

STRENGTHENING ENGLISH COMPETENCE FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PRACTICES IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract: This study aims to explore how collaborative learning practices can strengthen English competence among junior high school students and support their empowerment as future global citizens. The research is motivated by the growing need for young learners to acquire English communication skills that are relevant to the demands of the digital era, ASEAN community integration, and the broader context of global citizenship. This qualitative study was conducted at Junior High School 22 Kendari, involving in-depth interviews with English teachers and students, classroom observations, and analysis of student learning documentation, including project outputs and reflective journals. The findings reveal that collaborative learning fosters an inclusive and engaging classroom atmosphere where students are motivated to actively use English in meaningful contexts. Group-based activities, discussions, and project tasks help students not only improve their speaking and writing skills, but also develop critical thinking, teamwork, and intercultural sensitivity. The study also identifies challenges, such as varying levels of student confidence and the need for more structured guidance in group tasks, but highlights the overall positive impact on student motivation and participation. The results suggest that contextualized, project-based English learning with a collaborative focus can serve as an effective strategy to promote youth empowerment and prepare students for participation in a globalized world. This study provides insights that may inform the development of English language teaching practices aimed at fostering global citizenship values in similar educational settings.

Keywords: English Competence; Global Citizenship; Collaborative Learning; Qualitative Study; Junior High School

1. Introduction

The mastery of English has become a vital skill for students in the era of globalization, digital transformation, and ASEAN community integration. As a lingua franca, English provides access to knowledge, enables cross-cultural communication, and supports participation in international networks, all of which contribute to the development of global citizenship. Global citizenship involves active engagement, intercultural understanding, and the capacity to address shared global challenges. In Indonesia, junior high school students are at a formative stage where language learning and value formation occur together, making this a strategic period to integrate English learning with global citizenship principles. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2023) show that although English is a compulsory subject at the junior high school level, only about 35 percent of students reach intermediate proficiency, indicating a substantial gap in communicative competence. At the global level, UNESCO's 2024 progress review of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) reports that Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, continues to face difficulties in embedding global citizenship values into language curricula.

Collaborative learning offers a promising approach to promote active participation, peer interaction, and shared responsibility in learning outcomes. Research has shown that this method not only strengthens language skills but also cultivates teamwork, empathy, and intercultural awareness. Despite these benefits, few empirical studies have explored how collaborative learning can specifically enhance English competence for global citizenship in the Indonesian junior high school context. This study therefore aims to investigate how

collaborative learning practices can improve students' English competence, develop their global citizenship values, and address the challenges that may emerge during implementation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 English Competence and Global Citizenship

English competence refers to the ability to communicate effectively in English across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Its role in fostering global citizenship has been emphasized in recent studies, as it is closely tied to intercultural understanding, global collaboration, and the ability to participate in international discourse. A survey-based study by Tran and Pham (2023) found that English proficiency significantly predicted university students' readiness to engage in global issues, highlighting its importance for developing global perspectives in educational contexts.

Similarly, Meng et al. (2024) conducted a multinational investigation and concluded that foreign language learning, particularly English, has a positive effect on global competence, including intercultural sensitivity and problem-solving skills in multicultural settings, regardless of cultural orientation.

A more recent review by Fang and Baker (2025) analyzed global English language education policies and found that integrating global citizenship frameworks into language curricula improves learners' intercultural awareness and critical thinking, especially when linked with real-world issues. These studies underline the essential role of English in enabling active participation in global communities.

2.2 Collaborative Learning in Language Education

Collaborative learning, in which learners work in groups to achieve shared learning outcomes, has attracted attention for its potential to improve both language competence and higher-order thinking skills. An experimental study by Rahman et al. (2022) found that group-based English learning activities significantly improved vocabulary acquisition and speaking fluency among junior high school students when compared to traditional teacher-centered approaches.

Expanding on this, Nurdiana et al. (2024) applied the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) model in an eighth-grade English class and observed a nearly 99% improvement in reading comprehension scores. They attributed this success to structured peer discussions, role-based collaboration, and mutual scaffolding among learners, which created an engaging and supportive environment for language practice.

Additionally, Yamada and Smith (2024) conducted a cross-national study comparing collaborative learning methods in Japan and Australia, finding that project-based collaborative tasks significantly enhanced students' language fluency and intercultural competence, particularly when group diversity was high. These results emphasize that collaborative learning benefits are amplified when the activities are contextualized and culturally responsive.

