

Research Article

An Analysis of the Role of Cooperative Learning Approach on Students' Character Building in English Learning

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Abstract: This study explores the role of cooperative learning methods, particularly the Learning Together model, in shaping student character at UPTD SMP Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli. The research employed a qualitative approach, collecting data through classroom observation of 22 eighth-grade students and interviews with an English teacher. The focus was on how cooperative learning fosters essential values such as responsibility, tolerance, collaboration, and effective communication, which are closely aligned with the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile. Findings reveal that the Learning Together model effectively enhances students' social interactions, mutual respect, and willingness to participate actively in group discussions. It also promotes a sense of accountability by encouraging students to contribute ideas, support one another, and take shared responsibility for group outcomes. Beyond academic improvement, the model cultivates positive character traits that are necessary for holistic student development. Nevertheless, several challenges emerged during implementation. Some students displayed low self-confidence, while others struggled due to limited learning time and restricted access to teaching materials or supplementary resources. These barriers highlight the need for improved classroom support, extended learning opportunities, and diversified materials to optimize the effectiveness of cooperative learning. Overall, this research demonstrates that cooperative learning, when applied to English lessons, not only strengthens language skills but also nurtures character values essential for preparing students to meet future challenges. The study offers practical implications for educators, suggesting that balanced teaching strategies integrating academic competence with character development are vital within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. By addressing both cognitive and affective dimensions, teachers can create meaningful learning experiences that encourage students to grow as capable, responsible, and socially aware individuals.

Keywords: Character Development; Cooperative Learning; English Language Learning; Learning Together; Pancasila Student Profile

1. INTRODUCTION

English language learning does not only focus on academic skills, but also plays a role in shaping students' character. This aligns with the current independent curriculum, which emphasizes character development through the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). To ensure that every student can continue to be a competent learner, of good character, and behave in accordance with the values of Pancasila, the six dimensions of the Pancasila learner profile must be considered simultaneously.

Based on initial observations at SMP Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli, it was found that many students still struggle to acquire positive character qualities, especially social skills, according to preliminary assessments. Students typically lack the experience necessary to collaborate with others, share tasks, respect others' viewpoints, and communicate clearly. Many English language learners are more passive because they lack confidence speaking or participating, particularly in group settings. This limits their ability to learn empathy, compassion, and self-control.

A purportedly effective way for tackling this issue is the cooperative learning approach, specifically the Learning Together model. This methodology prioritizes collaboration within diverse small groups, grounded in the ideas of positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing. This strategy enables kids to gain linguistic competences while fostering responsibility, tolerance,

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empathy, and good communication skills. Prior studies (Slavin, 2011; Harianto et al., 2020; Putri, 2020) demonstrate that Cooperative Learning enhances academic performance and social competencies in students; yet, there remains a paucity of research addressing the challenges associated with its application in character development.

This study's main goal is to analyze the effectiveness of Learning Together in developing students' character in English language instruction by emphasizing teamwork, mutual respect, tolerance, and effective communication. Pendekatan kualitatif is used to analyze silent student and teacher experiences, identify implementation issues, and investigate changes in learning. The results of this study are expected to serve as a guide for students in developing learning strategies that are not just focused on academic achievement but also on student character development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooperative Learning Approach

The cooperative learning approach is a teaching method that encourages students to work together in small groups to achieve academic and social goals. According to Johnson & Johnson (1994), effective cooperative education can improve academic achievement, communication skills, and teamwork abilities. Unlike individual education, this approach encourages active participation, teamwork, and most importantly, cooperation among participants (Alruwaili, 2022).

This approach has two main categories: (1) Structured Team Learning such as Student Teams-Achievement Division (STAD), Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT), and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC); and (2) Informal Group Learning Methods such as Jigsaw II, Learning Together, Think-Pair-Share, and Group Investigation (Slavin, 2011).

Learning Together Model

Johnson & Johnson developed Model Learning Together as a cooperative learning approach that encourages teamwork among small, diverse groups to achieve shared goals. These include: group evaluation based on diverse skills, shared goals, unconditional trust, group and individual evaluation, bergilir leadership, and individual accountability (Sari & Dewi, 2018).

There are five elements of collaborative learning:

- a. Positive interdependence, each member needs each other to achieve the goal.
- b. Individual responsibility, each student is responsible for their part.
- c. Direct interaction, help, respect, and support each other.
- d. Social skills, listen, speak politely, and solve problems together.
- e. Group process, evaluate group performance for future improvement.

Increased student engagement, sense of responsibility, cooperation, sense of belonging, and critical thinking skills are all part of the Learning Together Advantage. These include, among other things, the need for strong preparation, complex classroom instruction, and the ability of the student to dominate the discussion (Anggriasari et al., 2020).

