

The Impact of Collaborative Learning on the Academic English Proficiency of

International College Students

by

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## ABSTRACT

English proficiency is one of the major factors affecting international students' academic adjustment to American universities. Many international college students select to improve their academic English proficiency through an English intensive program. Collaborative learning is an educational approach to teaching and learning that allows students and teachers to engage in a common task and work together to search for knowledge and skills. This thesis study aims to develop, design, and iteratively refine strategies to help English intensive program teachers build collaborative learning and promote international students' effective collaboration, so as to improve students' academic English proficiency. In this study, two different collaborative learning strategies were designed, implemented and iterated. Data was collected using qualitative methods and follow the principle of design-based research (DBR; Barab, 2014) The results of this study suggest that successful instructional strategies for collaborative learning should be designed in the following ways. First, gathering participants' opinions and feedback at all phases of design and iteration; Second, linking the new strategies or activity to students' grade should be the center of the design. Third, in DBR, researchers need to be patient to build good relationships with practitioners, which can provide a basis for continuing research.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to the 2018 Open Doors Report on the International Educational Exchange, the number of international students in the United States reached a new high of 1.09 million. At Arizona State University (ASU), there are more than 13,000 international students from 136 countries. The top three countries with the most international students in the United States were China(363,341) , India (196,271) and South Korea(54,555). Unlike domestic students, international students, especially those from non-English speaking countries, experience language challenges (Huntley, 1993; Kuo, 2011). When they engage in academic activities, such as understanding lectures, taking notes, answering questions, and writing essays, their academic English proficiency is not as good as that of domestic students. According to a study by Wan, Chapman and Biggs (1992), English proficiency is one of the major factors affecting international students' academic adjustment to American universities. Academic English proficiency impacts their academic performance and their academic careers in the U.S. Many international college students select to improve their academic English proficiency through an English intensive program. This study explores how collaborative learning strategies can enhance intensive programs vital to international student success in subsequent academic activities.

Collaborative learning is an educational approach to teaching and learning that allows students and teachers to engage in a common task and work together to search for knowledge and skills. It is now finding prominence in higher education (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). According to Panitz (1999), collaborative learning is different from



cooperative Learning which is more teacher centered and closely controlled by the teacher. Collaborative learning is focused on students' exploration instead of the teachers' presentation or explication. Students could take an active and constructive role in the learning process through the interaction and negotiation with other teachers and other students. Smith and MacGregor (1992) state that "collaborative learning holds enormous promise for improving student learning and revitalizing college teaching. It is a flexible and adaptable approach appropriate to any discipline," (p.10). Teachers of English intensive programs adapt a series of collaborative learning approaches in their classrooms in order to improve international students' academic English proficiency.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to develop, design, and iteratively refine strategies to help English intensive program teachers build collaborative learning and promote international students' effective collaboration, so as to improve students' academic English proficiency. According to Goh (2018), academic listening includes "attending to and comprehension of spoken texts in academic settings, such as lectures, tutorials, small group discussions, and seminars," (p.1). In addition, international students also need to "participate in class discussions, ask and respond to questions in classes, give oral reports, get and give help in office hour sessions, give instructions in labs, conduct tutorials and recitations, and give lectures" (Douglas, 1997, p.1) in the academic context. Therefore, academic language listening and speaking proficiency are essential to international students and it is the main focus in this study.

The Arizona State University (ASU) Global Launch Intensive English Program is designed for international students, with a focus on improving English proficiency and academic preparedness. This program increases academic English skills in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. There are six levels of English offered, which include basic 1&2 (B1, B2), intermediate 1 & 2 (I1, I2) and advanced 1 & 2(A1, A2) levels. It takes one full session (8 weeks) to complete one level. Students enroll in the number of sessions necessary to achieve their desired level of English proficiency. After successfully completing this program, students can transfer into one of ASU's degree programs. In this study, I focused on the B2 level listening and Speaking classroom at Global Launch. There were 15 international students and 1 instructor. The details of this classroom will be described in chapter 3. In general, this thesis investigates the following three research questions:

1. What collaborative learning practices already exist with international students in Global Launch listening and speaking classroom?

2. How might new instructional strategies enhance international college students' effective collaborative learning practices in Global Launch listening and speaking classroom?

3. When enacted, how do these new instructional strategies influence collaborative learning practices among international students of the Global Launch? Do these strategies improve academic English listening and speaking proficiency in the context of collaborative learning?

## **Rationale for the Study**

In 1979, Jim Cummins coined the acronyms BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). According to Cummins (2013), BICS is “the ability to carry on a conversation in familiar everyday situations” (p.10). For example, speaking to a friend on the playground, or getting meals in cafeterias and restaurants. CALP is “an individual’s access to and command of the specialized vocabulary, functions, and registers of language that are characteristic of the social institution of schooling” (Cummins, 2013, p.10). For example, writing a research paper, and participating in class discussions. Research by Cummins suggests that if language learners have sufficient exposure to the second language, it usually takes about two years to develop BICS, and five to seven years to approach grade norms in academic aspects of the second language (2013). At this point in B2 level where students are moving from BICS to CALP. In B2 listening and speaking class, B2 Students need to deal with content and more abstract topics instead of just the exchange of personal information. Several methods have been proposed in order to improve CALP and collaborative learning is an important method.

Collaborative learning is a widespread method which can be traced back to Dewey and Vygotsky’s work. Collaborative learning allows students to engage in a common task and work together when searching for knowledge and skills. Nichols and Miller (1994) believed that collaborative learning leads to higher academic achievement and greater enjoyment when compared to competitive and individualistic learning. Meaningful learning could be facilitated in a collaborative learning context. However, there are some

challenges for teachers who adopt collaborative learning approaches. For example, how might instructional strategies promote effective collaboration in the classroom? How might these strategies make sure that every student has a job?

In this thesis study, I used qualitative methods research to collect data from the Global Launch. I collected qualitative data from document analysis, interviews, and classroom videos. A qualitative method study helped me develop an in-depth analysis of what factors promote or hinder international college students' effective collaborative learning. In addition, I followed the principles of Design Based Research (DBR). DBR is the most crucial research methodology used by researchers in the learning sciences. The nature of DBR is cyclical and iterative, which allows researchers to reconfigure and retool the design of a model in order to achieve the desired result. Shavelson et al. (2002) state that DBR is “ iterative in that they involve tightly linked design-analysis-redesign cycles that move toward both learning and activity or artifact improvement.” According to Barab (2014), “DBR usually involves multiple iterations or what Collins (1992) refers to as progressive refinement, with each iteration providing a further refinement of the design in order to test the value of the innovation and, hopefully, stimulating the evolution of theory”(p.156).

There is little research to explore how to use DBR to develop strategies to improve international college students' academic English proficiency in the context of collaborative learning. DBR helped me to develop effective strategies to improve international college students' academic English proficiency in the context of collaborative learning. The

iterative nature of DBR helped me to evaluate the validity of the iterative teaching strategy.

