

HOW DO THEIR "GROUP WORK" WORKS AS AN ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGY OF EFL LEARNING

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Abstract: The implementation of active learning in junior high schools, particularly on how students respond to it is interesting to examine. The active learning program is extensively implemented in randomly selected seven provinces, at state schools in Indonesia. This research aims to investigate the implementation of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) active learning in classroom settings and to identify how the implementation is perceived by the students. To examine the implementation, 12 classroom observations at 8 purposely selected schools were carried out. Meanwhile, to identify how the implementation was perceived by the students, a number of students were interviewed, and 12 field notes were confirmed for validation. After the data were intensively analyzed, it was found that (1) active learning was evident in most classrooms in which group work was selected as the main learning strategy; (2) strategies were employed to perform different tasks and activities within ELT (English Language Teaching) sequences; and (3) most students positively responded the implementation of active learning with some suggestion for better implementation. This research recommends that the active learning approach be implemented in EFL classrooms since it potentially promotes skills other than English language skills.

Keywords: *active learning, EFL, Indonesian context, junior high schools.*

BAGAIMANA "GROUP WORK" COCOK SEBAGAI STRATEGI PEMBELAJARAN AKTIF PADA KELAS BAHASA INGGRIS

Abstrak: Pelaksanaan pembelajaran aktif di Sekolah Menengah Pertama, terutama bagaimana siswa menyikapi hal tersebut menarik untuk dikaji. Program tersebut diterapkan secara ekstensif di tujuh provinsi yang dipilih secara acak, di sekolah negeri di Indonesia. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mengungkap pelaksanaan belajar aktif di kelas-kelas bahasa Inggris dan mengetahui pendapat siswa terhadap pelaksanaan tersebut. Untuk mengungkap pelaksanaan program tersebut dilakukan pengamatan sebanyak 12 kali di 8 sekolah yang dijadikan sebagai sampel. Selanjutnya untuk mengetahui sikap siswa terhadap program tersebut sebanyak sejumlah siswa diwawancarai, dan 12 catatan lapangan dikonfirmasi untuk validasi. Setelah menganalisis data secara intensif, beberapa temuan diperoleh: (1) pembelajaran aktif terlihat di sebagian besar kelas di mana kerja kelompok dipilih sebagai strategi pembelajaran utama; (2) strategi digunakan untuk melakukan tugas dan aktivitas yang berbeda dengan mengikuti urutan-urutan pengajaran bahasa Inggris; dan (3) sebagian besar siswa menyikapinya secara positif dengan beberapa catatan untuk perbaikan. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan agar pembelajaran aktif dapat diterapkan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris karena berpeluang untuk meningkatkan keterampilan selain keterampilan bahasa Inggris yang menjadi tujuan utama pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: *pembelajaran aktif, bahasa Inggris, konteks Indonesia, Sekolah Menengah Pertama.*

INTRODUCTION

Active learning is commonly associated with student-centered approach (Nouri, 2016; Taraban, Box, Myers, Pollard & Bowen, 2007; Tomkin, Beilstein, Morphew, & Herman, 2019), cooperative learning (Harizaj, 2015; O'Neal & Pinder-Grover, 2005), experiential learning,

and learning-by-doing (Dewey, 1938). These learning approaches and strategies are closely intertwined, and are inseparable from active learning.

Within framework of student-centered approach, the students serve as subject rather than object of teaching. They take a greater space

in classroom sessions, and the teacher mostly plays a supervisor (Harizaj, 2015). In addition, the exploration on active learning strategies will rest in the types of cooperative learning, in which student participation and activeness are of most significance. It is believed that cooperative learning can encourage the students to get engaged with learning tasks, actively participate in sharing, discussing, and collaborating with their peers (Slavin, Hurley, & Chamberlain, 2003). Moreover, experience learning, coined by David A. Kolb, is considered an appropriate learning approach that give more rooms for students to acquire skills by experiencing (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2014). Learning-by-doing, based on Dewey's Progressive Education, is another label, and, therefore, identical with active learning since through carrying out an activity (doing); a student becomes active, and employs his physical, as well as, mental attributes.

