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INDONESIAN L2 LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS GROUP WORK: A SURVEY STUDY ON GENDER DIFFERENCES

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Abstract
This study was conducted to investigate the possible interaction between the attitudes of Indonesian learners from non-English majors towards group work in the English as second/foreign (L2) classes and their gender. The study employed an online survey. In this study, 187 learners from various regions in Indonesia participated. The study found that learners generally reported positive attitudes towards group work to facilitate a better learning atmosphere, for their self-improvement, and a medium of learning with their classmates. Furthermore, this study found no statistically significant difference in their attitudes towards group work seen from their gender. The no significant difference indicates that both male and female learners reported relatively similar attitudes towards group work. Limitations are acknowledged, and the possible contributions and pedagogical implications are stated alongside suggested directions for future studies in the fields of gender and group work in L2 classes.

Keywords: attitude, English as a second/foreign language (L2), gender, group work, non-English major

Introduction
Group work is an activity commonly conducted in second/foreign language (L2) classes and is believed to benefit L2 learners in many ways. Group work can help create a more comfortable and positive classroom environment than individual work does for the students (Subekti, 2018). It was found that learners felt less anxious when working in groups than when required to do individual work in L2 classes. In Japan, group work was found to help improve their personal learning and collaborative processes (Morgan, 2023). In Ukraine, it was also found to improve their communication skills as learners have more talking time in their small groups to practise the language in a less tense environment than in whole-class interactions (Bilyk et al., 2023).

Studies on group work have been conducted quite extensively (Ababneh, 2017; Al Mashjari, 2012; Alfares, 2017; Apple & Kikuchi, 2020; Brown, 2008; Y. Chen, 2017; Elashhab, 2020; Ibnian, 2012; León & Castro, 2016; Quy, 2017; Wahyuningsih et al., 2023). Studies in Colombia and Saudi Arabia, for example, reported that group work can facilitate better relationships among learners,

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facilitating their learning (Al Mashjari, 2012; Alfares, 2017; León & Castro, 2016). Al Mashjari (2012) in Saudi Arabia reported that 70 out of 134 learner participants reported the benefit of group work in enhancing relationships among group members, further contributing to a more relaxed class atmosphere. Additionally, Wagner and Ruch (2015) mentioned that good relations among learners could help them achieve more optimal learning. Group members who collaborated for the success of a specific task likely performed well in class. Several studies reported that group work could foster the exchange of knowledge, experience, and information among learners (Brown, 2008; Hidayati et al., 2018). This allows learners to learn from one another, promoting collaboration rather than competition among learners. Other studies also reported that group work could foster Taiwanese L2 learners' critical thinking (Chen, 2017) and enhance the problem-solving skills of Vietnamese L2 learners (Quy, 2017). In L2 learning contexts, though not exclusively investigating group work, studies suggested that small group activities where learners only interact with a few interlocutors could facilitate more confidence and risk-taking behaviours (Gallardo, 2020; Goram & Subekti, 2022; Kitano, 2001; Subekti, 2020). These risk-taking behaviours allow learners to practice L2 more extensively, eventually boosting their learning. It is speculated that learners' diverse cultural backgrounds may play a part in influencing the degree of success of group work activities in class (Chen, 2017).

Despite the seemingly uniform findings on the merits of conducting group work in L2 classes, it may be more complex than it seemed. In a Spanish as L2 context in the United States, a qualitative study by Dobao and Blum (2013) reported that more than half of the 55 participants perceived that group work did not enhance their L2 learning in vocabulary and grammar. Most of these Spanish as L2 learners felt that the group member did not correct their mistakes (Dobao & Blum, 2013). The results may be attributed to the possibility that these participants were at a similar level of L2 proficiency. Hence, their peer correction may not be considered sufficiently helpful by their peers. The nature of the assessment may also influence the results. For example, some learners may consider group work a waste of time in a class where a task can be done individually. Whilst a study suggested that group work could be used to help weaker learners in Botswana (Brown, 2008), a study in Thailand suggested that despite the benefit of helping weaker learners, group work made learners with high-performance work harder as they had to explain materials to weaker members of the group (Coffin, 2020). Hence, some of these high-performance learners perceived group work negatively. Some teachers in a qualitative study in Indonesia, whilst acknowledging the role of group work in alleviating learners' anxiety, mentioned that at times, low-achieving learners used group work to get away despite minimum effort and performance as they could depend on their more able peers (Subekti, 2018).

