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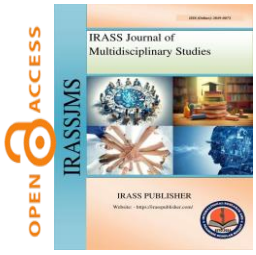

COLLABORATIVE STUDY STRATEGIES AS PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC GOAL-ORIENTATION OF UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH LEARNERS IN NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA

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Abstract: This study investigated the predictive role of collaborative study strategies on undergradute English learners' academic goal-orientation among in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The research was guided by five specific questions and four null hypotheses. The study employed a correlational survey research design, targeting all undergraduate English students at the university. A sample of 200 students was randomly selected from 1,146 populations of the two faculties: the English Department and Education and English Language. To collect data, 2 questionnaires; Collaborative Learning Questionnaire, CLQ; and Academic Goal-Orientation Questionnaire AGOQ were used. The internal consistency of the items was evaluated using Cronbach alpha statistics, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.81 for the CBQ and 0.93 for the AGO-Q. Data collected were analysed using SPSS version 24. Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to answer the research questions, while Simple Linear Regression was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that collaborative learning strategies such as group discussion, peer tutoring, and think-pair-share did not have a significant relationship with academic goal orientation. However, structured debate was found to significantly predict academic goal orientation among English learners at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This study underscores the importance of structured debate in enhancing academic goal orientation among English undergraduate students, providing valuable insights for teaching practices and strategies aimed at promoting academic success. Key findings were discussed, highlighting the significance of this research for educators and policymakers seeking to improve academic outcomes among English language learners.

Keywords: Collaborative learning, Academic goal orientation, English Language learners.

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Introduction

In contemporary higher education, the creation of effective learning environments has become increasingly essential. As the academic landscape continues to evolve, there is a growing demand for innovative teaching strategies that can enhance both student engagement and learning outcomes. One pedagogical approach that has gained considerable attention is collaborative study. This method encourages students to work together to achieve shared academic goals, thereby promoting knowledge sharing, mutual support, and the development of vital skills such as teamwork, communication, and critical thinking. Asiyai (2017) defines higher education as the postsecondary or tertiary level of learning provided in institutions such as universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, and monotechnics. Within this context, collaborative study represents a transformative learning strategy capable of enriching students' academic experiences.

Collaborative study refers to an educational practice in which students engage in group-based learning activities to achieve common academic objectives. From the perspective of the researcher, collaborative study is more than just group work—it involves active participation, structured interaction, and the intentional co-construction of knowledge. This method enables students to exchange ideas, support one another, and develop deeper understandings of academic content through shared learning experiences. Lin (2015) emphasizes that the depth and quality of interaction in collaborative settings play a crucial role in student development. The approach aligns with Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which asserts that learners often achieve higher levels of cognitive performance through social interaction. As noted by Appavoo *et al*. (2019), collaborative

learning fosters the development of higher-level thinking skills in ways that individual, competitive learning may not.

Al-Kaabi (2016) adds that collaborative learning extends beyond academic content mastery to involve emotional and behavioral engagement. It cultivates shared responsibility among group members, deepens learners' decision-making abilities, and enhances their connection to the learning community. Irene (2019) also highlights that collaborative learning promotes group interaction, individual accountability, and increased meta-cognitive awareness. Furthermore, empirical evidence from Iji *et al*. (2017) indicates that students engaged in collaborative learning outperform those taught through traditional lecture methods. The effectiveness of collaborative study lies in its capacity to help students co-create understanding, sharpen analytical skills, and construct knowledge rather than merely receiving information. Davidson and Major (2014) and Achufusi-Aka and Okpanachi (2021) agree that collaborative learning promotes joint intellectual effort, emphasizing teamwork over individual competition, while Okekeokosisi (2023) reinforces that collaborative activity allows students to create new knowledge by engaging actively with information and ideas.

For learners of English as a second language, collaborative study is especially beneficial. MacFarland *et al*. (2019) report that English learners consistently lag behind their peers in reading and subject content mastery. Collaborative study helps bridge this gap by providing emotional support, enhancing social interaction, and reducing the sense of isolation commonly experienced by L2 learners (Tuncel, 2015). It also supports academic confidence and encourages deeper engagement. According to Florisand and Divine (2015), students with strong reading skills tend to reach their academic goals more effectively, and collaborative learning plays a crucial role in nurturing such skills among English learners.