As opposed to passive learning, active learning approach bases its theory on Dewey's progressive education, Banduras' social learning theory, and Vygotsky's activity learning theory. John Dewey argued that education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience-which is always the actual life-experience of some individuals (Dewey, 1938). Meanwhile, Bandura (1977) argues that new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience of by observing others. According to Vygotsky, Davydov, & Robert (1977: 74), "The educational process an active one on three levels: the student is active, the teacher is active, and the environment created between them is an active one."

Students' activeness in active learning is dynamic in nature. It may range from a simply listening to teacher 'explanation to collaboratively execute the presented task and perform group presentation. In a more technical term, it is a continuum: from a simple task to complex task, from acquisition of knowledge to acquisition of skills/attitudes; and, from limited interaction to extensive interaction (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; O'Neal & Pinder-Grover, 2005).

Referring to the learning theories above, active learning approach can be further formulated as follows: (1) students are central in learning; (2) group work and discussion are main

strategies for teaching; (3) the students engage in experiencing (doing), rather than, listening and seeing and (4) more spaces are given to the students for learning by doing and experiencing, (5) a teacher mostly plays as supervisor or facilitator of learning, (6) involving instructional media and tools in teaching, and (7) student talk is more predominating than teacher talk.

Active learning is believed to contribute to student learning. It helps students develop their personal skills, as well as, social skills (Braxton, Jones, Hirschy & Hartley, 2008; Coorey, 2016; Taraban *et al.*, 2007), enhance students' motivation and participation (Harizaj, 2015), and promote critical thinking (Banerjee, Murthy & Iyer, 2015; Cadima, Barros, Ferreira, Serra-Lemos, Leal & Verschuere, 2018; Wu, Marek, & Chen, 2013). In addition to this, active learning facilitates students to improve their academic achievement (Slavin *et al.*, 2003; Taraban *et al.*, 2007). The effect of active learning on students' life is everlasting since it helps students acquire skills, in addition to knowledge. Both of them are simultaneously acquired in a meaningful activity. Knowledge is constructed during their interaction with peers, as wells, their teachers. Liu & Mathews (2005: 387) assert that knowledge is, "... actively constructed within the constraints and offerings of the learning environment." Meanwhile, skills are acquired when they engage in activities as a nurturing effect of selected active learning strategies. It is particularly true that knowledge is also acquired through their interaction with learning exposures (news, information, text, images, etc.).

Research, as well as, opinion papers on active learning is well documented in Indonesian publication. It can be traced from several scholarly articles dating back in 1980s (see, for example, Ngadiran, 1980; Arikunto, 1985). More research reports on the implementation of active learning in Indonesian schools were made in 2000s, in line with the promotion of PAIKEM (active, interactive, creative, affective learning), followed with Contextual Teaching and Learning (see, Gafur, 2003), Scientific Approach, and Character Education (Samal, 2018). Fahmi (2013), for example, employed group work strategies and the use of instructional media within context of PAIKEM. Fuadi, Johar, & Munzir (2016) applied a discussion technique in responding teacher questions. Within sequences

of Scientific Approach, the students are given more space to observe, to ask, and work in team (Suswandari, Siswandari, Sunardi, & Gunarhadi, 2020), and engage in problem-based learning (Issufiah, Sunardi, Sri, & Gunarhadi, 2018).

Most research on active learning employed quantitative approach with experimental study. Only a few research employs qualitative approach (see, for example, Daouk, Bahous, & Bacha, 2016; Momani, Asiri, & Alatawi, 2016). Of the previous research reports, there is no specific research qualitatively exploring the implementation of active learning in –more- than-one- schools/colleges and eliciting the students' opinion the implementation of active learning in EFL classroom settings. For example, Mulatu & Bezabih (2018) explore the implementation of active learning in the context of Ethiopian Schools, in which the teachers become the main respondents. Daouk *et al.* (2016) explore students' and instructors' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of implementing active learning strategies in higher education courses conducted at a tertiary institution in Lebanon. Er & Ataç (2014) surveys the students' attitude to the implementation of cooperative learning in the context of Turkish college students. Momani *et al.* (2016) investigate the teachers' views on using active learning strategies in Arabian Intermediate Schools.

