

An Analysis of Collaborative Learning Methods for Teaching Descriptive Text Materials

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Abstract

Teaching English descriptive texts in junior high schools requires methods that are engaging, interactive, and supportive of active participation. This study aimed to analyze the implementation of collaborative learning methods Learning Together and Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) in teaching descriptive texts to seventh-grade students at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, with data collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicated that collaborative learning increased student engagement, motivation, and confidence in writing descriptive texts. Students became more communicative during group work and showed improvement in vocabulary use, idea organization, and sentence construction. Peer feedback provided scaffolding, enabling less proficient students to participate actively. Interview results revealed that 7 of 8 students felt more comfortable learning in groups, while classroom observations confirmed higher participation during collaborative tasks. Nevertheless, challenges such as unequal task distribution, passive group members, and limited time persisted, requiring structured facilitation and clear role assignment. In conclusion, collaborative learning, when well-structured and guided by teachers, can enhance descriptive writing skills and create a supportive classroom environment. This study is limited by its small participant group and single-site focus. Future research is recommended with larger samples and diverse contexts to validate these findings.

Keywords: *Collaborative Learning; Descriptive Text; STAD; Learning Together; English Teaching*



1. Introduction

Teaching and learning methods are strongly influenced by classroom approaches. The choice of method plays an essential role in determining the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process, particularly in language education. Selecting an appropriate method is crucial not only for enhancing students' motivation but also for enabling them to achieve the required level of language competence. As Cross et al. (2014) argue, effective teaching methods foster a learning environment that supports engagement and active participation. In recent years, with the advancement of time and technology, educators have increasingly adopted innovative approaches to promote a more creative, interactive, and effective educational process. This shift reflects the dynamic nature of modern education, where teaching strategies must adapt to the evolving needs of students. In language classrooms, where students often come from diverse social and academic backgrounds, adaptive approaches such as collaborative learning have been widely recognized as an effective method to enhance motivation, involvement, and achievement Widiastuti and Hikmah, (2019).

According to Hamsah et al. (2024), the theoretical foundation of collaborative learning lies in Vygotsky's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of interaction in the learning process. Learning occurs more effectively when students collaborate with peers or teachers in a social context. In line with this, Zalukhu (2023) found that students engaged in collaborative tasks, particularly in reading comprehension, became more active and communicative. Through collaboration, students not only gain knowledge but also develop communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Several studies highlight the strengths of collaborative learning. Gillies (2008) noted that collaboration allows students to share ideas, provide feedback, and work together on assignments, thereby improving comprehension, communication, and problem-solving. Sidabalok and Ginting (2021) reported that collaborative writing enhanced organization, vocabulary, and idea development in descriptive texts. Similarly, Pardede (2024) found that writing collaboration fosters linguistic skills and student confidence. These findings indicate that collaborative learning enriches both the academic and social dimensions of the classroom.

However, weaknesses must also be acknowledged. Unequal contributions among group members remain a common issue, where dominant students may overshadow others Widiastuti and Hikmah (2019). This imbalance can reduce the development of critical thinking and limit learning outcomes. Assessing individual performance in group work also poses challenges. Nevertheless, with proper teacher facilitation and structured group roles, these problems can be mitigated Septy et al. (2025).

Based on an interview conducted on December 3, 2024, the English teacher at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih stated that she uses many types of collaborative learning methods in English teaching and learning. She usually asks students to collaborate with each other and exchange understanding through group discussions, cooperative project work, and task preparation. She added that this approach encourages students to collaborate, support each other, and improve their collective knowledge. Through these activities, they learn to divide responsibilities, resolve conflicts, and design strategies together to achieve group goals. Moreover, collaborative assignments also help students to build a sense of responsibility, mutual trust, and strong communication skills. The need for students to improve their communication and critical thinking skills while learning English, especially when it comes to producing descriptive texts, is met with the use of this collaborative learning approach. Teachers realize that producing descriptive texts requires a combination of language skills, such as proper vocabulary selection, good sentence structure, and the ability to convey information clearly and interestingly. By working together, students can provide each other with input, correct mistakes, and enrich their ideas.

