

## ARTICLE

# ESL Undergraduates' Views on the Collaborative Learning Approach and Its Relationship with Their Attitudes toward Learning English

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## ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, the focus of English language teaching has shifted from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach, including in Asian countries such as Pakistan. The Collaborative Learning Approach (CLA) offers numerous social and academic benefits. However, research on the implementation of CLA in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts at the university level remains limited. This study aimed to explore ESL undergraduates' views on CLA and its relationship with their attitudes toward learning English. A survey-based quantitative methodology was employed, using an adapted questionnaire from established instruments used in prior peer-reviewed studies. Data were collected from 250 ESL undergraduates selected through cluster sampling from the English departments of five public universities in Punjab, Pakistan. Findings revealed that students held moderate to high perceptions of the five core elements of CLA in English learning. A weak but positive correlation was identified between students' views on CLA and their attitudes toward English learning. The study highlights that CLA supports both social and academic development, including fostering social relationships, encouraging active participation, promoting problem-solving, enhancing communication, reducing anxiety, and developing higher-order thinking skills. These findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, students, parents, and textbook boards in designing effective and practical strategies to improve ESL learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Attitudes; Collaborative Learning Approach; English as a Second Language; Sociocultural Perspective; Views

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## 1. Introduction

English is recognized as one of the principal global languages and is widely taught as a core subject across the world <sup>[1, 2]</sup>. In numerous Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, English is predominantly taught as a second language <sup>[3-5]</sup>. Among the innovative pedagogical approaches employed in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, the Collaborative Learning Approach (CLA) has garnered substantial recognition and acclaim <sup>[6]</sup>. This approach fosters the development of authentic, creative, engaged, analytical, experiential, communicative, and interpersonal competencies among ESL learners <sup>[7]</sup>. The approach is grounded in sociocultural theory, particularly the work of Vygotsky <sup>[8]</sup> and Bruffee <sup>[9]</sup>, who initially introduced the concept in first-language contexts before it was adapted into English language pedagogy worldwide <sup>[9, 10]</sup>. CLA is distinguished from other pedagogical approaches by five essential elements: positive interdependence (Positive Mutual dependence), group reflection (Group performance), interpersonal and social abilities (Interpersonal skills), responsibility at both individual and group levels (Individual and group Responsibility), and direct, supportive interaction (Personal interaction) among learners <sup>[11-15]</sup>.

As a pedagogical strategy, CLA enables students to work collaboratively in small groups to solve problems, complete tasks, or achieve specific objectives <sup>[16]</sup>. Additionally, ESL learners' attitudes play a crucial role in language acquisition and are typically categorized into three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioural. This section highlights specific challenges and provides insights to deepen the understanding of the issues related to CLA and learners' attitudes in ESL contexts. ESL undergraduates need to improve their English communication even after studying it for more than 14 years, from school to university <sup>[3]</sup>. Ineffective policies for English language learning <sup>[7]</sup>, ESL learners' attitudes <sup>[17]</sup>, inexperienced English language teachers <sup>[18]</sup>, old English curriculum <sup>[19]</sup>, outdated English language teaching approaches <sup>[3]</sup>, large English classes <sup>[6]</sup>, lack of interest in English and English language teacher-oriented accomplishments <sup>[20]</sup> are some of the critical factors that restrict the fluency and accuracy of ESL undergraduates <sup>[21]</sup>. Because of these factors, the student's academic performance gets disturbed, and the students need

help understanding the subject matters, making the learning process slow in English classes. As a result, students lose interest, become less engaged, and fail to secure good scores in learning English. According to Gardner <sup>[22]</sup>, learners' attitudes influence both their achievement and underperformance in the ESL learning environment.

