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The impact of collaborative learning on enhancing speaking skills of college students

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Abstract
Collaborative learning has gained increasing attention in the field of language education, particularly for its potential to enhance spoken English skills and overall learning experiences for college students. This paper provides a comprehensive review of the benefits, implications, and future research directions related to collaborative learning in spoken English classes. The benefits discussed include improved language proficiency, increased motivation, enhanced critical thinking skills, and the development of collaboration competencies. The paper also explores the implications of collaborative learning for both educators and college students, offering practical suggestions for maximizing its benefits. Recommendations for future research focus on examining the impact of different collaborative learning activities, the role of technology, individual and cultural factors. By synthesizing current research and offering practical insights, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing improvement of spoken English education and promote the effective integration of collaborative learning in language classrooms.

Keywords: Collaborative learning, speaking skills, college spoken English, second language acquisition

1. Introductions
1.1 Background of Collaborative Learning
Collaborative learning, as an educational approach, has its roots in the early 20th century. The foundations of this approach can be traced back to the works of prominent educational theorists such as John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, and Jean Piaget, who emphasized the importance of social interaction in the learning process. These scholars argued that learning is not an isolated endeavor, but rather a complex, dynamic process that involves the interplay of cognitive, social, and emotional factors. In the 1970s and 1980s, collaborative learning gained increased attention as a result of the rising interest in the social aspects of learning and the growing recognition of the limitations of traditional, teacher-centered instructional methods. During this period, researchers and educators started to explore and implement various collaborative learning techniques, such as cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and project-based learning, in an effort to promote active learning, critical thinking, and social skills among students.

Collaborative learning is underpinned by the belief that students can learn more effectively when they work together in groups or teams, engaging in a shared endeavor to achieve common goals (Igel & Urquhart, 2012) [2]. This approach emphasizes the importance of interpersonal interaction and communication, as well as the constructive negotiation of meanings, ideas, and perspectives among learners. By working collaboratively, students are encouraged to pool their knowledge, skills, and resources, thereby fostering a sense of mutual interdependence and collective responsibility for their learning outcomes.

In recent years, the application of collaborative learning in language education has attracted considerable attention, as it offers a more authentic and engaging learning environment that closely resembles real-life communication contexts. In this setting, students are given ample opportunities to practice and develop their speaking skills, negotiate meaning, and exchange feedback with their peers. Furthermore, collaborative learning activities can help build students' confidence, motivation, and autonomy, which are crucial factors for successful language acquisition. As a result, collaborative learning provides a solid foundation for its application in college spoken English classes, as it aligns well with the goals and principles of effective language teaching and learning.

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1.2 Importance of Spoken English in College Education

Proficiency in spoken English is essential for effective communication, which is a vital skill for success in a globalized world (Rao, 2019) [6]. The importance of spoken English in college education is evident across academic, professional, and social domains. Fostering students' spoken English skills should be a central goal of college education, and collaborative learning offers a promising approach to achieving this objective. First, the mastery of spoken English is necessary for academic success, as it enables students to actively participate in classroom discussions, group projects, and oral presentations. Moreover, proficient spoken English is essential for understanding lectures and seminars delivered in English, particularly in contexts where English is used as a medium of instruction (EMI). Additionally, spoken English serves as a vital social tool that allows students to build relationships, engage in cultural exchanges, and participate in various extracurricular activities on campus. Many college students are exposed to diverse social environments, which often necessitate the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF). Developing spoken English skills not only promotes social integration and intercultural understanding but also fosters a sense of belonging and well-being among students. Furthermore, spoken English is a critical component of employability. As the global economy becomes increasingly interconnected, the demand for professionals with strong spoken English skills has grown considerably. Employers often seek candidates who can communicate effectively in English, as it facilitates collaboration and negotiation with colleagues, clients, and partners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Thus, having proficiency in spoken English enhances students' career prospects and offers a competitive advantage in the job market.

