

## English Literature | Full Research Article

# The Effects of Online Collaborative Reading on Reading Performance of Sophomore Students at Herat University

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### Abstract

Collaborative language classes have been always encouraged among teachers, but the effects of online collaborative reading among English learners, especially with Afghan learners, have never received much attention. This study was conducted to investigate if this method would affect students' reading performance. For Afghan English learners reading skill is a challenging solitary activity which may lead them to failure and disappointment. For data collection, the researchers divided the participants (sophomore students of the English department, Herat University, Afghanistan) into two groups; one group took the online collaborative reading class and the other one, as the control group, took the conventional face to face reading class. The researchers used Schoology platform as the tool for conducting this research for the online class. The participants took a pretest before the treatment and a post-test at the end of the six-week treatment. Data were analyzed quantitatively through SPSS; paired sample t-test and independent-sample t-test were used to find the effects of the treatment. The result of the study shows that students who took the online collaborative reading class and worked collaboratively in completing the assignments performed better in the post-test than the ones who took the conventional reading class.

**Keywords:** Collaborative learning, reading performance, EFL, ESL, online learning, language teaching

## Introduction

It is a fact that the English language has become the dominant language around the world, both for interaction among people in real-life and in the virtual world. Learners, based on their proficiency level and purpose, need develop different levels of reading skill; for example, if the learner needs to learn English language for academic purposes, they have to master reading skills to understand different types of academic texts. However, when we refer to the previous studies (Phajane, 2014; Cimmiyotti, 2013; Inderjit, 2014; Tran, 2012), we can develop a list of

common problems among the learners who try to develop their reading skills. The list may include problems such as reading anxiety, lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. As a solution, Rao (2019) and Rojas-Drummond et al. (2014) believed that it was good to use collaborative activities in our reading classes to push students toward learning through their interaction with their group members. Conversely, in line with advancements in education and integrating technology, it is suggested that English classes try to use technology more than before and try online teaching (Gomleksiz, 2004).

English language is used as a foreign language in Afghanistan (Alamyar, 2015) and its learners in this country do not get enough exposure to the language outside the classroom (Barbee, 2013). In developing language proficiency, Afghan language learners enroll in institutions and private classes to improve their language proficiency, explicitly reading; thus, to promote teamwork and group activities among learners through collaborative work and to develop problem-solving, synthesizing, and critical thinking skills, the researchers intend to address reading comprehension issues in this research. Collaborative learning is an approach that encourages students to work together and develop their language skills (Kreijns, Kirschner, & Jochems, 2013).

In this respect, collaborative learning has significantly been implemented in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to enhance students' English language proficiency (Cooper & Cowie, 2010). Many researchers have carried out relevant research on students' interacting and learning online with their peers, and it can be seen that collaborative learning facilitates peer interaction and enhance the language development of the language learners. For instance, learning by sharing information and exchanging knowledge among peers could enhance students' competitiveness and promote their learning performance (Wang, 2010; Wen et al., 2012). Hence, it is believed that collaborative learning can help students to have better English reading performance.

Moreover, according to Gao (2012), with the growth of technology, especially in education, collaborative learning can be integrated with the means of technology; besides, one of the aims of collaborative learning is to share ideas and increase interaction among the students. In particular, Yu et al. (2017) highlighted that the role of technology in learning is undeniable because integrating online platforms in collaborative learning increases many language skills among the students, such as vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. Moreover, according to Sellers (2005), collaborative learning can help to reduce reading anxiety of the learners; reading anxiety is known as one of the challenges faced by students in learning English reading skills (Zin, 2007; Cimmiyotti, 2013; Phajane, 2014; Inderjit, 2014; Javid, 2014). It is then believed that collaborative learning through technology such as computer-supported learning can help enhance learning through this approach. Thus, it is encouraged to use the online collaborative reading method.

In Afghanistan, Ministries of Education and Higher Education have extended compulsory English education in their curriculum. Studying English starts from primary school and continues as one of the university-level subjects in any field. To evaluate students' English language ability, both at school and university, students need to take English tests at the end of the academic year. Students interested in continuing their higher education may also need to take the Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) to demonstrate their English language proficiency. However, among all the language skills assessed in TOEFL, reading is the most challenging skill for most test-takers (Nurjanah, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to prepare

students for these challenges. One way to prepare them is to provide a quality language learning environment. For doing this, language instructors need to avail of instructional methods that would maximize learning outcomes. Collaborative learning is one of the methods to do this because “Students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats” (Hay & Pillay, 2010, p. 2). Since collaborative learning fosters language development among learners, it could be an ideal language learning method, in particular, to improve students’ reading skills.

