improves students' language abilities but also fosters their critical thinking skills. Gautam (2025) revealed widespread use of pair work, simulations, and peer feedback in Rupandehi district, noting the need for greater institutional support and teacher training.

The reviewed literature indicates that collaborative learning enhances both language proficiency and 21st-century skills. However, challenges persist, including unequal participation, teacher readiness, and limited research focusing on Nepali secondary-level ELT classrooms. This study builds on existing work (Regmi, 2011; Poudel, 2015; Gautam, 2025) by exploring teachers' and students' perceptions and practices to inform more contextually responsive strategies.

The conceptual framework of this study integrates socio-cultural theory, constructivist learning principles, and engagement theory, illustrating the interaction between collaborative strategies (e.g., group work, peer tutoring, simulations) and desired outcomes such as communicative competence, critical thinking, and social interaction. It positions teacher facilitation and supportive environments as central to successful implementation.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a survey research design, a commonly adopted method in the social sciences and especially prevalent in educational research. Kerlinger (1986) described survey research as an approach that examines both large and small populations by analyzing samples drawn from them to identify. The population of interest in this study included all secondary-level students enrolled in institutional schools within the Rupandehi district.. However, due to time and resource limitations, a sample of 60 students from community schools was selected using random sampling technique, which, as Creswell (2012) suggests, guarantees that every individual in the population has an equal opportunity to be selected for the study. This sampling method ensures that every member of the population has an equal likelihood of being selected. approach is suitable for obtaining a representative and unbiased subset of the population, thereby enhancing the reliability of the results.

To address the research objectives comprehensively, both primary and secondary data sources were utilized.

The questionnaires were designed to explore students' and teachers' views, practices, and experiences regarding collaborative learning techniques in the English classroom. The tool was validated through expert consultation and piloting prior to its final administration.

The process of data collection followed a structured and ethical approach. Initially, the researcher visited 20 selected institutional schools in Rupandehi and sought permission from school administrators by explaining the research objectives. After establishing rapport with the head teachers and obtaining their consent, the researcher approached English teachers and students at the secondary level.

Questionnaires were distributed and filled during school hours in a supportive environment. The collected data were systematically organized and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency tables, bar graphs, and percentage charts. As noted by Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010), descriptive statistics offer a concise and clear summary of research data, allowing for meaningful interpretation. In this study, the analysis was guided by the research objectives, focusing on two primary themes: (i) the degree to which collaborative learning is implemented in ELT classrooms, and (ii) the variety of collaborative learning activities employed by teachers.

Throughout the research, ethical considerations were rigorously observed. The study was conducted solely for academic purposes, and all participants were fully informed about the voluntary nature of their involvement. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection to ensure adherence to ethical standards (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018).

Participant confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, and no personal identifiers were recorded. Respondents were assured that their data would be used exclusively for academic analysis and reporting. Additionally, measures were taken to minimize any potential physical, psychological, or emotional discomfort for participants during the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, analysis and interpretation of data collected from both primary and secondary sources have been analyzed and interpreted. The data were collected through the questionnaire and were analyzed from both qualitative and quantitative approach of data analysis. The collected data through open-ended questions were analyzed thematically and the responses obtained from the close ended questions were analyzed statistically in tables, pie chart and graphs on the basis of major themes.

➤ *Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Collaborative Learning in ELT Classroom*

The following section reports on teachers' practices of collaborative learning (CL) in secondary-level English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. Data were collected based on four main thematic areas: the extent of CL implementation, students' participation and engagement, teacher support in CL activities, and the contribution of CL to problem-solving. Within these themes, ten specific statements were presented to the participants, who rated their responses using a four-point Likert scale: Always, Often, Sometimes, and Rarely.

I can also rephrase it in 2–3 alternative versions to give you options for your research report. Do you want me to do that?

Table 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Collaborative Learning in ELT Classrooms

S.N	Statement	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
1	Collaborative learning enhances student engagement and language acquisition	30%	70%	0%	0%
2	Collaborative learning helps improve students' language fluency	68%	32%	0%	0%
3	Collaborative learning makes students feel more included and valued	56%	30%	14%	0%
4	Collaborative learning promotes better student-student interaction compared to traditional methods	77%	23%	0%	0%
5	Collaborative learning enables students to cultivate essential social and teamwork skills.	70%	15%	15%	0%
6	Students working collaboratively are more likely to take responsibility for their learning	65%	15%	20%	0%
7	Students benefit more from peer feedback in collaborative environments than from teacher feedback alone	75%	10%	15%	0%
8	Collaborative learning improves classroom dynamics and reduces behavioral problems	80%	15%	5%	0%
9	Collaborative learning facilitates differentiated instruction, addressing the diverse needs of learners.	78%	17%	5%	0%
10	Collaborative learning prepares students for real-world situations requiring teamwork and communication	80%	15%	5%	0%

The data in Table 1 indicate that teachers strongly perceive collaborative learning (CL) as effective in secondary ELT classrooms. Most respondents reported that CL consistently enhances student engagement, language fluency, peer interaction, teamwork, and classroom dynamics, with 70–80% selecting “Always” and the remainder “Often.” Teachers also recognized CL’s role in promoting peer feedback, differentiated instruction, and real-world preparedness. Slight variability appeared in areas such as students feeling fully included (56% Always) and taking responsibility for their learning (65% Always), suggesting occasional challenges in achieving complete inclusivity and autonomy. Overall, the findings reflect a

strong, positive consensus among teachers regarding the benefits and regular practice of CL in ELT.