1.3 Significance of the Study

By examining the implementation of collaborative learning in spoken English classes, this study seeks to identify effective strategies and activities that can enhance students' speaking skills, motivation, and engagement. The findings of this research can provide valuable insights for language educators, who can use these strategies and activities to design and facilitate more effective and engaging learning experiences for their students. This research also has practical implications for college students, as it seeks to explore the impact of collaborative learning on their spoken English skills, motivation, and engagement. The findings of this study can inform students about the potential benefits of participating in collaborative learning activities and encourage them to actively engage in such activities to enhance their language learning outcomes. In the meanwhile, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of collaborative learning in the context of language education. By investigating the principles, theoretical foundations, and benefits of collaborative learning in spoken English classes, this research can help to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and advance our knowledge of how collaborative learning can be applied to promote language acquisition and development.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Definition and Principles of Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning can be defined as a pedagogical method that involves learners working together to solve problems, complete tasks, or create products, with the aim of enhancing their understanding and mastery of the subject matter (Sharan & Sharan, 1992) [7]. This approach encourages students to take an active role in their learning process, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills, as well as promoting a sense of mutual interdependence and shared responsibility for their learning outcomes (Warsah et al., 2021) [8].

Collaborative learning activities are designed to promote a sense of mutual reliance among students, as they work together towards achieving a common goal (Nastasi & Clements, 1991) [5]. Each student's success is dependent on the success of the group as a whole, which encourages cooperation and fosters a sense of collective responsibility for their learning outcomes. While students work together in groups, collaborative learning also emphasizes the importance of individual contributions and efforts. Each student is held accountable for their performance, ensuring that every member of the group contributes to the learning process. It provides ample opportunities for students to practice and develop social skills, such as active listening, empathy, conflict resolution, and leadership. These skills are essential for effective collaboration and are also valuable for students' personal and professional lives. Collaborative learning involves regular reflection and evaluation of group performance, with students discussing their progress, identifying areas for improvement, and setting goals for future activities. This process helps to foster a growth mindset and encourages continuous learning and development.

2.2 Benefits of Collaborative Learning in Language Education

Collaborative learning has been widely recognized as an effective approach in language education, offering a range of benefits for the stakeholders. The benefits of collaborative learning in language education are manifold, encompassing the enhancement of linguistic skills, motivation, learner autonomy, cultural understanding, etc. By implementing collaborative learning activities in the language classroom, educators can create a dynamic and stimulating learning environment, which can foster the development of well-rounded, confident, and competent language learners.

Collaborative learning provides ample opportunities for students to practice and develop their language skills through authentic communication and interaction with their peers. By engaging in meaningful conversations, students can improve their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, while also refining their pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Research has shown that collaborative learning is particularly effective in promoting language development (Alrayah, 2018) [1], as it encourages negotiation of meaning, error correction, and constructive feedback. Collaborative learning can enhance students' motivation to learn by creating a supportive and engaging learning environment. Working together in groups, students can experience a sense of camaraderie and shared achievement, which can boost their motivation and increase their commitment to learning. Moreover, collaborative learning encourages learners to take ownership of their learning, setting goals, and monitoring their progress, which can contribute to the development of intrinsic motivation. Collaborative learning fosters learner autonomy by

encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning, make decisions, and solve problems independently and provides a platform for students to interact with peers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

2.3 Previous Research on Collaborative Learning in Spoken English Classes

Over the past few decades, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative learning in spoken English classes, with a focus on various aspects such as language proficiency, motivation, and learner autonomy. For example, Namaziandost et al. (2019) [4] investigated how cooperative learning affects the improvement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' oral proficiency and their motivation to learn English. The results suggested that cooperative learning can serve as a valuable resource for teachers to enhance students' speaking abilities and intrinsic motivation.

Previous research on collaborative learning in spoken English classes has provided valuable insights into the potential benefits of this approach in terms of language proficiency, motivation, learner autonomy, and social and cultural aspects. However, further research is needed to explore the specific strategies, activities, and conditions that can optimize the effectiveness of collaborative learning in this context and to investigate the challenges and limitations associated with its implementation.