This thesis research is meaningful for researchers, instructors and international students.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The first chapter provides an overview of the proposal of this study, as well as a description of my work setting. My intervention aims to optimize the opportunities for collaborative learning activities as a means of improving college students' academic English proficiency. In order to achieve this goal, I used DBR to develop strategies.

In chapter two, I provide the theoretical perspectives, as well as historical and current research that frames this study. This chapter is organized into the following 3 sections: (1) collaborative learning; (2) design-based research; and (3) overview of the current research on academic English teaching and learning.

#### **Collaborative Learning**

**Definition of Collaborative Learning.** Collaborative learning is a widespread educational approach. According to Smith & Macgregor (1992), collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. Roschelle and Teasley (1995) defined collaboration as a "coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem" (p.70). Dillengourg (1999) gave a global definition to collaborative learning as a "situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together"(p.1). Dillengourg (1999) further explained three elements of this definition: "two or more" could be a small group (3-5

people), or even a society (several thousands or millions of people), “learning something” means learners take part in a course, learning activities, or lifelong work practice, and “together” could be interpreted as different forms of interaction, like face to face, and computer mediated.

Bruffee (1993) described collaborative learning as “a reacculturative process that helps students become members of the knowledge communities whose common property is different from the common property of the knowledge communities they already belong to” (p.3) . This definition focused on the social nature of education. Collaborative learning focused on students’ exploration instead of simply the teacher’s presentation or explication. Nichols & Miller (1994) believed that collaborative learning leads to higher academic achievement and greater enjoyment when compared to competitive and individualistic learning. Palloff and Pratt (2005) summarized the pedagogical benefits of collaborative learning, which include: development of critical thinking skills, co-creation of knowledge and meaning, reflection, and transformative learning. Because collaborative learning allows students to engage in discussions and take responsibility for their own learning, it contributes to developing students’ positive attitudes (Law, Chung, Leung & Wong, 2017, p.91) .

**Theoretical Respective of Collaborative Learning.** More generally, collaborative learning is rooted in social constructivism (Smith, Johnson, & Johnson, 1992; Oxford, 1997). According to Oxford (1997), collaborative learning can be traced back to Dewey and Vygotsky's work. Dewey (1916) believed that learners do not learn in isolation and they are a part of the learning community. The meaningful educational knowledge is a

process of continuous and collaborative reconstruction of experience. Like Dewey, Vygotsky believed individual's cognition is rooted in social groups and cannot be separated from social life. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1987) came up with the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), with collaborative learning being rooted in the concept of ZPD. Vygotsky believed that knowledge and thought are constructed through social interaction with family, friends, teachers, and peers. This has made way for ideas of group learning, one of which being collaborative learning. MacGregor (1992) believed that social constructionism is originated from the assumption that knowledge is socially, rather than individually, and social constructionism is constructed by immunities of individuals (p.52). Moreover, Oxford (1997) elaborates how social constructivism relates to the collaborative learning from the perspective of second language (L2) learning. The process of L2 learning is situated in a social context, and learners should learn and understand another culture. In the L2 classroom, the teachers and peers could provide scaffolding to learners to negotiate their own ZPD. Therefore, Oxford (1997) stated that "social constructivism is the foundation for collaborative learning in the L2 classroom" (p.449). L2 collaborative learning is more concerned with acculturation into the learning community. In addition, Lin (2015) presents the supporting theories of collaborative learning from second language acquisition. Lin (2015) believed that collaborative learning stemmed from Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) and Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1995). The input hypothesis claimed that the development of second language depends on the amount of input that learners receive. When learners comprehend language input that is slightly more advanced than their current level, they progress in their second language acquisition. On the other



hand, the output hypothesis states that L2 learners need to speak and produce output so that they could learn something new about the L2. In the context of collaborative learning, L2 learners have opportunities to both receive input and produce output. In summary, many researchers traced and summarized the theoretical framework of collaborative learning, and they also explored the theories of collaborative learning from a L2 language learning perspective.

**Strategies of Collaborative Learning.** Many researches have summarized different strategies of collaborative learning. Some of these strategies are used in a specific discipline, and some of them are used in many disciplines. Smith and MacGregor (1992) summarized six widely used collaborative learning approaches. (1) Cooperative learning (Smith & MacGregor, 1992), which entails a small group of learners that work together around the same given tasks or problems. (2) Problem-centered instruction (Smith & MacGregor, 1992) was widely used in professional education, and is regarded as an important teaching strategy in liberal arts education as well. Problem-centered instruction allows learners to immerse in complex real-world problems that learners must analyze and work together. Guided Design, cases, and simulations are forms of problem-centered instruction and these approaches “develop problems solving abilities, understanding of complex relationships, and decision-making in the face of uncertainty” (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, pp.16-17). (3) Writing Groups (Smith & MacGregor, 1992) as a collaborative learning approach, first used in writing class, and then used in other curriculum through the spread of writing activity. In the writing group, students work in small groups at every stage of the writing process, and in the process of getting response

and feedback from peers, students understand that writing is a social act instead of a solo performance. (4) Peer Teaching (Smith & MacGregor, 1992) is one of the oldest forms of collaborative learning which is a process of students teaching their fellow students. (5) Discussion Groups and Seminars (Smith & MacGregor, 1992) encourages students dialogue with teachers and with each other in formal and informal contexts. Both discussion and seminars “involve the interplay between the dissection of ideas and the cultivation of new ones, analysis and synthesis, the acknowledgment of diverse perspectives, and the creation of community” (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p.24). (6) Learning Communities (Smith & MacGregor, 1992) has two intentions. First, it links different classes together and builds relations between them. Second, it aims to build both academic and social community for students. Smith and MacGregor (1992) outlined all types of collaborative learning strategies that can be applied to teaching at any level and in any discipline.

### **Academic English Teaching and Learning**

Academic language refers to the language used in schools to help students engage in school-based learning, acquire and use knowledge (Anstrom, et al.,2010). Academic language includes but is not limited to discipline-specific vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, and applications of rhetorical conventions, essays and lab reports writing, and discussions of a controversial issue. Universities and colleges require international students to provide certain English proficiency documents when they apply; however, many international students still face language challenges. Kuo (2011) thought that TOEFL

scores only show students' performances in the English language, not students' academic area. A study by Sharma (1971) showed that non-European graduate students' academic problems include giving oral reports, participating in class discussions, taking notes in class, understanding lectures, taking appropriate courses of study and preparing written reports. Also, the result of Kuo (2011)'s study indicated that the major English language challenges faced by international graduate students were their listening comprehension and oral proficiency. Speaking and listening are the two of the four domains of language (listening, speaking, reading, writing), however, speaking and listening skills are often ignored in favor of literacy skills for international students. For example, in China, English is taught more through writing than through a speaking form, therefore, students do not have good speaking and listening skills in English (Wan, 2001).