Other studies also reported learner participants' opposition to group work. A participant in a study by Fushino (2011) commented, "I wanted to speak English more, but the atmosphere in my group was so lukewarm that I was unable to show my 'I-love-English' attitude, which was sad" (p. 308), suggesting group work atmosphere may not always be supportive for L2 learning. Understandably, it may not be very surprising that some studies reported learners' opposition to group work in L2 classes (Chen, 2003; Gonzales & Torres, 2016; Rao, 2002; Wang,

2021). Chinese learners preferred the traditional teacher-led teaching method (Rao, 2002) as well as considered group work wasting their time (Wang, 2021), and likewise, Philippines learners preferred working individually (Gonzales & Torres, 2016).

Furthermore, apart from learning activities in classes such as group work, learners' factors, collectively known as individual differences, could be instrumental in L2 learning. Besides factors such as motivation, anxiety, and confidence, learners' gender may be at play in L2 learning. Reasonably, many studies have contemplated this issue in the L2 learning field, perhaps most notably by MacIntyre and associates (Baker & MacIntyre, 2003; Dewaele et al., 2016). For example, a large-scale study involving 1736 multilingual learners by MacIntyre et al. (2016) found that female learners reported having significantly more fun in L2 classes than their male counterparts. They were also prouder of their L2 performance than their male counterparts.

Specific in the field of group work and gender, in a general education context in Europe, a study by Šerić and Praničević (2018) involving 30 participants from different nationalities found that male and female learners had different foci when working in a group. Female learners identified more merits and possible risks of group work than their male counterparts. Male learners focused more on the social benefits of group work, whilst female learners mentioned the social, functional, and personal benefits of group work equally. This suggested that gender may also play a part in the success of group work activities in class.

Nevertheless, specifically in L2 contexts, the possible role of gender has not been widely investigated despite the potential. One of the rare studies contemplating the possible effect of gender on group work was conducted in Malaysia by Nair et al. (2012), involving secondary school learners. They found that although female learners generally found group work to be more interesting and enjoyable than their male counterparts, male and female learners did not significantly differ in their inclination towards group work. Furthermore, learners' inclination towards group work did not significantly correlate with their L2 achievement. Despite the finding of that previous study suggesting no statistical gender difference regarding inclination towards group work, considering the scarcity of empirical studies in the L2 context contemplating the possible interaction between learners' gender and group work, more studies are still necessary. Besides, studies on group work alone in L2 contexts seem to produce inconclusive findings. Whilst some studies suggested learners' positive attitudes towards group work (Al Mashjari, 2012; Alfares, 2017; Dewaele et al., 2016), some others suggested learners had unpleasant experiences in working in a group in L2 classes (Chen, 2017; Fushino, 2011; Gonzales & Torres, 2016; Rao, 2002; Wang, 2021).

Specific in the Indonesian L2 context, though studies investigating group work have been conducted (e.g., Hidayati et al., 2018; Mallipa, 2018; Masruddin, 2018), such studies did not involve a sufficient number of samples and did not contemplate the possible interaction between learners' gender and their attitudes towards group work, albeit the potential. The study by Mallipa (2018) involved 60 participants from a university, the one by Hidayati et al. (2018) involved 33 participants from a university, and the one by Masruddin (2018) involved only 25

participants. Besides, these studies investigated group work in the framework of cooperative learning (Hidayati et al., 2018; Mallipa, 2018) and secondarily in an experimental study (Masruddin, 2018) without regarding gender as the possible differentiator. For these reasons, a quantitative study involving more participants investigating the possible role of gender in affecting learners' attitudes towards group work in the Indonesian L2 context is necessary. The findings of such a study may have the generalisation potential beneficial to provide an early map in the field of gender and group work in L2 learning in Indonesia.