In addition, the use of collaborative learning at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih is very relevant not only from an academic perspective but also from a social perspective. As a pesantren-based school, students come from various backgrounds and regions, which often creates social gaps in classroom interactions. Some students may be more dominant or quiet based on their previous educational experiences or social environment. Collaborative learning also helps bridge this gap by encouraging students to interact, support each other, and build mutual respect regardless of their backgrounds. This is in line with findings by (Zalukhu, 2023), who emphasized that collaborative learning not only improved students' academic performance in reading comprehension but also significantly enhanced peer interaction and confidence during classroom activities. This encourages a more harmonious classroom atmosphere in a diverse learning community. Although previous studies have discussed collaborative learning in general, limited research specifically addresses its implementation in teaching descriptive texts at the junior high school level, especially in pesantren-based schools. Most studies have focused on collaborative reading or writing broadly Zalukhu (2023); Sidabalok & Ginting, (2021); Pardede (2024), but little is known about how English teachers apply collaborative methods to improve descriptive text writing in socially diverse classrooms.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the collaborative learning methods used by English teachers at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih, especially when teaching 7th-grade students descriptive texts. This research aims to explore various techniques used by English teachers to improve students' understanding and skills in producing descriptive texts in English. At MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih, English teachers apply a variety of innovative teaching techniques to engage grade 8 students in the learning process of descriptive English texts. The collaborative approach was chosen because it allows students to actively participate in their education, develop shared knowledge, and improve their communication skills (Gillies, 2008). This method deepens students' engagement. Therefore, this method aims to help students interact more successfully in order to learn the workload or overcome learning challenges (Mimhamimdala & Nirwana, 2022). As students interact with each

other, they improve their ability to communicate effectively, an important skill when learning a new language, by focusing on these methods.

In line with the implementation of this approach, this research also seeks to identify its strengths and weaknesses based on students' perspectives in classroom practice. Not everyone who uses this method will be successful and effective; it can also be due to factors such as students, teachers, or conditions that can be the cause. Collaborative writing methods have various benefits, such as improving writing skills, motivating students through a fun learning atmosphere, and encouraging teamwork and sharing ideas. However, this strategy also has disadvantages, such as difficulty assessing individual contributions, challenges in managing large classes, and inequality of participation among group members. This research shows that the collaborative writing method has great potential in improving students' writing skills, especially in writing descriptive texts, although there are still challenges in its implementation.

To explore these strengths and weaknesses, more specifically, the scope of this research focuses on the English language learning process for 7th-grade students at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih, specifically examining the collaborative methods employed by teachers in teaching descriptive text materials. These methods include group discussions, joint projects, and collaboration in preparing assignments. The study is limited to this specific area of language learning and does not extend to other language skills such as speaking, reading, or listening. The primary focus is on how these collaborative methods can help students gain a better understanding of the structure of descriptive texts and improve their motivation and interest in learning. As highlighted by (Johnson et al., 2019), collaborative learning fosters student engagement and enhances academic achievement by promoting interaction and shared knowledge construction. Furthermore, (Slavin, 2014) emphasizes that well-structured cooperative learning methods can significantly improve student motivation and comprehension in language learning. Additionally, research conducted by (Pardede, 2024) indicates that collaboration in writing activities helps students develop better linguistic skills and increases their confidence in expressing ideas. This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the application of these methods in the context of descriptive text teaching, with the hope that the findings will offer valuable insights for teachers, enabling them to develop more effective and engaging teaching practices. Through this study, it is expected that a deeper understanding of the impact of collaborative methods on students' comprehension of descriptive texts can be obtained. Additionally, this research aspires to contribute to the development of more innovative teaching techniques that can enhance the quality of English learning, particularly in writing descriptive texts. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the collaborative learning methods used by English teachers at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih in teaching descriptive texts to 7th-grade students. It seeks to identify the techniques applied, examine their strengths and weaknesses, and explore their impact on students' understanding and motivation. The findings are expected to provide insights into how collaborative learning can be effectively adapted to support both academic achievement and social interaction in language classrooms.