### **Design-based Research**

**Definition of DBR.** As discussed in the previous chapter, I followed the principles of Design-based research (DBR) to develop collaborative strategies. Design-based research is a type of research methodology used by researchers in the learning sciences. DBR was first proposed as "design experiments" by Allan Collins (1990) and Ann Brown (1992). Besides "design experiments", researchers used other terms to describe this methodology, including "design research" (Cobb, 2001; Collins, Joseph, & Bielaczyc, 2004; Edelson, 2002; Oha & Reeves, 2010) and development research (van den Akker, 1999). According to Wang and Hannafin (2005), DBR is "a systematic but flexible methodology aimed to improve educational practices through iterative analysis, design, development, and

implementation, based on collaboration among researchers and practitioners in real-world settings, and leading to contextually-sensitive design principles and theories”(pp.6-7).

**The Main Characteristics of DBR.** First, DBR is situated in real educational contexts, and the design is conducted in a real-world setting, like in the classroom, instead of laboratories isolated from other everyday practice (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Stemberger & Cencic, 2016; Wang & Hannafin, 2005). DBR is an appropriate methodology to design and research effective teaching strategies and interventions in the situated contexts so that a bridge can be built to fill the gap between theory and practice. Therefore, Greeno et al.(1996) believed that the resulting principles of DBR have greater external validity than those developed in the laboratory (as cited in Wang & Hannafin, 2005, p.9).

The second characteristic of DBR is interactive and participatory as it involves a collaborative partnership between researchers and practitioners (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Cobb et al., 2003; Stemberger & Cencic, 2016; Wang & Hannafin, 2005). Teachers are usually busy and focused on their teaching, they are often ill trained to conduct in-depth research; on the other hand, researchers are not familiar with elements of the operating educational settings, such as school culture, school climate, interactions, technology, and politics. DBR bridges the gap between researchers and practitioners, so that researchers can create and measure intervention effectively (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012). As well, in the same article, Anderson and Shattuck (2012) observed that a partnership between researchers and teachers was developed through initial problem identification, literature review, intervention design and construction, implementation, assessment, and creation

and publication of theoretical and design principles. In brief, researchers and teachers work together to identify approaches and develop teaching strategies to address practical problems.

Third, the DBR involves multiple iterations. (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012; Cobb et al., 2003; Wang & Hannafin, 2005) This design cycle includes design, enactment or implementation, analysis, and redesign.(DBRC, 2003; Wang & Hannafin, 2005) Anderson and Shattuck (2012) described their iterative adjustment and interventions are “research through mistakes”. That means there is always room to improve the design and re-evaluation. However, the iterations of DBR means that it is difficult to know when the research is completed. ; Stemberger and Cencic, (2016) suggested that the term “theoretical saturation” can be borrowed, which means the research has ended when researchers cannot find new innovations.

Fourth, DBR interventions are integrative, which based on a wide variety of theories. (Anderson & Shattuck, 2011; Stemberger & Cencic, 2016; Wang & Hannafin, 2005) DBR research includes both quantitative and qualitative research method, depending on researchers’ requirements. It follows established norms for sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Therefore, McKenney and Reeves (2013) believed that DBR is not a “new research methodology”.

Fisher and Frey (2018) adapted formative experiments, to help middle school teachers to develop an intervention to develop English learners’ academic proficiency with the English language and they believed that formative experiments is “a type of design-

based research”. (p.32) However, Reinking and Watkins (1998) stated that formative experiments is related to but not yet clearly distinguishable from DBR. In my study, I used the method of DBR to develop strategies to improve international college students’ academic English proficiency in the context of collaborative learning, this study fills the research gap.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to develop, design, and iteratively refine strategies to help English intensive program listening and speaking teachers to build effective collaborative learning, so as to improve international college students' academic English listening and speaking. In general, this study investigated the following research questions:

1. What collaborative learning practices already exist with international students in Global Launch listening and speaking classroom?

2. How might new instructional strategies enhance international college students' effective collaborative learning practices in Global Launch listening and speaking classroom?

3. When enacted, how do these new instructional strategies influence collaborative learning practices among international students of the Global Launch? Do these strategies improve academic English listening and speaking proficiency in the context of collaborative learning?

#### **Context and Participants**

In DBR, research occurs in a real setting and a partnership is developed collaboratively between researchers and educators. (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012) The organization I worked with was the Global Launch intensive English program at Arizona

State University. Global Launch offers six levels of intensive English instruction from basic proficiency to advanced proficiency, and it takes 8 weeks to complete each level. This study took place in a listening and speaking classroom, including 15 B2 level international students and 1 instructor. Listening and Speaking is one of the core courses, 9 hours per week. In the B2 level listening and speaking classroom, the “English only” was put on top of the agenda. The instructor established an English-only environment and explicitly trained students speaking English only. In order to achieve this goal, building a collaborative learning context was essential for students. For example, students could monitor each other to speak English only in the classroom.

### **Overview of Research Design**

All data was collected in the spring semester of 2020 and 3 distinct phases were taken to carry out the current research. The first phase was preparation for initial intervention. I met with the B2 listening and speaking instructor to explain the study, worked through a preliminary timeline, discussed existing collaborative learning practices with B2 students, and obtained permissions. Then, I observed B2 listening and speaking class for 5 days, 7.5 hours. I focused on existing strategies of collaborative learning used by the instructor and evaluated whether these strategies promote students’ learning effectively. Based on the data collection and analysis in the first phases, during the second phases, I worked with the B2 listening and speaking instructor to design teaching strategies and intervention to build a more effective collaborative learning context, so as to help students improve their academic English speaking and listening proficiency. The instructor



and I worked together to implement the iterative strategies and intervention in the classroom. The last phase was collecting and analyzing post intervention data. Each of these three phases will be described in detail in the procedures section.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data for this study was collected using qualitative methods. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p.3), and they believe that “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of , or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.3) Van Maanen (1979) defines qualitative research as “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning ,not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world. ” (p. 520) I adapted qualitative methods for two reasons. First, all definitions of qualitative research above indicate that the qualitative research situated in a real word context and my thesis research occurred in a complex and authentic listening and speaking classroom. Second, the qualitative approach is a good fit with DBR. Anderson and Shattuck (2012) state that “DBR interventions are assessed on a wide variety of indices using multiple methodologies.”(p.17) Typically, qualitative researchers gather multiple sources of data, and all participants share their ideas freely (Creswell, 2014). This study relies on three sources of qualitative data:

**Audio or Video Recordings in the Classroom.** Classroom audio or video recordings are an important data collection method and have been used more and more in

educational research. (Pirie, 1996) The advantage of audio or video recordings is permanence, which allows researchers review data frequently and flexibility. (Bottorff, 1994)

Using audio recording devices, this study documented the instructor and students' activity in the listening and speaking classroom. According to Heath, Hindmarsh and Luff (2010), the research must be selective because it is rarely practical to try to deal with the whole recording. Therefore, when I analyzed these videos, I focused on students' performance in the collaborative learning activities instead of the transcripts. For example, how students interacted with peers and the instructor, and whether students could understand and participate in activities.

