

## Challenges Faced by Pakistani Undergraduates and Views of Teachers about the Challenges Faced by their Undergraduates in Learning English using the Collaborative Learning Approach (CLA)

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### ABSTRACT

*Though the educational, social, communicative, and practical benefits of the Collaborative Learning Approach (CLA) have been widely examined in past research, very few studies have been conducted to examine the challenges faced by students and teachers in learning English using CLA. This research aimed to investigate the challenges faced by Pakistani undergraduates and their teachers' views about the challenges faced by their undergraduates in learning English using CLA. The study employed a survey design, and data were collected using questionnaires with items adapted from a combination of previous studies. The study involved 420 undergraduates and 35 teachers who were selected through cluster sampling from seven public universities in the federal territory of Pakistan. The findings showed that Pakistani undergraduates showed high views on positive interdependence, whereas moderate views on individual and group accountability, group processing, and face-to-face promotive interaction. On the contrary, undergraduates expressed low views on social skills. Findings from the teachers also correspond with the undergraduates' views on three elements of CLA, such as positive interdependence, group processing, and face-to-face promotive interaction, whereas teachers revealed low views on individual and group accountability and the lowest views on social and interpersonal skills. Overall Pakistani undergraduates have been found to have faced moderate challenges using CLA in learning English. This study describes the challenges that hinder the effective learning of English under CLA for undergraduates that will assist educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers in the development of innovative and useful policies for improving ESL learning.*

*Keywords: challenges; collaborative learning approach; learning English; teachers; undergraduates*

### INTRODUCTION

Collaborative Learning Approach (CLA) is a teaching method that enables learners to collaborate in small groups, resolve problems, accomplish tasks, and attain academic goals while learning English. (Khan et al., 2023). Additionally, it concerns English learning activities that stimulate collaboration among students in small groups of typically two to five people to support their learning individually and also in teams (Le et al., 2018). Today, student-centred practices are applauded by all constituencies, but CLA is appreciated by English as Second Language (ESL) faculty members and students because of its useful characteristics (Qureshi et al., 2021).

CLA offers various strategies to facilitate the learning process of the English language in which teachers facilitate learners to perform their tasks. It changes the nature of the learning environment, where learners happily learn by working in small groups (Okolie et al., 2021). Qureshi et al. (2021) ascribed that Pakistani learners and teachers appreciate CLA because it is a stepping stone in fostering educational accomplishments. Furthermore, Adesina et al. (2022) stated that learners appreciate CLA as it offers opportunities to practise English, reduces fear and anxiety, develops relationships and confidence etc. Likewise, Yu et al. (2022) discovered that learners support CLA as it promotes group skills that help them to counter various conflicts in assessing different tasks. Yu et al. (2022) revealed that learners showed great interest while doing several tasks in teams. The research revealed that doing certain activities in teams could prepare students for their future professions. CLA has been recognised for improving students' academic and social abilities in English classes nowadays (Khan et al., 2023).

Several difficulties are observed by students in empirical research that affect CLA, i.e., learners' uneven participation in teamwork and poor communicative abilities. Teachers have mentioned several challenges when creating CLA activities, i.e., planning groups, handling team assignments, and scheduling adequate class time (Gillies, 2010). Concerning the research exploring the adoption and use of CLA, difficulties are examined from the viewpoints of either teachers or students in learning English. The only emphasis of the conducted investigations was on the challenges in CLA that teachers or students had in a context where English was the primary language. As a result, the challenges that ESL undergraduates faced in CLA and the views of ESL teachers about the challenges faced by their undergraduates in learning English using CLA have not been thoroughly examined. One of the well-known challenges is claimed as free riding that instructors face while creating CLA exercises, notably when they consider procedures for both individual and group accountability as far as positive interdependence (Adesina et al., 2022). Additionally, educators' judgements influence students' opinions and shape their behaviour in CLA exercises. For example, students participate in group projects less frequently than other group mates because they believe their involvement is optional (Le et al., 2018), resulting in constraints to productive teamwork in the study of English.

The impact and application of CLA at various educational levels in English were investigated by Khan et al. (2023). They reported that the participants highlighted certain concerns with CLA in learning English, including classroom instructions, group composition, uneven individual engagement in group work, and a deficiency of teamwork abilities. While English teachers always seemed to arrange active learning like structuring teams, handling time in the classes, plotting suitable group assignments and prescribing novel collaborative efforts. Le et al. (2018) also highlighted several other variables are highlighted in CLA, like time limit, group composition, overcrowded classrooms, unequal participation, and social loafing. Additional elements that affected the classroom atmosphere for English in CLA classrooms were also clarified by other studies. These include homogenous and diverse groupings and large classrooms (Qureshi et al., 2021). Learners who are incapable of working with others and communicating well are the real reason that CLA fails to be effective in learning English (Adesina et al., 2022). According to Gillies (2010), controlling class scheduling and grading learners' collaborative efforts are two further issues that limit learners' abilities in CLA. Some challenges are also caused by learners' fear and anxiety when working in small groups. Furthermore, pupils' nervousness during group projects creates issues with learning English during CLA practice. Other factors that hinder learning English using CLA include beliefs, attitudes, and apparent conduct. Studies on CLA in English language classrooms continue to be concentrated either on the instructors or, indeed, the