

Students' Perceptions of Using Group Work in Learning English in Nepal

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Abstract

Group work is regarded as an effective learner-centred technique and communicative method which encourages cooperative learning and engages students actively in the learning process. This study aims to discover secondary school students' perceptions of using group work in learning English in Nepal. A quantitative descriptive survey research design was employed to carry out the study. Eighty respondents studying in grade 12 were randomly selected from four public schools in Rupandehi, Nepal. Two sets of closed-ended questions with a five-point Likert scale comprising 20 items were used as the primary tools for data collection. The findings revealed that most students had positive perceptions of using group work and valued it as a learner-centred methodology. Group work improves teamwork, communicative competence, and learner engagement in the learning process. However, uneven involvement, excessive mother tongue use, and less instructor supervision were some challenges in using it. Thus, this study can contribute to the transformation of the lecture method with the effective application of group work, increasing learners' engagement in overall success of learning English.

Keywords: Collaboration, group work, learner autonomy, learner talking time, students' perception

Introduction

Group work is a learner-centred technique in which three or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated learning. However, many teachers are still using outdated teacher-centred techniques, which cannot address the requirements of the students in their classroom instruction. More than two people collaborate to do a task or project work together for the completion of the task to obtain knowledge and skill in cooperative teamwork. Group work gets pupils to engage with one another and work together, sharing ideas to finish an assignment.

Teachers frequently employ group work-based activities, mostly to raise students' learning achievement (Adams & Hamm, 1990). Despite its benefits for improving students' language learning skills, little research has been done on how these students' soft skills can be developed through group work, especially in higher education. In order to improve collaborative problem-solving abilities, this study intends to investigate how students view group work-based activities and how they impact their academic writing ability (Anisah & Suryati, 2025). Group learning is frequently used interchangeably with collaborative learning, cooperative learning, peer learning, and community learning. Richards et al. (2010) stated that group work is a learning activity which involves a small group of learners working together. The group may work on a single task or different parts of a larger task with

responsibility. Tasks of group members are often selected by the members of the group.

In traditional teacher-fronted class activities, students remain passive as there is no communication between instructors and pupils; teachers impose input on the learners, which may not provide appropriate input and opportunities to speak (Serin, 2018). In such classes, input is either too difficult or too simple-as a result, students feel frustrated. Group work makes it easy to individualize the task for learners according to their needs, interests and expectations, where students are divided into many small groups, each having talented as well as weak ones, and a piece of the task is given to each group. Since human beings are social creatures by nature, they can learn by engaging in group work. Group activities foster cooperation and personal growth (Dhawan, 2015) and promote cooperative learning and interpersonal growth. Group work has become a common teaching strategy in educational institutions in English as a Foreign Language classrooms (Meng, 2009). Group work is seen as a comprehensive teaching strategy that boosts student participation, enhances the caliber of learning, and lessens the effort of teachers (Bentley & Warwick, 2017). Communication games and problem-solving activities for groups of learners were created from the late 1970s onward to set up reasons for oral interaction amongst students and were seen by many as a particular hallmark of communicative teaching (Byrne and Rixon, 1979).

Group work is a way of solving problems that teachers experience in language teaching. The group leader leads other members of the group to do the given task and reports the findings of the group. Group work seems to be an extremely attractive idea for several reasons. Just as in pair work, we can mention the increase in the amount of student talking time, and we can emphasize the opportunities. It gives students really to use language to communicate with each other. When all the students in a group are working together to produce an achievement, for example, they will be communicating with each other and, more importantly, cooperating among themselves. Students will be teaching and learning in the group, exhibiting a degree of self-reliance that simply is not possible when the teacher is acting as a controller. Group work maximizes the students' talking time as it develops communicative skills along with self-reliance (Harmer, 2015). It encourages broader skills of cooperation and negotiation than pair work, then it promotes learner autonomy and communicative competence of the target language in the learners. Group work is a useful strategy for raising student involvement and enhancing their English-speaking abilities (Yanse, 2016). If students experience the issue as though they are in the actual setting where the language they have studied is used, they will be able to comprehend and master speaking. For instance, in order to provide students with a realistic experience of the English language, teachers employ role-playing or group work as a teaching method for speaking. Group work is an effective way to incorporate the 4Cs into EFL integrated skills development, as demonstrated by Pardede (2020). Students were also able to teach and learn from one another when they collaborated in groups. Working in groups could help you save time getting ready.

