

Collaborative Language Learning: A Systematic Literature Review on Pedagogical Practices, Affective Factors, and Technology Integration

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative language learning has become an important pedagogical approach in higher education because of its potential to improve language proficiency, learner engagement, and 21st-century skills. However, existing studies often examine pedagogical practices, affective factors, or technology integration separately, resulting in a fragmented understanding of collaborative language learning. This systematic literature review synthesizes recent empirical research on collaborative language learning in higher education by focusing on three themes: (1) collaborative and project-based learning for language development, (2) motivation, anxiety, and learner engagement, and (3) technology-enhanced and mobile-supported collaborative language learning. Guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, a systematic search was conducted using the Scopus and Web of Science databases. Following the identification, screening, eligibility, quality appraisal, and data abstraction processes, 19 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2026 were selected for analysis. The findings indicate that collaborative and project-based learning significantly enhance language proficiency, learner autonomy, and communicative competence through active participation and peer interaction. Motivation, self-efficacy, learner engagement, and reduced language anxiety were identified as essential factors influencing successful collaborative learning. The review also highlights the growing role of technology, including blended learning, mobile-assisted learning, flipped classrooms, and online collaborative platforms, in supporting communication, interaction, and flexible foreign language learning experiences. This SLR offers an integrated perspective on collaborative language learning and provides practical implications for educators, curriculum designers, and researchers seeking to develop effective, learner-centered, and technology-enhanced language learning environments.

Keywords: Collaborative learning, Higher education, Learner motivation, Technology-enhanced language learning, Foreign language

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Collaborative language learning has become an increasingly influential instructional approach in higher education due to its emphasis on active learning, meaningful interaction, and the development of communicative competence. Unlike traditional teacher-centered methods, collaborative learning encourages students to work together in pairs or groups to exchange ideas, solve authentic problems, and construct knowledge through shared experiences. Rooted in social constructivist principles, this approach enables learners to develop not only language proficiency but also critical thinking, creativity, communication, and teamwork skills that are essential in the twenty-first century. In recent years, collaborative learning has been further strengthened by pedagogical innovations such as project-based learning (PBL), cooperative learning, and problem-based learning, all of which provide authentic contexts for language use and promote learner autonomy. At the same time, rapid technological advancements have transformed language education through

the integration of mobile-assisted learning, blended learning, online collaboration, and digital communication platforms, enabling learners to interact beyond the traditional classroom and access diverse learning resources. Alongside these pedagogical developments, increasing attention has been given to affective factors, particularly learner motivation, engagement, self-efficacy, and foreign language anxiety, which significantly influence students' willingness to participate in collaborative activities and achieve positive learning outcomes. Consequently, collaborative language learning has evolved into a multidimensional educational approach that integrates pedagogical practices, psychological factors, and technological innovations. Understanding the relationships among these dimensions is essential for designing effective language learning environments that foster meaningful communication, learner engagement, and sustainable language development in higher education.

Statement of Problem

Despite the increasing adoption of collaborative language learning in higher education, several challenges continue to limit its effective implementation and the comprehensive understanding of its impact. Existing research has consistently reported positive outcomes associated with collaborative and project-based learning, including improvements in language proficiency, learner autonomy, communication skills, and academic achievement. However, many studies have examined these instructional approaches in isolation without adequately considering the influence of learner-related affective factors such as motivation, engagement, self-regulation, and foreign language anxiety. These psychological variables play a crucial role in determining learners' willingness to participate actively in collaborative tasks and their ability to benefit from group learning experiences. Furthermore, the rapid integration of educational technologies—including mobile applications, blended learning, flipped classrooms, and online collaborative platforms—has transformed language learning practices, yet evidence regarding how these technologies interact with pedagogical approaches and learner characteristics remains fragmented. Although numerous empirical studies have explored individual aspects of collaborative language learning, there is limited synthesis of how pedagogical practices, affective factors, and technology integration collectively contribute to language learning outcomes in higher education. Without such an integrated understanding, educators and curriculum designers may face difficulties in selecting instructional strategies that effectively address learners' academic and emotional needs. Therefore, a comprehensive systematic literature review is needed to consolidate current evidence, identify prevailing research trends, and provide a holistic understanding of collaborative language learning in contemporary higher education contexts.

Research Gap

Although collaborative language learning has received considerable scholarly attention over the past decade, several important gaps remain in the existing literature. First, previous studies have predominantly focused on specific aspects of collaborative learning, such as project-based learning, learner motivation, technology-enhanced learning, or foreign language anxiety, with relatively few studies examining these dimensions within a single comprehensive framework. This fragmented body of knowledge limits a holistic understanding of how pedagogical practices, learner affective factors, and technology integration interact to influence language learning outcomes. Second, the rapid advancement of digital technologies and online learning environments has introduced new collaborative learning opportunities through mobile-assisted learning, blended learning, and digital collaboration platforms. However, the implications of these technological innovations for collaborative language learning have not been comprehensively synthesized across recent empirical studies. Third, while existing reviews have explored collaborative learning or educational technology separately, there remains a lack of systematic literature reviews that integrate pedagogical, psychological, and technological perspectives specifically within the context of higher education language learning. Moreover, recent studies published between 2021 and 2026 have generated new evidence on collaborative language learning that has not yet been collectively analysed to identify emerging patterns, research trends, and future directions. Addressing these gaps is important for advancing both theory and practice. Therefore, this systematic literature review aims to provide a comprehensive synthesis of contemporary research by examining collaborative language learning through three interconnected themes: collaborative and project-based learning, motivation and learner engagement, and technology-enhanced collaborative language learning. This synthesis will offer evidence-based recommendations for future research and educational practice.

