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Unpacking Online Collaborative Learning in Teaching EFL Speaking: Insights from Three Rural Area Case Studies

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Abstract

The collaborative use of technology and online teaching and learning is a new pedagogical trend following the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This pedagogy has created flexible learning modes for teachers and students to practice and develop their speaking skills in English as a foreign language through collaborative activities, interactive group projects, and peer feedback. Despite the plethora of studies pertinent to online learning, online collaborative learning (OCL) insights in rural areas are not well-documented, leaving knowledge gaps. Thus, a study of teachers' and students' perceptions of OCL in rural areas of Papua, Indonesia, is needed. Researchers have confirmed that the OCL is a new pedagogical approach to lifelong and sustainable learning. This study employed a qualitative report, using a triple-case study approach. The results propose that: (1) OCL can be implemented using two learning modes: synchronous and asynchronous. The WhatsApp group (WAG) chat feature was used to deliver written discussions and peer evaluations and the WhatsApp voice note tool to provide oral feedback synchronously. Google Classroom asynchronously provided the materials, tasks, and teacher feedback. (2) Teachers' reasons for choosing OCL in EFL speaking courses include effectiveness, efficiency, interest, and engagement. Students' perceptions highlighted the OCL effect in light of three aspects: (a) social, (b) psychological, and (c) speaking skills. (3) Teachers' barriers during OCL implementation: (a) poor internet connection, (b) free-riders, (c) unpunctuality, and (d) unfamiliarity with technology use. (4) Teacher strategies to overcome the barriers to OCL: (a) university-sponsored internet, (b) OCL orientation at the beginning of class, (c) forming groups and choosing topics regarding students' prior knowledge, (d) extra peer tutoring time, and (e) self-directed learning.

Keywords

collaborative online-learning, perception, qualitative case study, rural-area, speaking

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Unpacking Online Collaborative Learning in Teaching EFL Speaking: Insights from Three Rural Area Case Studies

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The collaborative use of technology and online teaching and learning is a new pedagogical trend following the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This pedagogy has created flexible learning modes for teachers and students to practice and develop their speaking skills in English as a foreign language through collaborative activities, interactive group projects, and peer feedback. Despite the plethora of studies pertinent to online learning, online collaborative learning (OCL) insights in rural areas are not well-documented, leaving knowledge gaps. Thus, a study of teachers' and students' perceptions of OCL in rural areas of Papua, Indonesia, is needed. Researchers have confirmed that the OCL is a new pedagogical approach to lifelong and sustainable learning. This study employed a qualitative report, using a triple-case study approach. The results propose that: (1) OCL can be implemented using two learning modes: synchronous and asynchronous. The WhatsApp group (WAG) chat feature was used to deliver written discussions and peer evaluations and the WhatsApp voice note tool to provide oral feedback synchronously. Google Classroom asynchronously provided the materials, tasks, and teacher feedback. (2) Teachers' reasons for choosing OCL in EFL speaking courses include effectiveness, efficiency, interest, and engagement. Students' perceptions highlighted the OCL effect in light of three aspects: (a) social, (b) psychological, and (c) speaking skills. (3) Teachers' barriers during OCL implementation: (a) poor internet connection, (b) free-riders, (c) unpunctuality, and (d) unfamiliarity with technology use. (4) Teacher strategies to overcome the barriers to OCL: (a) university-sponsored internet, (b) OCL orientation at the beginning of class, (c) forming groups and choosing topics regarding students' prior knowledge, (d) extra peer tutoring time, and (e) self-directed learning.

Keywords: collaborative online-learning, perception, qualitative case study, rural-area, speaking

Introduction

Online collaborative learning (OCL) refers to a method of managing the teaching and learning process that focuses on the student and encourages teamwork or group problem-solving, aided by technology and synchronous and asynchronous internet access (McAlpine, 2000). Underpinned by constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes cognitive development through interactions with others (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), the OCL has been adequately applied in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL).

For this reason, the OCL helps students develop new skills, such as the capacity for critical thinking and problem solving (Gokhale, 1995), collaboration, and communication. Consequently, for years, this method has been hailed as a secret for effective English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, as mentioned by Ardiningtyas et al. (2023), Jung et al. (2012), Pleines (2020), Pulker and Kukulska-Hulme (2020), Sun et al. (2017), and Yildiz and Bichelmeyer (2003).

Collaborative use of technology and online teaching and learning are new pedagogical trends following the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Many schools and teachers have fully adapted online learning (Ludwig & Tassinari, 2023), blended learning (Qiao et al., 2023), and flipped learning (Al-Samarraie et al., 2020; Ni et al., 2023; Teo et al., 2022). With regards to this, some studies have investigated and explored online learning strategies (Cantrell et al., 2008; Davis et al., 2018) and blended learning tools (Guangying, 2014; Pinto-Llorente et al. 2017).

Online collaborative learning provides a flexible environment for learners to practice and develop their speaking skills in English as a foreign language. By engaging in interactive activities (Golub, 1988), communicating with peers, and receiving feedback, learners can improve their fluency, accuracy, and confidence in English. The OCL can effectively utilize English as a foreign language by providing opportunities for learners to engage in interactive and communicative activities with their peers. Online collaborative learning can promote the use of English as a foreign language in several ways (Alhussain et al. 2020).

(1) Group discussions: online platforms (Bach et al., 2006) can facilitate group discussions in which learners share ideas, opinions, and perspectives in English. This promotes communication and helps learners develop their speaking skills (Schiek & Ullrich, 2019).

(2) Virtual role-playing: online collaborative learning involves role-playing activities in which learners assume different roles and engage in simulated conversations and scenarios. This encourages learners to use English in a practical context and enhances their speaking abilities (Coe, 2017).

(3) Collaborative projects: learners can work together on collaborative projects and create presentations. This allows students to practice speaking English while working towards a common goal.

(4) Peer feedback and correction: online collaborative learning provides learners with opportunities to provide feedback and correction to their peers' spoken English. This feedback loop helps learners identify areas for improvement and enhances their speaking accuracy and fluency (Gielen et al., 2010).

