

REVIEW

Small Group Learning Strategies in English as Second Language Contexts: A Review of Literature

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ABSTRACT

Small group learning strategies offer significant benefits over individual learning and have gained increasing attention in English as Second Language (ESL) contexts. Grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, this study systematically reviews existing literature on collaborative and cooperative learning approaches in ESL classrooms, with a particular focus on Pakistan. While learner-centered methods have been widely implemented globally, Pakistani institutions have only recently begun integrating these approaches. This study examines the origins, definitions, key components, similarities, differences, and research paradigms of small group learning in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Pakistan. Using a systematic literature review, this study analyzed 40 articles using predefined inclusion criteria, including relevance to collaborative and cooperative learning in ESL contexts, studies conducted in Pakistan or similar settings, peer-reviewed sources, and publications from 15–20 years. Findings reveal that small group learning enhances English proficiency, knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and overall academic achievement. The study underscores the need for institutional support to maximize these benefits in Pakistani public institutions. These insights offer valuable guidance for teachers, policymakers, curriculum designers, and textbook boards in fostering more effective ESL learning environments.

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1. Introduction

Small group instruction for learning English has gained importance as an essential component of 21st-century pedagogy, as reflected in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English as a Second Language (ESL), and English as a Native Language (ENL) across various educational levels, from primary (Grade 1–5) and secondary (Grade 6–12) to higher education (undergraduate and postgraduate levels)^[1]. Studies conducted globally and within Pakistan^[2–4], consistently show that learners engaged in small group settings achieve better outcomes compared to those working individually. These outcomes span various critical areas, such as interpersonal and communication skills, higher-order thinking, problem-solving abilities, academic performance, and active engagement. Over the last four decades, a variety of labels had coined to represent this kind of interactive and active learning but collaborative and cooperative learning approaches are the most prevalent terms employed to define small group-based activities^[5]. Many researchers, for instance, Driver et al.^[6] and Bruffee^[7] approved that teaching and learning approaches are based upon academic and developmental framework referring to learning English as the outcome of socially integrated knowledge that is the essence of cooperative and collaborative learning processes. According to Bruffee^[8], two primary differences of opinions are dominant in these two small group based approaches. Bruffee^[9] stated that these two approaches were originally developed to support learners of different ages, experiences, and expertise in mastering interdependence. Bruffee^[9] added that teachers who use these methods often had distinctive concepts about the nature of authority information.

Gaillet^[10] also presents the argument that collaborative learning emerged in response to the limitations of teacher-centered pedagogy. Gaillet^[10] asserts that traditional large classroom settings often fail to prepare students for real-world, practical applications, thus calling for a more student-centered approach to learning. According to Koschmann^[11] and Udvari-Solner^[12], numerous teaching strategies for smaller-group learning, such as learning together, group in-

struction, problem-based education, tutoring among peers, discussion groups, learning through projects, , and learning centers are now referred to as collaborative learning. Although cooperative and collaborative learning originated at the same time, the relation between them is not very clear. Bruffee^[13] points to this obscurity, while MacGregor^[14] metaphorically describes it as resembling “an arbor of vines” growing alongside each other, sometimes crossing or intertwining. For some authors, collaboration and cooperation are used interchangeably, while others have placed them at the opposite extremes of a continuum. In this understanding, cooperative learning is considered as highly structured and organised while collaborative learning is fluid and flexible. However, Barkley et al.^[2] stated some fundamental differences between these two approaches.

Although there is an academic foundation for differentiating cooperative and collaborative learning, distinguishing between the two remains challenging due to overlapping elements in teamwork and group dynamics^[15]. Bruffee^[13] explains that collaboration and cooperative education are paired approaches, with key differences rooted in their distinct theoretical origins. While both methods aim to enhance interdependence among learners of various ages and skill levels, teachers often struggle with inconsistent interpretations and practical implementations of these strategies^[4,6]. This confusion is further compounded by the absence of a comprehensive systematic review that consolidates research on the pedagogical effectiveness and contextual applications of these approaches, particularly in ESL and EFL classrooms^[16]. Recent studies highlight ongoing debates regarding the conceptual boundaries of cooperative and collaborative learning but lack a unified framework to guide educators in practice. Addressing this gap is essential to developing clearer instructional strategies that align with the needs of English language learners in diverse educational settings.

