EXPLORING SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PRACTICES: COLLABORATIVE LEARNING CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN TEFL CLASSROOMS AT ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

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A B S T R A C T S

Islamic boarding schools play a vital role in Indonesia's education system, particularly in shaping students' religious and academic development. Within these institutions, implementing collaborative learning presents unique challenges due to their emphasis on discipline, religious values, and limited technological access. This study aims to explore Islamic boarding school teachers' perspectives on the challenges of applying social constructivist approaches in collaborative learning within TEFL classrooms, as well as the strategies used to overcome these obstacles. Using a qualitative design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five teachers and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that while collaborative learning can enhance students' motivation, critical thinking, and language skills, it requires careful planning and ongoing professional development to be effective in this context. Challenges identified include curriculum constraints, school culture, inadequate facilities, diverse student cognitive abilities, varying motivation levels, and emotional regulation. The study underscores the importance of strategic lesson planning, effective group composition, and teacher training in addressing these issues and improving collaborative learning in Islamic boarding school settings.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, collaborative learning has gained prominence in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), driven by the increasing recognition of social constructivist theories that emphasize interaction, cooperation, and learner-centered pedagogy. Collaborative learning is drawn upon for boosting motivation (Namaziandost et al., 2019, p. 1), enhancing reading (Rosnaningsih & Wulandari, 2017, p. 166), speaking (Babiker, 2018, p. 137), listening (Adnan Salih, 2022, p. 1267), and writing skills (Al-Yafaei & Mudhsh, 2023, p. 8). Collaborative learning as a medium for problem-based language learning enriches learners' vocabulary (Farahani et al., 2019, p. 366).

Grounded from Vygotsky's idea of the Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD) which refers to the difference between what a learner can do on their own (actual development) and what they can do with help from others (potential development), collaborative learning is evolved. Learning moves through three stages: 1) Object-regulation: The learner is influenced by objects and cultural practices in their environment (e.g., rituals, routines, or games) that help them understand their surroundings. For instance, children learn from elders offering tea. 2) Others-regulation: With the help of parents, teachers, or peers, the learner receives guidance to deepen their understanding. For instance, children understand the culture of offering tea through the explanation of parents. 3) Self-regulation: Eventually, the learner is able to apply what they have learned independently and master it on their own. For example, children start to be able to construct essays after being corrected in grammar and diction (Lin, 2006, p. 172).

While collaborative learning has shown positive outcomes in various educational settings, its implementation in culturally specific contexts such as Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) in Indonesia might present unique challenges. The prominent program of Islamic boarding school is law enforcement. It creates a religious environment for shaping a discipline character through controlling perpetual daily activities with a strict timeline encompassing time for praying and learning. The agreed punishment is a tool for shaping habituation for convincing the learners to obey the rules and regulation. As a prior concern of the school, it endeavours to grow a religious motivation through giving a guidance, continuous messages, and advices (Ihsan et al., 2021, p. 371).

Islamic boarding school constructs a perpetual curriculum for carrying out a formal learning activities inside and outside the classroom, as well as extracurriculars. Perpetual professional developments are scheduled for teachers to maintain the valuable and appropriate teaching skills in developing learning models and assessments. The endeavours are prospected to ensure the graduates possessing a balance proportion of intelligence, social, and emotion (Ilyasin, 2020, p. 21). The difference setting of school creates a uniqueness on treating the learners for meeting the expected goal of learning. Stakeholders and teachers are united for grasping a deep understanding teachers' complex roles when carrying out a learning activities in the classroom (Fatihah, 2022, p. 29).

The unique educational paradigm, program, and curriculum brings about challenges for teachers in teaching English. The challenges encompass: 1) Pedagogy competence which teachers often apply monotonous and inappropriate strategies for covering learners' diverse learning style. 2) The negative assumption towards English as a global demand owing to the Islamic contradiction is intentionally belonged by the learners (Sari, 2021, p. 117). 3) The multiple curricula enhance learning load which learners has a responsibility to comprehend Indonesian, Arabic, English and local languages. 4) Teacher dependence whose intelligence is the main and sometimes the only source of learning (Sari, 2021, p. 118). 5) Learners' diverse educational background is the factor determining the participation whether they are active and able to comprehend the lesson. 6) The emotional state might influence the flow of learning since they are struggle for their strict daily routines that impacted their motivation to learn despite due to tiresome (Fatihah, 2022, p. 29). 7) Insufficient learning facilities limit the opportunity to explore engaging and interesting teaching models and activities (Emawati et al., 2024, p. 256).