3. Implementation of Collaborative Learning in College Spoken English Class
3.1 Strategies for Promoting Collaboration
3.1.1 Group Formation

Group formation is a crucial aspect of collaborative learning (Maqtary et al., 2019) [3], as the composition and dynamics of groups can significantly influence the success of collaborative activities in spoken English classes. When forming groups, educators should take into account several factors, such as students' language proficiency, learning styles, personality traits, and cultural backgrounds. Ideally, groups should be heterogeneous in terms of language proficiency, allowing for a balance of skills and knowledge that can facilitate peer scaffolding and support. Additionally, considering students' learning styles, personalities, and cultural backgrounds can help create groups with complementary strengths and diverse perspectives, which can foster more effective collaboration.

One approach to group formation is for the teacher to assign students to groups based on their assessment of the factors mentioned above. This method allows instructors to ensure a balanced mix of abilities and characteristics within each group, which can enhance the learning experience for all members. However, teacher-assigned groups may not always account for students' preferences and social dynamics, which could affect the group's cohesiveness and motivation another approach is to allow students to form their groups, either by choosing their partners or by self-selecting into groups based on shared interests or goals. This method can foster a sense of ownership and commitment among group members, as they have more control over their learning environment. However, student-selected groups may result in homogenous groupings, with students gravitating towards peers with similar abilities or backgrounds, which may limit the potential for peer scaffolding and diverse perspectives. A third approach is to randomly assign students to groups, using techniques such as drawing lots or using a random number generator. This method can help ensure a degree of heterogeneity within groups while minimizing the potential for bias or favoritism. However, random assignment may not take into account important factors such as language proficiency, learning styles, or personality traits, which could impact the effectiveness of group collaboration.

3.1.2 Task Design

Task design plays a pivotal role in the success of collaborative learning in spoken English classes, as the nature and structure of tasks can significantly influence the level of student engagement, interaction, and learning outcomes. When designing collaborative tasks for spoken English classes, educators should consider key principles such as authenticity, cognitive challenge, interdependence, and language focus when designing tasks and select task types that align with their teaching objectives and students' needs. First, authenticity. Tasks should resemble real-world communicative situations, requiring students to use language in a purposeful and meaningful way. Authentic tasks can enhance students' motivation and facilitate the transfer of skills to real-life contexts. Second, cognitive challenge. Tasks should involve a degree of cognitive challenge, requiring students to engage in higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Challenging tasks can promote deeper learning and foster the development of problem-solving and critical thinking abilities. Third, interdependence. Tasks should encourage interdependence among group members, meaning that students need to rely on each other's skills, knowledge, and resources to complete the task successfully. Interdependence fosters cooperation, accountability, and active participation among group members. Fourth, language focus. While the primary goal of collaborative tasks is to promote communication and interaction, tasks should also incorporate a focus on language forms and functions relevant to the learners' proficiency and needs. This can help students develop their linguistic competence alongside their communicative abilities.

3.1.3 Role Assignment

Assigning roles to group members is an effective strategy for enhancing student engagement, promoting equal participation, and ensuring that collaborative tasks are completed efficiently in spoken English classes. Clearly defined roles can help students understand what is expected of them during the collaborative task, making it easier for them to focus on their responsibilities and contribute effectively to the group. It can also help to establish a structure and organization within the group, which can facilitate smoother communication, coordination, and decision-making processes. By assigning specific roles to each group member, instructors can ensure that all students have an opportunity to participate actively and contribute to the task, thus preventing one or two students from dominating the group discussion.

When implementing role assignment in spoken English classes, educators should consider the following guidelines. Clearly explain each role and its responsibilities to the students before assigning them. This will help students understand their responsibilities and expectations during the collaborative task. When possible, assign roles that align

with students' strengths, interests, and language proficiency, as this can help maximize their contributions and enhance their learning experience. Encourage students to rotate roles during different collaborative tasks, allowing them the opportunity to experience different responsibilities and develop a variety of skills. Monitor group work and provide support and feedback to students as they perform their roles. This can help students improve their performance and gain a deeper understanding of their responsibilities within the group.