Although there is an extended body of research regarding collaborative work, there is still a need for exploring online collaborative reading. This is because most researchers have studied the effects of collaboration on writing skills. There is less research on integrating technology in collaborative reading classrooms. Additionally, there is little experimental research used in studying collaborative learning, especially regarding reading skill (e.g., Lin, 2009; Liou & Lee, 2011; Strobl, 2014) because most of the accessible studies are case studies (e.g., Franco, 2008; Greenfield, 2003; Lee, 2010; Mak & Coniam, 2008). Case studies only investigate one specific phenomenon, and the results are only valid for that specific case and not generalizable to a larger population (Perry, 2005). Besides, there are also no studies on online collaborative learning and its effects on reading comprehension; therefore, the current study intended to fill the gap and add to the existing body of the literature by conducting experimental research and examining the effects of online collaborative learning English reading class.

### **Research Questions**

This research aims to investigate the following research question:

- What are the effects of online collaborative reading on students’ reading performance in English?

Based on the research objective and the research question, this hypothesis is formed. The hypothesis is shown as below:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no relationship between online collaborative reading and EFL students’ reading performance.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a relationship between online collaborative reading and EFL students’ reading performance.

## **Literature Review**

The field of language teaching has undergone several fluctuations over time. Therefore, researchers are investigating methods and approaches that would provide new insight into language instruction in English as a Foreign Language or English as a Second Language (EFL/ESL) contexts. Collaborative language teaching has emerged as a result of the changes that have occurred over a century. “The period from the 1950s to the 1980s has often been referred to as ‘The Age of Methods,’ during which several quite detailed prescriptions for language teaching were proposed” (Alamyar, 2015). He further states that various language teaching methods emerged, such as Audio-lingualism, situational language teaching, and eventually communicative language teaching in the 1980s. The communicative language teaching method introduced features that gave rise to collaborative language teaching.

### **Collaborative Learning, Its Features and Advantages**

Collaborative learning is increasingly becoming one of the favorite teaching approaches. According to Rao (2019), “Nowadays, most of the learners follow the technique of collaborative learning where they learn new knowledge and new things” (p. 330). Therefore, it is crucial to explore the implementation of collaborative learning in order to be able to practice purposefully. Marjan & Mozghan (2012), believe that in collaborative learning, as an educational approach for using groups, teachers can enhance students’ learning since students will be listening to other students’ viewpoints, creating their ideas, defending their positions and get to know how to work in groups rather than individually. Such goals can be achieved through activities such as brainstorming, think-pair-share, peer review, scaffolding, jigsaw, or discussion questions. Leigh and MacGregor (1992) defined collaborative learning as a cooperative approach where students intellectually work together; often, it can be a joint venture between students and teachers. However, Dillenbourg (1999) states that in cooperative learning, students divide up group work and then put the individual contributions together, whereas in collaborative learning, students do the work together. Therefore, not all cooperative learning activities can be regarded as collaborative learning activities; it depends on the nature of the task and the activity carried out. Thus, it is essential to distinguish between cooperative and collaborative learning activities when implementing and designing activities. According to Rojas-Drummond, Mazón, Littleton, and Vélez (2014), collaborative learning eases reading pressure; thus, resulting in better reading performance.

Furthermore, according to Shih and Yang (2008), collaborative learning also fosters a positive attitude and decreases test and assessment anxiety. Hence, instructors adapt collaborative learning to bring harmony, mutual respect, and a positive attitude towards the subject area, classroom, active participation, and learning. Bruffee (2018) also believes that “Well-organized collaborative learning puts students at the center of learning, constructing knowledge themselves. This group dynamic can make learning more engaging and give students a sense of control over their learning.” (p. 3) Therefore, in using collaborative learning in language classrooms, it is crucial for language instructors to carefully design activities that would purposefully target maximum interactions among language learners, particularly in collaborative reading. As a result, collaborative learning can be a successful teaching strategy to improve students’ understanding of a subject, such as reading tasks. It also adds to achieving harmony, a friendly atmosphere, and mutual respect among language learners. They learn to depend on each other and learn from each other while accomplishing a mutual goal.