Additionally, Gholam, Attaran, & Moghaddam (2014) review all accepted paper on active learning in the context of Iranian colleges. The present research is different from the research reports above. It examines the implementation of active learning in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms within the context of Indonesian Junior Secondary Schools. The research specifically focuses on the implementation of active learning at the schools and how it is responded by the students. Therefore, the research has the main goal: exploring the implementation of active learning at the schools, and identifying the students' response towards the implementation of active learning at the schools.

The present research may contribute to the better implementation of active learning in the context of Indonesian schools and, theoretically, enrich the existing research repertoires on active learning approach in ELT.

METHOD

Research Design

This multi- case study was carried out in Junior Secondary Schools. Eight Junior Secondary schools in the second cohort of pilot project were purposively sampled for the study. These schools, as well as other state–selected schools, give an easy access and a room for the exploration. The second cohort was taken as sample since the students' impression and experiences with the program remain easy for the elicitation.

Participants

The research involved 81 students from 8 Junior Secondary Schools in Central Java: 4 schools are under supervision of Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affair, popularly called MTsN; and the other four are under the auspices of Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, commonly named SMPN. From both MTsN and SMPN, students were selected as sample. By employing a convenient random sampling method, the participants were selected on the basis on the criteria set up by the researcher, that is —the participants who could articulate their experiences and they feel convenient to be interviewed. The data of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Participants

No	Names of Junior Secondary School (Pseudonym)	Number of Participants	Grade
1	MTsN Bondowoso	23	9
2	SMPN Kalijaga	22	9
3	MTsN Anugrah	29	9
4	SMPN Harapan 1	23	7
5	MTsN Amirah	22	8
6	SMPN Karangasem	23	9
7	MTsN Walisongo	25	7
8	SMPN Harapan 2	30	9
			Total: 81

Data Collection Techniques

To explore the implementation of active learning approach in the schools understudy,

observation in EFL classrooms was employed as main data collection technique. These—12—prolonged classroom observations were considered sufficient for gaining relevant and rich data. Teachers' and students' activities in any stages of EFL instruction as well as classroom settings were carefully recorded in 12- hand-written field notes. The field notes were adapted from Lynch's (1996) model of classroom observation, staged in every single 5-7 minutes with specific comments afterwards.

Eighty one students from eight Junior Secondary Schools participated in the interview to reveal the perception to the implementation of active learning. The interviews were tape recorded, and transcribed into verbatim data. The findings from interview were confirmed with the filed notes to match their perceptions and physical response during classroom sessions. This means the interview data were validated with field notes from the observation.

Data Analysis

Upon completing data collection, the raw data went through the following procedures: data restoration, followed with, data classification, data reduction, data display, drawing conclusion, and data verification.

The hand-writing data from classroom observations were retyped for readability. Likewise, data from interviews were transcribed for easy analysis. Both data were classified in different files: interview data and classroom observation data. Focusing on the research goals, that is — exploring the implementation of active learning at the schools, and identifying the students' response towards the implementation of active learning at the schools, both data were thoroughly analyzed for coding and, later, categorizing. The same phenomena were given the same codes and were displayed in tables for the interpretation. The conclusion was drawn after c, carefully looking the interconnection among the categories. Data verification was carried out to validate the temporary findings. For example, the temporary finding from interview was verified with the data of observation (field notes).

The research employed two types of coding for different sources of data: hierarchal coding and thematic coding. The former was employed for analyzing interview data and the

latter was used for observation data, as well as, interview data. To identify the students' response to the implementation of active learning, two major categories were developed: POSITIVE and NEGATIVE. To further identify any kinds of POSITIVE responses, sub categories were developed. These sub categories were developed from codes representing the same phenomena. In addition, to identify the students' suggestions for a better implementation, and to know the perceived benefits of the implementation of active learning, as well as, to explore active learning strategies selected by the teachers, thematic coding was carried out.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings and discussions are subdivided to follow the research aims: (1) exploring active learning strategies employed by the teachers in the schools understudy, and (2) identifying the students' perception to the implementation of active learning in the schools. The former used classroom observation as main data; meanwhile, the latter used face-to-face interviews as the main data collection techniques.