Several techniques underpin collaborative study, offering diverse ways to engage students. One such technique is the think-pair-share strategy, which allows students to reflect individually on a topic, discuss their thoughts with a partner, and then share their ideas with the larger group. According to Rachael (2024), this approach increases participation, encourages student confidence, and promotes deeper understanding. Another well-established strategy is the jigsaw method, in which each group member becomes an expert in a specific segment of the material and then teaches their peers. This not only reinforces accountability and collaboration but also improves students' goal-setting abilities and self-efficacy, as shown by Wang *et al*. (2018). Group discussions and projects also play a vital role in collaborative learning. These activities enable students to take on specific roles, explore multiple perspectives, and develop autonomy and self-regulation—skills that are essential for academic goal-setting, as noted by Zimmerman (2000).

Peer teaching, where students take on the role of the instructor, is another critical component of collaborative study. It allows learners to reinforce their understanding by explaining concepts to others, thereby enhancing both comprehension and retention. Structured debate, as a collaborative strategy, promotes critical thinking, effective communication, and teamwork. Through debate, students learn to evaluate evidence, articulate complex ideas, and engage respectfully with opposing views (Johnson & Johnson, 2020). These activities foster academic maturity and help students become more adaptable and socially aware.

Collaborative study ultimately shifts the responsibility of learning to the students themselves. It encourages active engagement and empowers learners to take charge of their academic progress. Through shared problem-solving and dialogue, students construct knowledge in meaningful ways. As such, collaborative study not only enriches the educational process but also has the potential to influence key psychological variables related to learning—one of which is academic goal orientation.

Academic goal orientation refers to the motivations that drive students to engage in learning activities. These orientations generally fall into two broad categories: mastery-oriented goals, which focus on learning and understanding, and performance-oriented goals, which emphasize demonstrating competence and achieving high grades relative to others (Ezeonwumelu *et al*., 2024). A third dimension, often referred to as social goal orientation, highlights the value of interpersonal relationships, peer collaboration, and communication in academic contexts. Socially oriented students often perform well in group settings due to their ability to foster supportive peer networks and engage positively in team-based tasks.

Hernandez and Rivera (2018) posits that the goal orientations students adopt significantly impact their academic achievement and behavior. These orientations determine the strategies, attitudes, and persistence that students display in the face of academic challenges. According to León *et al*. (2019), mastery goal orientation is often linked to higher engagement, intrinsic motivation, and long-term academic success, whereas performance goal orientation may lead to surface-level learning motivated by competition or fear of failure.

Understanding students' academic goal orientation is essential for fostering motivation, academic resilience, and achievement. When collaborative study is effectively implemented, it serves as a powerful predictor of these orientations. By working with peers, students can overcome academic barriers, manage time more efficiently, and stay motivated through shared support systems. This collaboration contributes to the development of well-defined academic goals and a stronger commitment to educational success.

Given the established links between collaborative study and students' academic motivations, this study seeks to examine collaborative study as a predictor of academic goal orientation among undergraduate English learners at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. By doing so, the research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on collaborative pedagogy and its influence on students' academic behavior, particularly within the context of English language learning.

Statement of the problem

Despite the increasing emphasis on student-centered learning approaches in higher education, many undergraduate English learners continue to struggle with setting and achieving meaningful academic goals. Traditional teaching methods often fail to foster the intrinsic motivation, engagement, and strategic thinking required for long-term academic success. Collaborative study has emerged as a promising pedagogical strategy, offering opportunities for shared learning, mutual support, and goal-directed behavior. However, there is a limited understanding of how collaborative study specifically influences students' academic goal orientation—particularly among English learners in the Nigerian university context. At Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, there is a noticeable variation in students' academic motivation and goal-setting abilities, which may be linked to their level of engagement in collaborative learning activities. This study,

therefore, seeks to investigate the extent to which collaborative study predicts academic goal orientation among undergraduate English learners, with the aim of informing more effective instructional strategies that enhance academic achievement and learner autonomy.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between group discussions and academic goal orientation?
2. What is the relationship between peer-tutoring and academic goal orientation?
3. What is the relationship between think-pair-share and academic goal orientation?
4. What is the relationship between structured debate and academic goal orientation?