The originality of this research lies in its focus on the implementation of collaborative learning models for teaching descriptive texts in a pesantren-based junior high school, a context that has received little attention in previous studies. Unlike earlier works that mainly emphasize general outcomes of collaboration in EFL classrooms, this study contributes by showing how Learning Together and STAD are practiced in this unique setting, along with the pedagogical benefits and challenges that emerge.

2. Method

This research uses qualitative methods. According to (Rusandi and Muhammad Rusli, 2021), descriptive research interprets and describes data related to the current situation, attitudes, and views regarding a phenomenon. The subjects in this research are an English teacher and 7th grade student. This research is conducted at MTs Darul Ulum in the 2024/2025 academic year. This research analyzes the collaborative learning model and the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative learning in learning descriptive text material in class 7 at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih.

a. Sampling procedure and participant profile

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, as they were considered most relevant to the objectives of this study. The English teacher involved in this research has more than five years of teaching experience and is responsible for teaching English at the 7th-grade level. The student participants consisted of approximately 32 students (ages 12–13) from one intact 7th-grade class. These students were chosen because descriptive text is part of the curriculum at their grade level, and their participation provided meaningful insights into the implementation of collaborative learning in writing activities.

b. Ethical considerations

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the school principal and the English teacher to conduct the research. Students were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their participation would not affect their academic evaluation. Participation was voluntary, and students' responses during interviews were kept confidential. To protect their privacy, pseudonyms are used in presenting the data.

c. Data Collection Technique

Data collection techniques are carried out using three techniques, namely: documentation, observation, and interviews. The instruments used are modules, observation sheets, and interview sheets. The following are research instruments on data collection techniques :

- 1) Observation

Observations are taken from observing the classroom situation during the learning process. This observation will last for 4 x 40 minutes in 2 meetings. In this observation, the data obtained was the collaborative learning model used, the frequency of its application, and the suitability stated in the learning module that occurred during the learning process. Apart from that, this observation also assesses student interaction and participation in terms of role distribution in groups, as well as challenges that arise during learning and student involvement in the distribution of tasks during learning.

2) Documentation

The documentation here is in the form of a module for the continuity of learning, in addition, the module will also be used as a tool to compile observation sheets that will be used to observe learning activities about the collaborative learning model that occurs during learning, then worksheets that will be used as aids or student worksheets to support learning or assessment.

3) Interview

Interviews are conducted by asking several questions regarding students' feelings and difficulties when learning using various collaborative learning models. Through interviews, the data obtained includes increased understanding of the material, increased motivation, and increased teamwork skills. Additionally, there are gaps in participation among group members, difficulties in coordinating tasks, and personal preferences for individual learning, as well as insight into students' comfort levels, their ability to work collaboratively, and their suggestions for improving the effectiveness of group learning. The data obtained from this interview will be analyzed together with observation and documentation to comprehensively examine the application of the collaborative learning model in teaching descriptive texts.

d. Research Instrument

1) Observation Sheets

The observation sheet was used to collect data on the application of collaborative learning methods in learning descriptive text material in grade 7 students at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih. Observation is focused on teacher and student activities, interaction patterns, and student involvement in learning. The aspects observed in the observation are the process of group formation, interaction in the group, the role of teachers in learning, evaluation, and learning outcomes, learning strategies applied, student participation, and any challenges faced in the implementation of collaborative learning.

The observation process will be carried out during learning activities by making notes based on predetermined indicators. These indicators include the clarity of the teacher's explanation, the involvement of students in the discussion, and the effectiveness of the collaborative learning process.

2) Document Observation Sheet

The document observation sheet serves as a tool to analyze various teaching materials and learning resources used in the implementation of collaborative learning methods. Documents such as modules and student worksheets are examined to determine how collaborative learning is structured and evaluated.

The analysis focuses on the core activities listed in the teaching module, aiming to identify whether collaborative elements are embedded through written instructions or activity schemes. This helps assess whether the instructional documents are aligned with collaborative learning principles and whether they effectively support student learning. The results of this document analysis will provide supporting evidence to validate the findings from observations and interviews.