Research Questions

Research questions are important to a systematic literature review (SLR). The questions provide the foundation and direction for the entire review process. A well-defined research question ensures that the literature search is exhaustive and systematic, covering all relevant studies that address key aspects of the topic (Kitchenham, 2007). The research questions in this SLR are formulated based on the PICO framework. This framework is a mnemonic style used to formulate research questions, particularly in qualitative research, proposed by Lockwood et al. (2015). PICO stands for Population, Interest, and Context. This SLR is done to answer the four research questions below;

RQ1:How do collaborative and project-based learning approaches contribute to language development among learners in higher education?

RQ2:What roles do motivation, anxiety, and learner engagement play in collaborative language learning among higher education students?

RQ3:How do technology-enhanced and mobile-supported collaborative learning environments support language learning and interaction among higher education learners?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Sociocultural Theory (SCT)

Sociocultural Theory (SCT), proposed by Vygotsky (1978), emphasizes that learning is a socially mediated process in which knowledge is developed through interaction with others and participation in meaningful social activities. According to SCT, cognitive and language development occur when learners engage in collaborative tasks, communicate with peers, and receive support from more knowledgeable individuals within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In language learning contexts, collaboration enables students to practice language authentically, negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, and solve problems collectively, thereby enhancing their linguistic competence and communicative abilities. Peer interaction plays a crucial role in this process, as learners scaffold one another's understanding through discussion, feedback, and shared experiences. Through these interactions, learners co-construct knowledge by jointly creating meaning and building upon each other's contributions. This theoretical perspective strongly supports collaborative learning approaches such as project-based learning, where students work together to complete tasks, conduct investigations, and produce meaningful outcomes. Such activities provide rich opportunities for communication, critical thinking, and social engagement, leading to improved language proficiency and learner autonomy. Therefore, SCT explains how collaboration, peer interaction, and knowledge co-construction serve as essential mechanisms for effective language learning and development.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

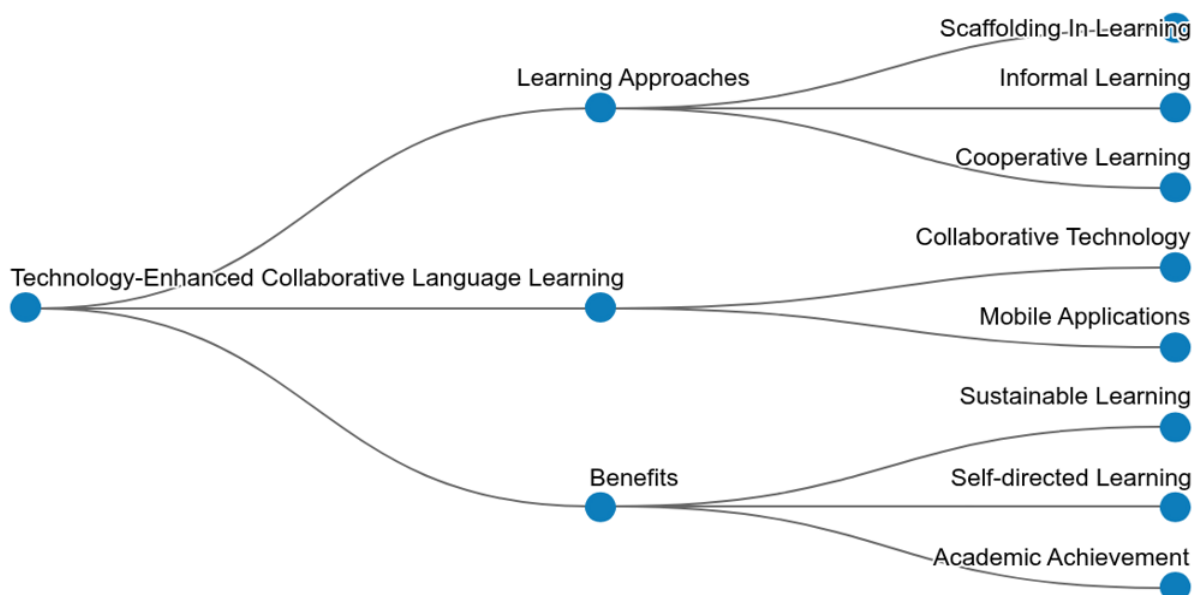
Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000), provides a valuable framework for understanding learner motivation, engagement, persistence, and emotional well-being in language learning. SDT posits that individuals are more likely to be intrinsically motivated when three basic psychological needs are satisfied: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to learners' sense of control and choice in their learning activities, competence relates to their perception of being capable of completing tasks, and relatedness involves feeling connected to peers and teachers. In language learning contexts, environments that support these needs encourage students to participate actively, sustain effort, and develop positive attitudes toward learning. For example, collaborative and project-based activities allow learners to make decisions, demonstrate their abilities, and interact meaningfully with others, thereby enhancing motivation and engagement. When learners feel supported and capable, they are more likely to persist in overcoming linguistic challenges and experience reduced anxiety and greater confidence. Furthermore, positive social relationships foster emotional security, which contributes to greater enjoyment and satisfaction in language learning.