3.2 Collaborative Learning Activities
3.2.1 Role-plays
Role-plays serve as an engaging and efficacious approach to fostering collaboration, interaction, and linguistic progress in spoken English lessons. These simulations afford learners with a context for exercising language within authentic and meaningful circumstances, thereby bridging the chasm between pedagogical environments and real-world communication. By permitting students to adopt varying identities and delve into diverse scenarios, role-plays facilitate the piquing of curiosity, the fostering of inventiveness, and the cultivation of motivation for acquiring knowledge. These enactments present numerous opportunities for pupils to rehearse an extensive array of linguistic functions such as formulating requests, proffering guidance, or articulating viewpoints, which can bolster their development of communicative proficiency. Furthermore, role-plays empower students to hone and refine essential social aptitudes, including negotiation, persuasion, empathy, and active listening, which are important for effective communication.

3.2.2 Debates
Debates serve as a dynamic and captivating activity, facilitating critical thinking, persuasive communication, and linguistic growth in spoken English courses. By engaging in debates, students must scrutinize, assess, and integrate information, thereby fostering their critical thinking abilities. The necessity to present and defend one's stance, address contradictory perspectives, and sway an audience strengthens students' persuasive communication skills. Furthermore, debates offer an array of opportunities for students to exercise diverse language functions—including expressing viewpoints, posing inquiries, and debunking arguments—all of which contribute to the development of their communicative competence. Additionally, the active listening and appropriate responsiveness necessitated by debates bolster students' auditory skills.

3.2.3 Group presentations
Group presentations serve as a highly effective activity in fostering collaboration, enhancing public speaking abilities, and advancing language development within spoken English classes. These presentations necessitate student collaboration, idea sharing, and concerted efforts, all of which contribute to the development of cooperative and teamwork skills. Moreover, group presentations afford students the opportunity to hone their public speaking capabilities, encompassing vital aspects such as voice projection, eye contact, and body language, all crucial elements for successful communication. Furthermore, group presentations present opportunities for students to practice various language functions, including explanation,

description, and summarization, thereby aiding in the refinement of their communicative competence. Group presentations also stimulate students to conduct thorough research and engage profoundly with the content, ultimately fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

3.3 Assessment and Evaluation
3.3.1 Formative and Summative Assessment
Assessment plays a crucial role in the educational process, allowing teachers to evaluate students' learning progress and providing feedback to improve their performance. In this section, we will discuss the two main types of assessment used in spoken English classes: formative and summative assessment, their purposes, characteristics, and examples of each type of assessment.

Formative assessment is a type of ongoing and informal evaluation that monitors students' learning progress throughout the instructional process. The main purpose of formative assessment is to provide feedback, identify students' strengths and weaknesses, and guide future instruction to help improve their overall performance. Teachers regularly conduct formative assessments to keep track of students' progress and provide timely feedback. Additionally, formative assessment is typically considered low-stakes, meaning that it does not have a significant impact on final grades. This can help alleviate students' anxiety and encourage them to participate actively. By diagnosing students' learning needs, identifying their areas of struggle, and tailoring instruction accordingly, formative assessment aids teachers in ensuring that their students achieve academic success.

Summative assessment is a formal evaluation of students' learning outcomes at the end of an instructional unit, course, or program. It is typically used to measure students' achievements, determine their final grades, and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the instruction. Summative assessments are planned in advance and occur at specific intervals, such as the end of a unit, semester, or academic year. Since summative assessments can significantly impact students' final grades and determine their academic progression, they are generally considered high-stakes evaluations. This type of assessment helps teachers reflect on the effectiveness of their instruction, identify areas for improvement, and inform future teaching practices.