As explained by Fajri et al. (2023) explain that one cooperative learning approach, the learning together approach, encourages students to work together better while learning. Students are grouped into small, heterogeneous groups in terms of ability, gender, and other characteristics. This approach emphasizes the importance of: positive interdependence, such as a sense of community, Direct or face-to-face interactions that support, assist, and respect one another and Students also have individual and group responsibility for achieving their own goals.

English Language Learning with Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning in English allows students to learn through group interaction, which improves their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. As shown by Sulistyorini's research, this method encourages students to participate more actively in discussions, exchange opinions, and appreciate other people's perspectives. Thus, language skills and character traits such as tolerance, cooperation, and responsibility can be improved. Since everyone has equal opportunities to participate, this approach is also effective in boosting students' confidence in speaking English. Additionally, the learning environment becomes more engaging, and students are motivated to participate actively.

Character Education and Pancasila Student Profile

Character education is a deliberate effort to encourage individuals to understand, pay attention to, and act based on moral principles, noble values, and ethics that apply in society (Wulandari 2022). Therefore, character education aims to shape individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have moral integrity and are able to contribute positively to social life.

In the current curriculum, namely the Merdeka Curriculum, character development for students is implemented through the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). Due to its important role, the Pancasila Student Profile must be understood by all stakeholders as it serves as the primary reference for guiding educational policies and as a benchmark for educators in developing students' character and competencies. To ensure this profile is integrated into daily activities, it must be simple, easy to remember, and easy to implement by both teachers and students. The Pancasila Student Profile (P5) is divided into six dimensions, namely: Dimension: Faithful, God-fearing, and of noble character. Indonesian students who are faithful, pious to God Almighty, and noble in character, Dimensions Diversity Global, Dimension Cooperation Teamwork, Independent Dimension, Dimension Critical Reasoning, Creative Dimension.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative research approach that will be adopted in this study. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a method for analyzing and understanding the significance of individuals or groups related to a social or human problem. In qualitative research, the use of diverse data sources is essential for data triangulation to ensure the validity and credibility of research results, as explained by Flick (2018). Flick emphasizes that to understand the research phenomenon comprehensively, it is important to combine various types of data, including observational data, interviews, and digital traces.

The data sources in this study include: English teachers, who served as primary informants regarding the implementation of the Cooperative Learning Approach in the learning process, and 22 students in Grade VIII-B at UPTD SMP Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli, Creswell (2018) also emphasizes the importance of using various data sources to improve the validity and credibility of research results, so that researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The following are some of the data collection techniques that will be used in this study: Observation and Interviews. Cohen et al. (2018), involve five important stages in the qualitative research data analysis process to understand the collected data: data reduction, data presentation, data analysis and interpretation, conclusion drawing and verification, and reporting.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

a) Implementation of the Learning Together Model in English Learning

The implementation of the Learning Together model in English language learning at UPTD SMP Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli shows a significant influence on the character building of students, especially when linked to the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). Based

on Johnson & Johnson's concept, this model encourages small group work that emphasizes positive interdependence, individual responsibility, promotive interaction, social skill development, and group reflection (Slavin, 2011 in Elisa & Setia, 2023). Observation results indicate that all five elements of this model have been integrated into the learning process, although their contributions to the dimensions of student character vary.

In some ways, the Learning Together model shows how students' characters are shaped, especially in terms of cooperation, responsibility, and communication. Although elements of positive interdependence enhance mutual assistance, they are less effective in fostering tolerance, independence, faith, creativity, critical thinking, and self-reliance. Although individual responsibility does not strengthen moral values and diversity, it encourages creativity, independence, and critical thinking. Despite the lack of spiritual values and independence, promotional interactions encourage diversity, cooperation, critical thinking, and creativity. Although social skills enhance creativity, faith, diversity, and cooperation, they do little to improve critical thinking skills. Group processing, on the other hand, is the most comprehensive component because it supports all dimensions of P5 through collective reflection. However, aspects such as spirituality, cultural tolerance, independence, creativity, and critical thinking still need to be enhanced through additional approaches that explicitly incorporate character values into every group activity.