Therefore, SDT explains how motivation and emotional factors influence learners' engagement and persistence, ultimately leading to more effective language development and academic success.

Connectivism by Siemens (2005)

The theory argues that knowledge is distributed across networks of people, digital tools, information sources, and technological platforms, and that learning occurs through the ability to create, navigate, and maintain these connections. Unlike traditional learning theories that focus primarily on individual knowledge acquisition, Connectivism emphasizes the importance of accessing and sharing information through technology-mediated interactions. In language learning, digital networks enable learners to communicate, collaborate, and exchange ideas with peers, instructors, and global communities through online platforms, social media, discussion forums, and collaborative tools. These interactions provide authentic opportunities for practicing language skills, receiving immediate feedback, and engaging in meaningful communication beyond the classroom. Online collaboration also promotes learner autonomy, active participation, and continuous knowledge construction, as learners draw upon diverse perspectives and resources available within their networks. Furthermore, digital technologies support lifelong learning by allowing learners to access updated information and build new connections as their learning needs evolve. Therefore, Connectivism provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how digital networks, technology-mediated interaction, and online collaboration facilitate effective language learning in the 21st century.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



The conceptual framework for this systematic literature review positions Collaborative Language Learning in Higher Education as a multidimensional construct influenced by pedagogical practices, affective factors, and technology integration. As illustrated in the diagram, Technology-Enhanced Collaborative Language Learning is developed through learning approaches such as cooperative learning, scaffolding-in-learning, and informal learning, which facilitate interaction among learners and support language development. This dimension is grounded in Sociocultural Theory (SCT) proposed by Vygotsky (1978), which views learning as a socially mediated process occurring through collaboration, peer interaction, and knowledge co-construction. Through collaborative and project-based activities, learners engage in meaningful communication, negotiate understanding, and receive scaffolding from peers and instructors within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Consequently, collaborative learning environments promote active participation and the development of linguistic and communicative competence.

The framework also incorporates Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) to explain the effective dimension of collaborative language learning. SDT emphasizes the importance of satisfying learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness to foster intrinsic motivation, engagement,

persistence, and emotional well-being. Within collaborative learning contexts, students are provided with opportunities to make decisions, contribute ideas, and build supportive relationships with peers, enhancing motivation and sustained participation. These positive affective experiences contribute to benefits identified in the framework, including self-directed learning, academic achievement, and sustainable learning outcomes.

Finally, the technology integration dimension is underpinned by Connectivism (Siemens, 2005), which posits that learning occurs through networks that connect individuals, digital resources, and technological tools. The use of collaborative technologies and mobile applications enables technology-mediated interaction, online collaboration, and access to diverse knowledge sources beyond traditional classroom boundaries. Through digital networks, learners can share information, engage in collaborative tasks, and continuously construct knowledge in virtual communities. Thus, the integration of SCT, SDT, and Connectivism provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation that explains how pedagogical practices, affective factors, and technology-enhanced collaboration collectively contribute to effective language learning in higher education.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

For conducting systematic literature reviews, the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach is a widely accepted standard that ensures transparency, completeness, and consistency throughout the procedure (Page et al., 2021). It guides how to systematically identify, screen, and include studies in a review. In the context of this SLR, the writers involved in this article act as researchers and work together to analyse the articles deemed relevant for the title. Two important databases, Web of Science and Scopus, were used in this analysis because of their wide coverage and robustness.

The PRISMA approach is organized into four key stages: (i) identification, (ii) screening, (iii) eligibility, and (iv) data abstraction. In the identification phase, databases are searched to locate all relevant studies. The screening phase then involves evaluating these studies against predefined criteria to eliminate irrelevant or low-quality research. During the eligibility phase, the remaining studies are thoroughly assessed to confirm they meet the inclusion criteria. Finally, data abstraction focuses on extracting and synthesizing data from the included studies, which is essential for deriving meaningful and reliable conclusions. This structured method ensures that the systematic review is conducted with rigor, leading to trustworthy results that can guide future research and practice. The PRISMA framework lists three main stages for analysis: (i) identification, (ii) screening, (iii) eligibility, (iv) data abstraction and analysis, as well as (v) quality of appraisal.

Identification

In accordance with the PRISMA framework, the identification phase represents a critical starting point in the systematic literature review process, as it is designed to ensure exhaustive coverage of relevant studies while reducing the risk of selection bias. In this study, a structured and comprehensive search was conducted across two leading bibliographic databases, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), using the keywords “collaborative learning,” “foreign language,” and “higher education.” Table 1 below shows the search string. These databases were deliberately selected because of their extensive multidisciplinary coverage, stringent indexing criteria, and strong representation of high-quality, peer-reviewed journals. The search process yielded 93 records from Scopus and 100 records from Web of Science, resulting in a total of 193 records before removing duplicates.