Conceptualizing Group Work

Group work is a learner-centred teaching strategy where two or more students collaborate to

complete a shared task or solve a problem, promoting active participation, communication, cooperation, and self-initiated learning, promotes learning together. It enhances language skills, fosters interpersonal growth, and encourages learner autonomy by allowing students to engage meaningfully with peers in a supportive, interactive environment (Richards et al., 2010; Harmer, 2015; Daba et al., 2016). Group work encourages students to participate in cooperative activities that improve their language proficiency and interpersonal development.

Benefits of Using Group Work

Group work is more dynamic than pair work; therefore, there is a greater possibility of discussion and a greater chance of solving problems. Working in groups is more relaxing, exciting and cooperative than working in pairs. Tiong and Yong's (2004) study indicated that Asian students like collaborative work and informal learning environments; however, their participation in classroom conversations with classmates and teachers is remarkably low. Assigning students to group work is one of the most popular teaching strategies. Students can collaborate with people who have various behaviours and competencies through group work (Alali et al., 2020). According to the Vygotskyian sociocultural theory, this activity promotes cooperative learning, in which students engage in meaningful interactions with their partners to activate their brains. It is consistent with the findings of Alkhudiry (2022), who conducted a critical analysis of the hypothesis that cooperative learning may help students expand their knowledge by letting them consider anything they believe merits discussion.

There are several benefits of group work for English classrooms. In educational systems, group work is a technique for learning at all levels. Group work is an instructional strategy in which students of various skill levels form small groups and collaborate to achieve a particular goal (Taqi & Al-Nouh, 2014). Group work is a teaching strategy in which students of all skill levels collaborate in small groups to achieve a common goal. Albaqshi (2016) has provided some benefits to using group work, including increasing participation opportunities in large classes; fostering learners' autonomy and responsibilities; giving them a sense of contribution that encourages greater participation; and facilitating student-to-student interaction and mutual learning. Deysolong (2023) stated that by using group work teachers help students feel like they own their work, improve their social skills, deepen their understanding, improve their memory, and embrace diversity by getting them to work together. A study by Alfares (2017) indicated that group work enhanced language learners' educational experience from cognitive, emotional, and motivational perspectives. It also helped them get the right feedback in correcting pronunciation and grammar mistakes in the target language.

Group work is essential to language acquisition because it fosters an informal, engaging atmosphere that allows students to practice speaking more frequently and freely. Promoting collaboration and negotiation and expanding possibilities for individual speaking aids in the management of big courses (Brown & Lee, 2025). Group work fosters autonomy and involvement by allowing students to share chores and make decisions. It also encourages motivation and a sense of

responsibility. By enabling assignments to be customized to learners' levels, interests, and learning styles, it meets their specific learning demands (Brown, 2007). Group work offers more opportunities for oral practice than teacher-fronted groups, particularly for students who are timid or reluctant. It also offers more intelligible input and opportunities for meaningful negotiation. Group work helps students' speaking accuracy and fluency significantly (Rospinah et al., 2021). It fosters natural, meaningful communication and helps learners gain confidence, which improves the effectiveness and enjoyment of language acquisition. Through group work, students can share knowledge, offer criticism, and search for appropriate answers to particular issues. Cooperative learning can enhance students' knowledge by allowing them to discuss topics they perceive as important (Situmorang, 2021). Through group work-based activities, teachers enthusiastically drive their pupils to collaborate with others. Bhatta (2025) claimed that group work, pair work, conversations, project work, dialogues, role play, task-based learning, problem-solving, presentations, elicitation, assignments, and other activities keep students involved in learning.