It has become quite a complex phenomenon to identify the approaches of small group based learning because they are mixed up together and this attempt is done by teachers, researchers and scholars of different times^[17]. Therefore, these approaches are mostly used alternately because they

are understood likewise^[18]. Sawyer and Obeid^[6] stated that these terms, used in small group based work, are either collaborative or cooperative learning approaches but the titles are mishandled at different levels of education^[1]. Moreover, when English language teachers are confused about the exact essence of the terms, this confusion leads them towards misconceptions to implement either collaborative or cooperative learning approaches at which level of education, such as school, college, and university^[17]. The past study conducted by Khan et al.^[4] showed that ESL teachers often face difficulties to identify appropriate approaches for small group work to apply at different levels of education in Pakistani ESL classrooms. In this attempt, the researchers tried to come up with a suitable purpose of highlighting appropriate small group based approaches in the Pakistani context to facilitate the teaching and learning environment of the English language.

Small group learning strategies have been increasingly adopted to enhance student participation, language acquisition, and critical thinking in ESL classrooms. These strategies are particularly relevant in Pakistan, where traditional teacher-centered approaches often limit student engagement and language proficiency. Despite their recognized benefits, there is a critical lack of comprehensive reviews that synthesize the theoretical foundations of collaborative and cooperative learning and assess their practical impact in real-world ESL settings. Understanding how these approaches function in public universities in Pakistan is essential for addressing pedagogical challenges, improving instructional practices, and informing curriculum development. This systematic review aims to bridge this gap by analyzing existing literature on small group learning strategies in ESL classrooms, with a particular focus on collaborative and cooperative approaches. By examining their theoretical origins, key components, similarities, and differences, this study seeks to provide evidence-based insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers. The findings will help optimize English language teaching in Pakistani higher education by promoting more effective student-centered strategies. The following seven questions are developed for this purpose:

1. What are the theoretical origins of collaborative and cooperative learning approaches in the context of learning English?
2. How are collaborative and cooperative learning de-

finied and conceptualized in ESL classrooms?

3. What are the key elements and principles of each approach in an ESL setting?
4. What similarities exist between collaborative and cooperative learning in English language instruction?
5. What are the distinct differences between these two approaches in ESL pedagogy?
6. How effective are collaborative and cooperative learning strategies in enhancing English language proficiency and academic success?
7. What gaps exist in the current research on these approaches, particularly in the Pakistani ESL context?

The present study has been undertaken to guide various stakeholders by providing evidence-based insights on the effectiveness of small group learning in enhancing English language acquisition. Specifically, it offers practical recommendations for teachers on implementing collaborative and cooperative strategies, informs policymakers on curriculum improvements, assists curriculum designers in integrating small-group methodologies, and supports educational institutions in adopting student-centered pedagogies to improve ESL learning outcomes.

ESL university teachers are ready to make their minds free to organise and manage the academic material and resources for English language learning classrooms. Policy makers will get guidance to design and implement those policies which can facilitate English language learning in Pakistani institutes. Textbook boards will get guidance from this study to design those books that can better reflect the practical activities for the assessment of students according to the specific approach. English language learners and their parents will also come to know different benefits of these approaches in their future carriers contrary to other teaching approaches.

2. Methods

A systematic review approach was conducted to review the existing literature on small group learning strategies in ESL contexts. Gray literature published in the last two decades was explored thoroughly across major academic databases, including ERIC, Scopus, and Google Scholar, for relevant peer-reviewed articles and conference proceedings. The study followed the Preferred Reporting Items for

Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure a transparent, structured, and reproducible review process. A comprehensive identification phase involved searching databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC using keywords such as ‘small group learning strategies’, ‘collaborative learning’, ‘cooperative learning’, and ‘ESL classrooms’, with Boolean operators refining results. In the screening phase, duplicate records were removed, and studies were filtered based on relevance, research quality, and publication within the last 15–20 years, excluding non-English and unrelated studies. The eligibility phase involved assessing full-text articles for methodological rigor and empirical evidence, resulting in a final selection of 40 high-quality studies explicitly discussing theoretical foundations and real-world applications. Finally, in the inclusion phase, selected studies were analyzed to identify key themes related to theoretical origins, key components, similarities, and differences. This structured approach ensures a comprehensive synthesis of small group learning strategies in ESL classrooms, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to enhance English language teaching and learning environments.