The higher number of results obtained from Scopus can be attributed to its broader inclusion of journals and stronger coverage in the social sciences, whereas WoS contributed a more targeted collection of highly cited and methodologically rigorous studies. As shown in Table 1, the identification of 193 records reflects the growing academic interest in writing within higher education and highlights the conceptual diversity of research spanning linguistic, pedagogical, and psychological perspectives. Employing multiple databases enhances the methodological robustness of the review by minimizing database-specific bias and increasing the likelihood of capturing diverse research traditions and geographical contexts.

Additionally, the use of carefully designed search terms ensured sensitivity to terminological variation while maintaining alignment with the review’s objectives. Overall, this transparent and systematic identification process establishes a strong foundation for subsequent screening and eligibility stages, consistent with PRISMA

standards and expectations for rigorous, replicable research

Table 1-The search string.

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("collaborative learning" OR "cooperative learning" OR "group learning" OR "team-based learning") AND ("foreign language" OR "second language" OR "language learning" OR "language acquisition") AND (universities OR "higher education" OR "tertiary education" OR college*) AND (students OR "learners" OR "pupils") AND (motivation OR "student motivation" OR "learning motivation" OR "intrinsic motivation" OR "extrinsic motivation"))
Web of Science	Ext TITLE-ABS-KEY (("collaborative learning" OR "cooperative learning" OR "group learning" OR "team-based learning") AND ("foreign language" OR "second language" OR "language learning" OR "language acquisition") AND (universities OR "higher education" OR "tertiary education" OR college*) AND (students OR "learners" OR "pupils") AND (motivation OR "student motivation" OR "learning motivation" OR "intrinsic motivation" OR "extrinsic motivation")) Extracted July 2026

Screening

During the screening stage of the systematic literature review, potentially relevant studies were evaluated to ensure their alignment with the four established research questions. This phase focused on refining the initial pool of records by removing duplicates and applying predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Following the initial review, 134 publications were excluded for failing to meet the scope and relevance requirements of the study, leaving 59 (Scopus=28; Wos; 31) articles for further consideration, as outlined in Figure 2. The primary inclusion criterion was the type of literature, with priority given to scholarly sources that offer substantive and empirical insights. As a result, materials such as book reviews, book series, meta-syntheses, meta-analyses, conference proceedings, and book chapters not directly related to the core focus of the review were excluded. To ensure consistency and relevance to contemporary academic discourse, only peer-reviewed publications written in English and published between 2021 and 2026 were retained. Additionally, a duplication check led to the removal of 0 repeated records across the databases. This systematic and criteria-driven screening process enhanced the focus and quality of the evidence base, ensuring that only the most relevant and methodologically sound studies progressed to the subsequent stages of analysis.

Eligibility

For the third step, known as eligibility, a total of 59 articles have been prepared. All articles' titles and key content were thoroughly reviewed at this stage to ensure that the inclusion requirements were fulfilled and fit into the present study with the current research aims. Finally, 19 articles are available for review (Table 3).

Table 2- The selection criterion is searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Time line	2021 – 2026	< 2021
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject Area	Collaborative Learning	Besides Collaborative Learning

Data Abstraction and Analysis

An integrative analysis was used as one of the assessment strategies in this study to examine and synthesize a variety of research designs (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods). To develop themes, the authors carefully analyzed 19 publications for relevant material related to the study's topics. They examined the

methodology and research results of significant studies on collaborative language learning and foreign language learners. The authors collaborated to develop themes based on the evidence presented throughout the study. They kept a log of their data analysis process to document relevant perspectives, analyses, or ideas. The authors ensured consistency in theme design by comparing the results and discussing disagreements between themselves. This expert review phase established the validity of each subtheme by ensuring clarity, importance, and suitability.

Quality of Appraisal

According to Kitchenham and Charters (Kitchenham, 2007), the researchers need to assess the quality of the research chosen. The next stage is applying quality assessment suggested by Abouzahra et al., (2020), which consists of six questions complying to a scoring procedure for evaluating each criteria. The possible ratings are; "Yes" (Y) with a score of 1 if the criterion is fully met, "Partly" (P) with a score of 0.5 if the criterion is somewhat met but contains some gaps or shortcomings, and "No" (N) with a score of 0 if the criterion is not met at all.

Table 3- Possible ratings for 6 questions by Abouzahra et al., (2020),

No	Question
QA1	Is the purpose of the study clearly stated?
QA2	Is the interest and the usefulness of the work clearly presented?
QA3	Is the study methodology clearly established?
QA4	Are the concepts of the approach clearly defined?
QA5	Is the work compared and measured with other similar work?
QA6	Are the limitations of the work clearly mentioned?