There are some other English learning barriers using CLA, i.e., group size and teaching practice <sup>[23]</sup>. Other researchers also elucidated some more factors in the organization of groups <sup>[24]</sup>, homogeneous and heterogeneous groups <sup>[25]</sup>, unequal individuals' participation in groups, and large classes <sup>[17]</sup> that impacted the English learning environment in CLA classrooms <sup>[26]</sup>. As stated by Li and Campbell <sup>[27]</sup> and Scager et al. <sup>[28]</sup>, students who lack collaborative and communicative skills are the genuine causes of the failure of CLA in an ESL learning environment because collaborative and communicative skills are the critical pillars of CLA for developing students' English language proficiency to develop their academic and professional relationships. Moreover, free riding is highlighted as a significant problem in the way of achieving success in CLA in learning English <sup>[29]</sup> because when the facilitator is not properly supervising the small groups, it usually happens that students start talking about unrelated and irrelevant things rather than focusing on their given tasks. Likewise, work distribution in groups of students is also a critical phase in CLA <sup>[30, 31]</sup>. As Gillies and Boyle <sup>[32]</sup> explained, evaluating students' learning in group work and managing their class timings also restrict their learning in CLA.

Students often face challenges when engaging in group work under the CLA, particularly due to fear and anxiety, which can hinder their English language learning <sup>[33]</sup>. Additionally, according to Le et al. <sup>[24]</sup>, students' perceptions, attitudes, and surface-level engagement can further limit the effectiveness of CLA in ESL contexts. In light of these concerns, this study aims to explore how CLA and students' attitudes toward learning English influence their learning experience. Specifically, the research seeks to examine the views of ESL undergraduates on the use of CLA in English learning, investigate their attitudes toward learning the language, and analyse the relationship between their perceptions of CLA and their attitudes. These core inquiries guide the study: What are the views of ESL undergraduates on the Collaborative Learning Approach in learning English? What are their attitudes toward learning

English? And finally, what is the relationship between their views on CLA and their attitudes toward English language learning?

## 2. Literature Review

English is the leading language in Pakistan, and it has the status of the supreme language among all indigenous languages of Pakistan because the development in almost all walks of life, like trade, arts, media, education, science, military, corporate sector, religion, politics, commerce, technology, and law, is conditioned with the success, accuracy, and proficiency of the English language [3, 4, 34]. English is the language of education entitled as Medium of Instruction (MoI) [35] and a compulsory subject [18] from 1-14 grades in public and private sector educational institutes of Pakistan after Urdu [3, 36-39]. Therefore, the present research was conducted in the Department of English at five public universities in Pakistan. Pakistan is an Asian country where CLA has recently revived its role [17, 40]. Very few qualitative and review research studies specified that the students of Pakistani Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) like learning English in holistic and collaborative environments [7]. As such, there is a need for researchers to focus on conducting quantitative research on the views of students about CLA in Pakistan [18, 41], especially on a large sample of university undergraduates [41, 42].

CLA is generally an instructional practice used to maximize the learning of individuals and group fellows [12, 43]. Koffka [44] said that dynamic entities were the outcome of pair/group work in which the element of interdependence in group fellows could fluctuate. Lewin [45] refined Koffka's ideas, asserting that interdependence is the essence of the group work environment. The existence of interdependence always requires more than one fellow member in a group, and members of the group must have a more significant effect on one another so that change in an individual might bring change in other fellows of the group, too [46]. Deutsch [47] updated Lewin's perspective regarding social interdependence and framed a theoretical ground for competition and collaboration. Deutsch [48] intellectualized the basic three categories of social interdependence: negative, positive, and none. Personal interaction is the motive of positive mutual dependence; oppositional interaction is the base for negative interdependence, and the

absence of interaction deals with non-interdependence [12]. CLA provides a platform for the learners to work together to achieve their targeted goals [14, 49, 50].