**Classroom Observations and Fieldnotes.** According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), observational data give researchers “the opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations” (p.305). Researchers rely on narrative to describe the research setting, the participants' behaviors and interactions, noteworthy events, and researchers' reflections (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). My role in the classroom was a participant-observer (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). According to Ary, et al. (2010), “a participant-observer may interact with subjects enough to establish rapport but do not really become involved in the behaviors and activities of the group.” During the second phase of my study, as a participant, I worked with the B2 listening and speaking instructor to design iterative instructional strategies. But in other phases of my study, my role was more peripheral rather than the active role. During my observations, I recorded the data through fieldnotes. Ary et al. (2010) state that “the successful outcome of the study relies on detailed, accurate, and

extensive field notes” (p.435). My field notes included two parts. The first part was the descriptive part (Ary et al., 2010) which was a complete description of the setting, students and the instructor’s reactions and relationships, and accounts of events. The second part was the reflective part (Ary et al., 2010) which was my personal feelings of impressions, problems, suggestions and comments.

This study included observations of classroom practices, existing strategies of collaborative learning used by the instructor, students’ classroom activities, and implementation of the iterative instructional strategies in the classroom. After I collected fieldnotes of classroom observation, I closely reviewed these notes. In the phase of preparation for initial intervention, I focused on what the instructor did in class to help students engage in collaborative learning activities. Besides, I also summarized two main existing collaborative learning activities. In the phase of design and implement the intervention, the fieldnotes helped me document the whole process that the instructor and I designed, implemented, and iterated.

**Interviews.** The interview is one of the most widely used methods for collecting qualitative data, and it provides information that cannot be obtained through observation. The interview helps researchers to understand the experiences people have and the meaning they make of (Ary et al., 2010). Generally, there are three types of interview: unstructured interview, structured interview and semi-structured interview (Ary et al., 2010). In semi-structured interviews, researchers have a list of open-ended questions in a specific area, but researchers may modify questions during the interview process. Because of semi-structured interview’s flexibility, I adapted to this type of interview.

In my study, I interviewed the B2 listening and speaking students. Before and after the interventions, I interviewed with students, then analyzed notes of interviews. Ary et al. (2010) believed that “interviews may provide information that cannot be obtained through observation, or they can be used to verify observations” (p.438) . Through this interview, I learned about these students’ educational background, as well as their attitudes and general opinions towards existing and iterated collaborative learning activities. I classified the students’ different views, then summarized and counted the main ones. The full interview protocol can be found in Appendices B.

### **Procedures**

The procedures for this study occurred in three phases: preparation for initial intervention, design and implementation of the intervention, and gathering post-intervention data. The details of each phase are shown in the following tables:

**Table 1 .**

*First Phase: Preparation for Initial Intervention*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Data Collected</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
What collaborative learning practices already exist with international students in Global Launch listening and speaking classroom?	I better understood whether and how collaborative learning facilitates students' learning.	Video recordings in the classroom  Fieldnotes of classroom observations  Interviews of students	<p>The research must be selective because it is rarely practical to try to deal with the whole recording. (Heath et al., 2010) For video recordings, I focused on students' performance in the classroom.</p> <p>I closely reviewed these fieldnotes of classroom observations. Researchers rely on narrative to describe the research setting, the participators' behaviors and interactions, noteworthy events, and researchers' reflections (Ary, Jacobs, &amp; Sorensen, 2010). I focused on what the instructor did in class to help students engage in collaborative learning activities. Besides, I summarized two main existing collaborative learning activities.</p> <p>“Interviews may provide information that cannot be obtained through observation” (Ary et al., 2010, p.438) I collected and classified the students' different views, then summarized and counted the main ones.</p>

**Table 2 .**

*Second Phase: Design and implementation of the intervention*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Data Collected</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
How might new instructional strategies enhance international college students' effective collaborative learning practices in Global Launch listening and speaking classroom?	I identified the positive and negative factors that affect collaborative learning, then designed, implemented and iteratively refine new strategies.	Video recordings in the classroom  Fieldnotes of classroom observations	The research must be selective because it is rarely practical to try to deal with the whole recording. (Heath et al., 2010) I recorded students' performance in the classroom. For example, how students interacted with peers and the instructor, and whether students could understand and participate in activities.  I closely reviewed these fieldnotes. Researchers rely on narrative to describe the research setting, the participators' behaviors and interactions, noteworthy events, and researchers' reflections (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). These fieldnotes documented the whole process that the instructor and I designed, implemented, and iterated

**Table 3 .**

*Third Phase: Gathering post-intervention data*

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Data Collected</b>	<b>Data Analysis</b>
When enacted, how do these new instructional strategies influence collaborative learning practices among international students of the Global Launch? Do these strategies improve academic English listening and speaking proficiency in the context of collaborative learning?	I evaluated the validity of the iterated teaching strategies and intervention.	Interviews of students and the instructor	“Interviews may provide information that cannot be obtained through observation” (Ary et al., 2010, p.438) I classified the instructor’s and students’ different views, then summarized and counted the main ones.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

This chapter reports the result of the data analyses described in chapter three. The instructor and I designed new teaching strategies and interventions together, then implemented in the B2 listening and speaking classroom. We iterated interventions one time then had two follow up discussions. I will introduce our design and intervention for this study in more detail in this chapter. A qualitative approach was conducted to collect the data, which included classroom observation notes, videos of students' performance in group discussion, notes of the interview with students, students' artifacts, and recordings of the discussion between instructor and me.

#### **The First Phase: Preparation for Initial Intervention**

Before the instructor and I designed new strategies and interventions, I collected field notes of class observation and interviews with 13 students. Over the course of the two weeks, these events generated more than 40 pages of observational notes. I also videotaped classroom activities, which included eight videos for a total of 100 minutes of observation. I closely reviewed observational notes and focused on what the instructor did. When I analyzed notes of interviews, I classified the students' different views and counted the main ones. As for the class video, I didn't focus on the transcripts, but rather on the students' performance in the class, such as whether they could immerse themselves in the class activities or understanding and completing the instructions by the instructor.



**Classroom Observation** As I mentioned in Chapter 3, *English only* is put on top of the agenda, and the instructor established an English only environment. There were two main collaborative learning activities in this classroom: pair work and group discussion. Pair work involved two students for each group. Students practiced English conversation with a partner, and this was a good opportunity to practice grammar and vocabulary. Pair work did not need a very long time, and there could be several short sessions in one class. Another important collaborative learning activity was group discussion. The instructor gave students a topic, for example, Stress and health. In order to help students to develop their discussion, the instructor designed some specific questions regarding this topic, for example: What did your parents or grandparents tell you to do if you were stressed out of feeling sick? What “bad” habits do you do when you feel stressed out? How can you take better care of yourself in the future?

In the instructor’s opinion, collaborative learning is “a communicative activity where students are mutually dependent on each other to negotiate what's going on, and to come to some sort of idea, or conclusion, or correct answer. They have to communicate verbally in order to achieve the goal.” The instructor did a lot of work to help students engage in collaborative learning activities. First, the instructor taught students a series of English communication strategies (See Figure 1) in the first class and reminded students to use these communication strategies in almost every subsequent class. These communication strategies ensured that students communicate more smoothly in this collaborative learning context. Second, during the pair work and group discussion, the instructor interrupted students’ practice or discussion, and taught them some skills so that

students got a more effective learning result. For example, when students practiced speaking English numbers with a partner, the instructor told students that if the partner could not understand their speaking, repeat it instead of slowing down. Third, during the collaborative learning activities, the instructor verbally encouraged students to participate in collaborative activities. For example, the instructor said, "Tell him what you think. " or "Good job!" Fourth, the instructor made the students change partners frequently. This strategy helped students to communicate with different classmates from different countries and get familiar with the different accents, so as to improve their communication skills.

