

ORAL PARTICIPATION IN IN-CLASS GROUP -WORK: A STUDY OF NON-ENGLISH MAJORED STUDENTS AT HANOI UNIVERSITY OF INDUSTRY

SỰ THAM GIA PHÁT BIỂU TRONG THẢO LUẬN NHÓM TRÊN LỚP:
NGHIÊN CỨU ĐỐI VỚI SINH VIÊN KHÔNG CHUYÊN TIẾNG ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC CÔNG NGHIỆP HÀ NỘI

Do Thi Huyen¹, Nguyen Thi Thanh Bang¹

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.57001/huiv5804.2025.430>

ABSTRACT

Group-work is regarded as an effective technique for promoting interaction in foreign language learning. However, its actual effectiveness requires verification. This paper investigates the current state of oral participation in group-work activities among the first-year non-English major students at Hanoi University of Industry. The objectives of the paper include examining students' perceptions, assessing their level and quality of oral participation, identifying influencing factors, and analyzing teachers' support strategies. Data were collected through three instruments: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. The results reveal that students support group-work because they improved their language skills and self-confidence through these activities. Additionally, the study identified three main groups of factors influencing students' participation, including student-related factors, pedagogical factors, and culture-related factors.

Keywords: *Students' perceptions, group-work, oral participation, factors, support strategies.*

TÓM TẮT

Hoạt động nhóm được xem là kỹ thuật hiệu quả nhằm thúc đẩy tương tác trong học ngoại ngữ. Tuy nhiên tính hiệu quả thực tế cần được kiểm chứng. Nghiên cứu này khảo sát thực trạng tham gia nói trong hoạt động nhóm của sinh viên không chuyên năm thứ nhất tại Trường Đại học Công nghiệp Hà Nội. Mục tiêu nghiên cứu bao gồm: tìm hiểu nhận thức của sinh viên, đánh giá mức độ và chất lượng tham gia, xác định các yếu tố ảnh hưởng và phân tích những chiến lược hỗ trợ từ giảng viên. Dữ liệu nghiên cứu được thu thập thông qua ba công cụ: phiếu khảo sát, phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc và quan sát lớp học. Kết quả chỉ ra rằng, sinh viên ủng hộ hoạt động nhóm vì thông qua hoạt động này, họ đã cải thiện kỹ năng ngôn ngữ và sự tự tin. Đồng thời, kết quả nghiên cứu cũng xác định ba nhóm yếu tố chính chi phối sự tham gia của người học gồm: yếu tố người học, yếu tố sư phạm và yếu tố văn hóa.

Từ khóa: *Nhận thức của sinh viên, hoạt động nhóm, sự tham gia phát biểu, yếu tố ảnh hưởng, chiến lược hỗ trợ.*

¹Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam

*Email: huyendtn@hauivn

Received: 01/10/2025

Revised: 20/12/2025

Accepted: 30/12/2025

1. INTRODUCTION

The pedagogical value of group work remains contested: collaborative learning is reported to “sometimes work while at other times fails,” [1, p.214] and instructors are cautioned that group work is “not a

panacea for learning” [2, p.4]. While several studies have examined how group-work theory works in practice, empirical investigations into the dynamics of student participation and its influencing factors remain comparatively limited [3, 4]. Consequently, the literature

still lacks sufficiently comprehensive, process-oriented evaluations of oral participation in group-work settings.

The pedagogical efficacy of group work in English Language Teaching (ELT) is a subject of ongoing debate. While group-based tasks are designed to foster cooperation and learner-generated language, scholars warn that collaborative learning is not a universal remedy and its success depends heavily on proper implementation. Although existing research has established various theoretical frameworks for collaborative learning, there remains a significant shortage of empirical, process-oriented evaluations regarding how students actually engage orally within these groups.

In Vietnam's ELT context, the aforementioned matter has not been thoroughly investigated. The need for such research is particularly urgent at Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI). This study aims to examine the oral participation in in-class group work among first-year non-English majored students at HaUI, thereby offering pedagogical implications for similar educational settings. Specifically, it addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: How do first-year non-English majored students at HaUI perceive in-class group work?

RQ2: What characterizes the frequency and quality of students' oral participation in these activities?

RQ3: What factors influence the students' oral participation in in-class group work?

RQ4: What monitoring strategies are employed by teachers to enhance students' oral participation?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical framework of group work

Group work is defined as learners working together in small groups on a common task, a process designed to promote cooperation and learner-generated language [5, 6]. According to [7], collaborative learning is categorized into formal learning groups, informal learning groups, and study teams. This study focuses specifically on oral participation within informal in-class groups [7]. While widely adopted, the pedagogical value of group work remains contested. Kirschner et al. [1] and Wilson et al. [2] caution that collaborative learning is "not a panacea" [2, p.4] noting that it may fail without proper implementation.