b) Linkage to Pancasila Student Profile Dimensions

The observation was conducted in the classroom while the language teacher was teaching English. The results of the observation regarding the aspects of Learning Together that can shape students' character in English language learning are as follows: The five elements of the Collaborative Learning Model have different relationships with the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). Positive Interdependence is only related to the dimension of mutual cooperation, fostering an attitude of mutual support but not yet touching on aspects of individual morality, diversity, independence, critical thinking, or creativity. Personal Responsibility is related to mutual cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity, encouraging personal responsibility and idea contribution, but does not instill spiritual values or awareness of diversity. Promotive Interaction is related to global diversity, mutual cooperation, critical thinking, and creativity, helping students appreciate differences, think reflectively, and collaborate, but does not yet strengthen spiritual values and independence. Social Skill Development is related to spiritual values, global diversity, cooperation, and creativity, building communication, empathy, and teamwork, but is not yet optimal in developing independence and critical thinking skills. Meanwhile, Group Processing is the only element that encompasses all dimensions of P5, as through group reflection, students can develop moral values, responsibility, openness, cooperation, critical thinking, and innovation in a balanced manner.

c) Challenges in Character Building

Interviews were conducted directly with English teachers to gather information about how challenges faced can shape character in English language learning. The researcher then analyzed the interview results as follows: Although the first topic, Positive Cooperation, encourages students to work together, it does not yet address the five important dimensions of P5: Faith, Piety, and Noble Character. Spirituality, honesty, and politeness are not yet evident in group work. Group interactions do not show respect for cultural diversity, so the dimension of global diversity has not yet been developed. Since students tend to rely on more active members, their independence is not yet evident. Since discussions are still limited without analysis or evaluation, critical thinking has not developed, and creativity has not emerged because students do not have the space or encouragement to express new ideas.

In the second element, Individual Accountability, challenges arise mainly in two dimensions: the dimension of faith, piety to God Almighty, and noble character, and the dimension of global diversity. Although students are trained to be responsible for individual tasks, the values of honesty, fairness, and ethics are not yet evident in their implementation. These activities remain technical in nature, neglecting spiritual aspects. Additionally, students are not yet accustomed to considering the differing perspectives and cultural backgrounds of their peers, resulting in a lack of developed multicultural awareness.

The third element, Promotive Interaction, also does not fully support the dimensions of Faith, Reverence for God Almighty, and Noble Character, as well as the dimension of Independence. Although there is positive interaction within the group, students have not demonstrated spiritual attitudes in their communication, such as respect, fairness, and ethical behavior. Additionally, the presence of dependency in discussions causes some students to become passive and unwilling to contribute ideas, which hinders the development of independence.

Meanwhile, the fourth element, Development of Social Skills, is not directly related to the dimensions of critical reasoning. Social interactions during learning emphasize cooperation, empathy, and communication, but do not effectively encourage students to think reflectively, express logical reasoning, or evaluate opinions critically.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that, although the use of the Learning Together model in English language learning at UPTD SMP Negeri 2 Gunungsitoli has a significant effect on the character formation of students, the use of this model has different effects on each dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). This aligns with the theories proposed by Johnson & Johnson (1994) and Slavin (2011), which emphasize that through the application of positive interdependence, individual responsibility, promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing, cooperative learning can enhance academic outcomes and social skills.

Although the elements of positive interdependence help foster a spirit of cooperation, they do not cover aspects such as creativity, critical thinking, global diversity, faith and noble character, and independence. While individual responsibility does not strongly support moral values and awareness of diversity, it does encourage creativity, independence, and critical thinking. Although spiritual values and independence are not yet ideal, promotive interactions encourage global diversity, mutual cooperation, critical thinking, and creativity. Social skills enhance diversity, faith, creativity, and mutual cooperation, but do not fully enhance critical thinking. Group processing, on the other hand, is the most comprehensive component because it supports all dimensions of P5 through shared reflection.

The results of this study support the conclusions of Harianto et al. (2020) and Putri (2020), who stated that cooperative learning is effective in fostering attitudes of mutual respect, responsibility, and cooperation. However, this study also found problems similar to those mentioned by Putri (2020), such as time constraints, teaching materials, and lack of group participation. To address these issues, teachers at the research site took several actions: modifying materials, providing personal motivation to students, and using simple media. This aligns with the idea proposed by Lathifa et al. (2024) that teachers' creativity is crucial for the success of Learning Together.

Thus, while the Learning Together model has proven effective in fostering responsibility, accountability, spirituality, creativity, independence, critical thinking, and cooperative character, additional strategies are needed to clearly integrate character values into every group activity.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study indicate that the collaborative learning model is effective in shaping students' character, particularly in terms of cooperation, responsibility, tolerance, and communication. However, some components do not fully support all aspects of the Pancasila Student Profile. Limitations in educational resources, the amount of time spent on learning, lack of self-confidence, lack of awareness of spiritual principles, independence, critical thinking, and appreciation of diversity are some of the challenges faced. Therefore, teachers should incorporate strategies that emphasize the strengthening of moral principles, independence, and multicultural awareness, while also providing students with opportunities for critical and creative thinking. Cooperative learning can have a positive impact on the character development of each student.

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