In contrast, CLA is a vital aspect used to give better results to group learners for a long time. The students feel more relaxed and comfortable learning better English from each other. As a result, CLA has extended its role and greatly emphasized the latest English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies. Therefore, learners' views are considered an essential aspect of English language learning classrooms across the globe. Similarly, Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) has emphasized providing standard and quality education, introducing active and innovative learning approaches, including CLA. Engaging in meaningful communication through group or pair activities enhances English education [46]. As an innovative and holistic approach to ELT, the CLA enhances learners' interest, motivation, and confidence, while simultaneously reducing fear, anxiety, and stress [6]. Collaboration between ESL teachers and students, as well as peer interaction among learners constitute a severe and critical component of effective English language acquisition [3]. Interaction and collaboration among group members are emphasized in ESL classrooms [25]. The small group/pair work creates an interactive environment in English language classrooms, which is the essence of CLA classrooms. Okolie et al. [51] recommend that collaborative tasks help learners learn English to the best of their efforts through social interaction. In addition, CLA is considered an effective learning method because it encourages the learners, motivates them to active learning, and improves their critical, social, communicative, and decision-making skills [17].

On the other hand, it is also highlighted that ESL learners feel reluctant while working with other students and do not collaborate with their fellow members in ESL classes [26]. Chatterjee further claims that working with others is challenging, as some students believe in individual and competitive working to lead the fellows. Similarly, some students want to avoid being social with their fellows because they believe in their skills rather than depending on others' work in learning English. Adesina et al. [52] investigated the effect of peer evaluation on learners' engagement in small-group work. The qualitative survey collected data from 165 first-year university students in

England. Regression analysis was used to analyse the data, and the results revealed that learners expressed that group work fostered engagement and learning. Qureshi et al. <sup>[7]</sup> examined how social factors influence CLA, student engagement, and performance using constructivist theory and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Findings showed that peer interaction, social presence, and social media use significantly impacted CLA environments and student outcomes. The reason is that using social media enhances learning and engagement in each aspect of academic and practical life, positively influencing the student's performance and level of confidence in learning English.

Okolie et al. <sup>[51]</sup> looked into research investigating the effect of CLA activities on university students' engagement in acquiring practical skills. Two hundred fifty Nigerian university students participated in the study. Through Hayes-PROCESS Macro 3.5, the mediation analysis was conducted. The findings based on regression analysis suggested that CLA activities greatly influenced the engagement of university students in acquiring practical skills. CLA is one of the best pedagogies that encourage interaction and collaboration among learners to provide better opportunities for English language learning and its practice in practical situations. Moreover, it develops a community of learners who may benefit each other while observing their English language learning and problem-solving skills during small group tasks and activities.

Lee and Yang <sup>[53]</sup> evaluated how and when CLA encouraged active learning and engagement among undergraduates. A popular constructivist method that has been pushed for its capacity to help students build common understanding is CLA. However, current research has indicated that social and cultural constraints, especially among Middle Eastern nations, may prevent students from engaging in CLA. This study investigated how 12-week course participants perceived group projects that required student collaboration. Key themes involving students' opinions on what effective and significant classroom collaboration entailed for them and how and why working together inspired and intrigued them emerged from interviews. According to survey results, learners' observations regarding CLA were bolstered by crucial components of constructivist learning settings, which assisted in triangulating interview data. Theorizing CLA

in higher education and successful pedagogical design are implications of this study.

Qureshi et al. <sup>[7]</sup> examined how social elements affect students' learning performance by influencing CLA and engagement. The study explored how social factors influence CLA and student engagement and whether these mediate the relationship with learning outcomes, using constructivist theory. University students completed surveys, and data were analysed using SEM. Results showed that peer and teacher interaction, social presence, and social media use enhance CLA and engagement, positively affecting academic performance. The findings also confirmed a dual mediation effect. Distance learning has to be encouraged in classroom instruction in HEIs because it affects the academic growth of learners. It has been determined that CLA, in general, and involvement with interpersonal variables enhance students' learning operations. Kanika et al. <sup>[25]</sup> conducted a recent study on the impact of homogenous and heterogeneous groups on students' performance and learning experience in the CLA environment. Groups improved students' performance and experience. Specifically, heterogeneous groups performed far better than homogeneous groups in performance, whereas homogeneous group students expressed better experiences than heterogeneous groups.