Each writer independently assesses the study according to these criteria, and the scores are then totalled across all experts to determine the overall mark. For a study to be accepted for the next process, the total mark, derived from summing the scores from all three experts, must exceed 3.0. This threshold ensures that only studies meeting a certain quality standard proceed further. The results are shown in Table 4.

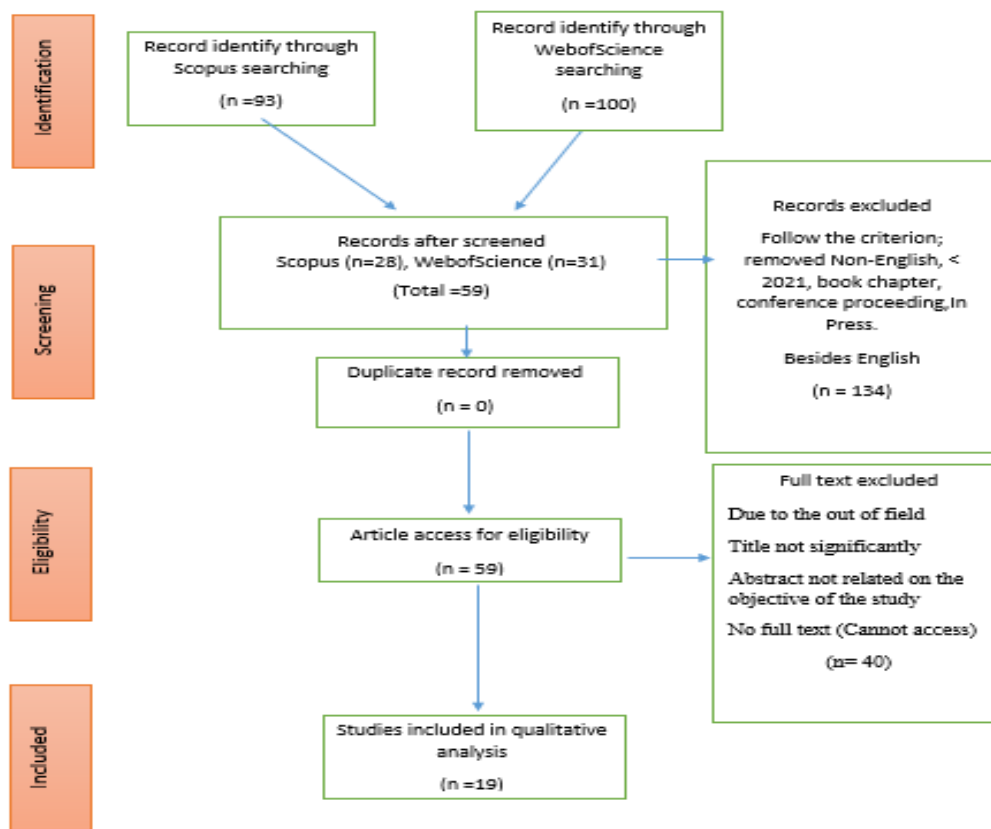


Figure 2. Flow diagram of the proposed searching study (Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, 2009)

RESULT AND FINDING

Quality of Assessment

Table 4 shows the result of the assessment performance for selected primary studies. The overall quality of the articles is as follows;

- **High quality ($\geq 80\%$):** Majority of studies
- High quality (60
- **Moderate quality (60–79%):** Conceptual or descriptive studies
- **Lower quality ($<60\%$):** Primarily survey-only or exploratory abstracts

Table 4- Quality Assessment for the selected 19 papers

PS	Author (Year)	Article Title	QA1	QA2	QA3	QA4	QA5	QA6	Total Mark	(%)
PS1	Pushpakumara (2026)	Fostering Active Learner Participation in Higher Education: An Action Research Project	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	P	4.5	75.0
PS2	Haque et al. (2026)	Pedagogical Strategies for Mitigating Foreign Language Anxiety	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4.0	66.7
PS3	Mudinillah et al. (2026)	Integrating Differentiated Instruction into Project-Based Learning	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4.0	66.7
PS4	Tu (2024)	The Impact of Project-Based Learning and Local Cultural Content on EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS5	Aldobekhi & Abahussain (2024)	Enhancing English Language Students Productive Skills through PBL	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	P	4.5	75.0
PS6	Chang et al. (2022)	Effects of Combining Different Collaborative Learning Strategies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	5.0	83.3
PS7	Xu & Peng (2022)	Exploring Learner Motivation and Mobile-Assisted Peer Feedback	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS8	Yang et al. (2025)	Unveiling Conceptual	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0

		Dimensions of Co-Regulated Learning								
PS9	Tiantian et al. (2024)	Effects of Collaborative Mobile Learning Approach	Y	Y	Y	P	N	N	3.5	58.3
PS10	Liu et al. (2022)	Wiki-Based Collaborative Writing for EFL Learners	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	P	5.0	83.3
PS11	Du et al. (2026)	Second Foreign Language Learning Difficulties	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	P	4.5	75.0
PS12	Robbins & Appel (2026)	Active Participation in Collaborative Activities	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS13	Jiao et al. (2026)	Profiling EFL Students Motivation and Anxiety	Y	Y	P	Y	N	N	3.5	58.3
PS14	Avsheniuk et al. (2023)	Fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	4.0	66.7
PS15	Zhou et al. (2026)	Understanding Multilingual Student Motivation	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	P	4.5	75.0
PS16	Bai & Zang (2026)	Bilingual Learning Motivation and Engagement	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS17	Barani et al. (2026)	Mediating Role of Language Learning Strategies	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0
PS18	Guo et al. (2023)	Impact of Blended Learning-Based Scaffolding	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	5.0	83.3
PS19	Peng & Fu (2021)	Learning Motivation on Learning Outcomes	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	4.5	75.0