2.2. Factors Influencing Oral Participation

A number of studies identify three primary dimensions affecting student participation.

Student-related factors are paramount, particularly the learner's willingness to interact and their ability to resolve disagreements [8]. *Pedagogical factors* refer to the instructional context, specifically the teacher's monitoring role and the perceived difficulty of the task [8, 9]. Finally, *cultural factors* significantly impact participation behaviors; concepts such as "face" [10, p.9], the value of silence [11], and attitudes toward cooperation are critical determinants in educational settings [12]. To manage these factors, it is important for teachers to employ monitoring strategies, such as linguistic support and timely intervention.

2.3. Research Gap

Despite the theoretical endorsement of group work, [3] and [4] note that empirical investigations into the specific dynamics of student participation remain comparatively limited. The current literature lacks comprehensive, process-oriented evaluations of oral participation, particularly within the Vietnamese ELT context where these issues have not been thoroughly investigated. This study addresses this gap by examining the specific perceptions and participation factors among non-English majors at Hanoi University of Industry.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data collection methods

The data were collected by three instruments, which established a triangulation to enhance data reliability and validity through multiple sources.

Questionnaires

To ensure construct validity, the questionnaire was developed based on the theoretical frameworks of collaborative learning and participation dynamics outlined by [7, 8]. The instrument was designed to gather quantitative data on student perceptions and participation factors. It comprised four sections: (1) students' perceptions of group work (8 items); (2) frequency and quality of oral participation in group activities (9 items); (3) influential factors (student, pedagogical, and cultural) (23 items); and (4) teacher's monitoring strategies (12 items).

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to triangulate and enrich the questionnaire data. There were two interview protocols for the students. The first protocol with three questions covered similar thematic areas to the questionnaire, but was expected to elicit more details. The second protocol, consisting of two questions, was for

the students to reflect on the specific group discussions observed during the study. This section focused on assessing their oral participation level and quality in those activities, and influential factors on their participation.

Observations

In the study, an observation scheme with two main parts was applied for its convenience in data coding and analysis. It was designed to investigate students' participation level in the observed group discussions, based on the times of turns taken and the total amount of talking time of each group member, and discover teachers' strategies to increase students' participation during those activities.

Data collection procedures

The data collection process was carried out during the period of six weeks. A pilot questionnaire was initially conducted with ten first-year students at HaUI - five from Mechanical Engineering and five from Electrical and Electronic Engineering - to verify its accuracy, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Following necessary revisions, the finalized questionnaire was distributed to 100 first-year students from the same majors at HaUI.

Subsequently, to elicit deeper qualitative insights, five randomly selected students (one from each class) participated in 15-20-minute semi-structured interviews. These sessions were conducted in Vietnamese using the first protocol and took place in an informal setting to minimize their anxiety.

Next, observations were conducted to examine data reliability. The researchers observed one specific group discussion per class following the observation scheme. Immediately after each lesson, a semi-structured interview of 5-10 minutes (using the second student-targeted schedule) was conducted with a member of the observed group in Vietnamese for data triangulation.

3.2. Data analysis and procedures

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS to calculate descriptive statistics, specifically Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD), to determine the central tendency and the dispersion of student responses. Interview transcripts were translated into English and subjected to color-coded content analysis. Observational data were coded based on the frequency of turn-taking and duration of talk time. The analysis focused on four central themes: (1) *students' perceptions*; (2) *the frequency and quality of oral participation*; (3) *influencing factors*; and (4) *teachers'*

monitoring strategies [13]. This approach facilitated a comprehensive triangulation of data sources.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Students' perceptions towards group-work

Data from the questionnaires

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics regarding students' attitudes toward group-work. The results indicate a positive perception of group-work among participants. Specifically, the majority of students concurred that group-work significantly enhances communicative competence and interactive skills (Item 1: M = 4.1; SD = 0.82; 84% Agreed) and creates a conducive learning atmosphere (Item 2: M = 4.06; SD = 0.85; 81% Agreed).

Table 1. Students' perceptions towards group-work

No	Items	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)*	% Agree
1	Increase communicative competence and interactive skills	4.10	0.82	84
2	Generate relaxing, friendly atmosphere	4.06	0.85	81
3	Create chances to use English more	3.39	0.96	52
4	Promote learner autonomy	3.20	1.02	43
5	Result in noisy and chaotic classroom	3.10	1.15	38
6	Lead to overuse of mother tongue	3.66	0.94	64
7	Make students expose to imperfect language from each other	3.49	0.98	56
8	Cause unbalanced participation among students in a group	3.57	0.95	61

In contrast, perceptions regarding the drawbacks were more varied. While students acknowledged the benefits, they also expressed concerns about the "overuse of mother tongue" (Item 6: M = 3.66, SD = 0.94, 64% Agreed) and "unbalanced participation" (Item 8: M = 3.57, SD = 0.95, 61% Agreed). The standard deviations in these items suggest a lack of consensus, implying that while some groups functioned well, others struggled with discipline and equity.