Er and Aksu Ataç <sup>[54]</sup> researched to learn more about the views of university English language learners about CLA. One hundred sixty-six students from various faculties participated in this study: one hundred females and sixty-six males. The students were enrolled in prep school and aged eighteen to twenty years old. The students' opinions on CLA were gathered through a survey questionnaire. The results revealed that 66.9% of the students support CLA, whereas 33.1% expressed that working alone would provide better outcomes and be more pleasurable. Students who participated in a focus group discussed CLA's advantages and disadvantages. The results also showed gender differences in attitudes toward CLA that primarily benefited the female students. CLA is widely spread and practiced across the world because of its multiple advantages over teacher-centered pedagogy, e.g., it engages students in practical activities, enables them to solve problems, develops their motivation, confidence, and thinking skills, reduces their fear and anxiety, enhances their interactive, social, relational, and communicative

skills in learning English <sup>[14, 55, 56]</sup>. The studies mentioned above also confirmed the advantageous role of CLA in various contexts at different levels of education due to its holistic, inclusive, and student-centered approach. Therefore, it is important to explore ESL undergraduates' perceptions of the CLA and their attitudes toward learning English.

Attitude has been defined in various ways by scholars. Gardner <sup>[57]</sup> described it as an inference based on beliefs about an object, and, drawing on Likert, as a mix of instincts, feelings, biases, and convictions. Baker <sup>[58]</sup> saw it as a construct explaining behaviour direction and persistence. Gardner <sup>[59]</sup> also identified attitude as a key component of motivation in language learning. In contrast, Wenden <sup>[60]</sup> proposed a more comprehensive explanation of attitude, arguing it comprises three aspects: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. The affective component of attitude discusses the emotions and feelings of individuals about some object, i.e., their likes or dislikes, with or against. The cognitive component explains the ideas, opinions, and beliefs about some object. Lastly, the behavioural aspect denotes individuals' actions and behavioural intentions about some object.

On the contrary, Nguyen <sup>[61]</sup> and Kara <sup>[62]</sup> propose that these three aspects are meticulously interconnected. Further, attitudes help learners learn a language, and attitudes are interlinked with the learning of languages <sup>[63]</sup>. Attitudes significantly impact English language learning outcomes <sup>[64]</sup>. Eshghinejad <sup>[65]</sup> found that Iranian EFL learners generally held positive attitudes toward learning English. Likewise, Ahmad <sup>[66]</sup> discovered the attitudes of Malaysian undergraduates towards learning English. EFL Malaysian participants (238) filled out the responses to 30-item questionnaires that portrayed a positive attitude toward learning English. Al-Samadani and Ibnian <sup>[67]</sup> conducted a study on the effect of attitudes of EFL Saudi learners (112) on their academic achievement towards learning English.

Studies confirm that EFL learners generally hold positive attitudes toward learning English. Tahaineh and Dana <sup>[68]</sup> found that 184 female Jordanian EFL students had favourable views, while Al-Noursi <sup>[69]</sup> reported similar positive attitudes among 196 EFL learners in the UAE. Ming et al. <sup>[70]</sup> inspected the attitudes of Malaysian secondary school learners about learning English. The

research respondents verified positive attitudes towards learning English. In addition, science learners showed greater interest in learning English than Art learners. Abidin et al. <sup>[71]</sup> conducted a research on the attitudes of EFL Libyan students (180) and illustrated negative attitudes towards learning English. The female learners' attitudes were slightly better than the male students. It is crucial to understand that attitudes toward learning English can alter throughout time and are subject to change. By building a supportive and exciting educational atmosphere that supports the growth of students' languages and increases one's trust in using English, instructional professionals significantly promote positive attitudes.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

