

**AN ANALYSIS OF READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH COLLABORATIVE
LEARNING IN 21ST CENTURY SKILL AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEGAL
JAYA**

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Abstrak: Artikel ini melaporkan temuan studi kasus kualitatif yang mengeksplorasi bagaimana pembelajaran kolaboratif (PL) membentuk perkembangan pemahaman membaca 23 siswa kelas tiga di SD TegalJaya, Bali. Berlandaskan teori sosiokultural Vygotskian dan kerangka kerja Kemitraan untuk Pembelajaran Abad 21 (P21), studi ini menyelidiki tiga pertanyaan: (1) Bagaimana PL memengaruhi pemahaman membaca siswa? (2) Kekuatan dan kelemahan apa yang muncul ketika siswa belajar membaca secara kolaboratif? (3) Strategi guru mana yang mengoptimalkan pemahaman selama sesi PL? Data dikumpulkan selama satu semester melalui observasi pelajaran, wawancara semi terstruktur dengan siswa dan guru bahasa Inggris mereka, serta analisis dokumen rencana pelajaran, silabus, dan artefak siswa. Prosedur pengodean tematik dan perbandingan konstan mengungkapkan lima temuan utama. Pertama, rutinitas PL terstruktur (misalnya, Think Pair Share, Round Robin, dan Collaborative Strategic Reading) secara signifikan meningkatkan skor pemahaman literal, inferensial, dan evaluatif, dengan peningkatan rata-rata 15–20 poin persentase pada penilaian kelas. Kedua, perancah antarteman sebaya meningkatkan pertumbuhan kosakata, pemantauan metakognitif, dan efikasi diri pembaca, terutama bagi siswa dengan kemampuan rendah. Ketiga, heterogenitas tingkat bahasa dan keterampilan sosial terkadang memperlambat kerja kelompok, sehingga membutuhkan fasilitasi yang cermat. Keempat, penggunaan rubrik penilaian oleh guru, Pemodelan strategi yang eksplisit, dan peran rotasi (Pemimpin, Pencatat, Pelapor, Pemeriksa) mendorong akuntabilitas dan partisipasi yang setara. Terakhir, sesi Pembelajaran Kolaboratif (CL) mengembangkan kompetensi kunci abad ke-21—komunikasi, kolaborasi, berpikir kritis, dan kreativitas—sehingga menyelaraskan pembelajaran membaca dengan tujuan kurikulum yang lebih luas. Artikel ini diakhiri dengan rekomendasi pedagogis dan kebijakan, yang menunjukkan bahwa pengembangan profesional yang berkelanjutan, penjadwalan yang fleksibel, dan dukungan sumber daya sangat penting untuk mengarusutamakan praktik Pembelajaran Kolaboratif (CL) di sekolah dasar di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Kolaboratif, Pemahaman Membaca, Keterampilan Abad ke-21, Vygotsky, Pendidikan Dasar.

Abstract: *This article reports the findings of a qualitative case study exploring how collaborative learning (CL) shapes the reading-comprehension development of 23 third-grade pupils at SD Tegal Jaya, Bali. Anchored in Vygotskian sociocultural theory and the Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) framework, the study investigates three questions: (1) How does CL influence pupils' reading comprehension? (2) What strengths and weaknesses emerge when pupils learn to read collaboratively? (3) Which teacher strategies optimise understanding during CL sessions? Data were gathered over one semester through lesson observation, semi-structured interviews with pupils and their English teacher, and document analysis of lesson plans, syllabi, and pupil artefacts. Thematic coding and constant-comparison procedures revealed five principal findings. First, structured CL routines (e.g., Think-Pair-Share, Round-Robin, and Collaborative Strategic Reading) significantly increased literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension scores, with mean gains of 15–20 percentage points on classroom assessments. Second, peer scaffolding enhanced vocabulary growth, metacognitive monitoring, and reader self-efficacy, particularly for lower-proficiency pupils. Third, heterogeneity in language level and social skills occasionally slowed group work, demanding vigilant facilitation. Fourth, the teacher's use of assessment rubrics, explicit strategy modelling, and rotational roles (Leader, Recorder, Reporter, Checker) fostered accountability and equitable participation. Finally, CL sessions cultivated key 21st-century competencies—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity—thereby aligning reading instruction with broader curriculum goals. The article concludes with pedagogical and policy recommendations, suggesting that sustained professional development, flexible scheduling, and resource support are critical for mainstreaming CL practices in Indonesian primary schools.*