➤ *Use of Collaborative Learning Activities*

Teacher collaboration benefits both students and the broader school community by fostering a supportive, student-centered environment. This aligns with theorists like Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky, who emphasized social interaction and cooperation in learning. Table 2 presents student responses on the perceived benefits of collaborative learning activities at the secondary level, using a four-point Likert scale.

Table 2: Benefits of Collaborative Learning for Students

SN	Benefits of Collaborative Learning	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	It helps facilitate cooperative learning with peers	68%	32%	0%	0%
2	It strengthens friendships and promotes team spirit along with learning	40%	60%	0%	0%
3	It empowers students to express their opinions more freely and confidently	42%	52%	6%	0%
4	It enables easier problem solving	52%	46%	2%	0%
5	It promotes student creativity	30%	68%	1%	1%
6	It improves teaching practices and enhances student learning	65%	31%	4%	0%
7	Learners come to understand that their achievements are interlinked with the accomplishments of their peers.	70%	23%	7%	0%
8	It helps students discover their strengths and build self-confidence	75%	23%	5%	2%
9	Collaborative cultures are associated with greater student learning outcomes	60%	20%	12%	8%
10	Collaborative learning serves as a highly effective strategy for teachers to enhance student engagement and achievement.	70%	20%	10%	0%

The data in Table 2 indicate that teachers overwhelmingly perceive collaborative learning (CL) as highly beneficial for students. Most teachers agreed or strongly agreed that CL facilitates cooperative learning, strengthens friendships and team spirit, boosts self-confidence, promotes problem-solving, and enhances creativity and critical thinking. It was also viewed as effective in improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes, with a significant majority recognizing its role in fostering interconnected success among students and creating a positive classroom culture. Only a small

minority expressed doubts about its impact on learning outcomes, suggesting that while the overall perception is strongly positive, the effectiveness of CL may vary depending on its implementation.

➤ *Students’ Engagement and involvement in Collaborative Learning*

Table 3 displays the students’ levels of engagement and participation in collaborative learning. Their responses were collected using four options: ‘strongly agree(SA),’ ‘agree,(A)’ ‘disagree (D),’ and ‘strongly disagree.(SD)

Table 3: Students’ Perceptions of Collaborative Learning

S.N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Cooperation and collaboration among peers help in solving problems	34%	64%	0%	2%
2	Collaborative learning makes students motivated to do their best	23%	65%	11%	1%
3	Students become more responsible in a collaborative learning environment	34%	66%	0%	0%
4	Teamwork fosters both self-worth and appreciation for others	75%	25%	0%	0%
5	Collaborative learning develops students’ communication skills	67%	28%	2%	3%
6	Group work makes language learning easier and more interesting	80%	20%	0%	0%
7	Students prefer cooperative learning because it builds	65%	25%	7%	3%

S.N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
	positive classroom relationships				
8	Collaborative learning supports more engaged, hands-on learning and improves communicative skills	70%	30%	0%	0%
9	Collaborative learning enhances cognitive development through group discussion, projects, cooperation, and idea sharing	80%	20%	0%	0%
10	Collaborative learning provides opportunities to build communication, social, interpersonal, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills necessary for future careers	80%	20%	0%	0%

Table 3 reveals that students hold highly positive perceptions of collaborative learning (CL). A significant majority agreed that CL enhances problem-solving (98%), motivation (88%), and responsibility (100%). Most students reported that teamwork builds self-worth and mutual appreciation (100%), strengthens communication skills (95%), and makes language learning more interesting and enjoyable (100%).

Furthermore, CL was perceived to foster positive relationships (90%), promote active participation (100%), and enhance cognitive development through group work (100%). It also provides opportunities to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills (100%). Only a very small fraction (up to 10%) expressed disagreement on aspects like motivation and classroom relationships.

Overall, the findings indicate that students view CL as an effective, engaging, and skill-enhancing strategy that improves both learning outcomes and classroom interaction, aligning with constructivist and social learning principles.

➤ *Students' Perceptions of Collaborative Learning in ELT Classrooms*

When schools create opportunities for students to learn through group activities, peer observation, discussions, and various forms of assessment, “a teacher’s daily practice transforms into meaningful professional development.” Additionally, teacher teams collaborate, exchange experiences, and focus on professional growth to better understand how students engage in collaborative learning within ELT classrooms.