Considering the rationales, the present study intends to answer the following research questions: First, how are L2 learners' attitudes towards group work seen from their gender? Second, is there a significant difference in attitudes towards group work between male and female learners?

Methods

Research design and participants

Studies on group work have been conducted using survey methods (Ibnian, 2012; Kemaloglu-Er & Özata, 2020; Mallipa, 2018; Masruddin, 2018; Ziauddin, 2013). In line with the research objectives and partly due to the popularity of the survey method in the field, the present study also employed a survey method. To reach as many participants as possible from a wider area (Nayak & Narayan, 2019), in this case, various islands in Indonesia, we employed an online survey. That is because Indonesia is an archipelago country comprising islands that accentuate cultural and social diversities among their L2 learners.

This study's participants were 187 learners from non-English majors from various regions in Indonesia, regardless of universities and majors. There were 97 female and 90 male participants. The minimum age was 18, while the maximum was 24. Table 1 presents the distribution of the participants based on their domiciles, while Table 2 illustrates the details of the participants' departments.

Table 1. Participants' domiciles

No	Domiciles	Number of Participants	Percentage
1.	Java	91	48.7%
2.	Kalimantan	28	15%
3.	Sulawesi	21	11.2%
4.	Sumatera	17	9.1%
5.	Bali	12	6.4%
6.	Papua	9	4.8%
7.	Nusa Tenggara	7	3.7%
8.	Other islands/regions	2	1.1%

Table 2. Participants' departments

No	Departments	Number of Participants	Percentage
1.	Management	28	15%
2.	Communication	23	12.3%
3.	Information Systems	22	11.8%
4.	Law	13	7%
5.	Architecture	9	4.8%
6.	Medical	9	4.8%
7.	Education	8	4.3%

No	Departments	Number of Participants	Percentage
8.	Design	7	3.7%
9.	Informatics Engineering	7	3.7%
10.	Industrial Engineering	4	2.1%
11.	Others	57	30.5%

Ethical consideration

Three research ethics principles were implemented: autonomy, non-maleficence, and justice. First, the autonomy principle was implemented through the distribution of consent forms. This consent form was provided before the main questionnaire items. The participants could freely decide to participate without coercion (Gray, 2022). Second, the non-maleficence or no harm principle was also adhered to. The possible participant risks were minimised (Israel & Hay, 2006). Third, the justice principle was employed by not discriminating against the targeted participants (Creswell, 2022). All Indonesian L2 learners of English who were studying in non-English majors could participate in this study.

Instruments

Twenty questionnaire items on attitudes towards group work were distributed online in a *Google Form*. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, and 17 were adapted from the work of Brown (2008), whilst items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, and 20 were adapted from that of Al Mashjari (2012). These adapted questionnaires were reliable, $\alpha = 0.88$ (Brown, 2008) and $\alpha = 0.81$ (Al Mashjari, 2012). In this study, a 4-response Likert scale was employed. The responses were "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly disagree." Among the twenty items, five were negative, with "Strongly agree" responses indicating highly negative attitudes and "Strongly disagree" responses indicating highly positive attitudes. Furthermore, to facilitate the presentation of data and thorough analysis, in this report, the twenty questionnaire items were divided into three categories, "Group Work and Learning Atmosphere" (items 5, 8, and 10), "Group Work and Learners' Self-Improvement" (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, and 20), and "Group Work and Learning Together" (items 6, 13, 16, 17, and 19). In this study, the questionnaires produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .83 and a McDonald's omega coefficient of .81, indicating high reliability.