(5) Virtual language exchange: online platforms can connect learners from different parts of the world, allowing them to engage in language exchanges. Learners can converse using English as a common language, providing valuable practice and exposure to different accents and cultural contexts (Mehra, 2002).

(6) Online language communities (Agopian, 2022): online collaborative learning can involve participation in language learning communities or forums in which learners can engage in discussions, ask questions, and receive support in English. This fosters a sense of community and encourages learners to use English to communicate with peers.

(7) Virtual presentations and debates: online collaborative learning can provide opportunities for learners to deliver presentations or participate in online English debates. These activities enhance students' speaking skills and confidence (Janghorban et al., 2014).

Unfortunately, teachers' and students' perceptions, strategies, barriers, and solutions to overcome the barriers to OCL insights in rural areas are not well documented, leaving knowledge gaps (Lucas & Vicente, 2023). We are concerned about how teachers can survive, continue, and succeed in the learning process in rural areas with limited technology infrastructure (Salemink et al., 2017) and lack of adequate teachers' technological ability

(Butarbutar et al., 2021; Stenman & Pettersson, 2020). As mentioned in the limited rural areas, it is challenging (to design online materials) and opportunistic (increase literacy in digital skills; Butarbutar, 2019; Butarbutar et al., 2021). In response, it is crucial to present and unpack how EFL-speaking teachers successfully apply the OCL.

Our study reports on five EFL teachers' strategies to design and apply OCL, as well as possible barriers and strategies to overcome them. This study attempts to accomplish this by exploring the perspectives of teachers and students regarding their success in OCL implementation. Furthermore, the current study responds to the call for papers by Chen et al. (2005) to improve the functionality of synchronous learning and create a more adaptable, simple, and comfortable learning environment for teachers and students.

In keeping with the objectives of our study, this study defined rural areas as groupings based on topography, accessibility to or distance from urban amenities, agricultural terrain, or population density. These characteristics are frequently used in research and policy debates to define "rural" (Hart et al., 2005; Putri et al. 2022). However, the current study categorizes rural areas as having the following limitations in light of educational (Butarbutar et al., 2018), infrastructures, and technological perspectives: (1) internet access; (2) weather-dependent signals, if it is heavy rain, it loses connection; (3) unfamiliar usage of technological devices; (4) less adaptability to advances in learning technology; (5) lack of personal computer ownership; (6) lack of motivation to use technology for learning purposes; and (7) periodic lighting off electricity. The latter occurred almost once per week in Merauke District: lighting off electricity around three-hour shift in each sub-district. It had a negative impact on teaching and learning processes and task submission punctuality.

This study has theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it adds to the literature on online learning and provides insights for EFL curriculum developer, policy maker, improving teaching conditions and learning opportunities for rural stakeholders. Practically, this can be a method, strategy, or best practice for online teaching and learning. To improve understanding, this study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. How do teachers implement OCL in EFL speaking courses?
2. What are teachers' and students' perceptions of the OCL EFL speaking course?
3. What are teachers' barriers to OCL implementation?
4. How do teachers' strategies overcome barriers to OCL implementation?

Authors' Contributions

All the authors are English EFL lecturers at the university and are native to Indonesia. Ranta Butarbutar is a senior English lecturer at the English Language Education Department, Universitas Musamus Merauke, South Papua, Indonesia. She holds a master's degree in English Language Education, earned at the Universitas Negeri Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia in 2017. She has been a doctoral student in English Language Education at Universitas Negeri Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia since 2021. Her research interests include EFL speaking, technology in language learning (TELL), and collaborative learning. This report is a part of her dissertation on data collection which was conducted in the South of Papua a few months ago. In doing so, she holds the responsibility for drafting, concept, and independent studies to conduct an in-depth literature review, as well as collecting, analyzing, writing, and disseminating this report through journal publications and seminars. Consequently, she is the first corresponding author.

Fentry Hernaningsi Ruing is a senior leacturer at the English Language Education Department, Universitas Sawerigading, South Sulawesi. Her contribution to our study was to collect, analyze, write, verify, and proofread the draft of the report.

Nurfajriah Basri is a senior leacturer at the English Language Education Department, Universitas Sawerigading, South Sulawesi. Her contribution to our study was to collect, analyze, write, verify, and proofread the draft of the report.

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Methods

This study aims to answer how the implementation, perceptions, barriers, and strategies to overcome the barriers to OCL exist in speaking EFL classrooms in the rural areas of Papua Province, Indonesia. In response to the research question on implementation, perceptions, barriers, and strategies to overcome these barriers, the researchers employed a qualitative method. The use of this qualitative method considers the following: (1) OCL is a new pedagogy for EFL classrooms in rural areas of Papua, Indonesia. Therefore, this issue must be explored for successful implementation. (2) Teachers' and students' perceptions and experiences require a detailed in-depth understanding during OCL. (3) The OCL is a product collaboration between EFL teachers, students, and the English Language and Education Department of Musamus, STIA Merauke, and Manokwari; hence, researchers can adjust their approach to faculty members or heads of those departments during the research process to explore unexpected findings or delve deeper into the OCL. (4) This study included three cases, which means that barriers to one another might differ. Thus, it requires deeper exploration, whole unpacking, and broader study so that its barrier could be a strategy for existing learning.

This study employs a case study which is an in-depth understanding of a single case or exploration of an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Yin, 2014) that can be involved in the real life of an entity, such as a small group. We chose a case study as an approach for an in-depth exploration of this study by considering: (1) this case occurred in a small group in an EFL speaking class. (2) The OCL is a current pedagogy and real-life situation in the rural areas of Papua, so that researchers can obtain accurate information (Creswell & Poth, 2016). (3) This study shows that OCL is a teaching method for EFL speaking course advances. (4) The OCL in speaking courses in rural areas of Papua is unique, whereas in other places, it might be a usual case, such as students' ages (ranging from 20 to 30 years – older than the Indonesian state university admission or SNPMB). (5) At the end of this study, we explain OCL as a new pedagogy in rural areas of Papua as the researcher's conclusion (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Research Data

Data can refer to information, facts, statistics, or any type of information that can be collected and analyzed. The data of this study concerned the method, strategy, barriers, and perception of OCL in EFL-speaking courses in rural areas of Papua. These data were obtained from the teachers' and students' perceptions (oral data) and narrated into written data. Written data were obtained from the open-ended questionnaires to be analyzed.