Meanwhile, the responses to item 3 (M = 3.39; SD = 0.96; 52% Agreed); and item 4 (M = 3.2, SD = 1.02, 43% Agreed) showed a tendency towards the middle, which demonstrated the participants' wider range of views. It suggests that group-work was perceived to provide chances for English use and boost learner

autonomy; these positive aspects of group-work were not experienced equally by all students.

Concerning the disadvantages of groupwork, the last four items indicated various opinions on the disadvantages. The last four statements in Table 1 all received mean scores between 3.1 and 3.7, among which overuse of mother tongue had the greatest tendency to agree ($M = 3.66$; $SD = 0.94$; 64% Agreed). Similarly, unbalanced participation ($M = 3.57$; $SD = 0.95$, 61% Agreed) and exposure to imperfect language ($M = 3.49$; $SD = 0.98$; 56% Agreed) also received moderate levels of agreement, along with large standard deviations, which implies a variety of individual experiences.

Data from the student interviews

It is noteworthy that all the interviewees pointed out various benefits they could gain through group activities. The first mentioned by three out of five were improving their language skills and boosting students' confidence through interacting with each other. Besides, two referred to the opportunity to widen their knowledge about certain topics.

All the interviewees also reflected on group-work's disadvantages. First, four of them agreed on students' overuse of their native language. Moreover, three acknowledged a noisy and chaotic atmosphere as a problem of group-work. Another disadvantage was the imbalance of participation among group members as assumed by two participants.

In general, the interview findings confirmed the questionnaire results, indicating both consistent benefits and shared concerns regarding group-work. Similar to the questionnaire data, all interviewees acknowledged that group-work enhanced language skills and confidence through peer interaction. This supports the high levels of agreement on communicative and interactive benefits reported in the questionnaires. In addition, some interviewees emphasized opportunities to broaden subject knowledge, which aligns with positive questionnaire responses related to learner autonomy and language use. In terms of disadvantages, interviews reinforced the quantitative findings on the overuse of the mother tongue and unbalanced participation. Furthermore, interviews provided additional qualitative insights, such as noisy and chaotic classroom environments, which help explain the varied perceptions and lack of consensus reflected in the questionnaire data.

4.2. Students' participation in in-class group-work

Data from the questionnaires

Data from the questionnaire show descriptive statistics on students' participation behaviors during in-class group work.

Item 6 received the highest mean score and highest frequency percentage ($M = 2.43$; $SD = 1.05$; 22% Agreed). This shows that a large proportion of students participate actively by sharing many ideas. However, not all their ideas are relevant and constructive. Item 5 records the second-highest mean score ($M = 2.35$; $SD = 1.01$) and a high-frequency rate of 19%, indicating meaningful participation among students.

The means of the first four statements concerning participation patterns illustrated that marginal interaction (Item 3: $M = 2.29$; $SD = 0.98$; 18% Agreed) and conditional participation (Item 2: $M = 2.26$; $SD = 0.95$; 15% Agreed) were the most popular participation patterns among the students in group-work while silent observation was the least common (Item 4: $M = 1.81$; $SD = 0.85$; 6% Agreed). These findings reveal that many students tend to be cautious or participate passively instead of active involvement. Of all the items, item 4 ($M = 1.81$; $SD = 0.85$; 6% Agreed) and item 8 ($M = 1.91$; $SD = 0.88$; 8% Agreed) get the lowest mean scores and high-frequency percentages. This shows that only a minority of students are passive when participating in group work.

Regarding the quality of ideas contributed (the last four statements in Table 2), sharing many ideas, even irrelevant and/or unconstructive ones was the most common (the highest mean = 2.43), which showed that the participants did not seem to be selective in sharing ideas. Besides, saying only some words or phrases was least regularly chosen (the lowest mean = 1.91). This implies that students tried their best to contribute their ideas to group activities.

Nonetheless, noticeably, the means of all the eight statements were less than 2.5, which showed the students' tendency to participate differently rather than follow a fixed pattern at different times. In general, the results show moderate levels of participation across most categories, with mean scores ranging from 1.81 to 2.43. This implies that students take part in group work in varied ways rather than demonstrating consistently high or low participation.

The standard deviation values (from 0.85 to 1.05) point out moderate variability in students' behaviour such as differences in confidence, and motivation.