Data collection and analysis

The link to the *Google Form* questionnaire was shared online from 22 September 2021 to 31 January 2022. It was distributed via several social media platforms, such as *WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter,* and *Facebook,* to reach many participants regardless of geographical boundaries within Indonesia. After the study successfully reached the required number of participants to make a meaningful quantitative analysis, the *Google Form* link was disabled, and the data that had been obtained were recorded in SPSS 25 for further analysis. The following scoring weights were used. For the positive items, "Strongly agree" was recorded as 5 points, "Agree" as 4 points, "Disagree" as 2 points, and "Strongly disagree" as 1 point, whilst the negative items were reverse-scored. Furthermore, descriptive statistics of cross-tabulation were employed to answer the first research question, whilst an independent t-test was employed to answer the

second research question to see whether there was a significant difference between male and female participants in their attitudes towards group work. The whole sequence of the data collection and analysis can be seen in Figure 1.

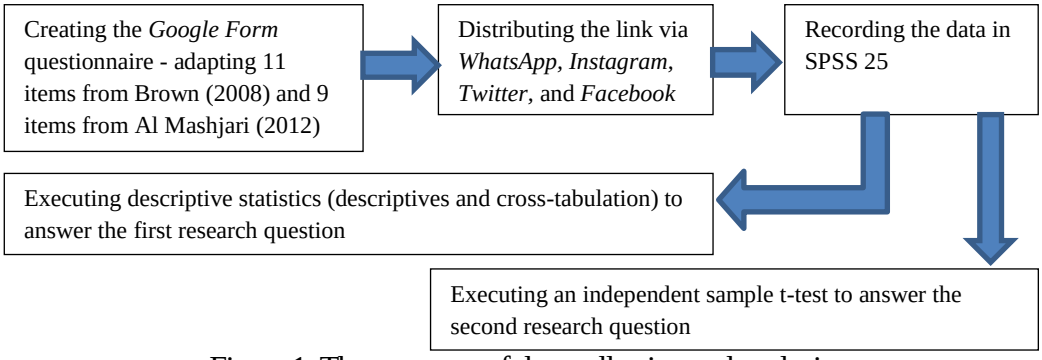


Figure 1. The sequence of data collection and analysis

Findings and Discussion

Male and female learners' attitudes towards group work in L2 classes

The mean score of the 20 questionnaire items on learners' attitudes towards group work was 3.91, indicating generally positive attitudes. This finding was similar to those of studies by Ababneh (2017) in Jordan and Elashhab (2020) in Saudi Arabia. Conversely, another study in Saudi Arabia by Alfares (2017) reported learners' generally negative attitudes towards group work. They felt that group work wasted their time (Alfares, 2017). In this case, learners' attitudes towards group work may be related to socio-cultural factors and learning atmosphere, which may be context-specific. For example, in a learning context with a very competitive atmosphere, learners may dislike group work activities. In the Indonesian context, in comparison, the participants may have been familiar with various group work activities in L2 classes. L2 classes at university are typically characterised by group work or group projects. Another possible factor was the influence of Indonesian society, which generally tends to cooperate to reach common goals rather than have open competition. This tendency toward cooperation in Indonesian society may partly explain why the participants generally reported positive attitudes towards group work. In a slightly dated yet still relevant study in China, Rao (2002) found that learners were not interested in group work activities because they caused chaos, which made them feel stressed in class.

Similarly, a qualitative study involving two L2 learners from Korea and Japan reported that the Japanese learner did not enjoy working in groups (Chen, 2003). The participants usually worked individually and tended to defend ideas whilst working in a group. However, due to the relatively scarce empirical studies specifically contemplating this issue, the conflicting findings of these fairly limited studies should be taken with caution, and further research may be necessary. It may especially be the case when discussing the possible socio-cultural factors involving such a vast and diverse context as Indonesia.

The participants' responses to the first questionnaire category, "Group Work and Learning Atmosphere", are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. Group work and learning atmosphere

No.	Statement	Gender	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5.	Group work provided a more relaxing atmosphere.	Male	3.90	.79	14.40%	73.30%	12.20%	0%
		Female	3.91	1.01	27.80%	53.60%	18.60%	0%
8.	Group work was fun.	Male	3.72	.96	14.40%	64.40%	21.10%	0%
		Female	4.03	.73	18.60%	74.20%	6.20%	1%
10.	Group work makes learning English more interesting.	Male	3.73	.90	11.10%	70%	18.90%	0%
		Female	4.00	.90	26.80%	59.80%	13.40%	0%