Data were collected from 30 teachers across 20 institutional schools in Siddharthanagar Municipality using 20 close-ended questions.

The table below illustrates students’ perceptions of their collaborative learning (CL) experiences, with a focus on project work, personal growth, and active participation. They expressed their level of agreement with each statement using the scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Table 4: Students’ Perceptions of Collaborative Learning Practices

S.N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	There is a strong alignment between classroom learning and everyday experiences.	0%	83%	17%	0%
2	I can apply my skills and insights more effectively in project work	70%	30%	0%	0%
3	Working on group projects broadens my understanding and improves my interactive skills	15%	75%	10%	0%
4	I enjoy learning more through collaboration than learning alone	77%	23%	0%	0%
5	Working in a team builds my confidence and reduces Hesitation	80%	20%	0%	0%
6	Collaboration was challenging, but it improved my communication, critical thinking, and social interaction skills	70%	30%	0%	0%
7	Collaborative learning motivated me to do my best	20%	69%	11%	0%
8	Collaborative learning taught me to work with multimedia tools, build networks, and collaborate from home	35%	50%	15%	0%
9	I found the project challenging yet intellectually stimulating	45%	50%	5%	0%
10	I consider myself a better learner now	43%	49%	8%	0%

The data from 30 teachers and 120 students across 20 institutional schools in Siddharthanagar Municipality reveal strong positive perceptions of collaborative learning (CL). Most students agreed that CL connects course content to real-world contexts (83%) and enhances project-based application of skills (70% strongly agree, 30% agree). Group work was reported to improve understanding (75%), interaction skills (70%), and confidence (80%). A large majority (77%) preferred collaboration over individual learning, finding it more enjoyable and motivating (89% agreed/strongly agreed).

Students noted that CL improved their communication, critical thinking, and social interaction skills, even when initially challenging. It also promoted the use of multimedia tools and networking (85% positive) and made learning both stimulating and challenging (95%). Nearly all students felt they had become better learners as a result.

The results correspond with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which highlights the importance of guided interaction in learning. Similarly, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory underscores the role of active participation and reflection in knowledge construction. In addition, Bandura's (1986) social learning theory helps explain the development of confidence and the influence of peer modeling observed in the findings. Collectively, these perspectives indicate that collaborative learning (CL) serves as a valuable, engaging, and skill-enriching approach in secondary-level ELT.

V. DISCUSSION

The data indicate a generally positive perception of collaborative learning (CL) among students in ELT classrooms. Students recognized CL as effective in connecting course content to real-world applications, applying skills in project work, and enhancing understanding through peer interaction. Most students expressed a preference for collaborative methods over individual learning, noting that group work fosters confidence, communication, critical thinking, and social skills. CL was also seen as motivating, with students acknowledging its role in developing digital literacy and engagement through multimedia tools. Despite occasional challenges, the majority found collaborative projects stimulating and beneficial, contributing to improved learning outcomes, learner autonomy, and metacognitive awareness.

Teachers similarly valued collaborative activities, with 30% reporting always using them and 70% frequently implementing them. They observed that CL enhances understanding, problem-solving, creativity, teamwork, and responsibility. Practices such as group work, think-pair-share, role plays, simulations, and project work promote active participation and equal expression among students. Although collaborative methods may initially appear time-consuming or challenging, teachers highlighted their significant long-term benefits for both student learning and classroom engagement. Overall, the findings affirm that CL

positively impacts academic achievement, personal growth, and essential life skills in ELT contexts.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This study confirms that collaborative learning (CL) is a highly effective yet underutilized approach in secondary-level English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepal. Although 70% of teachers acknowledged its importance, only 30% implemented it consistently, largely due to contextual constraints such as large class sizes, limited resources, and insufficient training. CL was found to enhance communication, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and emotional growth, aligning with the principles of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978; Dillenbourg, 1999). Common strategies included group work, pair work, and think-pair-share, but their inconsistent application indicates a need for stronger institutional support and sustained professional development (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998). Overall, CL holds transformative potential to foster student-centered, interactive learning communities, provided that national policies prioritize its integration and align with 21st-century educational goals (OECD, 2018).

At the policy level, national guidelines should mandate the integration of collaborative learning (CL) in English Language Teaching (ELT) curricula, supported by structured teacher training, workshops, and seminars that emphasize digital tools and student-centred approaches ensuring inclusivity and equal opportunities. At the practice level, teachers should be encouraged to implement diverse CL methods (e.g., group work, think-pair-share, simulations) while fostering teamwork, open communication, and differentiated strategies to meet varied learner needs. Sustained teacher engagement through regular use of collaborative techniques can enhance motivation and deeper learning. Further research should explore the challenges faced by teachers in applying CL, gather qualitative insights into their experiences, refine strategies for the Nepali ELT context, and use findings to continuously improve both policy and classroom practices.

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