Research Data Sources

The data were sourced from written open-ended questionnaire results. This written data was the perception and experience of teachers and students during the OCL in speaking course implementation. Thus, research data were sourced from three small-group cases (Yin, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2016) from three universities in Papua: (1) the State University of Musamus Merauke, (2) Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Administrasi (STIA) Karya Darma Merauke, and (3) the State University of Papua Manokwari. These universities were chosen for the following reasons: readiness for technology infrastructure, university-sponsored internet, students' personal computers, compatible mobile phones, and backgrounds of both students' and teachers' teaching experience. Their comparisons (similarities and differences) are discussed in the following sections. The following are the comparisons (similarities and differences):

Case Study 1: State University of Musamus Merauke (English Language Education).

This department employed ten lecturers to teach 228 students. Given their socioeconomic status, 80 percent of students were awarded "*Bidik Misi*," an Indonesian government scholarship for poor students. To access the OCL asynchronously, the students leveraged a university computer laboratory because they did not have personal computers. Teachers and students agreed to use personal electronic mail (email) for additional information. In the synchronous learning mode, they leveraged WhatsApp Group (WAG) chats and voice notes via the university-sponsored internet, because few students have *indihome* or home internet services. Another barrier is that one of the teachers is unfamiliar with the use of technology tools. The most challenging aspect is the lack of students' learning awareness and responsibility as university students, so they came to campus for exam orientation. Ironically, 50% of the students did not speak English even though they took the English department as a course major. Therefore, this study is referred to as the case study. Overall, they perceived collaborative learning to be simply working together.

Case Study 2: Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Administrasi (STIA) Karya Darma Merauke (Public Administration department).

Referring to the department, the English course was taught for specific purposes (ESP). In light of this, courses are compulsory and can be conducted for one or two semesters. The department had a teacher who taught the English courses. It is important to remember that English courses are offered in the first academic year; therefore, the average number of students who took this course was 153. Fifty percent of the students worked as administrators or operators for local government part-time jobs to supplement their income. Consequently, the lack of time in English courses has created challenges for both teachers and students. Regarding the previous online survey conducted by the researchers, a few students lacked interest in learning to speak English. Some believed that English was not the main language in community services. In fact, learning English is exam-oriented. In terms of learning facilities, when teaching and learning English, teachers are not supported by English laboratories but rather by conventional table and chair classrooms. As long as we can observe, the teacher dominated the use of the Indonesian language as a lingua franca rather than full English in teaching English courses, because the students in the classroom have different first languages. As a result, the students seldom practiced speaking. Overall, owing to the limitations of the technology facilities owned by both universities and students, teachers leverage OCL to increase the effectiveness of English learning.

Case Study 3: State University of Papua, Manokwari (English Language and Education Department).

This department has nine lecturers and 253 students. In terms of learning facilities, this department used one English laboratory and one computer laboratory to support the learning and teaching processes. Few students in this department leveraged university facilities for the OCL process because of limited use of personal computers, whereas others used mobile phones. However, occasionally, these devices are incompatible with learning software. Similar to the first case mentioned above, the students in this department were students in the English department; however, not every student was confident and speaking fluently, and speaking courses remained a problem. In addition, poor and unstable internet connections are the main reasons for the unpunctuality of task submission.

In summary, the similarities between the three cases were poor internet connections and limited technological devices. Meanwhile, the difference is the unfamiliarity with technology use, university facility readiness for learning purposes, and reluctance of students of the English department to speak English. Fortunately, OCL can exist in speaking EFL courses, apart from all the limitations. For this reason, we call it casuistic in rural areas, which means that in other universities, this might be a usual case.

Respondents' Profiles

In light of this study's objective, respondents were purposively chosen to dig, unpack, investigate, and expound rich information pertaining to OCL case studies or phenomena (Patton 1990) in rural areas. The participants were selected and recommended by the head of the English Language Education Department after the researcher sent an invitation letter. Ten students (five females and five males) and five EFL teachers (four females and one male) participated in the study. They were from English-language education and public administration. Their ages ranged from 20 to 30 years (older than the Indonesian state university admission or SNPMB). According to the National Selection of New Student Admissions (SNPMB) of the Republic of Indonesia, undergraduate students at state universities should have graduated from senior high school for maximum of two years. This implies that the age range of students at state universities is less than 25 years, except for extension programs and private and open universities. Therefore, this age range is referred to as a phenomenon for undergraduate students in rural areas (older than usual). In the current study, 50% of the students worked part-time jobs to supplement their incomes. They worked as administrators or operators of the local government and as part-time English teachers in both formal and informal schools. According to the initial information obtained from the questionnaire sheets and the head of the English Language and Education Department, students spent two or three hours using the university internet for OCL. The study respondents were comprised of five subtribes: Javanese immigrants, Muyu, Korowai, Marind/Malind, and Nusa Tenggara Timur. Furthermore, researchers created a WhatsApp Group (WAG) to facilitate data collection and invited all respondents to the created WAG.

Data Collection

To collect the data, this study used an open-ended questionnaire. This open-ended questionnaire was designed using Google Forms to create its link. Furthermore, the link was sent to respondents via WAG. They were then invited to complete a questionnaire. It is important to remember that to ensure that the respondents understood all items of the open-ended questionnaires, researchers conducted WAG video-call conferences to explain the

directions for filling out the questionnaire. Simultaneously, they were allowed to ask if any item of the questionnaire was still confusing; after it was clear, they were allowed to complete it. Consequently, after completing the questionnaire, researchers rewarded them with internet vouchers with respect to their contributions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The questionnaire components consisted of (1) implementation, (2) perceptions, (3) barriers, and (4) strategies for overcoming barriers. Questions for teachers were as follows: (1) "Would you like to share your perceptions and experiences during the implementation of the OCL in the EFL speaking course such as reasons for choosing OCL in the EFL speaking course?" (2) "How did you implement OCLin EFL course (materials, tasks, topic discussions, feedback, presentations, and group projects)?" (3) "What are the barriers to implementing the OCL?" (4) "What are your strategies for overcoming the barriers faced during the implementation of OCL?" Meanwhile, the question for the students was "What are your perceptions of OCL, and would you share your experiences during the OCL-speaking course such as OCL effect on your speaking course?"