The word collaborate originated from a Latin word Collaborare which means to interact with one another^[18]. Contemporary French language introduced this word to English in the nineteenth century^[6]. Whereas Cooperari, a Latin originated word which means to cooperate or engage with those around, is where the word cooperate has its historical roots^[6]. Cooperative learning and Collaborative approaches are practically student oriented, interactive, and active methods for learning English rather than teacher centered teaching strategies in which students remain passive to absorb and regenerate the same ideas discussed in the class^[4–6]. Collaborative and Cooperative learning approaches are the extended forms of small group based active and interactive learning^[16]. Both teaching and learning approaches are a forward block for teacher centered passive pedagogues^[5, 18].

Dewey’s philosophical works emphasize the social dimension of learning, highlighting the importance of interaction in education. The cooperative learning approach originated in the United States, drawing primarily from Lewin’s studies on team interaction and the role of structured group work in education. In contrast, the collaborative learning approach has its roots in Britain, where English instructors

explored ways to enhance student engagement with literature by fostering active participation and interactive learning^[5, 19]. The legacy of Cooperative learning approach frequently employs quantitative research methods that focus on accomplishment, or the final outcome of learning. A more qualitative technique is employed in the collaborative learning approach, which examines learner discussion on a task. Nowadays, both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms are applied on Collaborative learning approach because its umbrella term covers almost all types of peer or small group based active and interactive learning especially in English language classrooms in the world^[5].

3. Results

3.1. Theoretical Grounds

Vygotsky’s^[20] sociocultural theory is the foundation of both small group based Collaborative and Cooperative learning approaches in ESL setting. According to Vygotsky^[20] whenever students collaborate with other students, social and cognitive conflicts encourage more in-depth understanding in learning English^[4, 18]. In addition, Vygotsky contended that learning is a social phenomenon and appears first at social level prior to the personal level^[6]. Vygotsky’s theory stresses that learning English is not an isolated production of information but rather a social creation of ideas that actually occurs in constantly evolving historical and cultural circumstances^[5]. Vygotsky^[20] considers that active and interactive involvement of students is the key characteristic of both theories. Collaborative engagement provides a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) for individualized learning and social change^[20]. It implies that facilitators can encourage classmates of different levels of ability to work together on coordinated tasks and activities, stimulating learners’ actively growing abilities that they would not continually improve on their own^[5]. In keeping with this, Collaborative and Cooperative learning approaches that were introduced into Pakistani public universities classrooms are based on medium to large sizes of ESL undergraduate’s classrooms. In an effort to integrate the best elements of both approaches, these group activities frequently combined cooperative and collaborative strategies. The attempts to evaluate the motivational and educational effects produced by these strategies are also addressed^[21]. The researchers anticipate that presenting

thorough illustrations of these interactive, small group-based instructional strategies will help both novice and professional educators improve overall English education environment.

Small group based learning approaches, for example, cooperative and collaborative learning are interlinked and rooted in the same underpinnings but these terms are defined in a number of different ways that are stated as under^[18]. Cooperation is a form of interactions intended to aid the completion of an ultimate result or objective, while collaboration is an ideology of relationship and a private living^[6]. Collaboration in learning is not merely a technique used in English classrooms but rather a way of life^[17]. It involves a communication approach that values and emphasizes the contributions and achievements of each team member, regardless of the context in which individuals come together in groups. In such groups, participants take collective responsibility for one another's actions and share leadership roles^[4]. The philosophy behind collaborative learning is consensus through collaboration, not competition, where an individual tries to be better than others^[17]. On the other hand, cooperative learning, is defined as a set of techniques that make individuals to work together to achieve a common goal or product, often related to a specific area of learning^[16]. It is carefully overseen by the instructor and serves as an authoritative way of learning than a collaborative leadership structure. The core method is instructor oriented, whilst collaborative learning is so much more learners based, despite the abundance of opportunities for group comparison and reflection^[3].

Cooperative learning is the most effective method for achieving basic information comprehension. When learners are fairly acquainted, they are prepared for group work, for discussion and for assessment whereas Collaborative learning is the most effective way for achieving a high level of thinking at an advanced level in learning English. Collaboration or collaborative learning is a complex concept because there is no single widely accepted definition of it^[11, 22, 23]. According to Bruffee^[13], collaborative learning is the process of establishing an environment in which the boundaries separating the knowledge community that students already belong to and the one to which the professor belongs can be compromised. The concepts of authority and power are the viewpoints which operate under the premise that comprehension is collectively built among members of a group rather

than transferred from instructors to learners^[13, 24]. Consequently, learning can be seen as an interaction between individuals and a procedure of re-acculturation^[13, 24]. Furthermore, Panitz^[19] stated that collaboration is all about interaction, a way of life, which involves accepting responsibility for one's own actions, including learning, while valuing and respecting the abilities and contributions of one's peers. This collaborative learning's definition is based on Bruffee's idea. In a similar vein, Oxford^[25] recognized the conceptual underpinnings of collaborative learning. Roschelle and Teasley^[26] define collaborative learning as an approach by which participants, in cooperation with others, work together for the common goal of accomplishment, often focusing on process. Collaborative learning theoretically frees from instruction tasks that involve extraneous frameworks, according to Bruffee^[9, 13]. Learners for this approach work usually in small, self-managed, self-selected, and loosely structured groups^[27].