Table 4 presents the quality assessment results for the 19 studies included in this systematic literature review, indicating that the overall methodological quality of the selected papers is satisfactory. The quality scores range from 3.5 (58.3%) to 5.0 (83.3%), with most studies obtaining 4.5 (75.0%), demonstrating that they met the majority of the predefined quality assessment criteria. Three studies by Chang et al. (2022), Liu et al. (2022), and Guo et al. (2023), achieved the highest score of 5.0 (83.3%), reflecting strong methodological rigor and comprehensive reporting. In contrast, Tiantian et al. (2024) and Jiao et al. (2026) received the lowest score of 3.5 (58.3%), indicating that although they satisfied the essential inclusion criteria, certain methodological aspects were only partially addressed. Across all studies, the first four quality criteria (QA1–QA4) were consistently rated Yes (Y), suggesting that the studies generally had clear research objectives, appropriate research designs, and systematic data collection and analysis procedures. However, lower scores were primarily associated with QA5 and QA6, where several studies received Partially (P) or No (N), indicating limitations in areas such as validation, discussion of limitations, or generalizability.

Themes for Collaborative Language Learning

Table 5- Analysis of Themes

	Theme Name	Number of studies
Theme 1	Collaborative and Project-Based Learning for Language Development	8
Theme 2	Motivation, Anxiety, and Learner Engagement	8
Theme 3	Technology-Enhanced and Mobile-Supported Collaborative Language Learning	7

Table 5 presents the thematic analysis of the selected studies, revealing three major themes that characterize recent research on collaborative language learning. The findings show that Theme 1: Collaborative and Project-Based Learning for Language Development and Theme 2: Motivation, Anxiety, and Learner Engagement are the most frequently identified themes, with eight studies each. This indicates that current research places equal emphasis on the instructional strategies that promote collaborative learning and the psychological factors that influence learners' participation and academic performance. Studies within these themes highlight the importance of project-based and collaborative learning in developing language proficiency while also addressing learners' motivation, engagement, and anxiety to create meaningful learning experiences. Meanwhile, Theme 3: Technology-Enhanced and Mobile-Supported Collaborative Language Learning is represented by seven studies, demonstrating the growing integration of digital technologies and mobile applications into collaborative language education. Although slightly less prevalent than the other two themes, this area reflects the increasing role of technology in facilitating communication, interaction, and flexible learning opportunities. Overall, the distribution of studies suggests that contemporary language education research adopts a holistic perspective, recognizing that effective collaborative language learning depends on the interaction of pedagogical approaches, learner affective factors, and technological support to improve language learning outcomes.

Theme 1: Collaborative and Project-Based Learning for Language Development

Table 6 - Collaborative and Project-Based Learning for Language Development

PS	Author (Year)	Article Title
PS1	Pushpakumara (2026)	Fostering Active Learner Participation in Higher Education: An Action Research Project
PS3	Mudinillah et al. (2026)	Integrating Differentiated Instruction into Project-Based Learning: Implications for Collaborative Learning and Student Motivation in Arabic Language Education
PS4	Tu (2024)	The Impact of Project-Based Learning and Local Cultural Content on EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency
PS5	Aldobekhi & Abahussain (2024)	Enhancing English Language Students' Productive Skills through Project-Based Learning: A Mixed Method Research
PS6	Chang et al. (2022)	Effects of Combining Different Collaborative Learning Strategies with Problem-Based Learning in a Flipped Classroom on Program Language Learning
PS8	Yang et al. (2025)	Unveiling Conceptual Dimensions of Co-Regulated Learning Strategies and Interactions with Self-Regulation for EFL Learners in Collaborative Learning
PS12	Robbins & Appel (2026)	Active Participation in Collaborative Activities as a Precursor for Emotional Engagement and Academic Success in Online Higher Education Language Learning
PS14	Avsheniuk et al. (2023)	Fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence and Student Autonomy through Project-Based Learning

The studies presented in table 6 demonstrate a strong emphasis on learner-centered pedagogical approaches that promote active participation, collaboration, and authentic language use in language education. Several studies highlight the effectiveness of project-based learning (PBL) in enhancing different aspects of language acquisition. For instance, Pushpakumara (2026) and Robbins and Appel (2026) emphasize the importance of active learner participation in improving student engagement and academic success, particularly in higher

education and online learning environments. Similarly, Mudinillah et al. (2026), Tu (2024), Aldobekhi and Abahussain (2024), and Avsheniuk et al. (2023) demonstrate that integrating PBL with differentiated instruction, local cultural content, or intercultural activities enhances learners' speaking proficiency, productive language skills, motivation, autonomy, and intercultural communicative competence. Beyond PBL, Chang et al. (2022) investigate the integration of collaborative learning strategies with problem-based learning in flipped classrooms, showing their positive influence on programming language learning. Meanwhile, Yang et al. (2025) explore the role of co-regulated learning and self-regulation in collaborative environments, highlighting the importance of shared learning strategies for successful English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Collectively, these studies indicate that collaborative, project-based, and student-centered instructional approaches create meaningful learning experiences that foster language proficiency, learner motivation, engagement, autonomy, and overall academic achievement.