### **Collaborative Language Learning in EFL/ESL Contexts**

Collaborative learning and its benefits have been widely investigated. León and Castro (2017) studied the effects of collaborative learning in an EFL classroom in Colombia. They found out that knowledge of collaborative approaches changes traditional teaching and learning environments and can promote interaction among language learners, resulting in the learners’ empowerment and autonomy.

Aydin and Yildiz (2014) studied collaborative learning in EFL writing classrooms. They found out that their overall language proficiency developed when students used argumentative tasks to complete writing activities. They utilized wikis in their research on 34 EFL students in a collaborative environment. The study results showed that when students used peer-corrections and argumentative tasks, their writing skills dramatically progressed. Therefore, it can be inferred that collaborative learning enhances learners’ writing skills.

Similarly, collaborative learning is further studied in the Iranian EFL context using Weblogs in writing classrooms. Taki and Fardafshari (2012) divided the writing a classroom into a traditional and experimental group. The experimental group was given the task to post their writings on Weblogs, and then their peers would post comments and feedback on them. Their study suggested that collaborative learning in writing context using Weblogs developed their writing skills and motivates them to build autonomy in language learning.

Based on these studies (Gao, 2012; Rahman, 2015; Reznitskaya et al., 2009; Chinn et al., 2001; and Klingner and Vaughn, 2000), the collaborative aspect of the activities has helped in decreasing the stress and anxiety in completing challenging tasks. Therefore, task management and communication among students can ease situations and promote the learning atmosphere to a great extent (Rao, 2019). According to the researchers, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity are among the “4Cs” present in 21st-century learning skills. They believed that the group work used in collaborative learning can cover the “4Cs” and create new knowledge; moreover, it can improve content learning and language acquisition. Since the students are working as a team, they will share their understanding so they will learn the content; also when they share, they communicate via the target language; as a result, they help each other in the process of language acquisition because everybody in the group will notice language points used by other members and try to imitate them (Mackey & Gass, 2006). To collaborate effectively, students work together, come out of their comfort zones, and develop friendships to learn from each other.

Thus, it is also essential for language learners to practice collaborative learning with others who might have different personalities and learning styles to explore the variety and put themselves in situations outside of their comfort zones. It will provide them an opportunity to learn new skills and eventually learn from each other.

### **Collaborative Reading**

Collaborative learning is not only limited to writing but is also used in reading classrooms. In a research that was conducted by Klingner and Vaughn (2000), they studied how students “assisted one another in understanding word meanings, getting the main idea, asking and answering questions, and relating what they were learning to previous knowledge” (p. 69). Thus, the study results show that collaboration among students developed learners’ reading skills and promoted their critical thinking skills as well. However, it is vital to decide when to engage students in collaborative learning, what materials to choose for it, and what activities to design.

The text selected for collaborative reading purposes also plays an important role. The text makes readers carry out different tasks. If a reading passage is about various ethical topics, it generates interest in the reader to discuss moral values and connect them to their own culture, religion, and beliefs. Another appropriate option would be to bring fictional stories and folktales to attract the learners’ attention and open the discussion. These discussions can be sparked by yes/no questions (Chinn et al. 2001). However, yes/no questions are not the only way to start the discussion. As Reznitskaya et al. (2009) recommended that the teachers, “elicit more meaningful responses from the students because they can extend the story world and relate it to other complex issues relevant to them” (p. 33). Therefore, to challenge students and push them to work harder, it is essential to ask questions that would require students to think critically and tackle more complex issues.

Nelson and Murphy (1992) note that shifting or changing group membership provides students an opportunity to work with different peers on different parts of the paragraph or an

essay, thereby interacting with different readers. Therefore, when interacting with different students, they can learn different things. Group rotations also provide opportunities to look at the same problem from different dimensions. Thus, it is believed that collaborative learning can help in developing the reading proficiency of the learners. According to Nelson and Murphy (1992), these group membership alternations can be based on various situations such as topic preferences among students, mixed-gender groups (males and females), and varying levels in writing proficiency.