Data Analysis

This study used an interactive data-analysis model. According to Miles and Huberman (1984), data analysis might be conducted at the time of data collection in the field and after completion. This study employed four steps for interactive data analysis: collection, reduction, display, and drawing conclusions. First, data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire and oral information from the head of the English Language and Education Department. The second step was reduction – the collected data were reduced to determine relevant data to address the research questions. This reduction process aims to guide, categorize, sharpen, organize, and reduce irrelevant data. Third, data display: data were displayed through both written and tabulated forms. It aims to help researchers understand the entire data easily. Finally, conclusions are drawn. After irrelevant data reduction was completed, the researchers interpreted, verified, or trustworthy, and drew conclusions.

Trustworthiness

To prevent bias from a researcher's perspective, trustworthiness is essential. Trustworthiness represents the accuracy, truthfulness, and appropriateness of concepts, conclusions, and measurements (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The trustworthiness of the data and findings in our study was ensured by external peer checking to increase the verifiability of the results. To evaluate the trustworthiness of the data analysis and practical research recommendations, a portion of the data and conclusions was forwarded to two seasoned qualitative researchers and two doctoral lecturers in English language education. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Universitas Musamus Merauke, Papua Province, Indonesia. In keeping with respondents' privacy, we used pseudonyms.

Results

In response to the first research question, the results of our study found that teachers used two modes when implementing online collaboration for EFL speaking classes: (1) asynchronous Google Classroom (materials, tasks, and feedback delivery) and (2) WhatsApp group (WAG) chat features synchronously (written discussion and peer evaluation) and WhatsApp voice note tool (oral feedback). With regard to the second research question, students' and teachers' perceptions of OCL consisted of (1) reasons for choosing OCL (effectiveness and efficiency, interest, engagement) and (2) OCL effects, such as (a) social, (b)

psychological, and (c) speaking skills. Pertinent to the third research question, the results noted four OCL barriers: (1) poor internet connection, (2) free riders, (3) unpunctuality, and (4) unfamiliarity with technology use. Consequently, in response to the fourth research question, teachers' strategies to overcome barriers in implementing OCL were as follows: (1) university-sponsored internet, (2) OCL orientation at the beginning of class, (3) forming groups and choosing topics regarding students' prior knowledge, (4) extra peer teaching time, and (5) self-directed learning.

Google Classroom (GC) Asynchronously for Providing Materials, Tasks, and Feedback

Our results showed that in OCL implementation in speaking courses, EFL teachers asynchronously leveraged GC to post materials, tasks, and feedback. Simultaneously, teachers announced new instructions that students should understand well in the feature forums. Teachers posted students' scores or performances on feature grades. In doing so, the teachers highlighted submission deadlines. Nevertheless, before entering GC, the GC class codes were sent through the WAG. To do so, teachers can monitor and provide feedback on students' tasks easily and quickly, which is supported by the following excerpts.

> Instruction: Please enter our GC with "koexsnn" class code. Material: "pros and cons Chat GPT for education" Task: divide class into four groups; group 1 and 2 for "pros Chat GPT for education" meanwhile group 3 and 4 for "cons Chat GPT for education". After clearly discussing this with your group, you kindly uploaded your task before the deadline (Teacher 1).

For Teacher 1, GC was used to facilitate students' collaboration with their group. She posted the instructions, materials, and tasks to be discussed with the group. She shared the GC class code to facilitate students' entry into GC (Ventayen et al., (2018). In addition, she emphasized deadline uploading. Simultaneously, she was sending a reminder "became aware of the deadline uploading" to the student's personal email. She did so because students sometimes failed to pay attention to punctuality uploading.

> To perform the students' task evaluation, I wrote "You are diligent student" for the fastest submission, "You are smart" for those who gained the highest score, and "Be more punctual again" for students who uploaded late (Teacher 1).

The excerpt above shows that Teacher 1, as a senior and certified lecturer, utilized GC to provide three written feedback categories for students' tasks. Providing feedback from teachers was an opportunity to monitor students' progress in collaboration.

WhatsApp Group (WAG) Chat & Voice Note Synchronously

Written Discussion and Peer Evaluation

A written discussion in an OCL speaking course is a technique used by teachers to deliver a topic to be discussed. In doing so, the teachers wrote challenging tasks and questions that would immerse students in collaborative work. This technique was aimed at opening up large opportunities for discussants to deliver arguments, information, and thoughts; exchange ideas; debate issues; state agreement; disagreement; and clarification. As a result, students' speaking skills were encouraged during the active discussions. Simultaneously, students can

evaluate each other by repeating and reformulating the correct answers to the questions and responding appropriately to tasks. This is shown in the following excerpt:

> I do agree with student 1's opinion that collaborative learning is an excellent technique for improving students' speaking ability, I appreciate your good idea. However, I disagree with Student 3's argument that collaborative learning wastes time; in contrast, it is effective for peer discussions (Student 8).

The above excerpt shows that Student 8 provided a written comment (Gokhale, 1995) as her appreciation feedback for what Student 1 argued in the WAG chat room: peer evaluations include appreciating and strengthening peers so that they are more confident in delivering more arguments. In doing so, their peers were encouraged to engage in OCL discussions. As a result, the more students engaged in written discourse, the more confident they were in speaking. Peer feedback boosts students' active engagement in collaborative discussions and group projects (Goodsell et al., 1992).

Oral Feedback

Our study provided oral feedback through voice notes and WAG video call conferences. To do so, teachers and peers can provide verbal remarks, ideas, or critiques of student performance, projects, and presentations. This could be a useful technique for engaging both individuals and groups in improving their speaking skills.