As seen in Table 3, the mean scores of the female participants' responses in all three items in this category were slightly higher than those of their male counterparts. This indicated that female learners were more relaxed during group work activities, most notably in items 8, "Group work was fun", and 10, "Group work makes learning English more interesting." In a study not specifically investigating group work, MacIntyre et al. (2016), involving 90 participants from different nationalities, found that female learners enjoyed and had more fun in the L2 classroom than their male counterparts. These findings may have something to do with gender roles in the learning contexts in which these studies were conducted. That is to see gender not only as a biological factor but as a social factor. In countries where gender roles have been relatively equal, such as Indonesia, female learners may have more freedom to express themselves in L2 classes.

Interestingly, as seen from item 5, "Group work provided a more relaxing atmosphere," the mean scores were equally high *(M_{male} = 3.90, M_{female} = 3.91)*, indicating a relatively unanimous perceived effect of group work in creating a more relaxing atmosphere. A qualitative study in Indonesia reported that group work activities were attributed to lower speaking anxiety among learners since they were not required to talk in front of many listeners (Subekti, 2018). This 'distribution' of learning demand among group members may be why group work was perceived to provide a more relaxing atmosphere by both male and female participants.

The participants' responses to questionnaire items in the category "Group work and learners' self-improvement" are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Group work and learners' self-improvement

No.	Statement	Gender	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Group work helps with understanding/ comprehension.	Male	4.18	.53	22.20%	75.6%	2.2%	0%
		Female	4.16	.67	26.80%	68%	5.2%	0%
2.	Group work fosters the exchange of knowledge, information, and experience.	Male	4.22	.56	26.70%	71.1%	2.2%	0%
		Female	4.32	.68	40.20%	55.70%	4.10%	0%
3.	Group work	Male	4.09	.59	17.80%	77.80%	4.40%	0%

No.	Statement	Gender	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	makes problem-solving easier.	Female	4.05	.82	25.80%	63.90%	10.30%	0%
4.	Group work stimulates critical thinking.	Male	4.10	.60	18.90%	76.70%	4.40%	0%
		Female	4.10	.77	26.80%	64.90%	8.20%	0%
7.	Group work enhances communication skills.	Male	4.13	.62	22.20%	73.30%	4.40%	0.5%
		Female	4.32	.85	47.40%	45.40%	6.20%	0%
9.	Group work encourages me to learn English.	Male	3.86	.88	16.70%	67.80%	15.60%	0%
		Female	4.24	.66	32%	63.90%	4.10%	0%
11.	Group work gives me the chance to express my opinions and points of view.	Male	4.02	.75	17.80%	75.60%	4.40%	2.20%
		Female	4.14	.79	30.90%	60.80%	8.20%	0%
12.	Group work encourages me to be more organised.	Male	3.77	.89	11.10%	72.20%	15.60%	1.10%
		Female	4.04	.81	24.70%	64.90%	10.30%	0%
14.	Group work increases my knowledge income.	Male	4.19	.47	21.10%	77.80%	1.10%	0%
		Female	4.29	.68	36.10%	60.80%	2.10%	1%
15.	Group work encourages me to participate in the teaching/learning process actively.	Male	4.02	.65	15.60%	77.80%	6.70%	0%
		Female	3.99	.86	23.70%	63.90%	12.40%	0%
18.	Group work does not give me enough chance to practice the target language.	Male	3.47	1.12	6.70%	21.10%	63.30%	8.90%
		Female	3.31	1.33	11.30%	25.80%	46.40%	16.50%
20.	Group work distracts me from following the teacher's directions.	Male	3.48	1.13	8.90%	16.70%	66.70%	7.80%
		Female	3.40	1.16	5.20%	27.80%	55.70%	11.30%

Several items producing the highest and lowest mean scores in either male or female groups are further analysed. Item 2 produced the highest mean scores in the category *(M_{male} = 4.22, M_{female} = 4.32).* In this item, 97.80% of female and 95.90% of male participants agreed that group work fostered the exchange of knowledge, information, and experience. Though not investigating gender differences, two previous studies using the same item also reported generally positive responses from their participants (Brown, 2008; Hidayati et al., 2018). Both male and female learners in this study may have experienced first-hand the benefits of group work as a channel to exchange knowledge. In other words, they saw group work as a medium where they could learn from one another and simultaneously achieve the specific L2 tasks. This doubled benefit of group work could be why this item produced the highest mean scores in both groups in this study.