It is crucial for exploring the encountered challenges and applied strategies for overcoming barriers while practicing collaborative learning viewed from social constructivism. However, several studies have only contributed in illuminating the practice of constructivism through collaborative learning in a regular school. For instance, Alzahrani (2013) attempted to use Wiki technology and thus examined the relation between those aspects In an online classroom context. Seifert (2023) carried out a qualitative approach for investigating the implementation of both aspects in flipped classroom during Covid-19 era. Through the

identical approach, Ramsook (2019) brought up surprising result of study that uncovers the negative outcome of practice. Yet, it is contrast to Rahmayanti & Nirwana's (2021) study that revealed the positive outcome of the practice through a literature study. In the lens of EFL context, Agustini (2019) undertook a mix method study in exploring the classroom practice and teachers' perception on the practice through observation, questionnaire, interview. The study was supported by Zhang (2023), he discovered the benefits and challenges of the practice.

Owing to few studies investigating the practice of collaborative learning in Islamic Boarding school, the study attempts to fill the gap of previous studies through undergoing a focus investigation on teachers' perception. Through the unique paradigm, set-up curriculum, norm, habit, education objectives, and tightly knit learning environment, the practice of collaborative learning might be distinctive compared to regular schools. The circumstances will definitely contribute to unforeseen challenges that arise between teachers and learners. However, such challenges must be addressed through appropriate strategies, whether at the individual level or through institutional support which are required to be deeply investigated.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design
This study employed a qualitative research method to explore teachers' perceptions of social constructivism in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms within an Islamic boarding school setting. Qualitative research focused on text and data image, various design, and thorough analysis. According to Creswell (2018) it is involves explanation in research approach, design specification, and the accuracy through clear validation.

The case study approach under a qualitative study approach was adopted since it addressed on the research questions. Case study is suitable for exploring complex social phenomena, allowing for an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences. While through case study research, researcher is able to empirically, intensively, and systemically investigated natural phenomena with the use of multiple sources of evidence (Heale & Twycross, 2018, p. 7). It was chosen to examine the specific context of teachers working in Islamic boarding schools and their experiences in implementing social constructivism in EFL classrooms. This approach enabled the researchers to investigate real-life teaching practices, challenges, and strategies adopted by the participants.

Pertaining to ethical consideration, this study strictly followed ethical principles. All participants were completely informed about the study and their participation was conducted voluntarily with no external pressure, and they were free to withdraw at any stage of the study. Their confidentiality and anonymity were assured throughout the process of research. Additionally, the research questions were attentively constructed for avoiding an inappropriate, impulsive, aggressive, and offensive question without any consent (Richards & Schwartz, 2002, p. 136).

Population and Sample
This study involved five English teachers. These participants held a bachelor degree in Teaching English Education. They were all teachers of a private Islamic boarding school in urban and sub urban areas which possessed different gender and years of experiences in practicing collaborative learning in TEFL. The study drew upon purposive sampling. At the time of research, these teachers were teaching English as Foreign Language classes utilizing the constructivist approach as advised and mandated by the school's administration. The characteristic of each participant is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1
Participants of Study

No	Teacher's Code	Gender	Age (y.o)	Teaching Experience	School Setting
1.	AN	Female	38	10 years	Suburban
2.	RF	Female	39	14 years	Urban
3.	HA	Male	29	4.5 years	Urban
4.	NI	Female	28	3 years	Urban
5.	TI	Male	30	4 years	Suburban

Despite the number of participants, the study has achieved data saturation. The main concern of this study placed on the deep investigation, rather on the quantity. As the data collection process accomplished, the final data obtained showed similar and consistent themes and there were no new themes emerged or issues which needed further exploration. All participants have provided rich and in-depth insights towards the underlying issues.