Theme 2: Motivation, Anxiety, and Learner Engagement

Table 7 - Motivation, Anxiety, and Learner Engagement

PS	Author (Year)	Article Title
PS2	Haque et al. (2026)	Pedagogical Strategies for Mitigating Foreign Language Anxiety: A Mixed-Methods Study of First-Semester Undergraduate Students
PS11	Du et al. (2026)	Second Foreign Language Learning Difficulties and Curriculum Implications for English-Majoring Master's Students in Vietnam
PS13	Jiao et al. (2026)	Profiling EFL Students' Motivation and Anxiety in Collaborative Learning: Associations With Teachers' Support, Self-Regulated Learning, and Achievement
PS15	Zhou et al. (2026)	Understanding Multilingual Student Motivation through Ideal Self and International Posture: A Study of Simultaneous Language Learning University Programmes in China
PS16	Bai & Zang (2026)	Bilingual Learning Motivation and Engagement among Students in Chinese-English Bilingual Education Programmes in Mainland China: Competing or Coexistent?
PS17	Barani et al. (2026)	The Mediating Role of Language Learning Strategies and Motivational Learning Strategies on the Relationship between Learning Styles and Second/Foreign Language Achievement
PS18	Guo et al. (2023)	The Impact of Blended Learning-Based Scaffolding Techniques on Learners' Self-Efficacy and Willingness to Communicate
PS19	Peng & Fu (2021)	The Effect of Chinese EFL Students' Learning Motivation on Learning Outcomes within a Blended Learning Environment

The studies under Theme 2: Motivation, Anxiety, and Learner Engagement (Table 7) primarily examine the affective and psychological factors that influence second and foreign language learning. Several studies focus on learners' motivation as a key determinant of language achievement. The studies by Zhou et al. (2026), Bai and Zang (2026), Barani et al. (2026), and Peng and Fu (2021) demonstrate that higher levels of motivation are positively associated with learner engagement, language achievement, and successful learning outcomes in multilingual, bilingual, and blended learning environments. Complementing these findings, Guo et al. (2023) report that blended learning supported by scaffolding techniques enhances learners' self-efficacy and willingness to communicate, thereby promoting greater engagement in language learning. In contrast, Haque et al. (2026), Du et al. (2026), and Jiao et al. (2026) address the challenges of foreign language anxiety and learning difficulties, emphasizing that teacher support, self-regulated learning, and appropriate pedagogical strategies are essential for reducing anxiety and improving academic performance. Jiao et al. (2026) further reveal that motivation and anxiety are closely interconnected and significantly influence learners' achievement in collaborative learning settings. Overall, these studies indicate that fostering motivation, minimizing anxiety, and strengthening learner engagement are essential for improving language proficiency and supporting effective foreign language learning across diverse educational contexts.

Theme 3: Technology-Enhanced and Mobile-Supported Collaborative Language Learning

Table 8 - Technology-Enhanced and Mobile-Supported Collaborative Language Learning

PS	Author (Year)	Article Title
PS6	Chang et al. (2022)	Effects of Combining Different Collaborative Learning Strategies with Problem-Based Learning in a Flipped Classroom on Program Language Learning
PS7	Xu & Peng (2022)	Exploring Learner Motivation and Mobile-Assisted Peer Feedback in a Business English Speaking Course
PS9	Tiantian et al. (2024)	The Effects of Collaborative Mobile Learning Approach on Academic Performance: The Mediating Role of Social Interaction and Learning Motivation
PS10	Liu et al. (2022)	Students' Performance and Perceptions of Wiki-Based Collaborative Writing for Learners of English as a Foreign Language
PS12	Robbins & Appel (2026)	Active Participation in Collaborative Activities as a Precursor for Emotional Engagement and Academic Success in Online Higher Education Language Learning
PS18	Guo et al. (2023)	The Impact of Blended Learning-Based Scaffolding Techniques on Learners' Self-Efficacy and Willingness to Communicate
PS19	Peng & Fu (2021)	The Effect of Chinese EFL Students' Learning Motivation on Learning Outcomes within a Blended Learning Environment