> Group two's presentation was well done, and its topics were interesting; however, in my observation, there was one student who dominated the performance at that moment. The more active all students are, the more enthusiastic the group presentation is (Teacher 4).

From the above excerpt, Teacher 4 delivered oral feedback using the WAG voice note tool. In doing so, she praised "well done" and "interest" in the topic discussion simultaneously. Voice-note feedback is suitable for students with audio learning styles. In fact, few students found it easier to understand teachers' instructions and answer or respond to peer questions after repeatedly listening to voice notes. In addition to written feedback, oral feedback supports successful student speaking during the OCL.

Teachers' Perception for Choosing OCL

Effectiveness, Efficiency, Interest, and Engagement Factors

Despite the limited technology skills faced by teachers and internet quotas by students in rural areas, five EFL teachers successfully implemented the OCL. They had four considerations for choosing speaking courses: effectiveness, efficiency (space, time, and cost), interest, and engagement). Consequently, teachers asynchronously applied GC and WAG by considering students' personal computer devices and compatible mobile phone limitations. In doing so, they posted materials and tasks, and recorded topic discussions on GC. The reasons for this are as follows:

> In my experience, the OCL is effective in teaching speaking courses because I have a lot of flexibility and time to evaluate all students' tasks. In addition, in

> GC, I can see students' submissions, the first and last of whom submitted their tasks (Teacher 1).

> Learning in a small group, like the OCL, was effective in improving my speaking abilities such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. I was more active in engaging in discussions if the topic was similar to my previous experiences. In addition, learning through OCL is very helpful, especially for me, who do not have enough money to pay the internet quota. Fortunately, the university sponsored the internet during the session (Student 9 and student 10).

The excerpt above indicates that Teacher 1's consideration of using GC asynchronously concerns the effectiveness and efficiency factors. First, it is challenging to observe and evaluate students' speaking performance during face-to-face learning in the classroom. For this reason, GC is the best solution for providing feedback and evaluation regarding students' performance, both face-to-face in the classroom and online learning, without limited time. Second, the effectiveness of GC is paperless, because students do not need to print the materials anymore because they have been posted on GC.

Students 9 and 10 perceived that they were more actively engaging in OCL written discussions because their grammar and vocabulary had improved. They can be assisted by a capable peer during the group discussions. They agreed that their speaking skills improved daily from the first week to the end of the semester as a result of peer-to-peer learning. In addition, the university-sponsored internet was very helpful for the OCL.

Students' Perception of OCL Effects

Social Effect

OCL brings about social effects for students through both WAG and GC sessions. Socially, receiving feedback from group members, peers, and teachers encourages students to become more confident speaking up when delivering presentations. Peer support strengthens students' arguments when a question-and-answer session occurs during the OCL. In addition, sharing ideas and correcting mistakes through peer feedback teaches students that speaking improvement does not solo their performance. Peer teaching to solve group projects enriches students' social skills. This effect can be expressed as follows:

> I am more confident and motivated to practice speaking when paired with a group that helps and encourages one another. I respected those who gave me positive feedback and helped correct my grammatical mistakes by reformulating politely (Student 8).

Student 8's excerpt shows that the OCL method provides enlarged opportunities for students to work together and socially during the process. Peer teaching, teacher support, suggestions, and positive feedback were inherent OCL factors. A social effect was observed when receiving audience or group member feedback. Learning and interacting in a group consisting of different skills, experiences, and knowledge was socially beneficial (Laal & Laal, 2012) for students. For this reason, individual success influences group success and vice versa; "swim or sink together' (Johnson et al., 1998).

Psychological Effect

The interaction between peers and groups in the OCL process psychologically affects students. Collaborative group work to achieve group success encourages individuals' esteem and belief. Both psychological factors lead to responsibility for and respect for others. In addition, group diversity background influences self-confidence and willingness to perform more challenging tasks. Social interdependence to solve problems reduces student anxiety.

> My speaking skills are now better than they were before the OCL. Using this method, I felt more confident, because my peers encouraged me to practice speaking every day. I believe that I am still a learner who must learn from my peer group. When I work alone, I occasionally lack the confidence to speak in front of others, but when I work in groups, I have more confidence than before. Quite frankly, this method helps me lessen fear and anxiety (Student 7).

The above excerpt shows that Student 7 expressed that her speaking performance advanced psychologically after the OCL, such as self-confidence, motivation, self-esteem, and anxiety reduction. These psychological factors influence the students' confidence in answering questions, respecting others' opinions, group success responsibilities, and delivering arguments. Additionally, good social relationships among group members affect self-confidence when they have different ideas. Thus, the social and psychological hands-in-hand boosted the sense of OCL success.

Speaking Skill Improvement

The main purpose of OCL implementation was to improve students' speaking skills as a learning objective. Speaking as a productive skill means that there is a task, speech, or message needed to produce and speaking is the media. In doing so, speaking requires partners, peers, or collaborators to respond and provide feedback. As a result, peers in the OCL mediated and facilitated the vocabulary enrichment. Getting much vocabulary from experienced peers supported the idea that speaking is more fluent. In addition, reformulating and repeating correct phrases and sentences to determine whether the class project presentation was effective in improving speaking performance. OCL-based peer tutoring has a positive effect on improving speaking skills. This improvement was as follows:

> I support the OCL method in class because I can team with others who are more qualified. I frequently have trouble understanding properly employed grammar, but when working with a small group, I can correct myself by rephrasing what they state. At the end of the last semester, my English scores increased thanks to the collaborative learning technique, and I received a good category, which made me happier than in the last semester (Student 4).

The above excerpt demonstrates an improvement in students' speaking scores during the OCL implementation. In speaking courses, the OCL emphasizes interactions with peers who have more knowledge of linguistic competence. Students often work together in groups or pairs to share information when they know something more than others do. Pair work and group work are essential for speaking performance (Harmer, 2001), Celce-Murcia and McIntosh (1991) mentioned discussion and group work; Bailey and Nunan (2005) interaction-based activities; Richard (1990) created conditions for oral interaction through group work; and Ur (1996) used group work, in which students must mediate through other social groups, including parents,

classmates, and lecturers. Students collaborate regularly as scaffolders to overcome hurdles in small groups during speaking practice. Peer interactions and assistance are crucial for OCL.

