



ENGAGING STUDENTS WITH TEXTS: A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING FOR UNLOCKING MEANING AND ENCOURAGING CREATIVE EXPRESSION IN TEACHING POETRY

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Abstract : *This study investigates the impact of collaborative learning on student engagement and creative expression in the context of teaching poetry, specifically among fourth-semester English Department students at STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative research design, the research involved comprehensive observations and semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights into students' experiences and perspectives. The findings reveal that collaborative discussions not only foster a deeper understanding of poetic texts but also create a supportive learning environment that encourages students to share diverse interpretations and ideas. Participants reported that engaging with peers enriched their comprehension and inspired them to express their own creativity through poetry writing. Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of peer feedback in refining students' artistic skills, illustrating how constructive interactions enhance their overall learning experience. Ultimately, this research emphasizes the necessity of incorporating collaborative learning strategies in poetry instruction, as such practices not only unlock deeper meanings in literary texts but also cultivate essential skills that prepare students for both academic success and personal growth.*

Keywords : Collaborative Learning; Unlocking Meaning; Creative Expression; Teaching Poetry

Abstrak : *Penelitian ini menyelidiki dampak pembelajaran kolaboratif terhadap keterlibatan siswa dan ekspresi kreatif dalam konteks pengajaran puisi, khususnya di kalangan mahasiswa semester empat Program Studi Bahasa Inggris di STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini melibatkan observasi komprehensif dan wawancara semi-terstruktur untuk mengumpulkan wawasan mendalam tentang pengalaman dan perspektif siswa. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa diskusi kolaboratif tidak hanya mendorong pemahaman yang lebih dalam terhadap teks puisi, tetapi juga menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang mendukung yang mendorong siswa untuk berbagi berbagai interpretasi dan ide. Peserta melaporkan bahwa keterlibatan dengan teman sejawat memperkaya pemahaman mereka dan menginspirasi mereka untuk mengekspresikan kreativitas mereka sendiri melalui penulisan puisi. Selain itu, studi ini menyoroti pentingnya umpan balik dari teman sebaya dalam memperbaiki keterampilan artistik siswa, menggambarkan bagaimana interaksi konstruktif meningkatkan pengalaman belajar mereka secara keseluruhan. Pada akhirnya, penelitian ini menekankan perlunya mengintegrasikan strategi pembelajaran*

kolaboratif dalam pengajaran puisi, karena praktik semacam itu tidak hanya mengungkap makna yang lebih dalam dalam teks sastra tetapi juga mengembangkan keterampilan penting yang mempersiapkan siswa untuk mencapai kesuksesan akademis dan pertumbuhan pribadi.

Kata Kunci : Pembelajaran Kolaboratif; Mengungkap Makna; Ekspresi Kreatif; Pengajaran Puisi

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational landscape, engaging English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students with literary texts, particularly poetry, poses a unique set of challenges and opportunities for educators seeking to foster both comprehension and creativity (Rosenhan & Galloway, 2019; Bland, 2022). Poetry, with its nuanced language and layered meanings, can often intimidate students, leading to disengagement and a reluctance to explore its depths. However, when approached through collaborative learning methods, the experience of studying poetry can transform into an enriching and stimulating journey. Collaborative learning not only fosters a sense of community among students but also enhances their understanding of poetic texts by allowing them to share insights, perspectives, and interpretations (Wells, 2002; Larson, 2009). By creating a supportive environment where students can learn from one another, educators can cultivate a love for poetry that transcends mere academic analysis (Hansen, 2004). This approach also encourages students to take ownership of their learning, empowering them to delve deeper into the meanings behind the poems. Ultimately, such collaborative efforts can spark curiosity and inspire a lifelong appreciation for literature.