Weaknesses of Using Group Work

Usually, the group is noisy and time-consuming. Moreover, students are likely to commit errors in speaking. Talented students will overpower the weaker ones, etc. Group work is an instructional strategy in which students of various skill levels form small groups and collaborate to achieve a common goal (Taqi & Al-Nouh, 2014). They also stated that there are some weaknesses to group work. Some students get praise for doing very little work, while others do most of the work. Some students in a group may work with their friends and leave others. It brings the difficulty of grading every group member. Some students work more than others. Different habits of the students will make some students not like to take orders from other students in the group. Some group members may refuse to work with others, and noise is one of the outstanding disadvantages that discourages many teachers from using group work.

Although group work fosters collaboration and communication, it also presents several challenges that can hinder its effectiveness. One major concern is that teachers often lose control of the class, especially when noise levels rise and the class becomes disorganized. Managing group activities demands higher pedagogical skills, as teachers must assign roles, monitor discussions, and provide effective feedback. This additional burden can be overwhelming, particularly when teachers cannot oversee all groups simultaneously (Harmer, 2008). Furthermore, students tend to use their native language when working together, especially in contexts where most learners are from the same linguistic background, which limits their practice of the target language. Errors in grammar and sentence structure may also go unnoticed, as peer discussions may not always be accurate, and the teacher is not always present to correct mistakes. Group work may not suit all learners, especially adult learners or those who prefer individual tasks due to differences in age, learning style, cognitive abilities, and personal interests. Students often wish to be the centre of the teacher's attention rather than engaging with peers, especially when placed in uncongenial groups (Harmer, 2008). Especially in

uncooperative group situations, students frequently choose attention-seeking over interacting with others.

Steps in Implementing Group Work

Students' social connections are believable when the group work method is used in teaching and learning activities. According to Ellis and Holmes (2017), there are five processes involved in putting group work into practice: 1) getting ready for the assignment, 2) creating the activity, 3) introducing the task, 4) keeping an eye on the task, and 5) concluding the task. Some researchers have carried out a variety of studies. Students view group assignments favourably since they prefer them over individual assignments and assessments in the classroom (Daba et al. 2016). The majority of teachers who took part in the discussion, however, stated that their students have misunderstandings about the purpose of group work because they believe that students view it as a means of passing exams rather than as an activity that fosters cooperative learning.

Research suggests that teacher-centered methods predominant in Nepalese classrooms and students' self-efficacy in English may hamper student participation (Chitrakar, 2019 & Bista, 2018.) in learning. Little study has examined students' perspectives and lived experiences in particular classroom environments; most of the material now in publication focuses on the general implementation, advantages, and disadvantages of group work. By offering context-specific data on how students view the benefits and difficulties of group work in English language learning, this study seeks to fulfil that gap. Despite being widely recognized as a learner-centred technique in English language instruction, group work is frequently used without a thorough grasp of students' perspectives on its advantages and difficulties, which makes this study essential. Examining students' perspectives offers localized insights that exceed copied ideas, as their efficacy can differ in multilingual and multicultural environments. These results not only assist educators in improving their grouping, monitoring, and assessment strategies, but they also add to the body of knowledge on collaborative learning, which influences curriculum design, pedagogy, and policy to improve the effectiveness and significance of group work in language learning. This study aims to find out students' perceptions of using group work in learning English in Nepal. The study answers the following research questions: What are students' perceptions of using group work in learning the English language in Nepal? And what are the students' perceived benefits and weaknesses of using it?

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to find out students' perceptions of using group work in learning English in Nepal. Since it is quantitative research, a descriptive survey design was employed in this study. The respondents in this study were eighty students of grade 12 (20 from each school). Eighty students were the sample in the study because generally, 80 participants are supposed to be an appropriate number for most of the surveys of quantitative studies (Budiu & Moran, 2021). They were chosen because group work was a common practice in their English classes. The study is basically based on primary sources of data. A structured survey questionnaire design utilizing a five-point