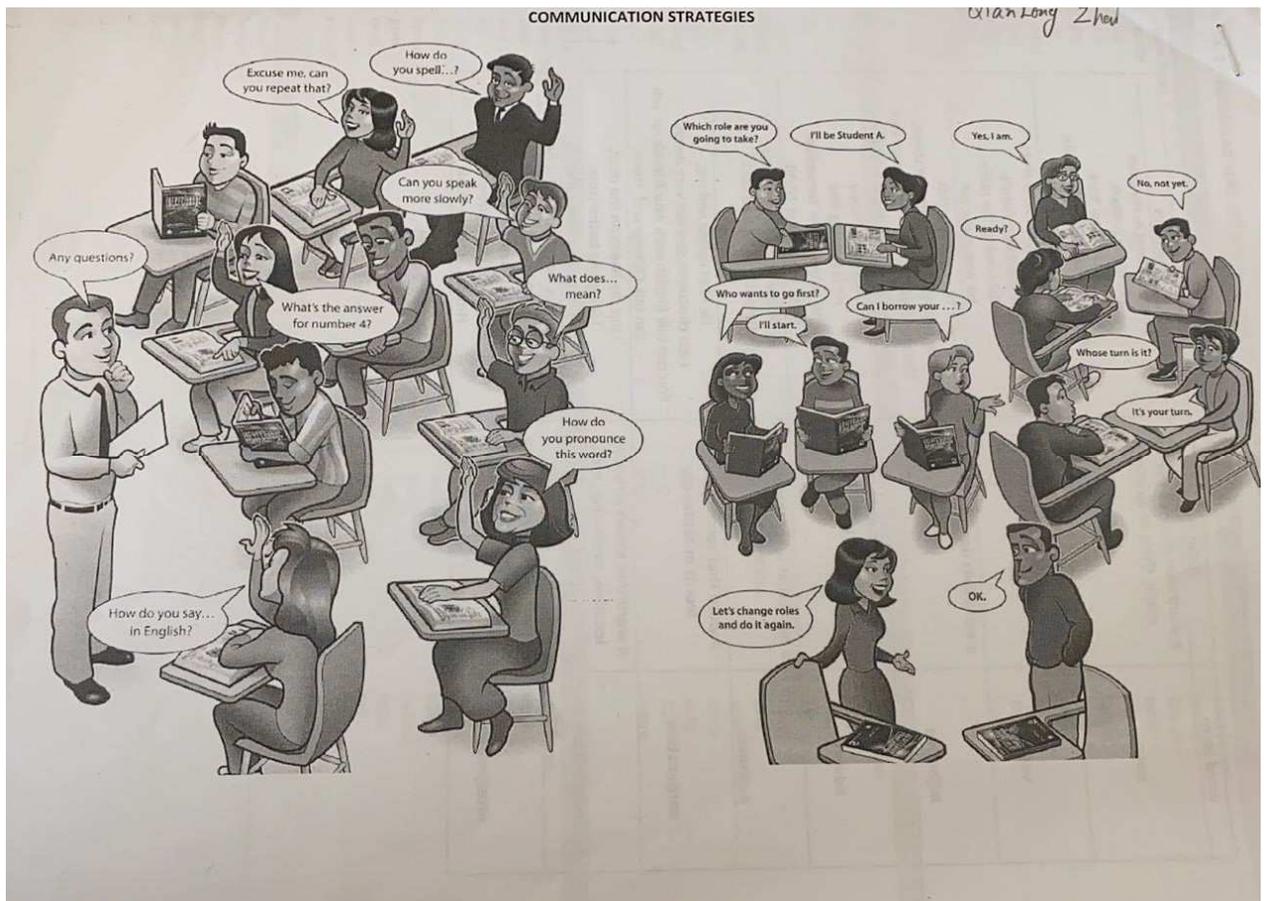


Figure 1. Worksheet with Example of English Communication Strategies

**Interviews and Videos** I interviewed 13 students in preparation for the initial intervention. Through this interview, I learned about these students' background, especially their educational background, as well as their attitudes and general opinions towards existing collaborative learning activities: pair work and group discussion. Considering the students' English level, I was cooperative with the instructor to design interview questions. I listed the questions first, then the instructor simplified these English questions so that B2 level students could understand them. For example, the question "how long have you been in the U.S.?" was difficult for B2 level students because they did not learn the present perfect tense. So, the instructor simplified this question to the simple past tense: "When did you come to the U.S. to study English?" During the interview, I also used body language and pictures to make these B2 students understand my questions better. Besides, I videotaped students' performances in the classroom.

Four out of 13 never experienced collaborative learning before, and all 13 students had positive attitudes towards both pair work and group discussion. Although two students mentioned that they were nervous when they participated in collaborative learning activities, all 13 students were interested in these activities and happy to participate. They believed that pair work and group discussion helped them to improve their English speaking and listening, learn more about different cultures, keep focused during class, and emerge in the English only environment.

In addition, students talked about difficulties in participating in pair practice and group discussion. The first difficulty was about new English words. Nine out of 13 students mentioned that the most considerable difficulty in participating in group discussion and group practice was they did not have enough English words to express themselves. In the video, sometimes students stopped their conversation and searched for new words on the phone. Students thought this was one of the main reasons that made them anxious and a little embarrassed in front of their partners. Five out of 13 students wanted to learn more new words from the instructor and classmates. When I asked students what they could learn from their partners, in addition to cultural knowledge, seven out of 13 students mentioned that they could learn new words from their partners during the group discussion and group practice. Two students emphasized that they were happy to teach their peers new words. Also, five out of 13 students hoped they could learn more new words from the teacher and classmates. Second, students thought they did not have an equal amount of time to speak in group discussions. Five out of 13 students thought that they did not have enough time to speak because their partners speak too much. Three out of 13 students told me that they really liked to speak as much as possible during the group activities. Two students told me that they hoped someone could help them make sure each student had an opportunity to speak in a group discussion. In the classroom video, I caught a similar situation. There were three students in the group. Two of them spoke a lot, and one student seemed unable to get a word in edgewise and looked a little embarrassed.

## **The Second Phase: Design and Implement the Intervention**

Based on the analysis of classroom observation, interviews, and videos, I selected to focus on students' group discussion and designed two strategies to improve B2 students' speaking and listening: (1) vocabulary journal and (2) assigning group roles. In this phase, I documented the process that the instructor and I designed, implemented, and iterated. I also collected students' artifacts, and focused on the instructor's comments and counting how many students had completed the vocabulary journal. As for the class video, I reviewed students' performance in the activities.