3) Interview Guidelines

Interview guidelines are designed to collect information about the difficulties experienced by students when working in groups or individually. Interviews will be conducted with 7th-grade students of MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih to gain their perspectives about the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative learning.

Students will be asked about their learning experiences, the difficulties faced, and their involvement in group activities. The aspects discussed or questions that will be conveyed to students include feelings when learning in groups, comfort, difficulties, and opinions about what they think is good to do. The researcher will use structured questions but will also provide flexibility to explore topics that arise based on respondents' answers.

e. Data Analysis Technique

According to (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the interactive approach consists of three main steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. These three steps are the basis for data analysis in this research. This method guarantees an organized and methodical procedure for evaluating qualitative data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. By using this model, researchers can find relevant findings and gain better knowledge about how collaborative learning techniques are used when teaching descriptive texts.

In the first stage, the data collected is carefully selected, simplified, and categorized to focus on the main aspects of the research. The data analyzed includes the collaborative learning model used in class, the extent to which the model fits the planned learning module, and the challenges faced during its implementation. Irrelevant information was removed to maintain data clarity. This reduction process helps sift through large amounts of qualitative data and ensures that only important aspects related to the research objectives are analyzed.

After reducing the data, the next stage is to present it in a structured format to facilitate interpretation. The data is presented in various forms, including descriptive narratives, tables, and charts, which describe the type of collaborative learning model implemented, the frequency of its use, and its impact on the student learning experience. This process includes reviewing observation sheets, interview transcripts, and documentation, identifying key passages relevant to the research question, and categorizing them accordingly. By presenting data systematically, researchers can observe patterns and relationships between various elements of collaborative learning. This stage helps in visualizing how various collaborative learning methods are implemented and their impact on student engagement and understanding.

The final stage of data analysis is drawing conclusions based on the data that has been processed. To ensure the accuracy of the findings, triangulation was applied by crosschecking data from observations, interviews, and documentation. For example, classroom observations are compared with student responses to verify whether the implementation of collaborative learning is in accordance with what was planned in the learning module. This step ensures that conclusions are drawn not from a single data source but rather from a comprehensive analysis of multiple perspectives. The final results are then presented in various formats, such as tables, charts, and narrative descriptions, for analysis of the application of collaborative learning methods in teaching descriptive texts, as seen in Figure 1.

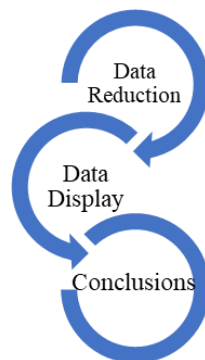


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman's Interactive model of Data Analysis (1994)

3. Findings and Discussion

Table 1. Classroom Observations Result

Aspect of Collaborative Learning	
Group Formation	Students were divided into small groups of 4–5 members. In general, the division was balanced, although in some groups a few students tended to dominate.
Student participation	Most students actively participated in group activities, but some students were still passive. The teacher often provided motivation to engage them
Interaction and discussion	Group discussions ran effectively, with students sharing ideas and negotiating answers, although sometimes only a few students dominated the discussion.
The teacher's role	The teacher acted as a facilitator, guiding the process, monitoring student activity, and intervening when groups were not on task
Task completion	Almost all groups managed to complete their assignments on time, although the quality of outcomes varied across groups.

The findings indicate that applying collaborative learning methods in teaching descriptive texts for the 7th grade of MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih has contributed meaningfully to the learning process, particularly in enhancing student participation and supporting their comprehension of the material. However, the application of these methods also revealed several weaknesses that need to be considered in the context of classroom implementation.

The data in this research were collected through classroom observations, interviews with students, and document analysis of the teaching module used by the English teacher. These diverse data collection techniques aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of how the teacher practiced the methods, how students responded to them, and what strengths and weaknesses emerged during the learning process. The findings are presented in two main areas: an analysis of the

collaborative learning methods used by teachers in teaching descriptive texts, and the strengths and weaknesses identified throughout the process of implementing collaborative learning methods.