CLA is deeply rooted in sociocultural theory, a concept introduced by Russian psychologist Vygotsky, who revolutionized English language teaching by emphasizing not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the development of learners' problem-solving abilities <sup>[72-74]</sup>. Sociocultural theory supports a holistic, interactive, and collaborative learning environment, positioning ESL learning as a socially mediated process rather than an isolated task <sup>[75]</sup>. Central to this theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which Vygotsky <sup>[8]</sup> defined as the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance from a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO), such as a teacher or peer. ZPD underscores the role of social interaction in cognitive development, asserting that learners can reach higher potential through collaborative problem-solving and group engagement <sup>[31]</sup>. Tools like group work and peer interaction are essential within ZPD, as they help students internalize knowledge gained through shared experiences <sup>[76]</sup>. Knowledge construction, therefore, is not an individual endeavour but a product of meaningful social exchanges <sup>[77]</sup>. In EFL classrooms, ZPD is the space between a student's current language ability and the potential they can reach through interaction, reflecting how language is produced individually and collectively <sup>[78, 79]</sup>. When students collaborate with peers and instructors, they become active participants in a community of practice, contributing to their intellectual and linguistic growth <sup>[80]</sup>. Vygotsky's theory posits that knowledge is born from cultural and social practices, not isolated thought,



and teachers serve as guides who help learners develop critical communicative and cultural skills<sup>[31]</sup>. In this way, sociocultural theory and its core principles, especially ZPD, offer practical frameworks for guiding ESL and EFL learners through collaborative, culturally rich, and socially meaningful educational experiences.

This research addresses key gaps by focusing on ESL undergraduates from public university English departments using a quantitative, survey-based approach with cluster sampling. It applies a sociocultural framework to examine CLA in ESL settings. Adapted questionnaires measure CLA's five pillars—positive interdependence (positive mutual dependence), group processing (group performance), social and interpersonal skills, individual and group accountability (individual and group responsibility), and face-to-face promotive interaction (personal interaction)—alongside the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of learners' attitudes toward English. The study uniquely explores both the views of ESL undergraduates on CLA and their attitudes toward English learning, as well as the relationship between them—an area not previously investigated. Findings highlight CLA's benefits in enhancing social connection, problem-solving, communication, reducing anxiety, and fostering critical thinking. The research provides insights for developing policies and instructional strategies that align with learners' needs. By designing theory-aligned questionnaires, the study ensures data relevance and depth, enabling an understanding of how ESL learners think, feel, and behave in relation to English learning, and how these factors contribute to or hinder their progress.

## 4. Methods

This study employed a quantitative survey design to ensure objective, valid, and reliable findings<sup>[81]</sup>. Quantitative data offers accurate insights<sup>[82-83]</sup> and allows researchers to gain an unbiased understanding of the research problem through the analysis of numerical data obtained from questionnaires<sup>[81, 82]</sup>. Since the approach retains anonymity and can handle large sample numbers, it encourages respondents to give open, truthful answers<sup>[83]</sup>. Furthermore, generalization to a larger population is possible with questionnaire-based research, increasing external validity. ESL undergraduates enrolled in a 4-year Bachelor of

Science English program from English departments of five public universities in Punjab, Pakistan were selected as participants in this study. Using cluster sampling, 50 students were randomly selected from each university, resulting in a total of 250 participants. Among them, 49.6% (n = 124) were male and 50.4% (n = 126) were female, with ages ranging from 18 to 30 years.

An adapted questionnaire from previous literature was reviewed by two experts in educational research and piloted with a small group (n = 30) of students to assess its reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87), indicating acceptable internal consistency. The questionnaire was divided into five sections based on the CLA: positive mutual dependence, group performance, interpersonal skills, individual and group responsibility, and personal interaction, as outlined by Johnson and Johnson<sup>[12]</sup>, in the context of learning English. The section on the views of ESL undergraduates on the CLA in learning English consisted of 35 items and employed a 5-point Likert scale to elicit responses. These items recorded an alpha value of 0.945 ( $\alpha = 0.945$ ), considered excellent reliability. The items in this section of the questionnaire were adapted from the past research<sup>[33, 54-56, 84-94]</sup>. Data collection began with obtaining permission from the Head of the English Department at each selected public university. Subsequently, written consent forms were provided to the research participants to ensure their voluntary involvement in the study. The researchers then offered clear instructions to guide participants through the process of completing the questionnaires. ESL undergraduate participants took approximately 15–20 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The data collected from the questionnaire responses regarding ESL undergraduates' perceptions of the CLA and their attitudes toward learning English were analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation. Additionally, inferential statistics, specifically Pearson correlation, were employed to examine the relationship between their views on CLA and their attitudes toward English language learning. **Table 1** presents the interpretation of the mean scores for both CLA and attitudes. According to previous research<sup>[95]</sup>, the mean