2.3 Challenges in Implementing Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning, defined as a process in which learners work together in groups to achieve shared learning outcomes, has gained recognition for its effectiveness in enhancing both language competence and higher-order thinking skills. In an experimental study, Rahman et al. (2022) reported that group-based English learning activities significantly improved vocabulary acquisition and speaking fluency among junior high school students compared to traditional teacher-centered approaches.

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3. Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the role of collaborative learning in strengthening English competence for global citizenship. It was conducted at Junior High School 22 Kendari from February to April 2025, involving two English teachers and twenty eighth-grade students selected purposively for their active participation in collaborative activities. The researcher attended the school as a non-participant observer during lessons.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, classroom observations, and analysis of student projects and reflective journals. Instruments included interview guides, observation sheets, and document checklists, supported by an audio recorder and field notes. The procedure comprised classroom observation, interviews, and document review.

Data were analyzed thematically following the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). The process began with initial coding, where all relevant statements from interviews, observations, and documents were labeled according to meaning units. This was followed by axial coding, in which related codes were grouped to identify broader categories. Finally, theme development was carried out to formulate overarching themes that represented patterns across the dataset, particularly regarding language skill improvement, student engagement, and the cultivation of global citizenship values. To ensure validity, data triangulation was applied by comparing findings across multiple data sources and methods, while member checking was conducted to verify interpretations with selected participants.

4. Finding and Discussion

Collaborative learning activities, such as group projects and peer discussions, significantly improved students' speaking and writing skills. Around 80% of the observed students showed more frequent use of English phrases during group discussions compared to individual work sessions. One student expressed, "Sebelumnya, saya malu berbicara bahasa Inggris, tetapi sekarang sudah tidak dan merasa lebih percaya diri karena teman-teman dalam kelompok saya membantu vocabnya" This aligns with the findings of Rahman et al. (2022), who demonstrated that peer collaboration in language classrooms creates authentic contexts for language use, leading to measurable improvements in communicative competence.

The study also revealed that collaborative projects enhanced students' teamwork, problem-solving abilities, and intercultural sensitivity, particularly when addressing global

themes such as environmental conservation and cultural diversity. More than three-quarters of participants actively engaged in exchanging ideas and sharing responsibilities during project work. A teacher commented, “Ketika siswa mengerjakan proyek tentang isu global, mereka menjadi lebih penasaran, lebih banyak bertanya, karena perbedaan perspektif dari keluarga serta budaya mereka” These results are consistent with Tran and Pham (2023), who found that English proficiency combined with collaborative learning fosters global citizenship values by encouraging active engagement in cross-cultural issues.

Despite these benefits, challenges were noted, including unequal participation and varying levels of English proficiency among students. Approximately 25% of students were less active during group work, often relying on peers to complete tasks. Some learners needed more structured guidance and clearly defined roles to contribute effectively. Similar challenges were identified by Li and Huang (2021), who emphasized that effective collaborative learning requires task clarity, teacher monitoring, and equitable role distribution to ensure balanced participation.

The findings indicate that contextualized, project-based collaborative learning not only strengthens linguistic competence but also promotes socio-emotional skills essential for global citizenship. This conclusion is consistent with the results of Suyato et al. (2024), who reported that collaborative learning approaches improve both academic and civic skills, making them a relevant strategy for preparing students to participate in a globalized world.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that collaborative learning is an effective approach to strengthening English competence among junior high school students while fostering global citizenship values. Through group-based activities, students enhanced their communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork, and intercultural understanding. The study recommends integrating collaborative, project-based English learning into the curriculum, supported by teacher training in group facilitation techniques. To make the recommendation more operational, schools can: (1) design English lesson plans that incorporate project-based collaborative tasks linked to global themes; (2) assign clear roles to each group member to ensure balanced participation; (3) provide structured guidance and monitoring during group activities; and (4) utilize both in-person and digital collaborative tools to extend interaction beyond the classroom. For policymakers, it is suggested to develop teacher professional development programs focusing on collaborative pedagogy and to allocate resources for implementing technology-supported collaborative learning. Future research could examine the long-term effects of such practices and explore digital platforms to support collaborative English learning.

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