Table 2. Students' participation in in-class group-work

No	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation (SD)*	High Frequency (%)
1	Active participation (Total integration)	2.14	0.92	12
2	Limited/Confused (Conditional participation)	2.26	0.95	15
3	Listening/Notes only (Marginal interaction)	2.29	0.98	18
4	Silent observation	1.81	0.85	6
5	Contributing constructive ideas	2.35	1.01	19
6	Sharing many ideas (even irrelevant)	2.43	1.05	22
7	Sharing few ideas (carefully brainstormed)	2.26	0.94	16
8	Saying short words to make others think you are concentrating on the group task	1.91	0.88	8

Note: "High Frequency refers to the combined percentage of students selecting 'Usually' and 'Always'."

Referring to different members' participation in one group (Figure 1), 26% of the respondents thought the imbalance always occurred. It seemed that those bore negative experiences concerning peers' participation in group-work. Strikingly, while 41% marked "Sometimes", 32% agreed on its high frequency.

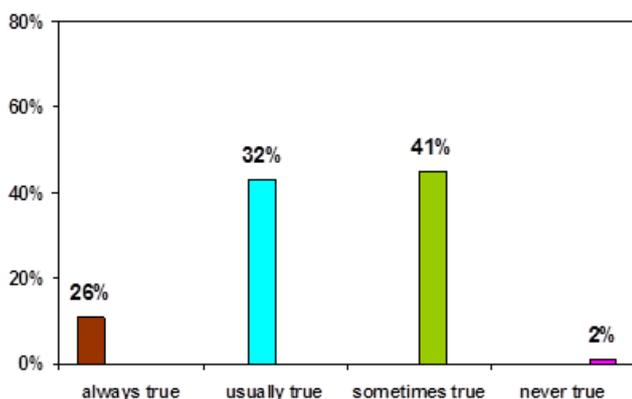


Figure 1. Participation imbalance in in-class group-work of the model accuracy for the Kriging models

Those data showed that the lack and imbalance of participation visibly occurred in in-class group-work. The quality of ideas shared in group-work also needed to be questioned since many students tended to be not selective in deciding on what to say.

Data from the student interviews

Three out of five interviewees admitted they tended to contribute little in group-work. Two of those first used the word "average" to talk about their participation level, but confessed to lacking participation when asked to elaborate more. By contrast, the other two assumed that they had active participation. However, one recalled his little involvement in the first semester. When it came to the observed lessons, most of them confessed to their little participation. Coincidentally, one used the word "average" again when first talking about his participation level. Furthermore, strikingly, all of them claimed that the dominance of some members visibly happened in their classes. This problematic situation was considerably common, especially when the students just got acquaintance with this ELT method. As regards the quality of ideas contributed, all of them said that at times they spoke whatever they thought of. Two of them even confessed to their low-quality ideas in group activities. On the whole, the student interview findings supported to verify the similar problems as revealed by the questionnaires.

Data from the observations

In terms of the number of turns (Figure 2), a serious lack of participation was apparently displayed. Half of the students took no more than three turns, at least twice fewer than those of the person participating most actively in each group. Furthermore, a great participation imbalance could be seen in every group, most obviously in group five where member one had 13 turns, more than the others' total turns. Notably, in the other groups, two members appeared to dominate the discussions for taking over half of the group's total turns.

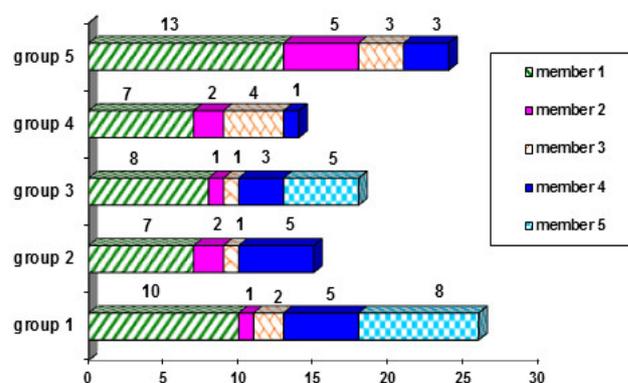


Figure 2. Number of turns taken by different group members

With regard to the total amount of talking time (Figure 3), the same situation was reflected. Nearly one

third took up less than five percent of the total talking time; meanwhile, some were too domineering. Most strikingly, over two thirds of group five's total talking time belonged to member one. In the other groups, the imbalance was still clear with one member's talking time taking up over 40%. Unsurprisingly, those having more turns talked more in each turn. Moreover, some had the same number of turns but differed in the amount of talking time.

In short, the observations disclosed the similar problems in participation level identified by the questionnaires and student interviews.