Hypotheses

- **H_{O1}:** Group discussions do not significantly predict academic orientation among English Language learners.
- **H_{O2}:** Peer tutoring does not significantly predict academic orientation among English Language learners.
- **H_{O3}:** Think-pair share does not significantly predict academic orientation among English Language learners.
- **H_{O4}:** Structured debates do not significantly predict academic orientation among English Language learners.

Methods

The study adopted a correlational research design. The researchers chose this design for the study as it is aimed at investigating collaborative study as predictor of Students Academic goal-orientations among English learners of undergraduates Students of NnamdiAzikiwe University Awka, Anambra State.

The population for this study comprised all the 1,146 English Language undergraduates at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, who were enrolled in the Department of Educational Foundations within the Faculty of Education and the English Language Department within the Faculty of Arts for the 2023/2024 academic session. The researchers employed Simple Random Sampling (SRS) to select a representative sample of 200 respondents from a population of 1,146 English learners from the two (2) Faculties

Data were collected by means of two different questionnaires; Collaborative Learning Questionnaire (CLQ) and the Academic Goal Orientation Questionnaire (AGOQ).

To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, a trial test was carried out. The instruments were administered to 20 undergraduate English Education students in Anambra State University [ANSU], outside the study area. The internal consistency of the items were determined using Cronbach alpha statistics which yielded the reliability scores of 0.81 for the researcher-made CLQ, and 0.93 for the adopted version of the AGOQ.The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer the research questions, while, linear regression was employed to test the null hypotheses.

Results

Demographic Data

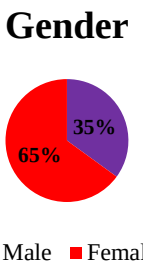

Fig1:The Percentage of Gender Responses

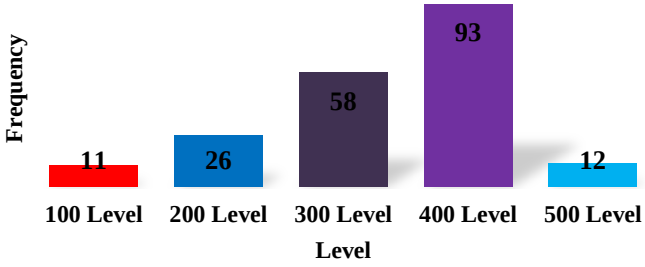

Fig2: The Academic Level Frequency of the Responses

The Figures 1 and 2 showed the descriptive statistics output of the demographic data for the research. Figure 1 showed the gender percentage of the respondents, of which the male respondents consisted of 35% and the female consisted of 65%. The academic level of the respondents was shown in Figure 2, with the 400 level students recording the highest value (93) of the total population of the respondents.

Research Question One: What is the relationship between group discussion and academic goal orientation?

Table 1: The Relationship between Group Discussion and Academic Goal Orientation

	R	R^2	AdjustedR^2	Sig.Value
GroupDiscussion–Academic-goal-orientation	.115	.013	.008	.105

Table 1 revealed that the correlation coefficient between group discussion and academic goal orientation is 0.115. This indicates that there is a weak and positive relationship between group discussion collaborative strategy and academic goal orientation. Thus, it could be inferred that group interactions among students do not relatively influence their academic goal orientation.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between peer tutoring and academic goal orientation?

Table 2: Correlational Relationship between Peer Tutoring and Academic Goal Orientation

	R	R^2	AdjustedR^2	Sig.Value
PeerTutoring–Academic-goal-orientation	.093	.009	.004	.189

Data in Table 2 revealed the relationship between peer tutoring and academic goal orientation. The data yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.093, which implies a weak and positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, peer tutoring collaborative strategy has a weak relationship with academic goal orientation of English learners in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Research Question Three: What is the relationship between think-pair-share and academic goal orientation?

Table 3: The Association between Think-Pair-Share and Academic Goal Orientation

	R	R^2	AdjustedR^2	Sig.Value
Think-pair-share–Academic-goal-orientation	.077	.006	.001	.279

Table 3 revealed that the coefficient for the association between think-pair-share and academic goal orientation is 0.077, which implies a weak and positive correlation between the two variables. Consequently, it denotes that think-pair-share had a weak correlation with academic goal orientation among the English students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Research Question Four: What is the relationship between structured debate and academic goal orientation?