Beaulieu-Jones and Proctor (2016) implemented collaborative learning in the reading classroom. In the collaborative learning groups, researchers integrated instructions that would require students to collaborate in reading comprehension procedures. Discussion questions were provided before reading to encourage purposeful reading among students. This led to group discussions and debate in post-reading stage. "The question was posed prior to reading specifically to set a clear purpose for reading and to help guide the students in working on supporting their stance with examples from the text" (p. 679). Therefore, when implementing collaborative reading activities, a better comprehension of the text could be achieved if students read the text purposefully.

## Research Method

### Participants

Purposive sampling was used to collect data from students. Purposive sampling is a non-random technique for selecting participants. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007), purposive sampling is defined as selecting individuals based on the specific purpose that the researcher sets out to obtain answers for the designed research questions. The sophomore students of the English department of a University were chosen to be the participants of the study because these students have opted to join the Language and Literature Faculty, English department through the university entrance exam (Kankor) from across the country. These students were selected because they have had three Reading Comprehension courses and are equipped with some reading strategies and skills they have learned in their previous Reading Comprehension courses. Both control and treatment groups were similar at baseline level; they were recognized as having the same reading proficiency level after analysing pre-tests' results. Therefore, any significant difference in the outcome can be assumed to be due to the intervention, online collaborative reading.

### Data Collection Instruments

Data was collected through pre-test and post-test (Appendix A). At the beginning of the data collection stage, students took a pre-test to create a baseline, and they were given a post-test after the treatment to measure the progress of the students' reading comprehension. The researchers opted for Schoology (schoology.com) as an online platform for collaborative reading activities. Schoology is a free, convenient to use, and accessible platform; it allows the teacher to share files, upload material for assessment and it also permits learners to provide comments and open discussion boards. Therefore, it was the most suitable platform to use for this research.

### **Reliability and Validity of the Instruments**

To understand the pre-test and post-test test-retest reliability difficulty, the researcher assessed the tests through Pearson correlation coefficient test. The results of the reliability test indicated that tests were highly reliable as  $r=0.94$ . Moreover, the test's difficulty level is also estimated through the textbook the pre-test and post-test were selected from. The textbook level from which the reading passages were selected is determined as intermediate-level reading and writing textbook.

### **Data Analysis**

The scores obtained from the pre-and post-test were quantitatively analyzed via SPSS software to find the minimum, maximum, mean, and mode of the scores. The data for each individual was inserted separately in the file then a descriptive test was run on both treatment and control groups. Normality test results for both groups were found and reported; to compare the pre-test and post-test, paired sample t-test was run on the scores of participants in each group (the normality and descriptive test results are presented in detail in the results and finding section). Moreover, to determine the inferential statistics for the pre-test and post-test, an independent sample t-test was run to compare the treatment and control groups' scores.

## **Results**

To analyse the pre-test and post-test scores, the descriptive statistics of the test are provided. The following Table 5.4 presents the data for descriptive statistics of control and treatment groups:

Table 1.1: *Descriptive Statistics for Control and Experimental Groups*

| <b>Test</b>      | <b>Class</b> | <b>M</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>Median</b> | <b>Min</b> | <b>Max</b> |
|------------------|--------------|----------|-----------|---------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Pre-test</b>  | Control      | 52.2     | 23        | 50            | 20         | 100        |
|                  | Experimental | 56.3     | 17.7      | 60            | 20         | 90         |
| <b>Post-test</b> | Control      | 56       | 22.9      | 50            | 20         | 100        |
|                  | Experimental | 73.4     | 19.5      | 70            | 30         | 100        |

The descriptive statistics for control and experimental groups in pre-test and post-test scores showed that the mean for the pre-test of the control group was  $M=52.2$ ,  $SD= 23$  with a minimum score of 20 and the maximum score of 100, the mean for the experimental group is  $M=56.3$ ,  $SD= 17.7$  and the minimum score is 20 while the maximum score is 90. This shows that both groups have a baseline balance and they shared almost the same characteristics in terms of reading proficiency. However, the post-test scores for the control group mean are  $M=56$ ,  $SD=22.9$ , with a minimum score of 20 and the maximum score of 100. The mean for the experimental group is  $M=73.4$ ,  $SD= 19.5$ , the minimum score for the group is 30 while the maximum is 100.