Likert-scale questionnaire was used to gather data and assess their perceptions of group work in learning English. The questionnaire contained 20 statements in total. Respondents were asked to select only one option to react to the items out of the five options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The survey was administered to the four selected community school students in Rupandehi, Nepal. Respondents completed the questionnaire, and the collected data were coded numerically, checked for completeness, and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies, percentages and means were calculated for each questionnaire item, and the results were presented in tables. For ethical considerations, the participants were provided detailed information about research objectives, procedures and their rights. Informed consent was established from all the participants before they participated in the study. For confidentiality, the researcher assured that all the collected data would be treated with strict confidentiality and participants' identities were kept anonymous. Finally, the quantitative data obtained from the survey were analyzed and interpreted descriptively using appropriate statistical methods and synthesized to conclude students' perceptions of group work in English classrooms.

Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion are presented and analyzed under two themes, accompanied by a table.

Students' Perceptions of Benefits in Using Group Work

Students' perceptions of the benefits of using group work are presented as follows.

Table 1

Benefits of Using Group Work

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Group work helped me manage assigned tasks effectively.	0	0	4	40	36
Group work taught me to respect the feelings, opinions, and ideas of others.	0	0	3	35	42
Group work assisted me in working collaboratively.	0	0	5	42	33
Group work supports me in correcting errors in pronunciation and grammar together.	0	0	6	46	28
Group work generates interactive language in class.	0	0	4	48	28
Group work promotes learner responsibility and autonomy.	0	0	5	43	32
Group work provides opportunities for learners to practise language orally.	0	0	6	22	52
Group work can provide more negotiation of meaning than a teacher-fronted class.	0	0	8	36	36
Group work provides a less threatening atmosphere for language learning.	0	0	6	38	36

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Group work creates a comfortable space to learn in their own way and time.	0	0	8	50	22

Table 1 indicates that none of the respondents responded "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" for any of the items. A majority of respondents selected 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree,' indicating that they had a positive opinion regarding the advantages of group work. Group work gives students the chance to practice their language skills orally and receive the highest degree of strong agreement (65%), followed by the idea that it inculcates respect for the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of others (52.5%).

While the 'Strongly Agree' score was marginally lower at 27.5%, statement 10, which emphasizes group collaboration as creating a comfortable space for self-paced learning, received the greatest total agreement (62.5% Agree). While the "Strongly Agree" score was marginally lower at 27.5%, statement 10, which emphasizes group collaboration as creating a comfortable space for self-paced learning, received the greatest total agreement (62.5% Agree). The small percentage of neutral replies (3.75% to 10%) indicates that most students had a strong and positive opinion on the importance of group projects in classroom settings.

The findings clearly show that the majority of students had positive perceptions of using group work because they believed group works provide them opportunities to share ideas with their peers. None of them strongly disagreed or agreed with any of the items. Group work facilitates cooperative learning, building mutual respect and understanding, offering a secure and engaging setting for language practice, in correcting errors in pronunciation and grammar together and encouraging learner autonomy.

Students' Perceptions of Drawbacks of Working in Groups

Drawbacks of conducting group work regarding responses from respondents are presented in the following table.

Table 2

Students' Perceptions of Drawbacks in Working Groups

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Some group members do not participate.	12	10	8	28	22
Group members do not share work equally.	4	10	16	24	26
Some members get good grades without doing work.	3	25	12	25	15
The teacher is no longer in control of the class.	4	4	10	25	37
Students use their native language.	6	6	8	26	46
Students' errors pass uncorrected.	4	8	8	24	48
Teachers cannot observe and monitor all groups at once.	5	3	6	25	41
Not all students may enjoy it.	6	2	5	26	41

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
Group work brings the difficulty of grading every group member.	4	6	6	28	36
Noise is a major drawback that stops many teachers from using group work.	4	4	6	26	40

Table 2 highlights several issues that students encounter when participating in group work in English language learning. Respondents responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with every obstacle on the list. For instance, 62.5% of them feel that some group members do not participate (28 Agree, 22 Strongly Agree), and 62.5% feel that members of the group do not distribute labour evenly (24 Agree, 26 Strongly Agree). 50% of respondents (25 Agree, 25 Strongly Agree) expressed worry that some members get good scores without doing anything. 46% of respondents strongly agreed that students utilize their native language when working in groups, while 48% strongly agreed that students' mistakes go unpunished. Furthermore, 78.75% of respondents (25 Agree, 37 Strongly Agree) concurred that group projects cause the teacher to lose control of the class. Additional frequent issues were classroom noise (82.5%), native language usage (72.5%), and grading challenges (80%). The majority of respondents had stable perceptions on these topics, as seen by the very low number of neutral responses, less than 20%.