The Active Learning Strategies Implemented in the Schools

Twelve observations (Obs.) conducted to the eight – selected schools reveal that active learning was implemented in most EFL classrooms with different degree of students' engagement. It rangers from simple cognitive-mental activities, such as individually listening teachers' instruction and explanation, identifying and analyzing tasks to more complex behavior –physical activities, such as, collaboratively execute the presented tasks and perfume group presentation. The type of students' activity is structured in active learning strategies selected by the teachers from one school to another.

Group Work

It is evident in most classroom observations. Of 12 observations, there were 11 times of group work employed in the classroom. Group work was selected to employ different tasks and activities. As demonstrated in the Table 2, these activities were collaboratively done in a group work.

Table 2. Group work

Students' Activities	Time Range (in every 5 minutes)	Obs. #
1. Describing people	9 th 5 min.	#01
2. Writing a recount text	13 th 5 min.	#03
3. Writing narrative text	3 th 5 min.	#04
4. Describing animal pictures	8 th 5 min.	#05
5. Putting the picture into order.	4 th 5 min.	#06
6. Filling in the table	6 th 5 min.	#07
7. Writing a descriptive text.	5 th 5 min.	#09
8. Putting pictures in order.	5 th 5 min.	#10
9. Finding Indonesian corresponding	5 th 5 min.	#11

A group work was chosen to execute different types of tasks and activities. The label was given since the activities began with discussion of the task, and, followed with the execution of the tasks. All the tasks were done in group in which all participants sat in opposing positions for easy communication. Within a group there was a leader appointed by its members or by the teacher. The leader was responsible for the task completion in the respective group.

Group Presentation

Group presentation was mostly carried out upon completing a group work. As the name suggests, it is selected to present the students' works or projects (see Table 3). The strategies were found in six classroom observations: obs. #03, obs. #04, obs. #05, obs. #06 obs. #07, and obs. #10. It was selected to present the students' works after group work activities.

Group presentation was led by a leader playing as a moderator and was assisted by his group members. The projects were put on the wall or held by his two or three group members. Then, a speaker/presenter read, or explained his ideas from the presented project.

Pair Works

Pair works, meaning two people working in pairs, were found in three times of classroom observation: (obs. #01, obs. #02, and obs. #12). This strategy was recorded in three filed notes with the activities as follows: identifying adjectives in a given text, playing a role, and writing English instructions shown in Table 3.

Pair works, as seen in the Table 3, are conducted in 1st to 4th 5 minutes. This suggests

that the strategies are employed in the phase of pre teaching activities. It may serve as an ice breaking to draw the student's attention and to make every student active since the beginning of the teaching sessions.

Self-reflection

By self-reflection, it means asking the students to jot down, in a piece of paper, their opinions dealing with the learning activities developed by their teachers. The strategy was evident in three classroom observations: Obs. #05, Obs. #10, and Obs. #11. The activities were commonly followed with the collection of the papers, and put them on the flashcard. The positive impressions are put on the left side of the cardboard and the negative ones are put on the left side, or vice versa shown Table 3.

Self-reflection, as demonstrated in the Table 3, is employed in the middle or in the last phase of teaching. It is a sort of post teaching activities that serves as a feedback for a teacher from which he can take a lesson for the betterment of his teachings.

Ice Breaking

Ice breaking was found in two times of classroom observation. It serves to make students ready for learning by presenting a game or fun activities. The students were active in calling their parts of body and following teacher's instructions shown in Table 3.

Ice breaking is presented, as the Table 3 suggests, in the pre teaching activities. Pre teaching activities are all about language preparation and warming-up prior to task execution.