Instruments

This study utilized interview data as data collection technique. Five teachers from Islamic boarding school were invited for interviews so that the researchers could gain more insightful data. The interviews took place on WhatsApp. The researchers asked open-ended questions using *Bahasa Indonesia* so that the participants could respond to each question clearly and comfortably. The researcher would raise follow up questions if required. During the interview, detailed notes were all written down. The list of questions is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2
The Interview Questions

No.	Questions
1.	*Bagaimana Anda melihat hubungan antara Collaborative Learning dengan social constructivism pada pengajaran Bahasa inggris Anda?*
2.	*Menurut Anda, seberapa efektif praktik Collaborative Learning di sekolah boarding?*
3.	*Berdasarkan pengalaman Anda, bagaimana biasanya Anda mempraktikkan Collaborative Learning di dalam pembelajaran Bahasa inggris?*
4.	*Apa saja manfaat dari Collaborative Learning tersebut pada pembelajaran Bahasa inggris?*
5.	*Apa saja tantangan yang dihadapi dari praktik Collaborative Learning tersebut pada pembelajaran Bahasa inggris?* *a. Adakah tantangan tentang kurikulum dan manajemen waktu terhadap praktik Collaborative Learning?* *b. Adakah tantangan tentang fasilitas sekolah terhadap praktik Collaborative Learning?* *c. Adakah tantangan tentang kultur sekolah terhadap praktik Collaborative Learning?* *d. Adakah tantangan tentang level kognitif siswa terhadap praktik Collaborative Learning?* *e. Adakah tantangan tentang level motivasi siswa terhadap praktik Collaborative Learning?* *f. Adakah tantangan tentang emosi siswa terhadap praktik Collaborative Learning?*
6.	*Menurut Anda, seberapa besar pengaruh kultur dan peraturan sekolah boarding islam mempengaruhi praktik collaborative learning?*
7.	*Strategi apa yang Anda gunakan untuk menghadapi tantangan tersebut?*
8.	*Bagaimana Anda memastikan semua siswa aktif berpartisipasi dalam praktik tersebut?*
9.	*Bagaimana strategi Anda untuk menghadapi tantangan dari kultur sekolah dan nilai-nilai islam yang diterapkan di sekolah pada praktik collaborative learning?*
10.	*Menurut Anda, seberapa perlu training untuk pengembangan profesional guru untuk lebih mengefektifkan praktik collaborative learning?*
11.	*Saran apa yang Anda akan berikan pada guru Bahasa inggris di sekolah boarding islam yang mau mengimplementasikan collaborative learning?*

Data Analysis

The data analysis process has been collected from the interview and analyzed by using thematic analysis. According to Christou (2023) thematic analysis is a process that comes from interview transcripts which produced a theme to illustrate a phenomenon from the object of the study. Grounded by Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis which defined it as one way to analyze data obtained in the field and aims to recognize patterns or fine themes. The analysis was conducted in six steps: 1) Data Familiarization: before coding, researcher read the entire collected data to seek the patterns and themes and transcribed the whole statements coming out from interviewee. 2) Initial Code Generator: researcher identified the interesting features of data regarding the phenomenon being examined while staying open to different meanings and keeping the context clear. 3) Themes Identification: researchers organized the codes into themes through identifying the connection among ideas. 4) Themes Review: researcher reviewed and refined the constructed theme to ensure that those themes has captured all data sets. 5) Themes Defining and Naming: researcher identified the core meaning from each theme and ensured there was no overlapping issues under each theme. 5) Report Writing: researcher wrote the report responding to underlying issues which were highlighted on research questions.