The role of collaboration in language learning cannot be overstated, especially for EFL students who may struggle with confidence and fluency. When students work together to analyze poetic texts, they engage in meaningful dialogue that enhances their language skills and deepens their comprehension of the material. As supported by McCarthy (2020), through group discussions, students have the opportunity to articulate their thoughts, ask questions, and challenge each other's perspectives, resulting in a richer and more nuanced understanding of the poem's themes, structures, and emotional resonances. This collaborative approach transforms the often solitary experience of reading poetry into a shared exploration, allowing students to feel more connected to both the text and their peers. In other words, collaborative discussions create an environment where students feel empowered to express their interpretations and connect personally with the material (Brookfield & Preskill, 2012). This communal aspect not only enriches their understanding of the texts but also builds a supportive network that encourages risk-taking and experimentation. In this way, poetry becomes not just a subject to be studied but a medium through which students can explore their identities and experiences. Furthermore, this collective engagement can lead to the

emergence of new ideas and interpretations that individual study might overlook, enriching the overall learning experience.

Collaborative learning encourages creativity among EFL students, who may feel restricted in their expression due to language barriers. Poetry is inherently an art form that thrives on imagination and personal expression, and by working in groups, students are encouraged to experiment with their ideas, drawing on their collective insights to inspire new interpretations or even original compositions (Harrington, 2002; McLeish, 2019). In collaborative settings, students are inspired by one another, leading to innovative interpretations and original poetry compositions. This creative process not only enhances their engagement with the text but also helps students develop their unique voices as they navigate the intricacies of a new language. By encouraging students to write and share their poetry in response to the works studied, educators can foster a deeper emotional connection to the material (Kessler, 2000; Grisham, 2006; Fisher, 2007; Talyor & Statler, 2014; Roebuck, 2015). Moreover, this creative collaboration can build confidence in students, as they realize that their contributions are valued and that their perspectives enrich the group's understanding of the text.

Integrating technology into collaborative learning can further amplify student engagement with poetic texts. Digital platforms allow for innovative forms of collaboration, enabling students to share their analyses and creative expressions beyond the classroom walls (Peppler & Colomou, 2011). Utilizing online discussion forums, collaborative writing tools, and multimedia presentations can help students visualize and articulate their thoughts on poetry in dynamic ways. This tech-savvy approach not only captivates students' interest but also prepares them for the increasingly digital world, where collaborative skills are essential. By leveraging technology, educators can create a more interactive and accessible learning environment that meets the diverse needs of EFL students (Siefert, et al., 2019; Hamilton, 2022; Anis, 2023; Vanisree, 2023; Hanh, 2024). Additionally, technology can facilitate asynchronous collaboration, allowing students to engage with their peers at their own pace and revisit discussions, thereby deepening their understanding and reinforcing their learning.

Moreover, engaging EFL students with poetry through collaborative learning is a powerful pedagogical strategy that unlocks meaning and fosters creative expression. By emphasizing collaboration, educators can transform the study of poetry from a daunting task into an enriching communal experience, enabling students to develop both their linguistic abilities and their artistic sensibilities (Ewing, 2011; Young, 2016). As EFL students collaborate to decipher the complexities of poetic texts and express their interpretations creatively, they develop not only their analytical skills but also their capacity for empathy, self-expression, and collaboration – essential skills for success in both academic and real-world contexts. This holistic development not only prepares students for future academic challenges but also equips them with the tools to navigate diverse cultural landscapes, making their educational

journey both relevant and transformative. Ultimately, the combination of collaboration and creative engagement with poetry has the potential to foster a generation of learners who are not only proficient in language but also passionate about literature.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative as a research design that characterized by several essential features, including the use of natural classroom environments as sources of data, the researcher acting as the primary instrument for data collection, and the emphasis on providing detailed descriptions of the subjects involved (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), descriptive qualitative research focuses on events occurring within real-life settings, effectively capturing the essence of lived experiences. Ultimately, it adopts a naturalistic perspective, generating descriptive data from individuals' verbal or written communications and observable actions, without intervening in the phenomena being studied.

The participants of this study were the fourth semester of English Department students at STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang. The data were gathered through observations and semi-structured interviews, focusing on the interactions and activities among students and between the lecturer and students during the implementation of collaborative learning strategies in the context of poetry instruction. Observations aimed to capture how students engaged with texts and collaborated on unlocking meanings and expressing their creativity. Additionally, interviews were conducted to explore students' perspectives on the benefits and challenges they encountered while participating in collaborative learning activities. The semi-structured format enabled the researcher to address specific themes while allowing interviewees the flexibility to elaborate and provide additional insights as needed.