**(1) Vocabulary Journal** This strategy was designed to help students expand their vocabulary, warm-up for the following activities, and exchange more information. Before the class, students were asked to prepare for the next discussion topic. They needed to think about what they would tell to partners in the following discussion activity and prepare new words, which included the definition of English and translation into their first language. During the group discussion, students were encouraged to try their best to use new words. If their partners could not understand this word, the student should explain this word to partners in different ways, like body language.

**(2) Assigning Group Roles** This strategy was designed to make sure each group member takes part in group discussions and has equal time to speak. Each discussion group consisted of three students, and each student was assigned a specific role. According to class time, the instructor designed three roles in a group: speaker, timekeeper, and interviewer. The speaker spoke first and talked for the full time (about two minutes), then told the interviewer, "It's your turn to speak." The interviewer needed to think about

questions while listing, then ask questions and follow-up questions. The timekeeper set the time on the phone and said, “Finish your idea” when the timer rang. The timekeeper should say “Keep talking” if the speaker finished before the time, and said, “Ask another question,” if the interviewer stopped. The detailed description is shown in Figure 3. In this activity, students would not have only one role, and they switched roles to make sure they played all three different roles.

## Group Discussion Jobs

- **1. Speaker**
  - --you speak first
  - --talk for the full time
  - --tell the next student “It’s your turn to speak”
- **2. Timekeeper**
  - --set the time on your phone and say “Finish your idea” when the timer rings
  - --say “Keep talking” if the student finishes before the time
  - --say “Ask another question” if the interviewer stops
- **3. Interviewer**
  - --ask the questions and the follow-up questions
  - --think about questions while you are listing

*Figure 2. The Initial Intervention: Assigning Group Roles*

**The Initial Intervention** The day before the class, the instructor gave students a handout (See Figure 3) to help them prepare for the discussion. The handout included two main parts. First was the discussion topic. In addition, the instructor listed eight exact questions related to the topic to help students develop their discussion. Students practiced giving an answer and then giving a lot of details to support the answer, and they just needed

to make some simple notes on the handout instead of writing full sentences. The second part was nine new words, and students should try their best to use these words in their discussion. At the same time, the instructor told students if they did not know words in English, they could write it on the handout in their first language, then translate these words in English and use these in the discussion.

**THINK ABOUT HOW PEOPLE HELP OR HURT THE ENVIRONMENT**  
Use the unit vocabulary in your answers.

environment	carpool	recycle	turn off/turn on	throw/throw away	save
garbage	cloth	waste	make a difference		

**ABOUT THE PAST**

What did you and your family do in your country to help save the environment?

What did you do that hurt the environment?

What did your grandparents and past generations do that was good for the environment in "the old days?"

**ABOUT THE PRESENT—TRY TO USE UNIT VOCABULARY**

What do you do now to help the environment?

What do you do that is NOT good for the environment?

What does ASU do to make a difference

**ABOUT THE FUTURE—TRY TO USE THE UNIT VOCABULARY**

What can you start to do in the future to help the environment?

How will life be different in the future? in 5 years? in 10 years? in 20 years?

Figure 3. Handout of the initial intervention

The next day, students brought the handout to the class and were ready for the discussion. They were divided into groups of three, and each of them was assigned the roles: speaker, timekeeper, and interviewer. The discussion went through three rounds, making sure each member played all three different roles.

**The Results of the Initial Intervention** During the initial intervention, I videotaped the students' group discussions and collected students' artifacts. These data showed the results of the initial intervention.

*(1) Video recordings* I videotaped three different groups of students' discussion. In the first group, the interviewer was listening, taking notes, and preparing follow-up questions while the speaker was speaking. The timekeeper also listened to them and kept time. When the speaker could not speak for two minutes, and the interviewer did not have new follow-up questions, the timekeeper just said "Keep talking" or "Ask another question" by his eye contact instead of saying it. In the second group, both speaker and timekeeper listened carefully. Timekeeper was very active in this group discussion, she said, "Keep talking." and "Ask another question." Besides, she also said, "It's your turn to speak." which wasn't what the speaker should say. In the third group, the conversation between the speaker and the interviewer went very well. The timekeeper did not have the chance to say, "Keep talking," "Ask another question," and looked like an outsider. It seemed that the timekeeper was eager to participate in the discussion, but the design of this activity did not give him more opportunities to speak. In the end, he seemed negative, just gesturing to remind the speaker and the interviewer that time was up.



(2) *Artifacts* I collected artifacts from eleven students. These artifacts were handouts given to students by the instructor the day before the class. On this handout, students should make simple notes related to the discussion topic, and they could record new English words they did not know but wanted to use in the discussion. Besides, the instructor also added comments on these handouts. Three out of eleven students had good details, and that meant they were well prepared for the discussion. Seven out of eleven students did not have enough details, and the instructor added the comment “add more details.” In these eleven handouts, I only found one student prepared new English words, which included translation into his or her first language. Three students did not finish this assignment, so I couldn’t collect their artifacts.

**The Iteration of the Intervention** Based on the data analysis above, the instructor and I iterated intervention. Considering that students needed to prepare for the final test, and they had no time to make a vocabulary journal, we focused on assigning group roles. We redesigned group roles. Each group had two members. The timekeeper was reminded and they needed to set the time on the phone. At the same time, the interviewer was removed, and their work done by the timekeeper, so the timekeeper should listen and think of follow-up questions and ask follow-up questions. The speaker's job didn't change. The specific description is shown in Figure 4.

# Speaker and Timekeeper

- **1. Timekeeper (Interviewer)**
  - --Set the time on your phone for 1 minute
  - --Listen and think of follow-up questions
  - --Ask follow-up questions for 1 minute
- **2. Speaker**
  - --Give answer and details for one minute
  - --Answer follow-up questions for 1 minute
  - --After you finish answering questions, you will talk again for 1 minute. You need to give more information in this minute.

*Figure 4. The Iteration of the Intervention: Assigning Group Roles*

During the implementation of the iterated intervention, I videotaped students' group discussions, which included 2 videos for a total of 30 minutes. There were 3 groups of discussion that I videotaped, and the performances of these 3 groups were basically the same. Timekeepers were more engaged in the conversation. They listened to speakers carefully while keeping time, then asked follow-up questions about what speakers said. Speakers could talk for one minute and answer timekeepers' follow-up questions.

### **The Third Phase: Gathering Post-Intervention Data**

After implementing the initial intervention and iterated intervention, I interviewed twelve students and got their attitudes and general opinions toward iterative interventions. I classified the students' different views and summarized the main points. Also, the instructor and I had discussions around twice interventions and we focused on the pedagogical aspects. I recorded our discussion and closely reviewed the transcript, then summarized the main points.

**Interviews** After two interventions, I interviewed twelve students. For the vocabulary journal, students had a positive attitude. Eight out of twelve students prepared new words before the discussion. They wrote down the words they wanted to say in their first language, then looked up these words in the dictionary and wrote it down on the handout or a separated paper. During the discussion, if their partners didn't understand the meaning of these new words, these students used pictures, body language, or other English words to explain the meaning. However, this strategy didn't help students to expand their vocabulary. All these eight students forgot these words after the discussion, and four of them didn't even remember how many new words they prepared.