scores were categorized into five levels: very high, high, moderate, low, and very low, to evaluate the extent of CLA implementation and attitudes toward learning English. A mean score between 1.00 and 1.49 is declared as very low views, 1.5 to 2.49 is considered as low views, 2.5 to 3.49

is claimed as moderate views, 3.5 to 4.49 is suggested as high views, and 4.5 to 5.0 is referred as very high views in CLA and attitudes towards learning English as shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Interpretation of the mean scores on the CLA and attitudes.

Scale	M.Score	Agreement Level	Views Level
1	1 - 1.49	SD	Very Low
2	1.5 - 2.49	D	Low
3	2.5 - 3.49	N	Moderate
4	3.5 - 4.49	A	High
5	4.5 - 5.0	SA	Very High

**Table 2** highlights the categorization of questionnaire items related to the challenges encountered by ESL under- graduates, as well as teachers' perspectives on the difficulties their students face when using the CLA in learning English.

**Table 2.** Division of the items of questionnaires.

Sr #	Elements of CLA	Items
1	Personal interaction	1, 3, 4, 6, 24
2	Interpersonal skills	2, 14, 15, 16, 17
3	Group performance	9, 10, 11, 22, 23
4	Individual and group Responsibility	18, 19, 20, 21, 25
5	Positive Mutual dependence	5, 7, 8, 12, 13

**Table 3** presents the perspectives of ESL under- graduates regarding the use of the CLA in learning English. Their responses are reflected through the mean scores of the five key CLA elements: positive mutual dependence (M = 4.08), individual and group responsibility (M = 4.40), interpersonal skills (M = 4.40), and personal interaction (M = 4.35), all of which indicate high agreement. However, the mean score for group performance (M = 3.48) falls within the moderate range. The overall mean score of 3.17 also indicates a moderate level of agreement, suggesting that ESL undergraduates generally support the use of CLA in their English learning environment.

**Table 3.** Views on the CLA.

Elements of CLA	Mean	Std. Deviation
positive mutual dependence	4.08	.44
individual and group responsibility	4.40	.52
group performance	3.48	.51
Interpersonal skills	4.40	.55
personal interaction	4.35	.58
Overall	3.17	.95

**Table 4** presents the findings on ESL undergraduates' attitudes toward learning English. The results demonstrate that they exhibited strong attitudes across all three dimensions: affective (M = 4.51), cognitive (M = 4.45), and behavioural (M = 4.48). The overall mean score is reported as moderate (M=3.73). This means that ESL undergraduates also like learning English.

**Table 4.** Attitudes toward learning English.

Aspects of Attitudes	Mean	Std. Deviation
Affective	4.51	0.56
Cognitive	4.45	0.56
Behavioural	4.48	0.56
Overall	3.73	0.78

**Table 5** outlines the relationship between ESL undergraduates' perceptions of the CLA and their attitudes toward learning English. The analysis revealed a weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.021$ ) between the two variables.