Furthermore, the data collected from observations and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using a three-stage process outlined by Ary et al. (2010): familiarizing and organizing, coding and reducing, and interpreting and representing. First, the researcher thoroughly reviewed and organized the data to enhance its accessibility. Next, the data were categorized into three groups corresponding to the research questions, with irrelevant information being discarded. In the final stage of interpretation, the researcher focused on extracting meanings, providing explanations, and connecting the findings to relevant theoretical frameworks. The representation of the data was achieved through various formats, including text, diagrams, and tables, ensuring a comprehensive descriptive analysis throughout the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the findings and discussions derived from the study, and it elaborated based on the problem of this research.

1. Result

The results of this study reveal that collaborative learning significantly enhances students' engagement with poetry, particularly among the fourth-semester English Department students at STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang. Through classroom observations, it was noted that students actively participated in discussions, exchanging diverse interpretations of poetic texts. This interactive environment not only facilitated a deeper understanding of the material but also encouraged students to articulate their thoughts confidently, thereby boosting their critical thinking skills. Many students expressed that discussing poetry in groups allowed them to appreciate multiple perspectives, ultimately enriching their comprehension of the texts. Additionally, the collaborative nature of the learning process fostered a sense of community among students, which played a crucial role in their overall motivation and enthusiasm for the subject. This supportive atmosphere not only enhanced their learning experience but also promoted a culture of shared exploration and mutual respect.

Semi-structured interviews revealed that this collaborative approach had a profound impact on students' creative expression. Many participants reported feeling inspired to write their own poetry after engaging in group discussions, highlighting how the collective brainstorming sessions ignited their imagination and opened new avenues for self-expression. The exchange of ideas and constructive feedback among peers were instrumental in helping students explore their creative potential, leading them to experiment with various poetic forms and themes. Students noted that this environment not only made them feel more comfortable sharing their work but also instilled a sense of ownership over their creative processes, empowering them to take risks in their writing. Ultimately, these insights suggest that incorporating collaborative learning strategies in poetry instruction can effectively unlock deeper meanings in texts while simultaneously nurturing students' creative abilities, fostering both intellectual growth and personal development.

Besides, the findings indicate that collaborative learning also enhances students' emotional engagement with poetry. By working together, students formed strong connections with their peers, creating a supportive network that encouraged them to share their feelings and interpretations openly. This emotional investment in the material led to a more profound appreciation for poetry as an art form, transforming their perception from mere academic study to a personal exploration of emotions and experiences. Many students expressed that discussing their interpretations in a safe environment helped them connect with the themes of the poems on a deeper level, fostering empathy and a greater understanding of the human experience.

Moreover, the collaborative learning framework allowed for diverse voices to be heard, which enriched the classroom dynamics. Students from various backgrounds brought unique perspectives to the discussions, leading to a richer dialogue about the texts. This

diversity not only enhanced critical thinking but also encouraged students to confront and challenge their own biases and assumptions. The exposure to different viewpoints helped them develop a more nuanced understanding of poetry, illustrating how collaboration can promote inclusivity and enhance learning outcomes. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of collaborative approaches in educational settings, particularly in subjects like poetry, where personal interpretation and emotional engagement are key to deeper learning.

2. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significance of collaborative learning in enhancing student engagement with poetry, a notion strongly supported by recent literature in educational psychology. As indicated by Johnson and Johnson (2014), collaborative learning not only promotes a deeper understanding of content but also fosters critical thinking skills among students. The active participation observed in the classroom, where students engaged in discussions and shared diverse interpretations, aligns with their assertion that learning is fundamentally a social process. This interactive dynamic allowed students to articulate their thoughts and challenge one another's viewpoints, enriching their comprehension of poetic texts. Such engagement is particularly critical in a discipline like poetry, where meaning is often layered and subjective. By encouraging students to explore various perspectives, collaborative learning creates an environment conducive to critical inquiry and deeper analysis. It related to literary translations that serve as a means to convey a country's culture, whether it is done implicitly or explicitly (Yusuf, 2024). Likewise, listening is crucial for effective communication and academic success in today's globalized world, acting as a gateway to comprehending spoken discourse, engaging with others, and accessing a range of educational and professional opportunities (Yuswandari, 2024).