Item 7 also produced high mean scores *(M_{male} = 4.13, M_{female} = 4.32)*. Responding to the item, 95.10% of male and 93.80% of female learners agreed that group work enhanced communication skills. Concerning that, 75% of the participants in a study in Botswana also agreed on the positive effect of group work on communication skills (Brown, 2008). Two other previous studies suggested that when learners are required to use L2 in front of fewer interlocutors, they tend to be more confident and less apprehensive (Kitano, 2001; Subekti, 2018). This could be why male and female learners in the present study seemed to support the statement uniformly. In Indonesia, L2 learners of English have little chance to practice the language outside the classroom context because of the English position as a foreign language in the country. Hence, it is perhaps understandable that they likely feel anxious to use the language in front of a large audience, such as the whole class. In this case, group work may have provided the participants with a safe environment where they could use L2 in a more relaxing atmosphere with a smaller audience away from the spotlight.

Furthermore, item 14 produced high mean scores from both groups *(M_{male} = 4.19, M_{female} = 4.29)*. In this item, 98.90% of the male and 96.90% of the female participants indicated their agreement that group work increased their knowledge income. This finding was the same as those reported by Ibnian (2012) in Jordan and Apple and Kikuchi (2020) in Japan. Ibnian (2012) found that group work could help learners improve their general English learning, whilst Apple and Kikuchi (2020) found that learners could develop their knowledge while working on group projects. The consistency in findings across these studies, spanning different contexts, probably suggests a universally positive effect of group work and the acceptance of it by L2 learners across diverse learning environments. Learners gain and learn new knowledge from other group members by exchanging their knowledge in group work.

Furthermore, item 1 also produced high mean scores *(M_{male} = 4.18, M_{female} = 4.16)*. Concerning this item, 97.80% of the male and 94.80% of the female participants agreed that group work helped with understanding/ comprehension. This finding differed from the finding of a study in the United States by Dobao and Blum (2013) in a Spanish as L2 context. The study reported that less than half of their participants agreed that group work could develop their understanding of Spanish. In this case, other than the different cultural backgrounds between the participants of this study and those in the study by Dobao and Blum (2013), the different nature of the assessment may also play a part. For example, in a context with a heavy focus on testing or implementing individual work assessments, learners may not consider group work effective in enhancing their understanding. Another possible contributing factor was the learners' proficiency level. When learners have similar proficiency levels, it is not uncommon for them to struggle to provide feedback that their peers find helpful in improving the quality of their work. The combination of such factors may lead some learners to consider group work wasting time as they could use the time otherwise to self-study.

Moreover, item 4 produced high mean scores from both groups *(M_{male} = 4.10, M_{female} = 4.10)*. In this item, 95.60% of male and 91.80% of female participants supported the statement that group work stimulated critical thinking. Related to these findings, at least two previous studies reported relatively similar findings (Brown, 2008; Y. Chen, 2017). In Taiwan, for example, a study reported

that some learners felt that group work could develop the way they thought (Y. Chen, 2017). In Vietnam, a study also reported that group work enhanced learners' problem-solving skills (Quy, 2017). In group work, learners with different ideas discuss the same topic or task, providing a stimulus to develop learners' critical thinking and, thus, problem-solving skills.

Item 18, a negative item, produced rather low mean scores from both groups *(M_{male} = 3.47, M_{female} = 3.31)*. Responding to this item, 27.80% of male and 37.10% of female participants agreed that group work did not give them enough chance to practice the target language. This indicated that some learners considered group work insufficient in providing a stage for learners to practice L2. Several factors could be at play. First, the duration of group work in language class sessions where learners could produce as much L2 as possible may be limited. Secondly, perhaps due to the varying nature of the tasks in group work, learners may not necessarily use L2 in the process (Subekti, 2018). Teacher participants in a study by Subekti (2018) even mentioned that, at times, some learners used group work as a place to hide behind their more able friends, rendering themselves learning less.