In conclusion, formative and summative assessment are essential components of spoken English classes, serving distinct yet complementary purposes. While formative assessment focuses on providing feedback and guiding instruction, summative assessment measures students' achievement and evaluates the effectiveness of the instruction. Educators should employ a balanced combination of both formative and summative assessment methods to support their students' learning and development in spoken English.

3.3.2 Peer and Self-Assessment
Peer and self-assessment serve as alternative assessment methods that can complement traditional teacher-led evaluations in spoken English classes. By engaging in peer and self-evaluation, students are able to take an active role in the assessment process, which enables them to develop a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning. Moreover, such assessments can raise students'

awareness of assessment criteria, language features, and performance standards, which, in turn, helps students set achievable goals and monitor their progress more effectively. By providing students with varied perspectives on their performance, peer and self-assessment complement teacher feedback and offer a more comprehensive understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, peer assessment cultivates important collaboration and teamwork skills as students work together to evaluate and provide constructive feedback to their peers.

In order to effectively implement peer and self-assessment, educators must create clear, specific, and objective evaluation criteria for spoken English tasks. These criteria should be shared with the students prior to the assessment process, and students should receive training and practice using them. Guidance should be provided on how to accurately and fairly evaluate their own and their peers' performance. During the assessment period, educators should monitor students' interactions, and provide feedback and guidance as needed, ensuring that the criteria are being applied consistently and objectively. It is important to encourage students to reflect on the feedback they receive from their peers and themselves, and use it as a means to set goals and develop strategies for improvement. Finally, a comprehensive picture of students' performance should be created by combining the results of peer and self-assessment with other assessment methods, like teacher-led evaluations. This allows educators to gain a more complete understanding of how students are performing.

4. Results
4.1 Effectiveness of Collaborative Learning in Improving Spoken English Skills
Collaborative learning, an instructional approach that encourages students to work together to achieve shared learning goals, has gained increasing attention in language education, including spoken English classes. Collaborative learning activities, such as group discussions and problem-solving tasks, provide students with ample opportunities to practice speaking, listening, and interacting in English, thus increasing their language input and output. Collaborative learning creates a context for authentic and meaningful communication, as students need to negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, and clarify misunderstandings in order to complete tasks and achieve their goals. In collaborative learning, students can provide each other with linguistic and cognitive scaffolding, which helps them build on their existing knowledge and develop new language skills. Collaborative learning can foster a sense of belonging and shared responsibility among students, which can enhance their motivation and engagement in learning spoken English.

4.2 Impact on Student Motivation and Engagement
The impact of collaborative learning on student motivation and engagement is an important consideration when evaluating its effectiveness in spoken English classes. Collaborative learning fosters a sense of positive interdependence among students, as they rely on each other to achieve their shared learning goals. This can lead to increased motivation, as students feel responsible for their own and their peers' learning outcomes. Collaborative learning can strengthen social bonds and create a sense of belonging among students, which can, in turn, increase their

intrinsic motivation and engagement in learning spoken English. By working together and supporting each other in the learning process, students can develop a greater sense of self-efficacy, or belief in their ability to improve their spoken English skills, which can enhance their motivation and engagement. Collaborative learning allows students to have more control over their learning process, offering them the opportunity to make choices and decisions about how they approach tasks and interact with their peers. This sense of autonomy can lead to increased motivation and engagement in learning spoken English.

4.3 Challenges and Limitations Encountered During Implementation
While collaborative learning has been shown to be effective in improving spoken English skills and enhancing student motivation and engagement, it is not without its challenges and limitations. In collaborative learning situations, some students may dominate the group discussions, while others may remain passive or disengaged, leading to an imbalance in participation and learning opportunities. Collaborative learning requires students to negotiate meaning, make decisions, and reach consensus, which can sometimes lead to conflicts and disagreements among group members. Collaborative learning activities can be time-consuming, as they require students to coordinate their efforts, engage in discussions, and complete tasks together, which may be challenging to manage within the limited time available in spoken English classes. Assessing students' individual contributions and progress in collaborative learning situations can be challenging, as their performance is often intertwined with that of their peers and influenced by various group factors.