For the group discussion roles, all eleven students liked to take part in this activity. Eleven out of twelve students felt they had more opportunities to speak than before, and all twelve students thought each member had an equal amount of time to practice speaking. My interview focused on the initial role assignment. Ten out of twelve students believed that the timekeeper's job was the easiest. Three students told me that as timekeepers, they

had no chance to think and practice speaking. Only two students realized that the timekeeper was a valuable role in a group. One student said, “ The timekeeper also got a chance to practice speaking, for example, the timekeeper could listen carefully to the conversation between the speaker and the interviewer, and said “Keep talking” or “Ask another question’ in different conditions.” Another student pointed out that “the timekeeper likes a bridge between interviewer and the speaker, and the timekeeper can create the atmosphere of the talks and the rhythm.”

**The Discussion with the Instructor** First, the instructor and I had different goals when we designed and iterated collaborative learning strategies. I, as a researcher in this classroom, focused on the designing of collaborative learning activities that allow students to better engage in the collaborative learning context. For example, assigning group roles allowed each group member to have equal time and opportunity to practice English speaking. On the other hand, the instructor was more concerned with training students to give an answer with details. I thought assigning group roles were successful interventions. The instructor, however, had different opinions. She felt the first intervention was not successful. Students tried to understand what an expanded answer meant, and they were simultaneously learning a new technique to work together. The instructor thought that there were too many things and it was difficult for students. Therefore, in the iterated intervention, the instructor explained how to produce an answer with details more concretely before the discussion, and the instructor thought it was much more effective.

Second, the instructor focused more on designing discussion topics. At this point in B2 level where students are moving from BICS to CALP. B2 students switched from

just pure questions and answers to having to hold forth and talk for a minute by themselves. Students were dealing first with content and more abstract topics instead of just the exchange of personal information. The instructor designed four topics for students to discuss: environment, stress and health, personality, and youth culture. All these topics were still related to personal information, but students had to deal with the content and respond to it, and manipulated the words to produce it. This group discussion helped students practice expounding ideas or experiences.

Based on data analysis and the result of the interventions, I gave two suggestions to the instructor about how to iterate the vocabulary journal and assign group roles. I suggested that for the vocabulary journal, the instructor could try to encourage students to take the personal vocabulary journal at the beginning of the session. This would bring two benefits. First, this would help students develop good study habits and expand vocabulary. Second, students have more time and opportunities to use new words so that they can actually remember these new words. For the assigning group roles, the instructor could provide clear instructions and communication strategies on a separate handout before the activity, so that different roles, especially the timekeeper, realize their responsibilities in this group. This would increase the cohesion of the group. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, this class of B2 students has already completed the B2 level, and the class no longer exists. With that constraint, we could not implement interventions again. The instructor will implement these iterated strategies in another B2 listening and speaking class, beyond the scope of this thesis study.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to develop, design, and iteratively refine strategies to help English intensive program teachers build collaborative learning and promote international students' effective collaboration, so as to improve students' academic English proficiency. The procedures for this study occurred in three phases, and each phase explored one research question. In this chapter, I will answer these research questions and offer conclusions.

In the first phase of this study, I explored *what collaborative learning practices already exist with international students in the Global Launch B2 level listening and speaking classroom*. The “English only” was put on top of the agenda and the instructor established an English only environment in this classroom. At the beginning of almost every class, the instructor emphasized to the students that only English could be spoken in the classroom. There were fifteen students from five different countries, therefore, the “English only” environment was an important foundation for building a collaborative learning context. There were two main kinds of collaborative learning activities: pair practice and group discussion. The pair practice allowed students to practice grammar with a partner, like practice speaking past, present, and future tense sentences. The group discussion was designed to develop students' ability to deal with content and more abstract topics instead of just pure questions and answers. That was a very significant step for B2 level students to move from BICS to CALP, and it was meaningful for them to practice

academic English speaking and listening proficiency. Therefore, in the second phase, I focused on the design and iteration group discussion activity.

The research question in the second phase was *how new instructional strategies might enhance international college students' effective learning practices in the Global Launch B2 level listening and speaking classroom*. By analyzing the data I collected in the first phase, there were 2 positive factors that affected collaborative learning in this classroom. The first factor was the English only environment, which ensured all students communicate in English. Second, the instructor taught students communication strategies (See Figure 1) in the first class. These communication strategies helped students communicate smoothly in English in a collaborative learning context. In addition, there were two negative factors affecting students' collaborative learning. First, students did not have enough English words to express their meaning in collaborative learning. Second, group members did not have equal time to practice speaking. Based on these positive and negative factors, the instructor and I cooperated in designing two different instructional strategies: vocabulary journal and assigning group roles. The vocabulary journal was designed to expand students' vocabulary, warm-up for the following group discussion, and exchange more information in the discussion. This activity was implemented once because students needed to prepare for the final test and had no time to make vocabulary journals. Assigning group roles was designed to facilitate students to take part in group discussions and make sure each group member had equal time and opportunity to practice speaking. The instructor implemented this activity once time, and I collected videos of students' discussion. Then the instructor and I iterated this strategy: we rearranged roles and jobs.

*When enacted, how do these new instructional strategies influence collaborative learning practices among international students of the Global Launch B2 level listening and speaking class? Do these strategies improve academic English listening and speaking proficiency in the context of collaborative learning?* These were questions that I explored in the third phase. Based on the data I collected and analyzed in chapter 4, the vocabulary journal was not a successful strategy. In interviews during the first phase of this study, students had a strong need to expand their vocabulary, so I designed a vocabulary journaling activity. Most of the students had a positive attitude for preparing new words, using these words in the discussion and explaining the meaning of new words to partners. However, the result fell short of expectations. After the discussion, all students forgot these new words, they didn't master these words at all. The main reason for this result was that vocabulary journals did not affect the final grade. By contrast, the assigning group roles helped students to prepare their final speaking test. All group members were preparing and practicing carefully. This activity was successful. Students did their job very well and had equal time to practice speaking. Through this activity, all students could speak for two minutes and give statements with details. This leads me to believe that in this context, linking the activity to a grade may be important.

In summary, these three phases of my study embody the four characteristics of DBR reviewed in chapter 2. First, DBR is pragmatic. This thesis study was situated in a real-world context, and the design was conducted in a real listening and speaking classroom. Second, DBR is interactive. As I mentioned in chapter 3, my role in the classroom was a participant-observer. (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) In the second phase of study, I worked



with instructor to develop, design and iteratively refine instructional strategies, and in other phases, my role was more peripheral. But in all three phases, as a researcher, I worked with the instructor and students all the time. Third, DBR is iterative. The design cycle of this study included design, implementation, analysis, and redesign. Though the initial intervention, I found room to improve the design, then iterated strategy and implemented. Fourth, DBR is integrative. I integrated a variety of research methods and approaches from qualitative research method. I gathered three sources of qualitative data: audio or video recordings in the classroom, classroom observations and fieldnotes, and interviews.