Next, another negative item, item 20, produced relatively low mean scores *(M_{male} = 3.48, M_{female} = 3.40)*. Regarding this item, the study revealed that 25.60% of the male and 33% of the female participants indicated their agreement that group work distracted them from following the teacher's directions. Though not the majority, such numbers were too big to be ignored. Several possible factors may explain this finding. First, some high-achieving or more able learners may consider working in a group troublesome because they may perceive working with less able peers as slowing them down. A study in Thailand reported that high-performing learners tended to work harder in group work activities (Coffin, 2020). Then, group members, regarding task instructions, may also have different thoughts or perceptions, which they must resolve together. Some learners may dislike this process as it is perceived to waste time (Alfares, 2017; Wang, 2021).

Table 5 illustrates the participants' responses to the items in the third category, "Group Work and Learning Together."

Table 5. Group work and learning together

No.	Statement	Gender	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6.	Group work enabled learners to help weaker learners in the group.	Male	4.19	.60	25.60%	71.10%	3.30%	0%
		Female	4.23	.89	43.30%	46.40%	10.30%	0%
13.	Group work builds good relations between students.	Male	4.07	.63	17.80%	76.70%	5.60%	0%
		Female	4.12	.74	26.80%	66%	7.20%	0%
16.	In group work, it is difficult to get members to actively participate in tasks.	Male	3.18	1.15	7.80%	31.10%	57.80%	3.30%
		Female	2.95	1.25	13.40%	35.10%	46.40%	5.20%
17.	In group work, it is a waste of time explaining things	Male	3.57	1.09	4.40%	21.10%	62.20%	12.20%
		Female	3.78	1.08	4.10%	15.50%	58.80%	21.60%

No.	Statement	Gender	Mean	SD	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	to others.							
19.	Group work makes me depend on others.	Male	3.50	1.09	4.40%	23.30%	62.20%	10%
		Female	3.57	1.06	3.10%	22.70%	62.90%	11.30%

Three items producing the highest mean scores are further analysed in this category. These are item 6 *(M_{male} = 4.19, M_{female} = 4.23)*, 13 *(M_{male} = 4.07, M_{female} = 4.12)*, and 17 *(M_{male} = 3.78, M_{female} = 3.57)*.

First, item 6 produced the highest mean scores in both groups *(M_{male} = 4.19, M_{female} = 4.23)*. In this item, 96.70% of male and 89.70% of female participants agreed that group work enabled learners to help weaker learners. On a positive note, this finding indicated that implementing group work could facilitate learners to help each other in their learning process. Nonetheless, a study by Coffin (2020) in Thailand reported that in group work, there seemed to be a disparity in learners' effort in which more able learners seemed to work harder than the less able group members. Regarding this, whilst such conditions may be unavoidable at times, teachers must ensure that less able learners are facilitated to be more confident and perform better rather than 'hiding' behind the backs of the more able group partners. Moreover, studies suggested small-group activities enhanced learners' confidence, perceived communication competence (Subekti, 2020) and risk-taking behaviours (Gallardo, 2020).

Item 13, stating that group work built good student relations, produced the second-highest mean scores *(M_{male} = 4.07, M_{female} = 4.12)*. This finding conformed to those of two previous studies (Al Mashjari, 2012; León & Castro, 2016). A study in Colombia reported that when learners worked together in a group, they could develop social skills and create better relationships among themselves (León & Castro, 2016). For example, learners often meet to work together for discussion. The more often they hold group discussions, the more they will get to know each other. Good relationships with classmates, eventually, can help facilitate the learning process and achievement (Wagner & Ruch, 2015)

Furthermore, item 13, a negative item produced, albeit the third highest, rather low mean scores *(M_{male} = 3.78, M_{female} = 3.57)*. Responding to this item, 25.50% of male and 19.60% of female participants agreed that group work was a waste of time regarding explaining things to others. These minority learners' negative attitudes may be in line with those of the participants in two previous studies in the Philippines and China (Gonzales & Torres, 2016; Wang, 2021). Gonzales and Torres (2016) found that Filipino learners preferred to work individually to have full control of their work. Wang (2021) also reported that Chinese learners felt group work wasted their time.