To find out the effect of the online reading and online collaborative reading on the students' reading comprehension, a normality test was run for both tests in both groups to find out if the data is normally distributed, and a parametric test can be used. The following table 5.5 presents the normality test results for the pre-test in the Control group:

Table 1.2: Normality Test Result for Pre-test and Post-test of Control Group

| Test      | Shapiro-Wilk |    |      |
|-----------|--------------|----|------|
|           | Statistic    | Df | Sig. |
| Pre-test  | .945         | 34 | .078 |
| Post-test | .947         | 34 | .089 |

As it can be seen, p value is higher than 0.5 which suggest a normal distribution of the data. Therefore, a paired sample t-test was used to measure the effect of the online reading class. The following Table 1.3 presents the results of the paired sample test:

Table 1.3: Results for Paired Sample t Test for Control Group

**Paired Differences**

|                           | M     | SD   | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence interval of differences |       | T    | df | Sig.(2-tailed) |
|---------------------------|-------|------|-----------------|--|-------|------|----|----------------|
|                           |       |      |                 | Lower                                  | Upper |      |    |                |
| <b>Pre-test-Post-test</b> | -3.71 | 23.4 | 3.96            | -11.7                                  | 4.23  | -.93 | 34 | .354           |

The data in the table indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of Control group scores (M=-3.71, SD=23.4);  $t(34) = -.93, p = .354$ . Therefore, the results of the paired sample t-test confirm the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of control group. Similarly, a normality test was run on the data received from pre and post test scores for Group B (treatment group) as well. In the following Table 1.4, the normality test results for the treatment group (Group B) is presented:

Table 1.4

Normality Test Result for Pre-test and Post-test of Treatment Group

| Test      | Shapiro-Wilk |    |      |
|-----------|--------------|----|------|
|           | Statistic    | Df | Sig. |
| Pre-test  | .951         | 34 | .124 |
| Post-test | .939         | 34 | .053 |

The p value in the normality test is higher than 0.5 which suggest a normal distribution of the data. Therefore, a paired sample t-test was used to measure the effect of the online collaborative reading class. The following Table 1.4 presents the results of the paired sample test:



Table 1.5: Results for Paired Sample t Test for Treatment Group

| Paired Differences        |       |      |                 | 95% Confidence interval of differences |       | T    | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------------|-------|------|-----------------|--|-------|------|----|-----------------|
|                           | M     | SD   | Std. Error Mean | Lower                                  | Upper |      |    |                 |
| <b>Pre-test-Post-test</b> | -17.1 | 22.3 | 3.77            | -24.8                                  | -9.48 | -4.5 | 34 | .000            |

The data in the table indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores (M=-17.1, SD=22.3);  $t(34) = -4.5, p = .000$ . Therefore, the results of the paired sample t-test confirm with the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the treatment group. In order to compare the data from control group (Group A) with the data collected from treatment group (Group B), an independent sample t-test was run. The following Table 1.6 presents data from the independent sample t-test results:

Table 1.6: Results from Independent Sample t Test

| Anxiety   | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      |      | t-test for Equality of Means |                 |                 |                       | 95% confidence interval of the Difference |       |       |
|-----------|---|------|------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|-------|
|           | F                                       | Sig. | T    | df                           | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | Lower                                     | Upper |       |
| Post-test | Equal variances                         | 1.8  | .181 | -3.42                        | 68              | .001            | -17.4                 | 5.09                                      | -27.6 | -7.27 |
|           | Equal variances                         |      |      | -3.42                        | 66.36           | .001            | -17.4                 | 5.09                                      | -27.6 | -7.27 |

An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in control group and experimental group in terms of their reading performance. The online collaborative reading class performed better (M = 73.4, SD = 19.5) than the online reading group (M = 56., SD = 22.9), a statistically significant difference, 95% CI [-27.6, -7.27],  $t(68) = -3.42, p = .001$ . Therefore, the results of the independent sample t-test confirmed the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of control group and treatment group.