To ensure data validity and reliability of the study, the following measures were: 1) Credibility 2) Transferability: 3) Dependability: This study presents raw data in the form of interview transcripts, several data analyses conducted by the researcher in the appendix of the research report. Furthermore, to find out the truth or error made by the researcher during the research process, the researcher consults with lecturers and discusses the findings obtained in the field area. The things that the researcher consults with the lecturer are the research process, data findings in the field, and data interpretation. 4) Confirmability: Confirmability testing in qualitative research is called objectivity testing. A study is said to be objective if the study is agreed upon by many people (Creswell, 2018). In this case, the researcher tests the research results and is associated with the process during the study by carefully examining the initial findings obtained by the researcher, analyzing the data, interpreting and reviewing the data, until the process of writing the research report.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The responses attained from the interview have portrayed the following findings. The challenges of collaborative learning enclosed the curriculum, school facilities, school culture and value, cognitive level, motivation level, emotional state. Those challenges were knocked off particular strategies as follows.

The Concept Understanding

Particularly, all of the teachers were aware of the relation of social constructivism in collaborative learning which has given no challenge to practice. They considered the highest possibilities in achieving the structured learning goals through collaborative learning through the practical benefit they have attained, such as developing discussion and social skills, building emotional bonds, respecting others' opinions, and promoting critical thinking. The detail description was declared by these excerpts:

> "It helps learners develop the skills of discussion and social skills. They get complete understanding through sharing activities. On top of that, it can enhance their learning outcome." (AN)
>
> "Learners are aware of their human nature that they need others' help. Their emotional bond is built while doing particular tasks." (TI)
>
> "They learn how to respect others' opinions and promote critical thinking as they get to know their friends well, as well." (RF)

The highlighted benefits depicted above were connected to how the learners construct their understanding while they socially interact with their peers. Teachers who practiced collaborative learning believed that social constructivism was able to be built through collaborative learning. The connection was captivatingly admitted below:

> "Collaborative learning and social constructivism have a strong bond. The social constructivism is performed by the communication and interaction while the learners discuss and solve the problem." (AN)
>
> "Collaborative learning and social constructivism are interrelated. They have a relevancy to be practiced in TEFL classrooms. collaborative learning presents the social constructivism principles." (NI)

The understanding of the concept derived from social constructivism in collaborative learning determined the practice as well. The comprehended understanding might be developed through the social phenomenon and learners' characteristics. Hence, teachers still demanded professional development to implement the practice efficiently and attractively. The demand was representatively conveyed by teachers who experience collaborative learning for 4 and 14 years through these excerpts:

> "The training is extremely needed. Many teachers might practice only one activity and it is quite mainstream. From the training, we get new knowledge about the various models of collaborative learning." (HA)
>
> "Maybe it mere to add insights about the activities that we can do." (RF)

The Curriculum

The curriculum became the core of learning which was fundamental to be obeyed. It compromised the approach, model, and learning activity conducted in the classroom that should be embodied in the recent curriculum. The learner-centered learning, as the spotlight of the recent curriculum, was the powerful advantage of collaborative learning practice. The extract below of interview described the correlation:

> "I know exactly that it is effective to embody learner-centered learning which is in line with the recent curriculum." (NI)

Nevertheless, several teachers, especially those who have experienced collaborative learning for less than 5 years, encountered a challenge in implementing collaborative learning due to the lesson time limitation. It aroused the attainment of learning objectives. The issues were declared through the excerpts:

> "For the challenge, maybe, when they have discussion, the time is limited. So, the final goal hasn't yet been achieved fully." (HA)
>
> "Of course, the time limitation always become one of challenge" (TI)
>
> "Actually, I often find a challenge relating to the curriculum, but it becomes my personal evaluation" (NI)

It seemed that the time limitation was not a confirmed terrifying challenge. The 14 years of practicing collaborative learning seemed to understand exactly how to deal with the condition and proposed the strategy to avoid the uttered challenge through planning a structured lesson plan. It was written in the excerpt below:

> "I don't face this kind of challenge because I have planned it before at the very first time of the academic year. I construct my lesson plan as real as possible. Learners have a multiple intelligence which must be covered in my lesson plan in the way that I teach" (RF)

School Facilities

Islamic boarding school teachers encountered challenges to undergo the practice owing to the insufficient technology devices. Surprisingly, teachers have planned an adjusted strategy to ensure the flow of practice aligned with their expectation. Their experiences initiated their

strategy construction which brought diverse actions. Sub urban teachers preferred to practice it in the classroom and bring a personal device to support the activity. The data from the interviews voiced viewpoints regarding the issues:

> "I've done a game for collaborative learning and I need a tv/lcd and projector. But, I've got difficulties doing the practice because the lcd can't work properly and there is no speaker in my school. That's why I always bring a marker in my hand to write on the whiteboard." (TI)
> "Because this school has limited technology to provide. … I always bring my laptop and other devices for them to search for materials." (AN)

Regarding the school facilities, there was no way out of avoiding the challenge. Teachers undertook the condition by designing plan-B. In contrast, distinctive assumptions came from some teachers who experienced the practice of collaborative learning in urban areas. They perceived the insufficient technology devices was not considered as a challenge because the limitation technology could be adjusted with their instruction. As a result, the strategies were not required. The statements were as followed:

> "Literally, the practice doesn't really need the involvement of school facilities that much because it depends on my instruction. Yet, the presence of technology devices creates better results." (NI)
> "Collaborative learning needs fewer devices, compared to individual tasks. When I do a grouping activity, I will distribute the devices based on the number of groups. Each group receives only one device." (RF)

School Culture and Value

Islamic boarding schools possessed particular characteristics, features, norms and law. The uniqueness elicited a dilemma for teachers in undertaking a learning process. Teachers considered it as a challenge that requires strategies to overcome. The common challenges aligned with the rules encompasses the limitation of technology use and social borders among gender differences. The mentioned challenges were depicted through the excerpts:

> "The school controls their freedom to use gadgets as they have difficulties getting trending information and news." (HA)
> "There is a limitation in technology use whereas they must know the social phenomenon. I should improve their literacy skills, but reading the English material book doesn't contain recent news." (NI)

The technology usage limitation could be viewed as the challenge that required a strategy to overcome. Learners depended heavily on teachers in order to keep up with the social phenomenon outside. Teachers' job was to make sure they grasp meaningful knowledge through giving an opportunity as fulfilling their rights. A male teacher brought up the information as the discussion topic in collaborative learning. While a female teacher viewed it as a trivial challenge that didn't hamper her ability to practice collaborative learning. The statements below were the evidence:

> "That's why I use trending news to make sure they know about it by inviting them to a computer lab to search something about the topic before discussing it with their group." (HA)
> "The school rules are absolute. I can do nothing about it and I don't see it as something big that makes me not do the practice. I will keep evaluating it until I get the best strategy to make the practice perfect." (NI)

Another challenge aligned with the rules, norm, and culture in Islamic boarding school was the presence of social borders among gender differences. Female and male teachers agreed that gender determines the composition of the classroom. Females were separated from males.

The challenge arose when they conducted collaborative learning. The excerpts explained the challenge and responded strategies:

> "Sometimes, when the group contains only males, their viewpoints are limited. Males tend to understand certain contexts, such as sports. Females tend to know about the internal women context… so I have to plan the common issues that can be received by them." (NI)
>
> "It will be interesting to have them in the same group. Males' opinion is different from the females, exactly… but, as a teacher I must be a facilitator and helper to guide them." (HA)

The strategies were quite personal which is based on their experience. The highlighted point from overcoming the challenge was teachers' involvement in every circumstance. On the other hand, teachers who worked more than 10 years didn't view the state as a challenge. The boarding school management eased them to conduct collaborative learning since the learners were close. Their positive assumptions were performed through their statements:

> "Learners stay and live 24 hours with their friends on board. I see it as a positive condition for them. It is easier for me to manage and monitor them because they have a good culture." (AN)
>
> "Because they are in boarding school. They are happy doing collaborative learning. They live together for 24 hours. There are no parents here, that's why their friends are their family. So, they don't have any difficulties in communicating and interacting their thoughts and ideas while discussing such topics." (RF)

Cognitive Level

Learners' cognitive level influenced the practice. Teachers' technique in grouping learners might arouse particular challenges. The decision-making of controlling group composition gave an impact on the classroom circumstance. Teachers applying random grouping benefitted on enriching learners' experience upon social interaction. The purposive grouping ensured the practice of peer tutoring while they undertook collaborative learning. The ideas were supported by these excerpts:

> "Yeah, random. Unluckily, the low skills learners are in the same group. I believe that it is similar to a puzzle. They have a different shape, but if they are organized well, it will be good. Collaborative learning needs to unite the learners to be perfect." (HA)
>
> "The low skills learners are sometimes lost. They have no idea what to do and don't get the objectives of learning from collaborative learning." (NI)

On the other hand, the purposive grouping promised the practice of peer tutoring while they undertook collaborative learning. Teachers intentionally select the superior of the class and distribute the position. The detail explanation was portrayed in those excerpts:

> "There is a superior in each group and there are learners that need to be improved. Higher level of learners will accomplish the task earlier and teach others." (TI)
>
> "I don't use random grouping techniques. I am a type of teacher that picks certain learners and becomes a tutor for other members. The learners will help others doing the task." (RF)

Based on the grouping techniques, teachers comprehended the need of becoming an observer, facilitator, and director for enlightening their path. The strategy was conducted for ensuring the goal achievement. The description of strategy was completely presented below:

> "For me, I keep on developing my method and give a stimulus for low skills learners. I will give them feedback." (NI)

"As a teacher, I don't let them get lost in a way. I must help them so that the discussion goes well." (HA)

Motivation Level

Pertaining to the motivation level, teachers failed to encounter a challenge. Learners were heavily motivated with the practice of collaborative learning connecting to the core of collaborative learning which concerned on boosting their motivation in learning. The statement was approved through the excerpts:

"They are so happy and excited with it. Most of them are more comfortable discussing such topics with their friends, rather than with the teacher." (RF)

"Relating to the motivation, I am sure they are motivated to do it. Collaborative learning is to enhance motivation. There is no challenge about motivation." (NI)

"The energy is contagious. The low motivated learners will be boosted by the others, because the atmosphere is supportive." (TI)

The strategic action has been perfectly constructed before. The presence of reward, positive feedback and additional points, was explained to the learners. The effectiveness of such rewards was approved by the teachers through these utterances:

"All of them should speak up their ideas. I told them that it's okay to make a mistake and I don't blame it on and judge them. I appreciate their effort by giving them points. I told them about it." (HA)

"Along the way, I observe them. I have an observation rubric that I have prepared before for monitoring whether the learning goals are achieved or not. For speaking, I also have a scoring rubric, also their participation is scored." (RF)

Emotional State

The emotional state influenced the effectiveness of collaborative learning. Some teachers were conscious about the need of maintaining the circumstance while others failed to observe the presence. The emotional state was disturbed by their reluctance to participate in the task and their personal feelings. The challenge of it was approved through these statements:

"They sometimes tell me if there is a group member that is doing nothing." (HA)

"Sometimes, some learners have a problem with others. It makes them awkward." (TI)

The teachers responded to the situation by actively observing and giving guidance and motivation to help them face the challenge. The intended efforts were described below:

"I help them by giving them an understanding. They have to support each other because you are a team. It's like a body, if there is a part of the body sick, others are sick too." (HA)

Professional development was demanded for ensuring the match of the practice to the learning goals. Teachers craved for insights on the various models of collaborative learning activities which could be implemented in the classroom. The demands of training was obviously declared below:

"It is necessary because the activity is quite monotone if only applying only one activity." (HA)

"For making it more engaging, the training might contain how to practice it in more interesting way." (TI)

"I support to get a training because I love applying collaborative learning." (NI)

"If it is about various activities that can be done by the teachers in collaborative learning. I am okay with the training." (RF)

Discussion

The major concern of this investigation was identifying the challenges encountered by Islamic boarding schools in practicing collaborative learning with the use of Vygotsky's social constructivism. Learners were the actors promising the mental process involved in understanding construction through a socially transmitted picture of the world by interacting, communicating, and discussing (Langford, 2005, p. 153). Putting up with the peculiar characteristics of Islamic boarding school learners, they encountered various challenges in practice. Those challenges were categorized as the concept understanding, the curriculum, school facilities, school culture and values, cognitive level, motivation level, and emotional state.