Moreover, they still put teachers at the core of the learning process. The majority of the participants in this present study disagreed with this negative statement, which may be attributed to the possibility that cooperative learning in language classes at the university level in Indonesia is already common. Thus, they did not consider explaining things to their group partners bothersome.

The difference in the attitudes towards group work between male and female learners

An independent sample t-test was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference in attitudes towards group work between male and female learners. The results are in Table 6.

Table 6. Independent sample T-Test result of female and male learners' attitude towards group work

	Male (N=90)		Female (N=97)		T-test	Sig.
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***t***	***p***
Learners' Attitude	73.00	7.973	74.94	8.117	-1.645	.849

As seen in Table 6, the study found that even though female learners had slightly more positive attitudes towards group work, indicated by a slightly higher mean score *(M_{male} = 73.00, SD = 7.97, M_{female} = 74.94, SD = 8.12)*, the difference was statistically non-significant, *t (185) = -1.65, p > .05.* This finding was in line with the finding of a study in Malaysia by involving secondary school learners (Nair et al., 2012). Nair et al. (2012) also found that learners' degree of inclination towards group work did not significantly differ across genders. The similarity between the previous and present studies may be attributed to the possibly similar characteristics of L2 learners among these studies conducted in Indonesia and Malaysia, which are geographically very close to each other. Similar characteristics of L2 instructions may also be at play. For example, L2 instructions in both contexts extensively expose learners to collaborative activities. This extensive exposure to collaborative activities could explain the participants' similar inclinations towards group work regardless of gender. Furthermore, in an Indonesian context, Hidayati et al. (2018) found that learner participants were familiar with group work activities in L2 classes. They enjoyed working together because they were already familiar with it. Related to this, the present study participants, regardless of gender, may have been familiar with group work. This could partly explain why there was no statistically significant difference in attitudes towards group work between the male and female groups in this study. Drawing a definite conclusion may be too early, considering that studies contemplating the degree of effect of gender on attitudes towards group work in the Indonesian context may still be at its onset stage. Further explorations may still be necessary.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to understanding the possible role of gender in affecting learners' preference in group work activities in L2 classes, especially in a relatively under-researched Indonesian context. Considering the wide distribution of the participants residing in various regions in Indonesia, the findings may give an early 'map' of Indonesian L2 learners' attitudes towards group work seen from their gender. The findings can reference future studies in the same context, considering the rarity of similar studies contemplating gender and group work in the region and the quantitative method employed.

Several implications can be suggested. The generally positive attitudes towards group work may encourage teachers to employ such strategies in L2

instruction. Nonetheless, it has weaknesses, and learners are well aware of these weaknesses. Nurturing the spirit of cooperation rather than competition, as well as encouraging less able learners to perform in a safer environment, such as group work, should be done hand-in-hand. That is to ensure that less able learners can learn from their more able peers instead of hiding behind them.

The present study has limitations that should be acknowledged. It relied solely on surveys as the data collection method, thus depending entirely on participants' honesty (or lack thereof) in responding to questionnaire items. Additionally, studies examining gender roles in group work are relatively scarce, which may, to some extent, affect the depth of analysis in interpreting the results of this study.

Furthermore, possible directions for future studies on gender and group work can be suggested. A mixed-method study involving both a survey and qualitative methods, such as interviews and class observations, may facilitate a better understanding of the possible effects of gender on learners' attitudes towards group work. Researchers could conduct the studies at different levels of education, for example, at senior high school and senior high school levels. Furthermore, investigating the effects of having group partners from the same and opposite gender could also be worthwhile. Such studies could inform practitioners on whether working with group partners of the same gender or the opposite one may make a difference in learners' L2 achievement.

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