By contrast, the concept of cooperative learning is often less formalized. Cooperative learning, as defined by key theorists such as Johnson and Johnson^[28], includes small groups in which learners work together to achieve the highest possible outcome for all members. According to them, students can reach their goals in learning due to achieving the goals set by their other groupmates by themselves, indicating the interdependency that should characterize cooperative learning^[28]. According to Panitz^[19], cooperative learning is an interactive structure that is designed to achieve an academic or intellectual product through the cooperation of group members working together. Roschelle and Teasley^[26] describe it as one in which each individual works on a part of the problem-solving activity and stress that the labor is divided among group members. Cooperative learning, with its emphasis on small, mixed-ability groups, is more practical than collaborative learning^[29]. Even though the particular aims and emphases of cooperative learning vary, its procedures uniformly provide for structured interaction in groups, including equal participation and individual responsibility for the group's performance^[9, 13, 25, 30]. The same field of cooperative learning also gave some of the most usable small group instructional strategies which include Team-Games-Tournament, Jigsaw, Three-Step Interview, Think-Pair-Share, and Group Investigation. In comparison, only fewer specific successes could be attributed to collaborative learning^[27].

3.2. Components of Small Group Based Learning Approaches

Laal and Laal^[17] used collaborative learning approach as an alternate term for cooperative learning approach and showed synonymous interest in primary five elements of cooperative learning with collaborative learning. Primary elements are same in both approaches e.g., positive interdependence, group processing, face to face promotive interaction, interpersonal or social skills, and individual and group accountability^[6, 18]. Many researchers^[3, 4, 6, 17, 18] explained five elements of collaborative and cooperative learning approaches as follows: Cooperative and collaborative activities are based upon the element of positive interdependence. Pupils must understand that (a) they are interconnected with respective group members in such a manner that they are unable to succeed without them conversely, and (b) their effort helps both respective group members and fellow group members' performance^[3]. For a lesson to really be either cooperative or collaborative, pupils' positive dependency must be incorporated into it. Although each course must include positive goal interdependence, this interdependence may additionally be shaped through common resources, matching responsibilities, reciprocal incentives, and a mutually beneficial relationship. Each specific team member is responsible for doing their fair part of the task. When every student's progress is evaluated and the outcomes are communicated to the group as well as the particular individuals in the group, there is individual and group accountability. Each individual is responsible for doing their portion of the work and assisting the other group members as needed. Cooperative learning aims to strengthen each group member as an individual. There is a significant amount of group to individual transmission. Pupils benefit from collaborative learning by developing their particular abilities. One way to organise individual and group accountability is to (a) watch pupils collaborate and note each person's valuable contribution, (b) ask each pupil to share what they have learned with a fellow student, or (c) administer a personal test per pupil^[3, 4, 6, 17, 18].

Through aiding, enabling, applauding, inspiring and promoting one another's attempts at learning, learners are motivated via one another to succeed. As a result, one engages in cognitive processes like debating the essence of the notions about to be learned, articulating how to resolve issues to everyone else, and imparting knowledge to classmates,

challenging one another's arguments, and relating current learning to prior learning. Face to Face Promotive interaction also involves interpersonal activities including supporting and motivating learning attempts, sharing in the group's successes, and providing suitable social skill usage examples. Learners are urged to use their interpersonal skills responsibly in groups to learn together. It is necessary to impart administrative support, self-reliance behaviours, teamwork strategies, judgment, and various abilities with the same intentionality and precision as theoretical learning. Johnson and Johnson's^[3] main goal is to educate learners' interpersonal skills. Learners must eventually participate in group processing. In the interest of discovering ways to make the procedure more efficient, group processing can be described as the analysis of how well individuals are using the procedure to optimize both their individual as well as each other's understanding^[4, 6].