From the finding, all of the teachers bragged their understanding of social constructivism in collaborative learning concepts beyond the bare minimum. Their satisfaction upon the benefits of collaborative learning obscured the challenge they faced owing to the lack of understanding. They raised the volume for declaring the effectiveness of the practice for boosting learners' motivation, participation, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and English skills. The result was in line with the Seifert's (2023), Babiker's (2018), Farahani et al.'s (2019), and Khabiri & Marashi's (2016) study.

Pertaining to the curriculum, teachers expressed concern about their limited skills to measure the duration for conducting the practice. It was assumed as a trivial challenge that required personal strategy to overcome. As Islamic boarding schools constructed a perpetual curriculum for carrying out formal learning activities inside and outside the classroom (Ilyasin, 2020), teachers planned feasible activities to be carried out efficiently learning activities with approximating the appropriate timeline. Teachers who had longer teaching experiences got used to plan better.

Practicing collaborative learning as a learning activity was inseparable to the provision of school facilities. Islamic boarding schools commonly encountered a challenge of embodying an effective learning process with the insufficient technological devices owing to the rules for gadget usage restriction (Emawati et al., 2024). Captivatingly, there was contradictory assumptions among teachers due to the issue. Teachers admitted the inadequacy stressed them out which resulted in preparing plan-B. Stakeholders and teachers were responsible to find the way out (Hidayati, 2017) for ensuring the modernization of Islamic boarding school followed technology advancement (Arifin, 2022). While others objected to Emawati et al.'s (2024) study which raised a claim on how the condition brought about the failure of creating engaging activities.

Teachers announced the dilemmas for practicing collaboration in Islamic boarding schools regarding school culture and values. In this case, learners got used to law enforcement cultivating their discipline (Ihsan et al., 2021). Teachers approved how the law enforcement benefitted their classroom management. Learners were quite responsible to accomplish the group project despite their close relationship among the community. On the other hand, a challenge arose when it came to the restriction of technological devices and social borders which dealt with the classroom composition based on gender. Teachers discovered a characteristic perspective between males and females which might limit their exploration upon the given issues though the practice allows group interaction (Koivuniemi et al., 2018). It is extremely connected to the social and moral values as the key feature of the Islamic boarding school (Irayanti, 2022). Hence, it was teachers' job for fulfilling the needs of learners under any circumstance by adjusting to the flexible learning instruction as the strategy.

One of the most recurring issues in the incorporation of collaborative learning in TEFL was group arrangement since the task could be conceptually complex. Homogenous groups based on personality traits and certain criteria were more effective to enhance academic achievement rather than learners' preference (Farahani et al., 2019). It was still in doubt the

way one teacher applying random grouping admitted the benefit of the type of group formation for enriching learners' experience upon social interaction for maintaining heterogeneity. While other teachers preferred setting up purposive grouping to maintain an equal combination between the superior and inferiors in ensuring the practice of peer tutoring while they undertook collaborative learning. Contrastingly, learners performed better in heterogeneous groups and more satisfied with homogenous group (Kanika et al., 2023, p. 1). The problem began to arise when inferiors were inadequately responsible for learning (Eslami et al., 2024, p. 78). Peer tutoring in the practice endeavoured to enhance learners' vocabulary (Farahani et al., 2019, p. 366), writing skills (Al-Yafaei & Mudhsh, 2023, p. 8), and speaking skills (Babiker, 2018, p. 137). In this case, teachers correspondingly tracked cognitive development by providing pre-existing content that was connected to the learners' prior knowledge. The outcome was further monitored and evaluated (Bose, 2010, p. 12) to explore the effectiveness.

Regarding motivation levels, teachers did not face any challenges. Students are highly motivated when engaging in collaborative learning, which is aligned with the primary goal of collaborative learning that was enhancing learners' participation (Zhang, 2023) and motivation (Namaziandost et al., 2019). Teachers promised the reward based on their active participation and performance which stimulated their personal goal to upgrade and push their best effort (Zhang, 2023) with the scoring rubric in teachers' hand. Moreover, the teacher provided feedback for ensuring the information delivery on their strength and weakness which fostered their speaking skills and motivation to perform better (Namaziandost et al., 2019). It refused the characteristic of Islamic boarding school learners of which a diverse educational background impact their participation in the classroom (Fatihah, 2022, p. 29).