Online Collaborative Learning Barriers

Poor Internet Connection (PIC)

Poor internet connection (PIC) is a barrier to the implementation of OCL in speaking courses in rural areas. Consequently, teachers often postponed holding group discussions and required additional time. This barrier "forced" teachers in rural areas to be more adaptive and flexible, especially EFL teachers.

> I often failed to upload and download files attached to the Image Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPG) extension and recorded my presentations. This required additional time for compression and conversion. It frequently occurred when heavy rain fell and my house was remote (Student 3).

The excerpt above describes Student 3's barrier to uploading and downloading the JPG files attached to the GC. This is because the geographical location is remote from the internet provider center. Natural factors such as heavy rain cause PIC during the OCL process. Therefore, as a special barrier in rural areas, teachers allow time flexibility in terms of task submission.

Free-Riders

A lack of a sense of collaboration and teamwork is a common barrier to OCL implementation. This occurs when students apply for work to cooperate and do not work to collaborate. Both terms are sometimes interchangeable and misinterpreted by students. Collaboration does not simply involve working in groups to complete a project with split work for an individual but emphasizes positive interdependence. Our study found that a few students interpreted collaboration as a combination of individual work in one group. As a result, there is a student who is a free-rider. Free-riders, or freeloading, sometimes occurs when a group consists of too many members, so not all members truly participate in working, but they have an effect. This is as follows:

> I had group members who were passive students. He had never participated in the workgroup. Crucially, he often turns off his mobile phone and responds slowly to information in WAG and GC. Like or disliked as a member of our group, he received a score for the final project (Student 3).

The aforementioned excerpt demonstrates that Student 3, as a leader of group three, said that during the OCL process, he found that there was a student on his team to be a free-rider. This commonly occurs when a group member does not understand the meaning of collaboration or lacks a sense of teamwork. Collaborative learning is fully understood when group work fills four components: (1) positive interdependence, (2) individual accountability, (3) interpersonal skills, and (4) group processing (Johnson et al., 1990).

Unpunctuality

Unpunctuality was defined as not being on time, showing up at a particular location, or event at a scheduled or anticipated time. Because it exhibits dependability, respect for others' time, and a feeling of responsibility, it is valued in the OCL implementation. However, it is sometimes ignored by a few students, specifically during task submission deadlines. Along with the individual responsibility required for the success of group work, punctuality is also a prerequisite. Our study reported that two groups submitted their tasks after the due time. This can be expressed as follows:

> Group 2 was submitted two days after the due time. However, after clarifying that the late submission task was caused by technical errors and internet connections. Meanwhile, group four had due time for task submission because they ignored deadlines (Teacher 3).

The excerpt mentioned above emphasizes that unpunctuality occurs due to technical and human factors. Punctuality submission tasks assume a form of responsibility for both individual and group collaboration. This factor is an important component in the success of OCL. Punctuality represents responsibility, and responsibility supports OCL. The more punctual individuals and groups, the more meaningful the collaboration.

Unfamiliarity with Technology Use

Unfamiliarity with technology use refers to a lack of knowledge, expertise, or comfort when using various technical equipment, software, or digital tools. This might manifest as limited digital skills such as sending emails, browsing the internet, or using productivity software and prior experience based on printed textbooks. In addition, this unfamiliarity is caused by dependency on others (DoT). DoT means that someone unfamiliar with technology may rely on others such as family members, friends, or colleagues to assist them with technology-related tasks. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

> It is difficult to upload several files simultaneously, particularly if their extensions are different. Moreover, uploading a recorded video with larger capacity fails. Therefore, I have assisted my colleagues in solving this problem (Teacher 5).

The aforementioned excerpt describes unfamiliarity with basic technological skills. However, these skills are the main needs for OCL implementation in rural areas. Therefore, teachers should be adaptable to the growth of technology, including its use, to facilitate some different files as learning sources for students in rural areas and should not depend on others, except in special cases (such as Internet errors).

Teachers' Strategies to Overcome Difficulties When Implementing OCL

University-Sponsored Internet

In supporting that the OCL implementation is running well, teachers in this study proposed the internet sponsored by the university. It was initiated by teachers to overcome the difficulties faced by teachers and students in rural areas. Therefore, to the best of our knowledge, the Indonesian government has launched funding internet programs for rural areas,

specifically in Papua, such as free internet 30 Gigabytes for students and 50 Gigabytes for teachers. Without this, OCL implementation may be staggered, fail, or even return to the conventional face-to-face classroom processes. Unfortunately, this program is periodic and situational, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the university anniversary. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

> During the OCL class, my students accessed Google Classroom and WhatsApp Group using the internet provided by the university. However, I worry that if this program ends, my students will have difficulty accessing OCL classes in the future because not every student has his or her own internet quota (Teacher 4).

The above excerpt shows that teachers and students gained access to Google Classroom and WhatsApp Group by leveraging the internet sponsored by the university during the OCL implementation. This implies the sustainability of the university-sponsored internet and does not remain periodic as long as students become university students because online learning is no longer avoided, even in rural areas. Life-long learning and sustainability are necessary.

OCL Orientation at the Beginning of Class

To ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the OCL in improving students' speaking skills, students were oriented at the beginning of the class. In doing so, the teachers told them that the essence of collaborative work was positive interdependence rather than competition. Individual success affects group success and vice versa. In addition, collaboration is not simply working together but rather building a sense of group. To do this, students are boosted to engage in class discussion activities, such as peer support, evaluation or correction, asking and responding to others' questions, sharing opinions, listening to and criticizing others' opinions, clarifying, confirming, agreeing, and explaining what they have learned during the collaboration class. As a result, group work is no longer competition-oriented but oriented toward problem-solving based on collaboration. In addition, during this session, teachers were reminded of punctuality when collaborative work was required; this is a representation of individual responsibilities. This strategy was socialized for students to avoid disorientation, unpunctuality, competition, and free-riders, which are barriers to implementing the OCL. Otherwise, they simply worked in groups to cooperate as excerpts, as follows:

> To begin class discussions and orientation in week 1 of the WAG chat, I wrote the definition, principles, and components of collaborative learning, including its difference from cooperative learning and challenges and opportunities during the OCL class for one-semester implementation (Teacher 1).