To ensure that everyone in the group can establish and sustain good working connections, group members must (a) identify what behaviors are beneficial and unproductive, (b) choose which behaviors to keep up with or modify, and (c) recognize each other's efforts and accomplishments^[3, 4, 6, 17, 18]. The recommended choice for learners is these five essential components. They give teachers the ability to: (a) organise any course in just about any field of study towards cooperative learning through any collection of curricular resources; (b) good and customize cooperative learning to their particular learners' requirements; and (c) engage in dysfunctional groups to increase their efficacy. With the help of these five components, instructors may be able to develop their lessons for promoting students' participation on the basic five elements. But whenever these five dimensions are thoughtfully incorporated into a session, the learners actively participate in learning and the class develops a genuinely collaborative environment for learning English.

3.3. Difference between Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Approaches

Panhwar^[16] surprised that how come it would be possible to use both terms alternately whereas both would have different titles. Cooperative learning approach is known as basic and structured as compared to collaborative learning approach. Though, there is not a consensus on the correct

definition of Cooperative learning typically it emphasizes on interdependent labour in which each team member is frequently in-charge of the resulted task^[31]. Work division is often formally organised in Cooperative learning approach in which each team member plays a distinctive role and performs the answerable tasks. Comparatively, collaborative learning approach involves more dynamic environment, changing specific roles, with team members bridging gaps across domains of expertise or jointly determining the most effective strategies to interact on a particular project^[5, 22, 32]. Collaborative teams are increasingly self-managed in different settings and interaction styles with open ended goals and activities. Through all the intentional clustering of learners or the randomly allocated learners to the groups, teachers may indeed take on a greater part in scaffolding activities under Cooperative learning approach. The enhanced cooperation of team members may indeed require additional scaffolding, including the direct instruction of interaction skills and reflection on those skills. This deliberate group is a result of the civil and human rights campaign's impact on cooperative learning approach and the goal of bringing together ethnically varied groups of students who are collaborating toward common objectives, thereby eliminating prejudice among them^[5, 33].

Jigsaw activity (cooperative learning) designed in the context of the movement of civil rights with the aim of changing students' innate competitive impulses towards those that promote cooperation. Cooperative learning approach entails a group of 5 to 6 learners, where each learner is tasked with becoming an expert by learning about a specific aspect of the broader subject. Specialists momentarily establish teams with certain other masters in the classroom who are assigned the very same section of the subject in order to share thoughts and expand their abilities. Once together in their initial members, the learners subsequently share their contribution to the cognitive conundrum. In contrast, teachers typically take a much more keep away approach in a collaborative learning environment, letting the learners create clusters of connections or mutual interests^[18]. Cooperative learning approach has been shown to have good benefits on academic achievement and the improvement of higher-order analytical skills in studies conducted with learners of different ages and in a wide range of subjects^[6]. Additionally, Springer and Colleagues^[34] conducted a meta-analysis and

discovered that higher education learners who participated in cooperative learning in the fields of technology, engineering, mathematics and science classes outperformed than those classmates who used non-cooperative techniques in terms of performance, perseverance, and favorable attitudes towards learning. It has also been discovered that cooperative strategies make it easier for learners to understand cognitive strategies^[35, 36]. These positive impacts of cooperative learning approach have been argued to be caused by the socio-cognitive conflict that develops when interacting with a colleague's ideas and viewpoints, which in turn encourages deeper reasoning^[20, 37]. The interactions frequently take the form of collaborative discussions that expand upon and address the partner's contributions of pertinent knowledge and thought-provoking queries, thereby deepening the conceptual comprehension of the collaborating individuals^[38].

While this is going on, research on Collaborative learning approach has shown that it can be successful in enabling small groups (3–5) of learners to work toward common objectives and find answers to difficult and unsolved issues^[9, 39]. With the aid of trans-disciplinary abilities, collaborative learning approaches places a strong emphasis on learners' assessments of materials and rational reasoning. Thereby, collaborative learning approach is understood the suitable options that are considered for empirical investigation and its application^[40]. Learners can participate in inquiry-driven conflict resolution and establish themselves as members of a social community of students and intellectuals in a classroom by collaborating with classmates and the support of the teacher^[41, 42]. Problem-based learning is one the strategies of Collaborative learning approach in which learners try to find many solutions to a difficult problem^[39]. Learners usually determine on the basis of relevant skills and information that they have to resolve the issue via cooperative groups. Following this, students participate in auto learning by solving the problem using their newly acquired information and then assessing their progress and the efficiency of their solutions^[5]. Instead of imparting information or facts directly to the pupils, teachers only assist in their self-directed procedures or serve as models for specific thought patterns. Problem based learning's objectives include assisting learners in developing adaptable information, practical problem-solving techniques, self-directed learning abilities, teamwork abilities and intrinsic motivation.