Table 4: The Correlation between Structured Debate and Academic Goal Orientation

	R	R^2	AdjustedR^2	Sig.Value
Structured Debate–Academic-goal-orientation	.212	.045	.040	.003

Result from Table 4 revealed that the relationship coefficient between structured debates and academic goal orientation is 0.212. This shows that there is a weak and positive relationship between structured debates collaborative strategy and academic goal orientation. Thus, it could be interpreted that structured debate does not relatively influence the student academic goal orientation.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between group discussion and academic goal orientation among English learners of undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Table 5: Prediction Analysis of the Influence of Group Discussion on Academic Goal Orientation among English Learners of Undergraduate Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Coefficients[a]

Model		UnstandardizedCoefficients B	UnstandardizedCoefficients Std.Error	StandardizedCoefficients Beta	t	Sig.	F	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.471	0.270		9.167	0.000		
	Group_Discussion	0.139	0.085	0.115	1.627	0.105[a]	2.646	.105[b]

a.DependentVariable:Academic_Goal_Orientation

b.Predictors:(Constant),Group_Discussion

The predictive influence of group discussion on the academic goal orientation of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was shown in Table 5. The Beta value was ascertained to be B = 0.115 (p > 0.05); t-value is 1.627 (p > 0.05) and the p-value (0.105) is greater than 0.05, so the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, group discussion does not predict academic goal orientation among English learners of undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra state.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between peer tutoring and academic goal orientation among English learners of undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Table 6: Predictive Influence of Peer Tutoring on Academic Goal Orientation among English Learners of Undergraduate Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Coefficients[a]

Model		UnstandardizedCoefficients B	UnstandardizedCoefficients Std.Error	StandardizedCoefficients Beta	t	Sig.	F	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.613	0.225		11.591	0.000		
	PeerTutoring	0.102	0.078	0.093	1.317	0.189[a]	1.735	.189[b]

a.DependentVariable:Academic_Goal_Orientation

b.Predictors:(Constant),Peer_Tutoring

Table 6 showed that the predictive power of peer tutoring on the academic goal orientation of English learners of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was found to be B = 0.093 ($p > 0.05$) and t-value was 1.317 ($p > 0.05$). The p-value (0.189) is greater than 0.05, so the null hypothesis was not rejected. Thus, peer tutoring does not predict academic goal orientation.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between think-pair-share and academic goal orientation among English learners of undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Table 7: Regression Analysis of the Influence of Think-Pair-Share on Academic Goal Orientation among English Learners of Undergraduate Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Coefficients[a]

Model		UnstandardizedCoefficients		StandardizedCoefficients				
		B	Std.Error	Beta	t	Sig.	F	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.703	0.190		14.223	0.000		
	Think-Pair-Share	0.075	0.069	0.077	1.084	0.279[a]	1.176	.279[b]

a.DependentVariable:Academic_Goal_Orientation

b.Predictors:(Constant),Think_Pair_Share

The predictive influence of think-pair-share on the academic goal orientation among the English learners (undergraduate) of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was revealed in Table 7 and was shown to be B = 0.077 ($p < 0.05$) and t-value = 1.084. The p-value (0.279) is greater than 0.05, so the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, think-pair-share cannot predict the academic goal orientation of English learners in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant relationship between structured debate and academic goal orientation among English learners of undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Table 8: Predictive Influence of Structured Debate on Academic Goal Orientation among English Learners of Undergraduate Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Coefficients[a]

Model		UnstandardizedCoefficients		StandardizedCoefficients				
		B	Std.Error	Beta	t	Sig.	F	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.238	0.221		10.130	0.000		
	Group_Discussion	0.229	0.075	0.212	3.056	0.003[a]	9.342	.003[b]

a.DependentVariable:Academic_Goal_Orientation

b.Predictors:(Constant),Group_Discussion

The predictive influence of structured debate on the academic goal orientation of English learners in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was shown in Table 8. The Beta value was ascertained to be B = 0.714 ($p < 0.05$); t-value was 3.056, and the p-value (0.003) is less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, structured debate predicts academic goal orientation among the English learners in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Discussion