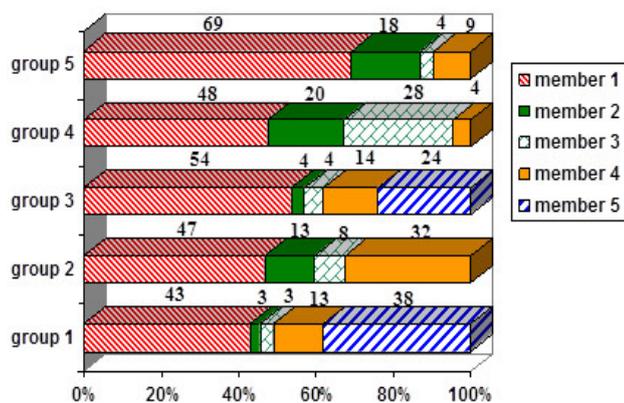


Figure 3. Amount of talking time of different group members

The triangulation of questionnaires, interviews, and observations reveals consistent patterns of participation imbalance and contribution quality in group work. All sources confirm that participation is frequently unequal. The survey finding that 26% of students felt imbalance "always occurred" was confirmed by observations where single members dominated over two-thirds of the talking time. This pattern was further supported by student interviews. Moreover, all data sources consistently show that students often shared ideas without selecting them first. The survey identified this as a common behavior, matching interview admissions of speaking whatever came to mind. Finally, the observations and interviews clearly back up the statistics regarding dominance and passive participation.

4.3. Factors affecting students' participation in in-class group-work

Data from the questionnaires

First, the top striking student-related factors included lacking vocabulary and grammar, lacking previous group-work experience, lacking background knowledge, having a positive view of group-work, and lacking confidence ($M > 2.5$) (Table 3). Among those, lacking

vocabulary and grammar was the most prominent ($M = 2.9, SD = 1.12$) and the highest agreement rate (38%). It means that insufficient language proficiency is the greatest barrier hindering students in actively participating in group activities. Subsequently, item 7 holds the second-highest mean score ($M = 2.67$) and agreement rate (32%), suggesting limited exposure to collaborative learning environments may result in a negative influence on students' confidence and willingness to participate in group work.

On the contrary, item 6 records the lowest mean score ($M = 1.81, SD = 0.86$) and percentage of agreement (8%). This implies that a majority of students admit the value of group work.

Table 3. Student-related factors

No.	Student-related Factors	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)*	% Agree / High Impact*
1	Lacking vocabulary and grammar	2.90	1.12	38
2	Lacking background knowledge	2.60	01.05	29
3	Lacking confidence	2.54	01.08	26
4	Being unaware of turn-taking rules	2.10	0.95	14
5	Having positive view of group work	2.59	01.04	28
6	Being unable to see benefits of group work	1.81	0.86	8
7	Lacking prior group work experience	2.67	1.15	32
8	Being shy	2.17	0.98	16

In terms of pedagogy-related factors (Table 4), the most outstanding was being encouraged by teachers' clear instructions with the highest mean score ($M = 2.85, SD = 1.15$) and proportion of agreement (37%). This indicates that teachers' clear guidance is important in assisting students' participation in group work. Item 9 ($M = 2.33, SD = 1.02$) and item 10 ($M = 2.47, SD = 1.09$) receive relatively high mean scores, showing moderate negative effects on participation. These findings suggest that tasks should be designed with comprehensible input and be interesting enough to attract students' engagement in group activities. Item 13 also records an encouraging effect ($M = 2.43, SD = 1.06$) and 24% of students regard it as having a high impact. This result implies that students prefer increasing learner autonomy.

Four factors (item 11 with $M = 1.97, SD = 0.92, 11\%$ Agreed; item 14 with $M = 1.77, SD = 0.85, 7\%$ Agreed; item

15 with $M = 1.68$, $SD = 0.81$, 5% Agreed; item 16 with $M = 1.81$, $SD = 0.89$, 9% Agreed) received low mean scores (below 2) and agreement percentages, among which item 15 stood at the bottom of the list. These results demonstrate that interpersonal and peer-pressure factors do not significantly affect students' group participation.

To sum up, the findings emphasize the crucial role of pedagogical strategies in which clear instructions and suitable task design are the most important in enhancing students' active engagement in group activities.

Table 4. Pedagogy-related factors

No.	Pedagogy-related Factors	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)*	% Agree / High Impact*
9	Being discouraged by task difficulty	2.33	1.02	22
10	Being bored with the task	2.47	1.09	26
11	Seeing no clear rules for participation	1.97	0.92	11
12	Being encouraged by clear instructions	2.85	1.15	37
13	Being encouraged by teacher's absence during group-work	2.43	1.06	24
14	Being afraid of negative peer evaluation	1.77	0.85	7
15	Disliking group members	1.68	0.81	5
16	Being forced participation due to peers' silence	1.81	0.89	9

Table 5. Culture-related factors

No	Culture-related Factors	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)*	% Agree / High Impact*
17	Being afraid of losing face in front of peers	1.71	0.82	6
18	Being afraid of losing face in front of teachers	1.93	0.94	12
19	Appreciating silence in classroom	1.72	0.85	7
20	Having habit of passive listening	2.34	1.05	23
21	Believing that interrupting is impolite	2.12	0.97	15
22	Trying to avoid arguments with others	02.08	0.93	14