The small group work is an excellent way for learners to exercise their interpersonal, social and communicative skills in both collaborative and cooperative learning environments^[31, 43]. Collaboration tends to be more engaging and motivating for learners than teach independently^[44]. The main difference between collaborative and cooperative learning comes with the way each system implements accountability and authority. According to Bruffee^[13], collaborative learning relinquishes guaranteed accountability to forge peer relationships among students into the heart of learning. Cooperative learning retains the authority structure characteristic of traditional education, within small groups as well as across the class, but it fosters the learning gains associated with self-regulated student interaction. Several researchers have attempted to elucidate how these two modes differ from one another^[9, 18, 19, 25, 27, 45–47]. Important to keep in mind is that such distinctions, particularly in their early phases, are approximations of both of these methods. These two approaches may develop into several distinct forms, and after several years of growth and development, a number of the variations appear to be lost. Khan et al.^[4] compared Cooperative and Collaborative learning Approaches in learning English in **Table 1**.

3.4. Similarities between Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Approaches

Although both approaches have different beginnings, ideologies and components, they also share significant similarities. Davidson and Major^[18] have highlighted some characteristics that are shared by both cooperative and collaborative learning approaches in a theoretical synthesis of both approaches. The main commonalities among these two are as follows; in both approaches, the students are more engaged in learning. Regarding the fact that lengthy time is provided to the students to work still has considerable advantages. In both approaches, teams cooperate and collaborate with each other which help them to build a healthy social interaction. Teams get in touch with one another in and out of the class. In both approaches, the students work in groups in order to achieve a common educational task^[48]. Cooperative and collaborative learning approaches are different from other means of traditional educational approaches because both provide a chance to assess students in different ways. These approaches eases students' nervousness brought by

the task and unexpected situations in the classroom^[6]. The mentor has a keen eye on each student during the task and this opens up a possibility for the teacher to offer the students further assistance and counseling. With the help of a mentor, the students better show their ability to think critically^[49].

In cooperative as well as in collaborative approaches, the learner shares an educational setting in which the students from different social backgrounds work together without any sense of competition with each other^[48]. The students learn to accept the differences with the fellow beings in these learning approaches. Both methods hold importance in students' progress. The students feel that their voice has some importance which helps them to be more independent. When any of these is done individually, the whole procedure will be more boring and it consumes a considerable amount of time^[50]. The subsets of groups make this process exciting and enjoyable because students are actively participating in group form rather than individually. Collaborative learning approaches support the student in amicably resolving conflicts like cooperative learning approaches. They need to learn how to argue against ideas and defend their beliefs without sounding personal. Both improve the oral communication abilities of the students. Students are involved and engaged passionately in learning^[51]. Students can participate in creating the curriculum and the operating procedures for the classroom throughout the cooperative process.

Among the most important outcomes of this collaborative learning approach is effectiveness related to academics. Contrary to some traditional, passive modes of learning, for example, learning by way of listening in lectures or reading from the screen-students within a collaborative learning setting are active members of the process. By regularly working together on a project under the teacher's guidance, they come to understand their diversities and find ways of dealing with potential social problems; this, in turn, helps build further social support among fellows. Apart from the classroom, it is at times personal issues that are affecting the student outside the class while they were able to share their concern with their mentor openly. This makes them more vocal and sociable too^[4]. In the classroom and out of the classroom, this collaborative learning makes the skill development more apparent and participation interesting as this method eliminates monotony^[52]. In addition, collaborative learning helps improve students' oral communication skills through the pro-

Table 1. Comparison between Cooperative and Collaborative learning Approaches in learning English.

Comparison	Collaborative Learning	Cooperative Learning
Philosophy of Meanings	In a collaborative learning approach, two groups of students discuss the topic.	Under the teachers' guidance, students cooperate in their groups to accomplish their objectives of learning.
Orientation	Student-centred	Teacher-centred
Nature of interaction	Composed (structured)	Doctrine (Philosophy)
Material	Learners shared material	Teacher shared material
Responsibilities	Negotiation and agreement oriented	Predetermined
Activities	Partially organised	Organised
Facilitator's presence	Often	Compulsory presence
Assessment	Student based	Teacher based
Level of learners	Advance learners	Beginners
Ways	Non-Instructional	Pedagogical (Instructional)
Targets	Without specific Common Goal	One specific common Goal
Tasks	Open ended Tasks	Close and Open ended Tasks
Problem's Solution	Learners' shared collaboration and participation	Learners' individual efforts to solve various aspects of a problem
Learning	Formal	Flexible
Success	Individual efforts for competitive success	Individual efforts for group's success

cess of encouraging students to independently express their opinions. The focus is changed from performance goals to the achievement of deeper learning objectives^[53].