**Table 5.** Relationship between the views and attitudes.

Views on the CLA	Views on the CLA		Attitudes
	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	250	
Attitudes	Views on the CLA		Attitudes
	Pearson Correlation	0.021	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.670	
	N	250	250

This study explored ESL undergraduates' perspectives on the CLA and their attitudes toward learning English. It also examined the relationship between these perspectives and their attitudes. Overall, the findings indicated that ESL undergraduates held positive views regarding the five key elements of CLA, with high mean scores reported for positive mutual dependence ( $M = 4.08$ ), individual and group responsibility ( $M = 4.40$ ), interpersonal skills ( $M = 4.40$ ), and personal interaction ( $M = 4.35$ ). Only group performance received a moderate mean score ( $M = 3.48$ ). Previous studies on CLA showed that the essential elements of CLA helped students learn English better through CLA as a sociocultural phenomenon<sup>[7]</sup> because the students are offered vibrant opportunities for inclusive learning. Similarly, Neo et al.<sup>[56]</sup> found very high views about CLA elements, i.e., Positive interaction ( $M = 3.70$  to  $4.0$ ), individual and group responsibility ( $M = 3.25$  to  $3.50$ ), personal interaction ( $M = 3.87$  to  $4.02$ ), interpersonal skills ( $M = 3.83$  to  $4.11$ ) and group performance ( $M = 3.77$  to  $4.06$ ). In addition, Gonzales and Torres<sup>[55]</sup> also explored high views on five elements of CLA, i.e., Positive interaction ( $M = 3.43$  to  $3.47$ ), individual and group responsibility ( $M = 3.81$  to  $4.00$ ), personal interaction ( $M = 3.21$  to  $3.47$ ), interpersonal skills ( $M = 3.32$  to  $3.51$ ) and group performance ( $M = 3.38$  to  $3.44$ ). These findings are similar to the past studies<sup>[33, 54, 84-94]</sup>.

ESL undergraduates expressed high views on positive mutual dependence. The result assures that ESL undergraduates positively contribute with their fellow members in small group activities. Based on the data, ESL undergraduates favoured positive mutual dependence because it helped ESL undergraduates assist each other in solving problems. The ESL undergraduates involved in this study expressed satisfaction with their group's success ( $M$

$= 4.08$ ). Therefore, the findings suggest that the learners held a positive attitude and response toward the concept of positive mutual dependence within the CLA framework. These findings are similar to Johnson and Johnson<sup>[12]</sup>, Gonzales and Torres<sup>[55]</sup>, and Neo et al.<sup>[56]</sup>.

ESL undergraduates also showed high views about individual and group responsibility. ESL undergraduates revealed that they have double checks on them in learning English using CLA because they are responsible individually and collectively. ESL undergraduates supported CLA, and they endorsed CLA for positive participation, knowledge sharing, and listening ideas. In addition to being highly motivated, nearly all students in the cooperative learning group demonstrated a clear understanding of their roles within the group ( $M = 4.40$ ). From this, the learners responded positively towards CLA regarding individual and group responsibility. These findings reflect those of Johnson and Johnson<sup>[12]</sup>, Gonzales and Torres<sup>[56]</sup>, and Neo et al.<sup>[56]</sup>, who also stated the same results for individual and group responsibility.

ESL undergraduates showed high views on interpersonal skills because it was easy for them to share ideas, work, and communicate appropriately in groups. The evidence showed that ESL undergraduates believed that CLA helps them to improve their relational, communicative, and collaborative skills in learning English. ESL undergraduates respected each other's opinions in communication and showed positive responses on interpersonal skills. These findings are also similar to the studies of Johnson and Johnson<sup>[13]</sup>, Gonzales and Torres<sup>[55]</sup>, and Neo et al.<sup>[56]</sup>. ESL undergraduates expressed high views on personal interaction. They claimed through results that they enjoy face-to-face activities using CLA in learning English. They appreciated personal interaction



because it provided a base for understanding the subject matter and lessons with improving performance. High views also directed that ESL undergraduates make good decisions in groups. Johnson and Johnson<sup>[12]</sup>, Gonzales and Torres<sup>[55]</sup>, and Neo et al.<sup>[56]</sup> claimed the same results for personal interaction.