The first is an analysis of the collaborative learning methods used by the teacher in teaching descriptive text based on two days of observations conducted in Grade 7 at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih, along with an analysis of the teaching modules used by the English teacher, it was found that two models of collaborative learning were applied: Learning Together and Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD). These two models were used interchangeably and complementarily during the descriptive text lesson themed School Festival.

In the first meeting, the teacher formed heterogeneous groups, meaning that the students were grouped based on varying levels of ability. This aligns with the concept of the Learning Together model, where diversity within the group becomes a strength as students complement each other. This is also stated in the teacher's teaching module used in the class. Students are grouped based on different skill levels. According to the observations on June 13, 2025, this method of group formation fostered a naturally collaborative learning process. Although the syntax of learning together was not verbally assigned, students distributed tasks among themselves spontaneously and supported each other throughout the activity.

At the beginning of the lesson, students were asked to listen to an audio recording from the WAJAR worksheet played through a speaker. Most students paid close attention and took notes. After the listening activity, they discussed the answers to the questions on page 42 of the worksheet. The discussion process was fairly active; most students immediately engaged with their groupmates, and when encountering confusion, they asked their peers or the teacher directly. These discussions were effective, as evidenced by the mutual interaction. For example, one student helped a group understand unfamiliar vocabulary, while another checked the accuracy by referring to the worksheet and confirming with the teacher. This kind of interaction reflects a healthy collaborative environment, where students not only work side by side but genuinely cooperate to build understanding together.

Observation notes also showed that most students were active in discussions and eager to ask questions, explain ideas, and help peers understand the material. While some groups encountered issues such as uneven task distribution or minor disagreements, they generally managed to complete tasks through respectful discussion and cooperation. This indicates that student interaction occurred naturally; they did not simply sit together but truly collaborated and complemented one another. Meanwhile, the teacher acted as a facilitator, moving between groups to guide, motivate, and ensure discussions ran effectively.

In the second meeting, the teacher implemented the Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) model as a further approach to increasing responsibility in each group activity. The focus of this lesson was descriptive writing skills, where students were asked to work collaboratively in groups while still demonstrating individual learning outcomes. Students were divided into heterogeneous groups of 4-5 members, based on the STAD approach. Each student was tasked with writing a specific section of a descriptive paragraph based on the picture on page 46 of the WAJAR textbook. After completing their sections, they collaboratively combined them into a complete paragraph.

Based on the results of the second observation on June 14, 2025, it was clear that students were actively collaborating, providing feedback, and discussing the text. Students who understood the material better helped those who were having difficulty, especially with vocabulary. After the text was completed, each group compiled its writing into a coherent paragraph and provided feedback to others. This activity helped students develop critical thinking skills and improve their writing. After completing the group work, the teacher gave individual quizzes related to vocabulary, text structure, and the content of the material discussed. This activity aimed to measure students' individual understanding, as well as assess the group as a whole. This is in line with STAD, where individual score increases affect the group's final score. Seven out of eight students appeared motivated in the activity. Based on observation notes, students showed increased self-confidence, active involvement, and a sense of comfort.

The second is the strengths and weaknesses of the collaborative learning method used by the teacher. Based on the results of observations conducted on June 13-14, 2025, and interviews with students, the implementation of collaborative learning by teachers using the learning together and students' team achievement division (STAD) models has strengths and weaknesses that need to be considered. One of the main strengths of implementing collaborative learning is the increase in active participation and interaction between students. During the learning process, students appeared to be engaged in group discussions, asking questions, and providing explanations to their peers. This created a complementary learning atmosphere, as reflected in the discussion activities in the first meeting, which used the learning together model, and the collaborative writing activities and individual quizzes in the second meeting, which used the student teams achievement (STAD) model.