As demonstrated in Table 5, cultural factors exert minimal influence on participation ($M = 1.71 - 2.34$), with "fear of losing face" ranking lowest ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.82$, 6% Agreed). These findings challenge traditional stereotypes regarding Asian learner reticence, suggesting a psychologically safe classroom environment. While cultural psychology is not a primary barrier compared to linguistic competence, the persistence of the "passive listening" habit ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 1.05$, 23% Agreed) - the highest in this category - reflects a need to shift from teacher-centered secondary education to a student-centred approach in an active university environment.

Overall, the questionnaire data showed that student-related elements were the most influential while culture-related ones were the least striking. The level of impact and the number of factors differed among the participants.

Data from the student interviews

Student-related factors

One prevailing factor was the lack of concentration. During the observed group discussions, four out of five experienced it, which made them unaware of being in group-work at times. Nevertheless, just three of them could figure out the reasons.

Students are willing to participate in group work activities; however, language difficulties troubled the participants. In the observed activity, four had problems with vocabulary. Three of those also acknowledged the failure to express their ideas in English. Only S4 was not troubled by vocabulary; she appeared to be the most confident about her proficiency level of English.

Furthermore, three of them agreed on the influence of the shortage of ideas and previous experience with group-work and English skills. Additionally, preference to working individually was mentioned by two. Both had little previous group-work experience, and expressed their unfamiliarity with studying in groups. Thus, it could be seen that secondary-school experience had great impacts on students' preference to work individually. Being afraid of making mistakes also hindered the participation of two. Despite their initial desire to speak, they did not dare to speak for their anxiety of being underrated.

Two other much less striking elements included students' personality and students' attitudes towards group-work as stated by one. S2 expressed her negative

attitude to group-work. It seemed that she had several negative group-work experiences.

Pedagogy-related factors

The first factor is the teacher's intervention during group-work. Teachers played an important role in group work such as supporting and monitoring student's progress. In the observed discussion, S2 was motivated by the teacher's support and clear instruction. Meanwhile, S4 expressed her desire for teacher's help and giving feedback on their performance and achievements.

Another factor is the task difficulty. Three said that the difficult topics in the observed discussions did not inspire them to talk whereas one was motivated to discuss by the favoured topic. In the general interviews, the same number affirmed negative and positive impacts of this factor. The level of difficulty of the topic also influenced students' participation but appeared to be less troublesome.

Culture-related factors

Disagreements about ideas might be related to being afraid of hurting others. This was closely associated with the cultural value of compromise, which means students do not want to argue with others because they do not want to lose their group members' face. It is noteworthy that S4, whose participation level in the observed discussion was the highest, indicated the fewest influential factors, one of which was positive. On the whole, it is obvious that the participants were much influenced by internal factors (themselves) and by peers in this kind of activity. Overall, the interview findings support the questionnaire results, particularly regarding the prominence of student-related and pedagogical factors over cultural ones. Both data sources identified insufficient language proficiency and lack of prior group-work experience as major barriers to participation. While the questionnaires highlighted these factors quantitatively, interviews provided richer explanations, such as fear of making mistakes, lack of ideas, and difficulty maintaining concentration. Similarly, both data from the questionnaire and interviews emphasized the importance of teachers' clear instructions and support, although interviews further stressed the motivating role of real-time intervention and feedback. In contrast, cultural factors were found to have minimal influence in the questionnaires, and interviews largely confirmed this, aside from occasional concerns about avoiding conflict to maintain group harmony.

4.4. Teachers' monitoring strategies during group-work

Data from the questionnaires

Table 6 reveals that teachers prioritize facilitation over strict management. The most applied strategy is "providing language help" (M = 3.25, SD = 1.05, 52% Agreed), directly addressing students' primary linguistic barriers. Active monitoring, such as moving around to observe (M = 3.18, SD = 1.08, 45% Agreed) and refocusing groups (M = 3.15, SD = 1.12, 44% Agreed), is also prevalent. In contrast, "assigning extra tasks" to fast finishers (M = 1.85, SD = 0.9) is the least practiced, with only 8% high frequency. This neglect of fast finishers shows a pedagogical gap in managing "dead time," likely contributing to the chaotic atmosphere noted in Table 1, as unoccupied students may disrupt the class.