This strategy has shown that well-organized and executed English classes based on cooperative learning result in real accomplishments and beneficial relationships between students. This learning technique implies that students work in small groups to tackle various challenges and have something meaningful to say about the subject being covered. Cooperative approach helps the students to involve actively in the activity. When varied linguistic proficient students collaborate for the completion of a task, cooperative learning is effective^[54]. The result of this approach is that the students feel as though they actively contribute to the classroom queries, and how to rely on one another to produce a good result. The advantages of this student cooperation are instantly apparent^[45]. The students who cooperate with one another also tend to understand each other. They also exhibit a considerable improvement in critical thinking abilities and have more possibilities to develop them^[55]. The most crucial thing is that they develop their confidence in their English skills as effective communicators, both with one another and in front of an audience. It helps them to listen to the others' perceptions and take positive criticism. Cooperative learning approach has several advantages and often yields higher success and productivity. The way students support each other and respect each other's beliefs causes a devoted relationship and improves psychological health, social competence, and confidence of the student.

3.5. Tetra Research Paradigms of Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Approaches

The amount of study on cooperative and collaborative learning has multiplied over the last fifty years. Dillenbourg et al.^[56] described the development of investigations on collaborative learning that was utilized as a catch-all word, and suggested a trio of paradigms: the effect paradigm, the conditions paradigm, and the interaction paradigm to classify different study perspectives. Everyone has its origins in various collaborative learning concepts. Yang^[57] added a new term that is the design paradigm to their hierarchy of concepts to refer to the design-based study in Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) that has come about over the past 20 years. Consequently, there are in total four study paradigms for collaborative and cooperative learning altogether. In this part, learning that is cooperative and collaborative is both referred to as collaborative learning in accordance with Dillenbourg et al.^[56]. Since every study perspective is required, Dillenbourg et al.^[56] emphasized that this categorization is not an indication that a particular paradigm is superior to the others. Nevertheless, given their common scientific foundations, it is significant to observe that in reality there is not a distinct line separating a particular approach from the next.

3.6. Effect Research Paradigm of Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Approaches

This model aims to determine whether or not collaborative learning proves to be more effective than individual

learning^[56]. To verify their presumptions, academics typically carry out studies in classes or workplaces with groups serving as controls (who work alone) as well as condition subjects (working together). Specific academic results, such as success, analytical thinking, and views on the topic of study matter as peer encouragement with self-worth and interpersonal abilities are typically influenced by external factors^[28, 31]. Although conflicting results have emerged from research in this area, the weight of meta-analytic studies has generally suggested that collaborative learning has a positive effect^[58, 59]. On the other hand, Dillenbourg et al.^[56] warn that negative findings, or ones that reveal no significant differences, should not be entirely discarded. Some negative effects, such as the tendency for low achievers to become passive when working with high achievers, are consistent and well-documented. Additionally, considering cooperation does not simply occur when learners are placed in pairs or trios, collaborative learning ought not to be viewed as a black box^[56]. Collaboration in the classroom does not by itself improve or impede comprehension^[60]. The forthcoming paradigm's emphasis is on collaborative learning, which means maybe the more appropriate issue to ask is under what circumstances working solely is more effective than working together.

3.7. Conditions Research Paradigm of Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Approaches

The aforementioned framework for study examines the particular circumstances that might encourage group learning. Yet, scholars methodically examine a broad variety of factors, which includes the creation of groups, type of assignments, interaction substrate, and teamwork settings. The investigation's tools are identical to the initial paradigm^[56]. For instance, diverse teams with varying degrees of knowledge are typically more effective than uniform teams, however they affect low and high achievers differently^[56]. Slavin^[60] concentrated on tasks and systems of incentives in a review of the literature. The findings demonstrated that collective rewards instead of separate rewards—and oneself accountability—attained through specialized tasks and work division—are essential for raising students' performance in K–12 settings^[60]. In contrast to the previous framework, the conditions paradigm aids teachers and researchers in understand-

ing the workings of shared learning. However, in real-world learning situations like classrooms, the condition variables invariably communicate with additional factors to affect the factor that is dependent, which leads to inconsistent research results. According to some investigators, the discrepancies can be attributed to the use of various cooperative learning methods, learning environments, designs for experiments, student characteristics, and topic matter utilized by various scholars. Nevertheless, the interplay of these characteristics was rarely taken into account^[61]. Studies should concentrate more on “the more micro genetic features of the interaction” because productive group interactions are the foundation of effective collaborative learning (^[56], p. 12). The interaction paradigm is the third paradigm as a result.