The studies under Theme 3: Technology-Enhanced and Mobile-Supported Collaborative Language Learning demonstrate the growing importance of digital technologies in facilitating collaborative language learning and improving student outcomes. Various technology-enhanced approaches, including flipped classrooms, mobile-assisted learning, wiki-based collaborative writing, blended learning, and online collaborative activities, are shown to support both language development and learner engagement. Chang et al. (2022) report that integrating collaborative learning strategies with problem-based learning in a flipped classroom enhances programming language learning and promotes active collaboration. Similarly, Xu and Peng (2022) and Tiantian et al. (2024) reveal that mobile-assisted learning and collaborative mobile learning improve learner motivation, peer interaction, speaking performance, and academic achievement. Liu et al. (2022) further demonstrate that wiki-based collaborative writing strengthens English writing performance while fostering positive learner perceptions of collaborative work. In online learning contexts, Robbins and Appel (2026) highlight that active participation in technology-mediated collaborative activities contributes to emotional engagement and academic success. Besides, Guo et al. (2023) and Peng and Fu (2021) show that blended learning environments, supported by scaffolding techniques and strong learner motivation, enhance self-efficacy, willingness to communicate, and overall language learning outcomes. Collectively, these studies suggest that technology-supported collaborative learning creates flexible, interactive, and engaging learning environments that promote language proficiency, motivation, communication, and academic achievement across diverse educational settings.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This systematic literature review examined 19 peer-reviewed studies published between 2021 and 2026 to synthesize current evidence on collaborative language learning in higher education. Using the PRISMA framework, the review identified three dominant themes, Theme 1: Collaborative and Project-Based Learning for Language Development, Theme 2: Motivation, Anxiety, and Learner Engagement, and Theme 3: Technology-Enhanced and Mobile-Supported Collaborative Language Learning. The findings consistently demonstrate that collaborative and project-based pedagogies promote active participation, authentic communication, learner autonomy, and higher-order thinking, leading to improved language proficiency. Studies by Pushpakumara (2026), Mudinillah et al. (2026), Tu (2024), Aldobekhi and Abahussain (2024), and Avsheniuk et al. (2023) further confirm the effectiveness of project-based learning in enhancing productive language skills, intercultural competence, and student engagement. Likewise, the review shows that affective

factors remain central to successful language learning. Research by Haque et al. (2026), Jiao et al. (2026), Zhou et al. (2026), and Peng and Fu (2021) demonstrates that motivation, teacher support, self-regulated learning, and reduced language anxiety significantly contribute to learner engagement and academic achievement. Furthermore, technology-enhanced collaborative environments—including blended learning, mobile-assisted learning, flipped classrooms, and wiki-based collaborative writing—provide flexible and interactive learning experiences that strengthen communication, self-efficacy, and collaborative knowledge construction, as evidenced by Chang et al. (2022), Xu and Peng (2022), Liu et al. (2022), Guo et al. (2023), and Robbins and Appel (2026).

Additionally, the methodological diversity across the reviewed studies demonstrates the breadth of research examining collaborative and learner-centred approaches in language education, while simultaneously revealing important limitations in the comparability and generalisability of the evidence. Small-scale action research and case studies, such as those conducted by Pushpakumara (2026) and Avsheniuk et al. (2023), provide valuable contextual and experiential insights into classroom processes but offer limited causal inference and external validity. Conversely, quasi-experimental and quantitative studies provide stronger evidence of intervention effects or relationships among variables, yet several remain constrained by small, homogeneous, convenience-based, or institution-specific samples. Moreover, differences in analytical approaches—from pre- and post-testing to structural equation modelling and latent profile analysis—reflect fundamentally different assumptions about whether collaborative learning should be understood primarily as an intervention, a behavioural process, or a multidimensional learner characteristic.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The contextual analysis further indicates that the evidence base is geographically and linguistically uneven, with a strong concentration in Asian educational settings and a pronounced dominance of English as the target language. Although studies from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Ukraine, and Spain provide valuable contextual variation, the limited representation of non-English languages restricts the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic applicability of the findings. Importantly, learner responses to collaboration may be shaped by cultural expectations, teacher–student relationships, learner autonomy, linguistic background, technological environments, and institutional conditions. Therefore, collaborative learning should be understood as a context-sensitive rather than universally transferable pedagogical phenomenon. Future research should employ larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal and cross-cultural comparative designs, and greater representation of languages beyond English to determine which collaborative learning mechanisms are robust across contexts and which are culturally, linguistically, or institutionally contingent. Such methodological and contextual diversification would strengthen the external validity, theoretical coherence, and practical relevance of future research in language education

The findings also have several important implications for language education in higher education. Pedagogically, educators should adopt collaborative, project-based, and technology-supported instructional practices that encourage meaningful interaction, learner autonomy, and authentic communication. Higher institutions should also create learning environments that address learners' motivational and emotional needs by providing appropriate scaffolding, constructive feedback, and opportunities for collaborative engagement. Theoretically, the review demonstrates that Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and Connectivism (Siemens, 2005) collectively offer a comprehensive framework for explaining how social interaction, psychological factors, and digital technologies influence collaborative language learning. Future research should extend beyond descriptive investigations by employing longitudinal, experimental, and mixed-methods designs to examine the long-term effects of collaborative learning interventions across diverse cultural and institutional contexts. Further studies should also explore emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, adaptive learning systems, and learning analytics, to determine how these innovations can further enhance collaborative language learning, learner engagement, and academic achievement in higher education.

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