Table 6. Teachers' monitoring strategies - Application

No.	Monitoring strategies	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)*	High Frequency (%)*
1	Observing from the front/side of the class	3.12	1.10	42
2	Moving around to observe groups	3.18	1.08	45
3	Keeping distance at the beginning stage of the activity for students to work by themselves	2.49	1.05	28
4	Reminding groups to focus on the task	3.15	1.12	44
5	Reminding dominant speakers to share turns with others	2.45	1.02	25
6	Encouraging shy members to speak	3.04	1.15	39
7	Assigning extra tasks for fast finishers	1.85	0.9	8
8	Providing language help when students need	3.25	1.05	52
9	Correcting mistakes immediately during group-work	2.91	1.10	35
10	Taking notes of students' mistakes for later correction	2.96	1.08	36
11	Trying to correct all mistakes made in groups	2.94	1.09	35

Regarding student preference, data in Table 7 reveals a distinct student preference for linguistic accuracy over autonomy. Strategies involving language help and error

correction (Items 8-11) received the highest ratings ($M > 4.0$), with 88% desiring direct assistance. This indicates a strong form-focused mindset. Additionally, students highly value encouragement for shy members ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.95$, 68% Agree), reflecting a desire for inclusive participation. In contrast, assigning extra tasks is strongly rejected ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 0.88$, 9% Agree). Crucially, the demand for immediate correction ($M = 4.07$) significantly exceeds teacher application ($M = 2.9$ in Table 6), highlighting a gap between student expectations for accuracy and communicative teaching practices.

Table 7. Teachers' monitoring strategies - Student preference

No.	Monitoring strategies	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)*	High Frequency (%)*
1	Observing from the front/side of the class	3.08	1.12	35
2	Moving around to observe groups	3.32	1.05	45
3	Keeping distance at the beginning stage of the activity for students to work by themselves	3.03	1.15	32
4	Reminding groups to focus on the task	3.43	1.02	52
5	Reminding dominant speakers to share turns with others	3.34	1.08	48
6	Encouraging shy members to speak	3.78	0.95	68
7	Assigning extra tasks for fast finishers	1.91	0.88	9
8	Providing language help when students need	4.19	0.75	88
9	Correcting mistakes immediately during group-work	4.07	0.82	82
10	Taking notes of students' mistakes for later correction	4.01	0.85	79
11	Trying to correct all mistakes made in groups	4.1	0.78	84

Comparing teacher application and student preference indicated that except for providing language help when needed, which was both most frequently applied by the teachers and most strongly favored by the respondents, other commonly applied strategies by the teachers received diverse opinions from the students. Moreover, the least commonly applied was coincidentally the least preferred.

Data from the observations

Observational data confirms high teacher engagement, with "moving around to observe groups" and "taking notes of students' mistakes for later correction" were done by all the teachers ($N = 5$). Linguistic support (item 8), observing from the front/ side (item 1), and moving around to remind students to stay focused were also common ($N = 4$). However, the observations reveal critical gaps: strategies for managing interactional dynamics - regulating dominant or shy speakers - were rare ($N = 2$). Most strikingly, no teacher assigned extra tasks to fast finishers ($N = 0$). This complete absence of contingency planning for early completion suggests a structural weakness in classroom management, directly correlating with the "chaotic" atmosphere reported by students in Table 1.

Table 8. Teachers' observed monitoring strategies during group-work

No	Monitoring strategies	Teacher application (N)
1	Standing at the front or the side of the class to observe groups	4
2	Moving around to observe groups	5
3	Keeping distance from groups for the beginning stage of the activity for them to work by themselves	3
4	Moving around to remind if groups do not stay focused on the task	4
5	Moving around to remind any dominant speakers to share turns with others	2
6	Moving around to encourage any shy members to speak	2
7	Assigning further tasks for those who have finished earlier	0
8	Providing language help when students need	4
9	Correcting students' mistakes made immediately during group work	2
10	Taking notes of students' mistakes made in groups for later correction	5
11	Trying to correct all students' mistakes made in groups	3

In general, the observational data verified the questionnaire findings, confirming both the prioritization of linguistic support and the neglect of fast finishers. Consistent with student preferences and teacher self-reports, classroom observations verified that providing language assistance was a dominant strategy. Conversely, the rejection of assigning extra tasks by students aligned