The excerpt above explains that the teacher gave class orientation before truly implementing the OCL. The first class was intended to provide students with insights into the full meaning of collaborative learning. This understanding was the key to improving speaking skills by leveraging OCL. In this vein, she delivered a written orientation, which became a topic of discussion during the first week of the speech course. She informed the students that speaking class would be conducted through the OCL until the end of the semester. This implies that insight and perception of collaborative learning are the primary aspects of OCL. The better students understood collaborative learning, the better their speaking skills improved.

Forming Groups and Choosing Topics Regarding Students' Prior Knowledge

To overcome the barriers to OCL implementation, teachers formed groups and selected topics regarding students' prior knowledge. Each student had different prior knowledge, insights, and expertise. Joining the aforementioned students in one group would make it easier for them to develop new skills. Students' speaking performance is affected by how active they are during group projects and discussion. According to the findings of the current study, teachers divided the students into groups based on their responsibilities and special roles. This is a trained division to increase students' interactions with peers, which in turn affects their achievement by reducing their dependence on active students. In addition, group division was intended to anticipate passive students. In this study, groups were formed by fixing each role. This formation is clearly seen in the following excerpt.

> By paying attention to the prior knowledge and skills of each student, I grouped them by fixing roles, such as Students 1 and 2 as information seekers and givers, Students 3 and 4 as elaborators, Students 5 and 6 as presenters, Students 7 and 8 as recorders and uploaders, and Students 9 and 10 as evaluators (Teacher 5).

The excerpt from Teacher 5 mentioned above indicates that she grouped her students by fixing their roles. Each student was responsible for their fixed roles. This individual responsibility affects the success of a group project. How far she played the role and was involved in the discussion influenced group achievement. The more actively students play their roles (Coe, 2017), the more their speaking skills improve.

> In the third week of the OCL class, I announced in the forum that please choose your topic based on your group members' experiences (Teacher 5).

In the above excerpt, Teacher 5 delineated her strategy for avoiding free-riders and passive students by choosing topics of discussion in the light of each student. It might sometimes be that the discussion is difficult or passive because the topics being discussed are far from their knowledge or never experienced. In such situations, discussions are dominated by active students and other listeners.

Peer Tutoring Time Extra

Owing to limited time and internet quotas, collaboration between GC and WAG is sometimes challenging. The teacher gave students extra time for peer tutoring outside the OCL class. This strategy aims to help students learn unfamiliar technology. To do this, students are involved in pairing or grouping students according to their speaking levels so that one student can provide assistance and support to another in the collaboration process. In addition, the teacher selected two students who were more knowledgeable than the others as tutors, information seekers, and givers of the previous week. They also played the roles of scaffolders and tutors. Interestingly, they conducted peer tutoring with flexibility and comfort, similar to round-the-table conferences. This situation can be described in the following excerpt.

> Student 9 played the role of tutor for students 1, 2, and 3, whereas student 7 played the role of tutor for leader discussions 4, 5, and 10. "Digital skills for accelerating Education in Papua" was a tutoring topic.

The above excerpt demonstrates that the teacher provided extra time for students to peer tutors or alternative time to peers (Goodsell et al., 1992) out of the OCL class. It is intended for students who face barriers, such as unfamiliar technology use, poor internet connection, lack of interaction (passive students) in discussion sessions, and free riders. In addition, tutoring is an effort to create an adaptable and comfortable learning environment for students (Chen et al., 2005). Hence, tutors or scaffolding can strengthen topics that still lack understanding of the previous OCL class. In addition, tutoring tended to emphasize linguistic elements and competencies, whereas in true OCL, both issues were limited.

Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

Teachers' barriers to OCL implementation in rural areas imply strategies and insights for overcoming them. In such cases, additional assistance or training in technology and digital skill development are required. However, teachers must reduce their DoT except in urgent cases. Consequently, the teachers leveraged Google Flatform as a large learning source and tool for SDL. The SDL, which is based on Google's power, supports the existence and sustainability of OCL in rural areas. Teachers make efforts to facilitate students' learning needs in rural areas both synchronously and asynchronously. To do this, they initiated self-development through self-planning, self-organizing strategies, self-actualization, and self-evaluation, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

> Autodidact, I learned to convert documents in Microsoft Word into PDF, and vice versa. In addition, I compress a larger PDF capacity from Google internet. If I was still confused, I watched a YouTube tutorial.

The excerpt above shows that the teacher converted and compressed PDF files using Google or the internet. Our study reported that both skills were needed for OCL implementation, and that not every teacher in rural areas could perform both skills. As a result, the teacher initiated an SDL strategy in which the internet was a learning resource and Google was its tool. In this vein, SDL strengthens teachers' capacity as directors, planners, developers, managers, and evaluators of teaching and learning processes (Tudor, 1993) in both the classroom and online learning.

Discussion

In the implementation of online collaborative learning, EFL teachers gained insights from three rural areas. The following section was divided into four parts: OCL implementation, teachers' and students' perceptions of OCL, teachers' barriers to OCL, and teachers' strategies to overcome barriers.

First, the OCL was implemented using two learning modes: (1) asynchronous Google Classroom for posting materials, tasks, and feedback; and (2) the WhatsApp group chats and voice notes synchronously to provide written discussions, peer evaluations, and oral feedback. Both of these learning modes are insightful for monitoring students' progress in collaboration and boosting their active engagement (Goodsell et al., 1992) in OCL discussions and group projects easily and quickly. The success of OCL was consistent with (Glover & Brown, 2006; Van Der Kleij & Adie, 2020) who stated that feedback is effective when students act on it and improve their work and learning. In this vein, feedback and peer evaluation were effective in engaging students in OCL activities such as delivering arguments, information, and thoughts, exchanging ideas, debating issues, and stating agreement, disagreement, and clarification.