ESL undergraduates supported the element of group performance by showing moderate views since it enhanced undergraduates' cooperation in small groups, helped them to achieve goals, and enabled them to enjoy working in groups. The results revealed that sometimes they feel comfortable and sometimes not. ESL undergraduates anticipated positive responses about group performance, as shown in the studies of Johnson and Johnson<sup>[12]</sup>, Gonzales and Torres<sup>[55]</sup>, and Neo et al.<sup>[56]</sup>. Three domains of attitudes, e.g., affective, cognitive, and behavioural, towards learning English were also high. The results indicated that ESL undergraduates showed very high and high attitudes in three aspects: affective ( $M = 4.51$ ), cognitive ( $M = 4.45$ ), and behavioural ( $M = 4.48$ ). Previous studies revealed similar findings<sup>[22, 65-71, 96-112]</sup> in their specific contexts.

ESL undergraduates showed very strong views regarding the affective aspect of their attitudes toward learning English, as it positively influenced their emotions and feelings about the language. These findings are consistent with previous research<sup>[65-67, 71, 96]</sup>. ESL Undergraduates revealed high views on the cognitive domain of attitudes towards learning English since it helped them to develop their thinking skills. These findings are similar to the past research<sup>[65, 69, 70, 97-104]</sup>. ESL undergraduates revealed high views on behavioural aspects of attitudes toward learning English. Similar results were also declared by past research work<sup>[68, 105-112]</sup>. This study identified a weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.021$ ) between ESL undergraduates' perceptions of the CLA and their attitudes toward learning English. These findings differ from the past research work of Gonzales and Torres<sup>[56]</sup> and Neo et al.<sup>[56]</sup>. On the contrary, Lagat and Concepcion<sup>[31]</sup> also determined the relationship among three constructs: social interaction, CLA, and perceived learning. A significant positive correlation was identified between social interaction and the CLA. It is suggested in the light of research findings that English language teachers should integrate structured collaborative activities that promote

interaction, critical thinking, and peer support to enhance student engagement and language proficiency. School administrators and curriculum developers are encouraged to incorporate collaborative learning principles into course design and teacher training programs to foster more student-centered and motivating ESL environments.

## 6. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the perspectives of ESL undergraduates from five public universities in Punjab, Pakistan, regarding the CLA and its connection to their attitudes toward learning English. The findings revealed that students held strong views on the five key elements of CLA and demonstrated high levels of attitude across its three dimensions toward learning English. Additionally, a weak positive correlation was found between their views on CLA and their attitudes toward English language learning. This research supported sociocultural theory in ESL because ESL undergraduates showed high views on the CLA and attitudes toward learning English. Moreover, this research has several limitations, like other research studies. Multiple factors related to context, including their previous schooling, financial circumstances, and cultural precedents, impact ESL undergraduates' views about CLA and their attitudes toward learning English. A quantitative investigation may only partially capture the complexity of these environmental components. Even though quantitative research might offer quantitative data and statistical assessments, it could not dive thoroughly into the root causes and motives of the views of ESL undergraduates about CLA and their attitudes toward learning English. Qualitative research techniques would be required to examine the variety and depth of their viewpoints. The research results could be time-sensitive because views and opinions might alter as time passes because of changing cultural norms or approaches to learning English. Future researchers could carry out similar studies focusing on students from private colleges and universities within both ESL and EFL settings. They may also explore ESL teachers' perspectives on their students' engagement with the CLA and their perceptions of students' attitudes toward learning English. Additionally, upcoming studies could examine the challenges ESL undergraduates encounter when using CLA for English learning, as well as gather

teachers' insights on these difficulties. It is essential to explore the relationship between ESL teachers' views on their students' experiences with CLA and their perceptions of students' attitudes toward learning English.

## Author Contributions

All these authors have equally contributed to conduct, review and edit this research. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript in the *Forum for Linguistic Studies*.

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## Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in strict adherence to ethical guidelines to ensure the confidentiality and respect of all participants involved. All participants were informed about the research aims, procedures, voluntary participation, anonymity, and their right to withdraw at any time before providing written consent to participate.

## Informed Consent Statement

All the participants signed the consent forms and consented to publish the results of the study.

## Data Availability Statement

Data are available on reasonable request from authors.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this

research.

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