3.8. Interaction Research Paradigm of Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Approaches

The condition paradigm splits the study's issues into 2 sub-questions i.e., which circumstances cause how things interact as well as what impacts do these connections have^[56]. Identifying the variables which describe interactions yet can be empirically and theoretically related to conditions and outcomes of learning have turned to be an important step in facing these challenges^[56]. Consequently, research has been taking more of a process-driven approach. Many researchers adopt qualitative methods, such as discursive analysis and conversation analysis. The instance of group cooperation is then taken as the unit of analysis^[61]. Factors commonly researched in these interactions include control, arguments, and justification. For instance, Webb^[61] found that distracted or idle behavior was related negatively to educational outcomes while providing and receiving comprehensive explanations was positively related rather than offering only correct answers. However, a great deal of the process-driven research in the interaction model tends to fall on just subsections of the interaction process^[56]. In this regard, academics do not always make it obvious how conditions for learning along with educational outputs relate to one another. Yet one problem has faced the interaction paradigm; lacking philosophical frameworks as for considering their evaluation, Piagetian and Vygotskian perspectives alone sound so huge to go with it^[56].

3.9. Design Research Paradigm of Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Approaches

In order to explain a distinctive branch of CSCL studies that concentrates on the development and creation of conditions whereby efficient collaborations among groups are anticipated to happen. Stahl^[62] proposed design as the final framework. Each of the three prior concepts is simple to spot in the CSCL research^[63, 64]. Nevertheless, the design-based research has a history within the CSCL group. By doing the process of iterative design, scholars and educators work together to evaluate and enhance principles of design in order to investigate phenomena that occur in real-world learning environments^[65]. Design framework seeks to close the divide among theorizing, investigating and execution, so it is both theoretically-driven and application-oriented^[66]. Computer-Supported Intentional Learning Environment (CSILE) previously referred to as understanding forums, is an effective design-based research initiative^[67, 68]. They improved the technology, education, and conceptual framework for information creation by means of iterative design initiatives in order to develop innovative means for promoting the collaborative development of collective understanding^[67, 68]. The results of the knowledge forums initiative and associated study show how the design approach to research in CSCL has a lot of potential. Design-based research, nevertheless, is not without difficulties. In the beginning, there is nonetheless a dearth of consensus regarding the meaning, definitions, characteristics, and practices of design-based research^[69]. It is challenging to think about and carry out design-based research because of this disparity^[70]. Since design-based research initiatives are typically located in particular educational environments, it may be challenging to extend the treatments to more expansive circumstances^[70]. However, some academics warn that emphasizing adaptability and generalization may undermine “the designed nature of design-based research” (^[71], p. 35). To find equilibrium seems to be difficult. Several iterations of a design-based research project might face difficulties due to time limitations on practical grounds^[70].

4. Conclusions

This systematic review highlights small group learning strategies within the ESL contexts, along with relevant

theoretical perspectives and practical applications, and implications for language learning. These include peer tutoring, jigsaw, and project work that enhance collaboration, the development of language skills, and engagement while fostering critical thinking and teamwork, as followed by constructivism and sociocultural theory. It insists on more professional development, teacher facilitation, and policy-level support for proper implementation of the approach, as unequal participation, issues in group management, and cultural constraints are found to be challenges in small group learning approaches. This attempt has seven major purposes to highlight the two-fold small group based strands especially in Pakistani universities for learning English. The main aim is to explain the origins, definitions, primary elements, similarities, differences, benefits, and tetra paradigms of research for collaborative and cooperative learning approaches relying on small group work to promote the process of learning English. This related literature research will help policy makers, curriculum designers, researchers, teachers and students to completely understand the importance of cooperative and collaborative learning approaches at different levels and also help them to design effective policies to practically implement them in the learning English environment for better and effective output.

Author Contributions

H.S.M. synthesized existing literature on small group learning strategies, focusing on their application in ESL contexts and wrote this review paper. B.S. and A.S. supervised and guided the process of data collection and writing. H.J.P. contributed in data analysis. A.B.K. reviewed and revised the language of the paper. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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