Second, teachers' perceptions of OCL considered the reasons for choosing it to be its effectiveness, efficiency, interest, and engagement. Our study reported that teachers in rural areas highlighted GC asynchronously and WAG chats and voice notes synchronously. Both learning modes were effective and efficient in delivering materials, tasks, peer feedback, and monitoring students' progress. Students' perceptions pointed out the effects of OCL on three aspects: social, psychological, and speaking skill improvement.

(1) Socially, students interact individual-to-individual, peer-to-peer, or even individual-to-group when providing or receiving feedback. Learning and interacting in groups consisting of different skills, experiences, and knowledge is socially beneficial for students. Therefore, individual success affects group success, and vice versa (Gokhale, 1995), social interdependence (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1998), and "swim or sink together' (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1998). Similarly, Schiek and Ullrich (2019) argued that group discussions can promote speaking skills by sharing ideas or opinions. Moreover, our study agrees with Vygotsky and Cole's (1978) constructivist learning theory which emphasizes cognitive development through interactions with the environment. Peer feedback encourages students to develop new speaking skills. Students' interactions to socialize with groups and the environment develop cognition (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The more the students interact with groups, the more speaking develops.

(2) Psychologically, self-esteem, beliefs, self-confidence, and low anxiety boosted a sense of OCL success. Positive peer feedback and interactions between peers and groups reduce student anxiety regarding group projects (Gokhale, 1995) and presentations. Social interdependence to solve problems reduces student anxiety. Group diversity, background, and knowledge affect self-confidence and individual responsibility to work collaboratively (Butarbutar et al., 2023).

(3) Speaking skill improvement: students obtained much vocabulary from experienced peers, more productive speaking-assisted peers, and accuracy by correcting peer phrases and sentence reformulation and repetition. Collaborative pair work, group work, discussion, and interaction are consistent with teaching-speaking strategies (Bailey & Nunan, 2005; Celce-Murcia & McIntosh, 1991; Harmer, 2001; Richard, 1990; Ur, 1996).

Third, teachers' barriers to OCL are categorized into four factors: (1) poor internet connection (PIC), which is caused by two factors (natural factors such as heavy rain and geographical location being remote from the internet provider center). This affects postponing group discussions and requires flexibility-time collaboration. As a result, these barriers imply adaptive behavior among EFL teachers in rural areas. (2) Free-rider: getting the impact of collaboration without any contribution, instead of status group members. It is caused by each group member not understanding the four components of OCL: (a) positive interdependence, free competition, otherwise collaboration; (b) individual accountability, individual responsibility for group success; (c) interpersonal skills, interaction with respect for others' opinions; and (d) group processing, small group skills (Johnson & Johnson 1989). (3) Unpunctuality is caused by a lack of personal accountability and social interdependence (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1998; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1998). (4) Unfamiliarity with technology caused by dependency on others, such as family members, friends, or colleagues, to assist them in technology-related tasks. In addition, the unfamiliarity of the technology barrier is caused by prior habits of print-based learning sources. Therefore, this barrier requires time to adapt and migrate technological skills for OCL implementation.

Fourth, teachers' strategies to overcome barriers consisted of five aspects:

(1) OCL orientation at the beginning of the class: in this vein, teachers oriented the essence of collaborative work as positive interdependence rather than competition, and actively

engaged in collaborative activities. This orientation implies that the better students understand collaborative learning, the better their speaking skills will improve.

(2) University-sponsored internet sponsored free internet quota for learning purposes; unfortunately, it was situational, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or university anniversary. This strategy implies university-sponsored internet sustainability for lifelong learning (Jarvis, 2004) and sustainability in rural areas.

(3) Forming groups and choosing topics based on students' prior knowledge: student comfort in group formation influences individual responsibility, as manifested in group performance and achievement. The chosen topics based on prior knowledge affected students' activities and engagement in the OCL.

(4) Peer tutoring affects student interactions socially, increases communicative and collaboration skills, and increases enthusiasm for speaking (Whitman & Fife, 1988). Moreover, peer tutoring strategy supports scaffolding learning (Bruner, 2006), which assists lower students (tutees) by empowering more capable students as scaffolders or tutors. In addition, our study reported that peer tutoring is the time given for peer assistance (Goodsell et al., 1992) regarding linguistic elements and competencies. This strategy is also an alternative to a comfortable learning atmosphere (Chen et al., 2005) for students and groups.

(5) Self-directed learning: this was done to improve the technology and digital skills left behind. SDL strengthens teachers' capacity as directors, planners, developers, managers, and evaluators of teaching and learning processes in both the classroom and online learning (Taylor, 2005). Our study agrees with Ardiningtyas et al. (2023), Butarbutar (2023), Knowles (1975), and Leba et al. (2021), who declared SDL a guide for teachers and students regarding their self-learning strategies and evaluations.

Conclusion

In summary, the current study focused on implementation, teachers' and students' perceptions, teachers' barriers, and teachers' strategies to overcome barriers to OCL EFL speaking in rural areas of Papua, Indonesia.

First, OCL was implemented using two learning modes: synchronous and asynchronous. Teachers synchronously leveraged the WhatsApp group (WAG) chat feature to deliver written discussions and peer evaluations. WhatsApp voice note tool for providing oral feedback. By contrast, Google Classroom asynchronously leverages the upload of materials, tasks, and teacher feedback (Iftakhar, 2016).

Second, teachers perceived effectiveness, efficiency, interest, and engagement as reasons for choosing OCL in EFL speaking courses. The students' perceptions highlighted the OCL effect in light of three aspects: (a) social, (b) psychological, and (c) speaking skills.

Third, during OCL implementation, teachers face four barriers: (1) poor internet connection, (2) free-riders, (3) unpunctuality, and (4) unfamiliarity with technology use.

Fourth, to overcome the four barriers mentioned above, teachers applied five strategies: (i) university-sponsored internet, (ii) OCL orientation at the beginning of class, (iii) forming groups and choosing topics regarding students' prior knowledge, (iv) extra peer tutoring time, and (v) self-directed learning.

Overall, OCL was an appropriate pedagogy conducted in rural areas to support lifelong learning and sustainability.

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