Results from the analyses shown in Tables 1 and 5 revealed that group discussions had a weak correlation and did not predict academic goal orientation among Nnamdi Azikiwe University English students. This implied that irrespective of the collaborative efforts, evident in students' formation of discussion groups, their academic goal orientation is not influenced. This is discordant with the findings of Swali and Muwaga (2024) that established that there is a significant relationship between group discussions and positive academic outcomes. This association could be linked to the promotion of learner-centered approaches that are focused on cooperation, rather than competition ideas, as they strive to consolidate on insights gained from other learners with potentially higher levels of cognitive abilities. In addition, Loes (2021) disagreed with the findings of the study, establishing a statistically significant association between collaborative learning strategies and academic motivation irrespective of sociodemographic characteristics of the learner. In agreement with the findings of this study, however, Okereke and Ugwuegbulam (2023) found that even though classroom communities and student engagement jointly predicted academic motivation, there is no direct link between study group participation and academic motivation. This points to the fact that factors that predicted purpose-driven behavior may be innate and not often dependent on group behaviour.

Also, results from the analyses presented in Tables 2 and 6 revealed that peer tutoring had a negligible relationship and did not predict academic goal orientation among English learners in Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The findings of this study resonate with that of Lanki and Wells (2021) that inferred that even though peer tutoring can trigger better academic outcomes, there is little or no evidence to suggest that exposing young learners to peer-help may be the best for enhancing innate drive for better outcomes. In addition, O'Donnell and King (2014) found that peer tutoring was found to be of importance in improving skills in specialized courses like mathematics. However, the study did not find a significant relationship among peer tutoring, student motivation, and goal-setting behavior. Abdulraheem *et al*. (2017), however, disputed the finding of the study, claiming that placing learners in peer mentoring groups had a profound impact on their academic

outcomes, irrespective of gender and other sociodemographic variables. While the disparities in findings may be associated to contextual and cultural factors, it can be seen that peer mentoring in one way or another has effects on learning.

Furthermore, results from Tables 3 and 7 also revealed that think-pair-share has a weak correlation and does not predict academic goal orientation among Nnamdi Azikiwe University English students. This implies that creating very small groups (pairs) to enable information sharing may not necessarily lead to improvement in individual goal orientation. This agrees with the findings of Cohen and Lotan (2014) that found no significant difference in the academic motivation of college students based on exposure to TPS and traditional methods. Thus, learning outcomes and motivation were found to be the same among learners irrespective of their participation in a think-pair-share group or not. Also, the findings of this study also fall within the spectrum of the position of Boud and Falchikov (2006) that there is no significant relationship between TPS and academic goal setting among young learners. Boud and Falchikov (2006) attributed academic goal-setting behaviors to several other factors that may be innate or characteristics of the individual learner.

Results in Tables 4 and 8 further revealed that structured debate has a weak correlation but predicts academic goal orientation. The findings of this study disagree with Davis and McGregor (2017) that found no significant increase in motivation or academic goal setting among students who participated in structured debates and those that did not. Hernandez and Rivers (2018) also disagreed with the findings of this study as they found no statistically significant association between debate participation and changes in academic motivation and goal-setting behaviors. Rosales and Mrad (2020) found that while structured debate had a significant impact on students' critical thinking ability, there was no substantial impact on the students' academic motivation and goal orientation. On the contrary, Kornienko (2020) found that students of tertiary institutions subjected to structured debate experiences learned autonomy, sharpened critical thinking, and may bode well for learners' academic goal orientation. While structured debate has been found to sharpen analytical skills and critical thinking skills, they also have influence on students' ability to set academic-oriented goals.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it was concluded that collaborative learning strategies such as group discussion, peer tutoring, and think-pair-share have no significant relationship with academic goal orientation, while structured debate predicted significantly the academic goal orientation of English learners in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.This conclusion bodes well for stakeholders to consider designing competitive frameworks, within collaborative study groups to enhance academic goal orientation.

Recommendations

1. Curriculum planners and educators should prioritize the integration of structured debate into English language instruction, as it has been shown to significantly predict academic goal orientation among students.
2. Lecturers and facilitators should adopt structured debate as a core component of collaborative learning, using it to foster critical thinking, motivation, and purposeful academic engagement among English learners.
3. Educational stakeholders should develop competitive yet collaborative frameworks within group activities, such as incorporating debate-style tasks into peer interactions to enhance students' goal-setting and achievement behaviors.
4. Further training should be provided for academic staff on how to effectively implement structured debate in classrooms, ensuring that its potential to influence students' academic motivation is fully harnessed.

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