## Discussion

Pre-test and post-tests were used to measure the students' reading comprehension before and after the treatment. Independent sample t-test was run to compare the control group performance with the treatment group performance; moreover, data from pre-test and post-

test of the control and treatment groups were compared within the group to measure the participants' growth within their groups as well. It is interesting to see that the control group has a minimal improvement (See Table 1.4); however, the scores of the post-test of the treatment group demonstrated significant development from scores they obtained in the pre-test.

The descriptive statistics of the two groups presented in Table 1.1 show that both groups were at the same level when they started the course as the mean for both groups is similar (control group  $M=5.2$ ; treatment group  $M=5.6$ ). However, the post-test results for the groups were different from each other; the control group scores somewhat improved ( $M=5.63$ ), but the treatment group scores showed more improvement ( $M=7.34$ ) than the pre-test scores. Therefore, a paired sample t-test was run to make sure if this development was significant or not. The paired sample t-test verified that participants' reading comprehension significantly improved in the treatment group as the p-value was  $p=.000$ ; in contrast, the results of the paired sample t-test on the control suggested that the reading comprehension of the control group was not significant as  $p=.354$ .

To further compare the post-test results of the control group and treatment group, an independent sample t-test was run. The results showed statistically significant development in reading comprehension of the online collaborative group ( $p=.000$ ) compared to the online reading group. Thus, it can be concluded that online collaborative reading helped students improve their reading comprehension. Gao (2012) asserted that online collaborative reading makes students more active, boosts their motivation, and better comprehends the reading material.

Likewise, the results of the post-test of the control group and treatment group reinforce the findings of Gao (2012) and assert that when students work together in solving a problem, composing an answer, respond to critical thinking questions, they perform significantly better than when they are left on their own. Collaborative work is further utilized to develop problem-solving skills, synthesizing skills, and critical thinking skills. Collaborative learning is an approach that encourages students to work together and develop their language skills (Kreijns, Kirschner, & Jochems, 2013). Therefore, the online collaborative reading course suggests that when learners work together to find an answer, solve a problem, or develop their overall reading skills, the course outcomes are often positive.

Moreover, Shih and Yang (2008) believe that collaborative learning promotes a positive attitude and decreases anxiety among language learners. Hence, instructors adapt collaborative learning to bring harmony, mutual respect, and a positive attitude towards the subject area, classroom, active participation, and learning. On the other hand, Bruffee (2018) also believes that "Well-organized collaborative learning puts students at the center of learning, constructing knowledge themselves and others. This group dynamic can make learning more engaging and give students a sense of control over their learning" (p. 3).

As a result of the online collaborative reading course, the reading comprehension of students developed, but it also helped develop autonomy, interdependence, and accountability among learners. As McGroarty and Calderon (2005) state, collaborative learning facilitates interaction among learners, develops accountability and interdependence, and promotes autonomy among learners. Therefore, when the treatment group outperformed the control group in the reading comprehension test, not only did they score higher, but they also develop friendships and comfort levels with each other that would help them in their future reading endeavours.

This study has several pedagogical implications for novice and practicing instructors. The study's findings will help the reading instructors design activities and tasks that would require students to collaborate in completing activities and would result in improved reading comprehension skills. This study will help the language instructors to make more informed decisions when designing activities and lesson plans. Although the online platform was used as a medium of instruction, collaborative activities can develop reading comprehension skills in traditional face-to-face settings.

Other than teachers, there are implications for students as well. Students should work in groups when approaching a new language learning stage. When students work together, they become more autonomous and independent of the teacher. According to León and Castro (2017), collaborative activities promote interaction among language learners, resulting in the learners' empowerment and autonomy. Therefore, collaborative learning activities encourage independent learning and help learners take responsibility for their learning. This leads to improving the students' critical thinking since everyone is responsible to collaborate and help the group to achieve the goal. It also motivates learners to intensify their language proficiency to be a useful member of their groups and share their knowledge with others.

There were some limitations while doing this research; first, it was designed and implemented in only one class in the western part of Afghanistan; it would be interesting to determine if similar data can be driven if this study is replicated in other contexts. Second, other factors such as the cultural background, opportunities to interact with peers, social economical context, and gender issues may interfere with the study's outcome; therefore, replicating this study in other parts of the country may provide different results and shed light on the research topic various angles. Third, it would be useful to study if this method can work on learners with higher or lower levels of language proficiency and how it relates to the role of the teacher.

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## About the Author

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