In the emotional state dimension, teachers encountered a distinct challenge compared to regular schools. Their strict daily routines were sometimes overwhelming which impacted their behaviour in the practice (Fatihah, 2022, p. 29). Implementing collaborative learning was proved as the powerful magic for keeping their awake owing to the interesting and engaging activity (Sari, 2021). There was a distinct perspective among teacher which they found and ignored the emotional state of learners. Learners' energy was contagious. It would be a problem for their peers to denote the negative emotion emerging from others. Hence, learners' personal skills determined the learning atmosphere (Şengel & Yaşar Özden, 2010, p. 24). The emotion regulation was carried out by group cooperation to help one another (Järvenoja et al., 2019). Thus, teachers should be attentive to notice it while assisted them to regulate their emotion (Koivuniemi et al., 2018). A professional development was desirable for maintaining their positive assumption and perspective in the practice of collaborative learning, indeed with the help of stakeholders (Sari, 2021).

This study underscored the specific implication for implementing collaborative learning in Islamic boarding schools. The encountered challenges call out the structured and applicable professional development training. Teachers' willingness to upgrade their teaching skills are desirable while the stakeholders are responsible to support teachers' personal development. Applying varied instructional strategies, such as group project is able to stimulate learners' interesting experiences (Sari, 2021, p. 118). The strategy is carried out for covering learners' diverse learning style and negative emotional state. The collaboration between teacher and parent are heavily required for altering their negative assumption and boosting learners' motivation to learn English regardless of the learning load (p. 119).

CONCLUSION

The study examined the perceptions of Islamic boarding school teachers regarding the challenges and strategies for implementing collaborative learning within the framework of social constructivism in TEFL classrooms. Grounded in Vygotsky's theory, it highlighted the role of collaborative learning in fostering knowledge construction through interaction and

problem-solving. Teachers demonstrated a deep understanding of the theoretical and practical implications, viewing collaborative learning as a means to develop motivation, critical thinking, and language acquisition.

However, implementation was influenced by challenges related to the curriculum, school culture, facilities, cognitive diversity, motivation levels, and emotional states. Time constraints and curriculum demands hindered achieving learning objectives, but strategic planning allowed teachers to align activities with goals. The school regulations, including limited technology use and gender-segregated classrooms, posed constraints; nonetheless, the disciplined environment and close student communities were seen as supportive of collaboration. Teachers adapted to limited resources by using alternative methods but emphasized the need for institutional investment in facilities and technology. Cognitive disparities among students necessitated tailored group compositions, while emotional challenges were mitigated through teacher facilitation and guidance. Despite these barriers, collaborative learning was inherently motivating, with students showing high engagement when rewards and feedback mechanisms were employed. Teachers expressed a strong desire for professional development to enhance their collaborative teaching methods and access diverse instructional strategies.

The study underscores several implications for promoting collaborative learning practice in Islamic boarding schools. The policymakers are required to prioritize upgrading and completing school facilities and educational technologies to support the implementation. The improvement of infrastructure needs to be embodied aligned with school regulations and environments with limited access to internet. The stakeholder and curriculum planners should take flexibility and suitable model and strategy of learning into consideration. Additionally, targeted professional development programs should be provided to equip teachers with diverse collaborative teaching techniques that address cognitive diversity and emotional challenges. Teachers should also be encouraged to design adaptable and inclusive collaborative learning strategies that align with the unique cultural and religious context of Islamic boarding schools.

Despite its contributions, this study also has limitations. The sample size was limited to a small group of teachers from Islamic boarding schools in specific geographic regions, which may not fully represent the diversity of such schools across broader contexts. Furthermore, the study primarily relied on qualitative data, which, while rich in depth, may benefit from being supplemented with quantitative measures to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the sample size, including diverse educational contexts, concerning gender difference as a variable of study, and employing mixed-method approaches to explore the long-term impacts of collaborative learning on student outcomes.

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