### **Implications of the Study**

In this section, I will share the design implications and practice implications that arose as a result of this study.

**Implications for Design.** DBR is situated in real educational contexts, and it involves multiple iterations. (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012) Gathering participants' opinions and feedback at all phases of design and iteration is very significant, and that would help researchers design and develop strategies to solve problems in a real context. This thesis research occurred in a B2 level listening and speaking classroom, and the design of interventions went through once iteration. In this process, the students' voice was the most important and guided the direction of the design. In the first phase of this study, I explored what collaborative learning practices already exist in this classroom. In the second phase, it was challenging to decide what strategies should be designed and how to iterate strategies simply by classroom observation and video recordings. After interviewing students, I understand their attitudes and general opinions towards existing collaborative learning

strategies or activities, as well as their difficulties in their study. Then, the instructor and I found what we should do for the next step.

Besides, linking the new strategies or activity to students' grade should be the centre of the design. The vocabulary journal was not a successful strategy because it did not affect students' grades, therefore, students did not take this task seriously. By contrast, the assigning group roles related to the final speaking test directly, and all students completed it very well.

**Implications for Practice** According to Anderson & Shattuck (2012), DBR involves a collaborative partnership between researchers and practitioners. Researchers need to be patient to build good relationships with practitioners. It can be a slow process, but it is necessary for the research. This study took place in a B2 listening and speaking classroom, 14 B2 students from four different countries and one instructor were agreeing to be part of this thesis research. Building a good relationship with students and the instructor was essential for this study. The instructor was a bridge between the researcher and students. The instructor and I communicated regularly, including talking about students' academic performances, and the thesis research plan. These informal discussions let me learn more about students and this curriculum better. Besides, the instructor showed me how to communicate with B2 students because their English was limited. For example, use simple tenses as much as possible because they did not learn other tenses. In addition, the instructor helped students get used to having a researcher in the classroom. In the first class, the instructor asked me to introduce myself and my thesis. Also, the instructor mentioned me in every class. For example, when students practiced the English sentence,

“Who is he/ she/ that?” The instructor pointed at me and asked students, “Who is she?” All these efforts helped the researcher and students got familiar with each other, making subsequent research and data collection smoothly.

Informal discussions and conversations were a critical way to build a good relationship with students. Through informal conversations before and after class, I got a better understanding of students’ educational background and their future study plans. After a friendly relationship was built, it became easier to interview students. Students were more likely to share their opinions and feelings about the new strategies with the researcher.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this thesis study. First, the data collection was limited to the B2 level listening and speaking classroom. Moving forward, a more comprehensive study of all different levels of international students and all instructors at Global Launch would strengthen the approach.

Second, as a qualitative study, this study relies on the interpretation of interviews with students, classroom observation notes, and video recordings. As a researcher, I might overemphasize some parts I thought were more important and might ignore the parts that I thought were not. I communicated with the instructor regularly to avoid this limitation. Through the discussion and conversations with the instructor, I could learn the instructor’s opinions and attitude toward the new teaching strategies.

Third, this study does not examine whether the new strategies helped improve students’ academic English listening and speaking. This study focused on students’ general

attitudes and opinions toward iterative instructional strategies. Therefore, the researcher will focus on if these strategies improve students' academic achievements in future studies.

### **Future Opportunities**

This study aimed to develop, design, and iteratively refine strategies to help English intensive program teachers build collaborative learning context and promote international students' effective collaboration, so as to improve students' academic English proficiency. I worked with a B2 listening and speaking instructor to design and iterate intervention. In this process, two findings are significant for my future study. First, it is important to link the activity to students' grades. That will motivate the students, and assess whether the new strategies have improved students' academic performance. Second, in DBR, researchers need to make efforts to build good relationships with practitioners. This process requires patience and even a bit of luck, but it will pave the way for future research.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROBAL DOCUMENT



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Leigh Wolf](#)

[Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe](#)

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[Leigh.Wolf@asu.edu](mailto:Leigh.Wolf@asu.edu)

Dear [Leigh Wolf](#):

On 2/13/2020 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	The Impact of Collaborative Learning on the Academic English Proficiency of International College Students
Investigator:	<a href="#">Leigh Wolf</a>
IRB ID:	STUDY00011507
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Digengni's interview question.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li><li>• IRB Social Behavioral 2019 - Digengni.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;</li><li>• recruitment_methods_02-12-2020.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li></ul>

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 on 2/13/2020.

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviews in the first phase of the study

My name is Digengni. I am conducting a thesis research study to develop, design, and iteratively refine strategies to help English intensive program teachers build collaborative learning and promote international students' effective collaboration, so as to improve students' academic English proficiency.

Today, I will be conducting the interview. This interview will last 40 minutes. Your responses will remain confidential, and this interview will not be shared with anyone. Is it OK if I take notes during our conversation?

Part one: Basic information

1. Where are you from? When did you come to the United States to study English?
2. I am going to ask questions about studying English in your past. When did you first start learning English in your country? Did you study in a college or university before? Did you finish your study? What was your major?
3. What is your plan? After you finish the B2 level successfully, will you continue to study at Global Launch for the next level? Or take a TOEFL test? Or transfer to another school?

Part two: Students opinions towards existing strategies of collaborative learning

1. Did you do group discussion or group practice before in GL or your country?
2. If you work or practice alone, do you think you can learn more?
3. Do you think the group discussion and group practice help you improve your English listening and speaking?

4. Do you like group discussion or group practice? Why or why not? Are you comfortable with that? Why or why not? Do you feel nervous? Is it difficult for you to practice or discuss in a group?

5. What kind of problems do you maybe have in a group? Did you get over or fix these problems?

6. Are you interested in group work? What kind of group are you interested in?

7. Do you think the teacher give you enough help for your group work? When you work with your partner, what kind of help do you like your teacher to give you?

8. During the class, the teacher taught you a lot of English communication strategies. Will these strategies help you communicate better with your group partner?

9. Can you learn or learn new things from your classmates?

10. When you or your partner make mistakes in the practice, do you correct each other?

11. Do you prefer to change partners a lot or work with a regular partner?

12. What kind of partner do you like to work with?

13. If you have any questions about homework or something in class, do you like to talk with your peers first? Did your classmates understand your questions? Did they help you?

Interviews in the third phase of study

Today, I am going to ask you questions about Group Discussion Jobs and Vocabulary Journal.

1. Do you like having a job in a group discussion? What were your job?

2. There are three jobs in this group, Speaker, Timekeeper and Interviewer,
3. Which job did you like? Why?
4. Which job you didn't like? Why?
5. Did you do your job very well? Why or why not?
6. After you have a job in a group,
7. Did you speak more than before?
8. Did you have enough time to speak?
9. Could you speak for 2 minutes? If couldn't, why?
10. Did you prepare enough notes/ details/ vocabulary before the discussion?
11. What can you learn from your job? Did you learn new words?
12. Some people think that the timekeeper is an easy job, do you think so?