perfectly with its complete absence in pedagogical practice. However, a significant difference emerged regarding interaction management. While students expressed a strong desire for immediate error correction and encouragement for quiet members, observational evidence revealed that teachers rarely implemented these specific interventions. This discrepancy highlights a critical gap between learners' expectations for strict accuracy and actual classroom pedagogy.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the findings show that students hold positive perceptions of group-work including enhancing language skills, confidence, and peer interaction, and widening their subject knowledge. Group-work is considered as a valuable pedagogical tool that promotes communicative competence and learner autonomy. However, they pointed out challenges such as uneven participation, reliance on the mother tongue, and disruptive classroom dynamics, indicating that the effectiveness of group-work highly depends on classroom management and task design. The results suggest that while group-work offers clear benefits, its successful implementation requires careful structuring and teacher guidance to minimize potential drawbacks. Regarding the frequency and quality of students' oral participation, the data demonstrate imbalanced participation and limited quality of contribution. Additionally, the tendency for students to share ideas without prior reflection suggests that participation is not always meaningful or well-structured. Therefore, targeted instructional strategies and clearer role assignments are necessary to promote more balanced involvement and higher-quality contributions during group activities. Concerning factors affecting students' participation in in-class group-work, the findings highlighted individual and pedagogical factors rather than cultural ones. The alignment between questionnaire and interview data reinforces the significance of language proficiency and prior experience as key determinants of active participation. Furthermore, teachers' clear instructions, timely intervention, and constructive feedback play an important role in fostering students' engagement. These findings imply that it is vital to address students' linguistic confidence and provide structured pedagogical support to enhance participation in group-work. With regard to teachers' monitoring strategies, the findings indicate a mismatch between teachers' monitoring strategies during group work and

students' expectations. Although linguistic support was prioritized in both perception and practice, teachers paid limited attention to interaction management and differentiated support, particularly for fast finishers and quieter students. This gap suggests a need for more balanced monitoring approaches that address not only language support but also learners' expectations for accuracy and fair participation.

Although the study was conducted on a small scale with a particular group of first-year students at HaUI, it would contribute to the existing knowledge in the field concerning group-work, students' participation in group-work, influential factors, and teachers' strategies. Moreover, it could raise awareness of EFL learners about the problems in their peers' participation in group-work and elements affecting their participation. It could also assist teachers of English to recognize what encourage or discourage their students from participating in group activities so that they could adjust their teaching methods. Finally, it proposed several useful recommendations for teachers to minimize negative impacts of influential factors on students' participation.

Due to various constraints and scope of the study, the present research displays certain limitations. First of all, only five teachers were involved, which might somehow affect the data richness. However, since multiple methods addressing the same issue were adopted, and the findings by those supplemented each other, this did not affect the study reliability. Second, this research did not go deep into each category of factors and the influence level of each element.

The limitations of the present study leave several gaps for other researchers to fill in. First, further studies should widen the research scale with a larger and more varied group of participants. Second, they might thoroughly investigate each category of influential factors on students' participation in in-class group-work. Also, they can go deep into the level of influence of those elements. Besides, they can examine similar matters but in long-term or formal groups.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Kirschner P. A., Sweller J., Kirschner F., Zambrano J. R., "From cognitive load theory to collaborative cognitive load theory," *International Journal of Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning*, 13 (2), 213-233, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11412-018-9277-y>

- [2]. Wilson K. J., Brickman P., Brame C. J., "Group work," *CBE-Life Sciences Education*, 17 (1), 1-5, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.17-12-0258>.
- [3]. Pica T., Doughty C., "The Role of Group Work in Classroom Second Language Acquisition," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 7 (2), 233-248, 1985. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263100005398>.
- [4]. McDonough K., "Learner-learner Interaction during Pair and Small Group Activities in a Thai EFL Context," *System*, 32 (2), 207-224, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2004.01.003>.
- [5]. Brown H. D., *Teaching by principles - an interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). New York, Addition Wesley Longman, Inc, 2001.
- [6]. Doff A., *Teach English: A training course for teachers. Trainer's handbook*. Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- [7]. Johnson D. W., Smith K. A., "Active learning: Cooperation in the college classroom," *The Annual Report of Educational Psychology in Japan*, 47, 29-30, 2008. https://doi.org/10.5926/arepj1962.47.0_29.
- [8]. Le T.N.D., Nguyen B.H., "Factors influencing group work of students in learning English as a foreign language (EFL): A case study at a Vietnamese university," *Can Tho University of Journal of Science*, 6, 9-16, 2017. Doi: 10.22144/ctu.jen.2017.021.
- [9]. Tavakoli P., "Investigating Task Difficulty: Learners' and Teachers' Perceptions," *International Journal of Applied Linguistic*, 19, 1-25, 2009. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2009.00216.x>.
- [10]. Nguyen M. P. M., "Culturally appropriate face strategies in cooperative learning with insight from cultural neuroscience," *Comparative Education*, 55(1), 66-96, 2019. Doi: 10.1080/03050068.2018.1541664.
- [11]. Bao D., Ye Y., "Investigating learner silent and verbal response to tasks," *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, 4(1), 61-72, 2020. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.22437/ijolte.v4i1.10469>
- [12]. Burnes A., *Collaborative Action Research for English language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- [13]. Abbott B. B., Bordens K. S., *Research design and methods: A process approach* (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill., 2018.

THÔNG TIN TÁC GIẢ

Đỗ Thị Huyền, Nguyễn Thị Thanh Bằng

Trường Ngoại ngữ - Du lịch, Trường Đại học Công nghiệp Hà Nội