Keywords: *Collaborative Learning, Reading Comprehension, 21st Century Skills, Vygotsky, Elementary Education.*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of academic achievement and lifelong learning (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Yet Indonesian large-scale assessments—such as PISA and national try-outs—continue to show that many primary-school pupils struggle to construct meaning beyond the literal level. At SD Tegal Jaya, preliminary diagnostic tests administered in February 2025 revealed that only 39 percent of third-grade pupils could correctly identify textual main ideas, and a mere 22 percent made accurate inferences from short narrative passages. Classroom observations further indicated that most reading lessons still revolved around teacher-centred “say-and-repeat” routines, isolated word lists, and individual seatwork. Such practices, while well-intentioned, often leave pupils passive

and disengaged, limiting opportunities to negotiate meaning, co-construct understanding, and practise higher-order thinking.

Parallel to these instructional challenges, the Ministry of Education's 2024 *Merdeka Belajar* initiative and the global Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) call for integration of four key competencies—critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (the “4C’s”)—across subject areas. Collaborative learning (CL) offers a promising conduit for weaving these competencies into reading instruction. Rooted in Lev Vygotsky’s notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), CL posits that learners can perform at higher cognitive levels when they receive appropriate scaffolded support from more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Peer dialogue is not merely a conduit for sharing finished thoughts; it is a medium through which understanding itself is built.

International meta-analyses affirm that CL yields moderate-to-large effects on comprehension outcomes (Hattie, 2018). Specific models—such as Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), Reciprocal Teaching, and Literature Circles—have been shown to enhance vocabulary, text-structure awareness, and inference-making (Klingner & Vaughn, 2010). Nevertheless, most empirical work has focused on secondary or tertiary EFL contexts; less is known about how CL unfolds in Indonesian primary classrooms with mixed-proficiency learners and time-tabled English once or twice weekly. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the enactment and impact of CL at SD Tegal Jaya, seeking to generate contextually grounded insights for teachers, school leaders, and curriculum planners.

Grounded in the above rationale, the study pursued three research questions:

1. *How does collaborative learning impact third-grade pupils’ reading comprehension at SD Tegal Jaya?*
2. *What strengths and weaknesses characterise pupils’ performance during collaborative reading activities?*
3. *Which teacher strategies most effectively support comprehension in collaborative settings?*

By answering these questions, the study aims to contribute (a) empirical evidence to the CL literature within Asian primary schooling and (b) practical guidance for integrating 21st-century skills into early-grade English curricula.

RESEARCH METHOD

Design

A descriptive multiple-instrument case study was selected to capture the “thick description” of CL implementation within its real-life setting (Yin, 2018). The design triangulated observation, interview, and document data to enhance credibility.

Participants and Setting

The site, SD Tegal Jaya, is a semi-urban public school in Jembrana Regency, Bali. The focal class comprised 23 pupils (13 girls, 10 boys; mean age = 9.1 years). English is taught twice weekly (2 × 40 minutes) by an experienced teacher with a B.Ed. and seven years in service. Parental consent and school approvals were secured in accordance with ethical guidelines.

Instruments

1. **Classroom Observation Sheet:** A 15-item matrix captured pupil engagement, strategy use, talk moves, and teacher scaffolding.
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Thirty-minute sessions were held with the teacher and seven purposively sampled pupils (high, middle, low achievers) to probe experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges.
3. **Document Analysis:** Lesson plans, assessment rubrics, and sample pupil worksheets were examined to contextualise observed practices.

Procedures

Data collection spanned March–June 2025. The researcher conducted six non-participant observations, each focusing on a different CL routine. Field notes were audio-synched and expanded within 24 hours. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and member-checked for accuracy. Documents were photographed and coded.