The study reveals some weaknesses of using group work, such as uncorrected mistakes, the use of native language, unequal participation, and a lack of instructor control, which hinder the effective use of group work. Therefore, teachers need to establish explicit grading standards if they want group work to be genuinely successful.

Discussion

This study emphasizes the effectiveness of group work regarding its benefits and weaknesses in learning the English language. With 100% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with each of the ten positive statements regarding group work, a majority of students recognized its educational benefits. It is noteworthy that 65% of respondents strongly believed that it improves oral language practice, supporting the assertions made by Brown and Lee (2025) and Rospinah et al. (2021) on increased speaking confidence and fluency. Furthermore, 62.5% of respondents believed that it produces a welcoming, learner-centred environment, and 52.5% strongly agreed that it promotes respect for others' perspectives. The data on students' perceptions of using group work in teaching revealed that the majority of the students agreed that their teachers constantly use group work in English class. They believe group work offers them an opportunity to share ideas with their peers. This is in harmony with Wahyuningsih's (2018) findings, revealing that the application of group work boosts the students' feeling of competence, feeling to be respected, feeling to be loved, feeling to have a chance for success, and feeling of confidence. These findings are consistent with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as well as research by Albaqshi (2016) and Taqi & Al-Nouh (2014).

However, students also pointed out important disadvantages. A startling 78.75% of

respondents replied that teachers lost control during group work, and 82.5% felt that noise was a significant problem. In addition, 60% of respondents mentioned that some students receive high grades without contributing, and 72.5% mentioned that friends frequently use their native tongue, problems that can hinder successful language learning. Harmer (2008) cautioned against these weaknesses, stressing the significance of preserving self-control and making sure that language is used correctly.

Most students found group work beneficial for language learning, especially for speaking practice, mutual respect, and self-paced learning. While it fosters collaboration and autonomy, challenges like unequal participation and loss of teacher control require careful management and strategic planning by teachers. Ellis and Holmes (2017) suggest an organized method of group work that incorporates role assignments, active supervision, and clear preparation in order to overcome these problems. Research indicates that teacher-centred pedagogies prevalent in Nepalese classrooms, along with students' self-efficacy in English, may impede student participation (Bhatta, 2025; Chitrakar, 2019 & Bista, 2018). Group work can minimize its weaknesses through careful preparation and teacher guidance while increasing motivation, autonomy, and interactive learning.

Conclusion and Implications

The objective of this study was to examine students' perceptions of group work in learning English in Nepal. The findings indicate that the majority of secondary-level students perceived group work positively, although there are some drawbacks in using it. They perceive group work as a learner-centred technique that supports collaboration and autonomy. Group work was found to enhance learning by engaging mixed-ability learners, providing maximum learning opportunities to the students and promoting real interpersonal communication in a relaxed and interactive environment. It also encourages greater independence, active participation, and the integration of the four language skills. However, several challenges-such as unequal participation, use of native language, uncorrected errors, and reduced teacher control hindered its effectiveness. Appropriate grouping strategies, active teacher facilitation, and clear evaluation criteria are essential to maximize its benefits and avoid potential weaknesses that may arise from its misuse.

Teachers are also suggested to ensure that students learn comfortably by selecting the most effective techniques and strategies that consider their interests when group work is being used in the classroom. The study's results can support curriculum designers in designing curricula with group work activities and support English language teachers in using group work effectively. This study can contribute to giving educators fresh perspectives on how to better include group work as a teaching strategy in English language lessons, to promote student centred learning, and the transformation of the lecture method with the application of group work, increasing learners' engagement in learning English.

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