5. Discussion and Implications
5.1 Implications for Teaching and Learning
The research findings on collaborative learning in spoken English classes reveal several implications for teaching and learning. Collaborative learning has been shown to offer numerous benefits in spoken English classes such as promoting interaction and communication among students. Group discussions, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks are some of the collaborative learning activities educators should consider to facilitate the development of students' spoken English skills. Creating a classroom environment that fosters positive interdependence, social cohesion, and trust among students can enhance motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes in collaborative learning situations. It is essential to observe and assess group dynamics regularly to ensure effective participation among all students. Additionally, guidance and support should be provided to help students acquire effective collaboration skills and resolve conflicts when necessary. Furthermore, educators should recognize and address the diverse needs of students with different proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds to provide them with the necessary scaffolding, differentiation, and support.

5.2 Implications for College Students
Research on collaborative learning in spoken English classes has significant implications not only for educators, but also for college students who aim to improve their spoken English skills and overall learning experiences. The benefits of collaborative learning in spoken English classes

indicate that students should actively engage in collaborative activities, such as group discussions, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks, to practice and develop spoken English skills while enhancing understanding of course content. Effective collaboration skills, which include communication, active listening, conflict resolution, and decision-making, are essential for successful group work and can positively impact overall academic performance. To foster a supportive and inclusive group atmosphere, it is crucial to embrace diversity, respect others' opinions, and encourage equal participation among all members. However, it is vital to recognize that collaboration is not a substitute for individual effort and responsibility; students should take ownership of their learning by actively participating in group activities, completing assigned tasks, and seeking help when needed. Regularly reflecting on the collaborative learning experiences can help identify areas of improvement, set personal goals, and track progress toward achieving those objectives.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

While the existing research on collaborative learning in spoken English classes has provided valuable insights into its effectiveness and implications for teaching, learning, and curriculum design, there is still room for further investigation and exploration. Future research could investigate the relative effectiveness of various types of collaborative learning activities (e.g., group discussions, role-plays, problem-solving tasks) in promoting the development of spoken English skills and other language competencies. This could help educators refine their instructional strategies and identify the most effective activities for different learning contexts and student populations. At the same time, as technology continues to advance and reshape education, researchers should examine the role of digital tools in facilitating and enhancing collaborative learning experiences in spoken English classes. This could include the exploration of online platforms, apps, and virtual reality environments, as well as the examination of best practices for integrating technology effectively into the language learning process. Furthermore, to better understand the nuances of collaborative learning in spoken English classes, future research could explore the impact of various individual factors (e.g., language proficiency, motivation, learning styles) and cultural factors (e.g., cultural background, power dynamics) on students' experiences and outcomes. This could help educators develop more targeted and inclusive instructional approaches that cater to the diverse needs of their students.

6. Conclusion

Collaborative learning has emerged as a powerful and effective approach in spoken English classes, with numerous studies demonstrating its potential to enhance language development, motivation, and overall learning experiences for students. By engaging students in interactive and cooperative activities, collaborative learning not only promotes the development of spoken English skills but also fosters essential collaboration competencies and social skills that are valuable for academic and professional success.

This paper has discussed the benefits of collaborative learning in spoken English classes, the implications of this approach for teaching and learning, and recommendations for future research. As educators and researchers continue to explore and refine the implementation of collaborative learning in language education, it is crucial to consider the diverse needs of students, the evolving role of technology, and the importance of ongoing professional development for instructors. By embracing the insights gained from collaborative learning research and implementing evidence-based practices, educators can help create more effective, engaging, and inclusive learning environments for their students. In turn, college students can maximize the benefits of collaborative learning by actively participating in group activities, developing effective collaboration skills, and taking responsibility for their own learning. As a result, collaborative learning in spoken English classes has the potential to contribute significantly to the ongoing improvement of language education and the success of learners in today's interconnected world.

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