In addition, the sense of community cultivated through collaborative learning aligns with the findings of Tinto (1997), who emphasized the importance of social integration in achieving academic success. Students reported feeling more motivated and enthusiastic about poetry when working alongside their peers, highlighting how a supportive classroom environment can enhance their learning experience. This sense of belonging is crucial in higher education, where students may often experience isolation. The formation of supportive networks within the classroom not only boosts motivation but also encourages students to take ownership of their learning. This resonates with the conclusions of Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), who noted that social engagement is a key predictor of student persistence and success. By fostering an inclusive environment, educators can significantly enhance students' overall educational experience and cultivate a culture of collaboration that extends beyond the classroom. As stated by Nahidin (2024), lecturers encounter various teaching challenges, such as managing the diverse linguistic backgrounds and skill levels of students, ensuring effective content delivery in multiple languages, and promoting meaningful

interactions in both languages. Further, Mahmawati & Mubayyinah (2024) indicated that education is undergoing continuous development in creating diverse learning models, encompassing strategies, methods, and administrative designs, which is the core of lectures to successfully achieve learning objectives.

The results further highlight the impact of collaborative discussions on students' creative expression, resonating with principles outlined in the Creative Learning Theory by Craft (2005). This theory posits that creativity thrives in environments that encourage exploration and risk-taking. In this study, students reported feeling inspired to write their own poetry after participating in group discussions, demonstrating how collective brainstorming sessions can ignite their imagination. This transformative power of idea generation reflects the assertion by Sawyer (2006) that collaborative learning environments facilitate the creative process by allowing individuals to draw from one another's strengths, ultimately leading to more innovative outcomes. The opportunity to engage in creative dialogues not only enhances their writing skills but also nurtures their ability to think outside the box, fostering a mindset that values experimentation and originality. Here, grammar proficiency is honed as students deliberate on sentence structures to effectively convey their ideas, thereby requiring application of their knowledge of grammatical patterns (Hidayat & Rifdah, 2024).

Additionally, the importance of constructive feedback within collaborative settings reinforces the insights of Hattie and Timperley (2007), who argue that feedback is essential for student learning and development. In this study, students noted that peer feedback significantly contributed to their growth as poets, enabling them to refine their craft and experiment with various styles. This reciprocal process of giving and receiving feedback not only enhances students' writing abilities but also fosters a critical mindset, encouraging them to view revision as an integral part of their creative journey. Such an approach aligns with the idea that effective feedback mechanisms can lead to improved performance and deeper learning experiences. In summary, the findings of this study illustrate that collaborative learning serves as a powerful pedagogical approach in teaching poetry, effectively unlocking deeper meanings and nurturing creative expression. By implementing collaborative strategies across various disciplines, educators can foster engagement and creativity, ultimately preparing students for academic success and equipping them with the collaborative skills necessary to thrive in today's interconnected world.

CONCLUSION

This study clearly demonstrates that collaborative learning is an effective and transformative approach to teaching poetry, significantly enhancing student engagement and fostering creative expression among fourth-semester English Department students at STIT Miftahul Midad Lumajang. The findings reveal that through active participation in group

discussions, students not only developed a deeper understanding of poetic texts but also cultivated a sense of community that motivated them to engage more fully in their learning process. The supportive environment created by collaborative interactions allowed for the exchange of diverse perspectives, which enriched students' comprehension and inspired them to explore their own creativity in writing poetry. Additionally, the role of constructive feedback emerged as a crucial element in refining their craft, underscoring the importance of peer collaboration in artistic development. Overall, these insights highlight the necessity for educators to incorporate collaborative strategies in poetry instruction and across various disciplines, as such practices not only unlock deeper meanings in texts but also nurture essential skills that prepare students for success in both academic and real-world contexts.

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