Based on interviews conducted on June 16, 2025, 7 out of 8 students stated that studying in groups made them feel more comfortable and easier to understand the material. For example, Student 1 revealed that helping each other with friends was very helpful in understanding the material. Student 2 added that the discussion atmosphere made him happy and motivated because he could immediately ask questions when confused, without having to wait for the teacher's explanation. In addition, students 3 and 4 said they could exchange opinions and receive explanations from friends in a simpler and easier to understand way.

Another strength is the natural division of roles within the group. Although students don't verbally assign roles, they demonstrate initiative in sharing tasks and setting the pace of group work. This demonstrates a growing sense of

responsibility, independence, and self-management skills in the learning process. In the STAD model, an additional strength is seen in the balance between group collaboration and individual responsibility, where the group's success is determined by the learning outcomes of each member. Through individual quizzes, students become more motivated to understand the material in depth.

Furthermore, the use of games like "Guess the place" is also an element that strengthens collaborative learning. This game helps students practice their ability to describe a place verbally in a fun and meaningful setting. Although collaborative learning has many advantages, its implementation in the classroom faces several challenges. One major weakness identified is the unequal participation within groups. Based on observations and student statements, there is a tendency for some students to be more dominant in completing assignments, while others tend to be passive or simply follow their peers' directions without actively contributing. Student 2 reported that the division of tasks is uneven, and Student 4 added that often only one or two students are actively working, while the rest of the group remains silent.

Other weaknesses that emerged included differences in understanding levels among students, a lack of focus due to a less than conducive classroom atmosphere, and difficulty in unifying group opinions. Students 5 and 6 also noted that teamwork wasn't always optimal, and communication between members sometimes wasn't smooth.

These conditions indicate that collaborative learning requires more structured, specific management, particularly in terms of task allocation, teacher supervision, and providing space for student reflection. Teachers need to provide clearer direction and ensure that each group member has equal responsibility.

The implementation of collaborative learning in teaching descriptive text to seventh-grade students at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasih through the Learning Together and Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) models has demonstrated meaningful contributions to the dynamics of classroom learning. Based on observation data, interviews with students and teachers, and the analysis of the learning module, several key themes emerged that align with theoretical foundations and previous studies.

The Learning Together model, applied in the first meeting, embodies Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory (L.S Vygotsky & Bakhtin, 1978), where students build knowledge through peer interaction and collaborative support. This was observed clearly when students were seen actively sharing ideas and helping each other formulate descriptive sentences. During group discussions, students with higher language proficiency assisted their peers in choosing appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures. This reciprocal interaction allowed for scaffolding to occur, where the stronger students supported the learning of those with more limited vocabulary or understanding.

Meanwhile, the STAD model used in the second meeting reflects concepts of positive interdependence and individual accountability. Each student was assigned a role in their group, such as writer, idea contributor, or presenter, encouraging them to be responsible for their individual contributions while still relying on the team. This balance was evident during group presentations, where each member could explain different parts of their group's descriptive text product. The teacher's strategy in assigning roles also helped reduce dependency on dominant members and fostered a sense of shared responsibility.

Student interviews reinforced these observations. Seven out of eight students reported that working collaboratively increased their motivation and made it easier to understand the material. They described feeling more supported and less afraid of making mistakes, as their peers helped clarify instructions and correct errors. This supports (Gillies, 2008) perspective that collaborative learning enhances participation and critical thinking. (Mahmud and Afkarina Ali, 2023) also emphasizes the improvement of vocabulary and confidence through collaboration in writing. These findings are echoed in the studies of (Azurra et al., 2023) and (Widiastuti and Hikmah, 2019), who noted that students felt more comfortable and engaged during collaborative writing activities.

However, the implementation was not without challenges. The teacher admitted that one of the planned syntax stages in the teaching module, namely, the speaking practice describing places at a school festival, had to be skipped. This was due to the limited time and the students' lack of vocabulary mastery, which made it difficult to proceed with speaking tasks. As a result, the session moved directly from group writing to presentation. This kind of adaptation, although necessary, highlights the complexities of classroom realities and the need for flexibility in instructional planning. It aligns with (Johnson et al., 2019) assertion that effective collaborative learning depends on the teacher's ability to adjust instruction based on student readiness.