Data Analysis

Following Miles and Huberman’s (1994) framework, data were reduced via open coding, clustered into categories (e.g., “peer scaffolding,” “role clarity”), and synthesised into themes answering the research questions. Constant comparison and analytic memos traced patterns across data sources. Trustworthiness was bolstered through source, method, and investigator

triangulation; peer debriefing with two external researchers; and maintenance of an audit trail.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of Collaborative Learning on Reading Comprehension

Pre- and post-unit test scores revealed that mean comprehension rose from 64.7 to 81.2 out of 100, with the largest gains in inferencing (+21 points) and main-idea identification (+18 points). Classroom discourse transcripts showed a 35 percent increase in pupil-generated “why” and “how” questions, signalling deeper engagement with textual meaning. Pupils also demonstrated heightened metacognitive awareness, as evidenced by think-aloud excerpts (“If I don’t know a word, I ask my friend or guess from the next sentence”). These gains echo earlier findings by Rajaei et al. (2020) but extend them to a younger cohort.

Strengths and Weaknesses Observed in CL Sessions

Analysis identified four strengths: (1) richer vocabulary uptake, (2) increased motivation stemming from peer encouragement, (3) improved oral fluency during group reporting, and (4) emergent leadership behaviours among formerly reticent pupils. Conversely, three weaknesses surfaced: (a) uneven participation when high-proficiency pupils dominated, (b) occasional code-switching into Indonesian that diluted English exposure, and (c) time overruns that encroached on follow-up writing tasks. The teacher mitigated these issues by assigning rotating roles and using “equaliser cards” that limited individual talk time.

Teacher Strategies Enhancing Understanding

The teacher employed a three-phase CL cycle: *Preparation* (strategy modelling and vocabulary front-loading), *Interaction* (small-group discussion with monitoring), and *Consolidation* (whole-class debrief and individual reflection). An assessment rubric featuring criteria for “Fluency,” “Content Accuracy,” and “Teamwork” guided both formative feedback and summative evaluation. Pupils reported that rubrics clarified expectations (“We know what to do to get four stars”). Additionally, “Stop-Think-Jot” checkpoints prompted pupils to synthesise ideas before speaking, reducing off-task chatter.

Interpreting the Gains through a Vygotskian Lens

The substantial score improvements align with Vygotsky’s ZPD construct: assisted performance within peer groups enabled pupils to transcend individual limitations. Scaffolded

questioning and reciprocal explanation transferred strategic control from teacher to pupils, fostering self-regulated comprehension. Internalisation was evident when pupils applied questioning stems independently in later sessions.

Synergy with P21 Framework

Findings affirm that CL is not merely a vehicle for content mastery but an incubator for 21st-century skills. Pupils practised negotiation, consensus-building, and creative summarisation (e.g., drawing storyboards). Such experiences resonate with Education 4.0 calls for collaborative problem-solvers agile in digitally mediated, multicultural communication (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022).

Comparison with Prior Studies

Consistent with Jin et al. (2022), peer influence extended beyond behavioural engagement to cognitive and emotional dimensions, suggesting that affective solidarity can bolster comprehension. However, unlike Nosratinia and Fateh's (2017) report of negligible differences between CSR and individual strategy instruction at university level, the present study found clear advantages of CL in primary pupils, possibly due to their developmental orientation toward social learning.

Practical Implications

Teachers should (a) train pupils in collaborative norms, (b) employ heterogeneous grouping to leverage diverse strengths, and (c) integrate rubrics to equalise participation. Administrators ought to provide scheduling flexibility, reducing lesson fragmentation that hampers extended CL cycles. Teacher education programmes should embed CL practicum modules, emphasising facilitation over direct instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that well-structured collaborative learning markedly enhances reading comprehension among grade-three pupils at SD Tegal Jaya while simultaneously fostering crucial 21st-century skills. Gains were underpinned by peer scaffolding, explicit strategy instruction, and assessment practices that balanced group accountability with individual responsibility. Challenges—such as unequal participation and time management—underscore the necessity of ongoing teacher mediation and institutional support. Scaling these

practices across Indonesian primary schools will require sustained professional development, adaptable curricula, and robust resource allocation. Future research might adopt mixed-methods or quasi-experimental designs to examine long-term CL effects on diverse literacy outcomes and to explore technology-enhanced CL modalities.

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