Observations and teacher interviews also highlighted the issue of uneven participation. Some students were more dominant, while others were passive. The teacher responded by assigning specific responsibilities to passive members, such as writing summaries or managing group materials. These strategies helped increase their engagement, though not entirely eliminating the imbalance. (Mimhamimdala and Nirwana, 2022) also acknowledged that without structured roles, dominant students may overpower quieter ones. The findings from this study reinforce the importance of role clarity and teacher intervention in maintaining balanced group dynamics.

The teacher played a pivotal role as a facilitator throughout the process. She continuously monitored group activities, gave verbal support, clarified confusion, and ensured the groups remained focused. These facilitation efforts were essential in guiding the students to complete the collaborative tasks successfully. (Slavin, 2014) emphasizes that such active facilitation is a critical component of successful collaborative learning, especially in mixed-ability classrooms.

In contrast to previous studies (Rahmi, 2021) that focused largely on outcomes such as academic performance or writing quality, this research emphasizes the real-time classroom dynamics and the challenges teachers face in executing

collaborative learning. This includes the gap between lesson plans and actual implementation, the need for spontaneous decisions, and the varying levels of student participation.

By exploring these detailed classroom interactions and teacher responses, this study provides a more comprehensive view of how collaborative learning operates in practice. The insights gained help fill the gap in existing literature by shedding light on the nuanced

realities of applying Learning Together and STAD models in junior high school descriptive text instruction. It also underscores the importance of adaptability, teacher guidance, and continuous reflection in ensuring the effectiveness of collaborative learning in varied classroom contexts.

Table 2. Themes from the Student interview

Themes from Interview	Summary of Students' Responses
Positive Experiences	Students expressed that collaborative learning was fun, made learning easier to understand, and increased their confidence in using English.
Enjoyment with Challenges	Several students admitted they enjoyed the group work but also faced challenges such as dominant peers and unequal participation within groups.
Highlighted Challenges	Some students stated that certain group members tended to remain passive, leaving the workload to others.

4. Conclusion

This research examined the implementation of collaborative learning methods specifically Learning Together and Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) in teaching descriptive texts to seventh-grade students at MTs Darul Ulum Tlasi. The combination of classroom observations, student interviews, and document analysis provided a comprehensive picture of how these models function in a real classroom setting. The results indicated that collaborative learning positively affected students' engagement, confidence, and comprehension of descriptive text structure. Students were generally more motivated to participate in discussions, share ideas, and help peers, which led to improvements in vocabulary use, sentence construction, and overall writing quality.

The Learning Together model encouraged students to work as a team, share tasks, and complement one another's abilities, resulting in an atmosphere of mutual support. Meanwhile, the STAD model added a level of accountability by linking individual performance to group success, motivating students to contribute actively. These findings confirm that collaborative learning can successfully combine social interaction with academic objectives, aligning with Vygotsky's concept of learning through social context.

Nevertheless, the study also revealed several challenges. Unequal participation, dominant students overshadowing quieter peers, and limited time for reflection occasionally hindered optimal group work. Teachers must therefore plan activities carefully, assign clear roles, and actively monitor group dynamics to ensure fair task distribution. Additional scaffolding is needed for students with lower proficiency to prevent them from becoming passive participants.

The implications of this study suggest that teachers in similar contexts should integrate collaborative learning more intentionally into their lesson planning. Designing well-structured tasks, incorporating interactive elements such as games, and balancing collaboration with individual accountability are key strategies to maximize its effectiveness. Teacher facilitation plays a crucial role in guiding discussions, clarifying instructions, and motivating students.

This research is limited by its small participant group and focus on a single Islamic boarding school, which restricts generalizability. Future studies could involve multiple schools, larger sample sizes, and longitudinal designs to observe how collaborative learning impacts students' language development over time. Further exploration of digital tools and blended learning approaches could also provide insights into enhancing collaborative activities, especially in EFL settings. Overall, the research reinforces the view that collaborative learning, when carefully planned and facilitated, is an effective method for improving students' descriptive writing skills and fostering a supportive, inclusive classroom environment.

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