Table 3. Activities After Group Work

Stage	Students' Activities	Time Range (in every 5 minutes)	Obs. #
Group presentation	1. Presenting a fill – in form in group	3 rd 5 min.	#03
	2. Identifying regulars' verbs	10 th 5 min	#04
	3. Presenting group's project.	16 th 5 min.	#05
	4. Presenting group's project	10 th 5 min.	#06
	5. Presenting group's project	14 th 5 min	#07
	6. Presenting group's project	15 th 5 min.	#10
Pair works	1. Identifying adjectives in a given text	2 nd 5 min.	#01
	2. Playing a assigned role	1 st 5 min.	#02
	3. Writing English instructions	4 th 5 min.	#12
Self-reflection	1. Writing students ' personal learning reflection	26 th 5 min.	#05
	2. Writing their impressions	16 th 5 min.	#10
	3. Assessing student project.	9 th 5 min.	#11
Ice breaking	1. Mentioning part of body	1 st 5 min.	#08
	2. Simon says	2 nd 5 min.	#08
Brainstorming	1. Asking students' activity in the past	1 st 5 min.	#03
	2. Reviewing students' vocabulary mastery	1 st 5 min.	#08
Role playing	1. Playing a role in given dialogue	1 st 5 min.	#02

Brainstorming

Brainstorming was found in two field notes, meaning there were two brainstorming activities presented in the classroom. It is aimed at eliciting students' opinion. There is no wrong or right answer. The most important one is that there are a plenty of oral response from the students shown in Table 3.

Like ice breaking activities, brainstorming was carried out in the beginning of the teaching. This made students active since the first phase of their learning. As presented in the Table 3, the strategy was employed at the first five minutes.

Role Playing

Role playing was the only strategy during classroom observations. It was found in obs. #02 when the students were playing as a father and a mother. The strategy began with distribution of a written dialogue (Table 3), which was followed with playing their role. Since the strategy was carried out in the beginning of the classroom

sessions, it serves as a warming up activity. An analysis on the field note reveals that after conduction a role playing, they continued learning with a different topic of presentation.

From the Table 2 and 3, it can be implied that group work is the most frequently selected strategy in the classrooms. It is followed with group presentation, pair works, self-reflection, ice breaking, brainstorming, and role playing.

In fact, several active learning strategies are employed in one classroom session. For example, in addition to group work, the teachers employed classroom presentation, and self- reflection. It is evident in 10 of 12 classroom observations in which the teachers selected two or more active learning activities in one classroom session. In this case, ice breaking, group work, classroom presentation, and self- reflection strategies were applied in one classroom meeting. Therefore it is safe to say that a complete active learning model implemented the schools shown in Figure 1.

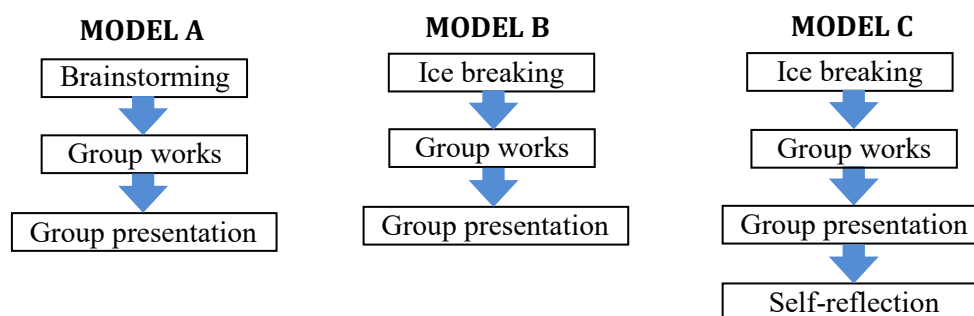


Figure 1. The Patterns of Active Learning

Model A is formulated in the classroom observations: #03; meanwhile, model B is found in the classroom observation: #04 and #07 Model C, the most holistic pattern, is evident in the classroom observation: #11. The strategies were designed by a teacher at MTsN Bondowoso which was completed within 70 minutes of teaching. How the model emerges can be seen in Figure 2.

The classroom activity begins with the building of group (10.20). It is then followed with the icebreaking. In this case, the teacher

shows a picture of Koala bear, and asks what the picture is about. Group work begins when the teacher distributes a worksheet to do in group (10.27), and ends when it has been filled in by one of the groups (10.48). It means group work takes place in 21 minutes. The participants of the group work come forward to present their work (10.55). So, the group presentation is carried out between 10.55- 11.16. Self- assessment or self –reflection is conducted after all learning sessions are done (11.16). It takes place within 14 minutes.

Timing	Classroom activities	Remarks
10.20 -11.30		
1 st 7 minutes	10.20 Guru membentuk kelompok sebelum belajar dimulai. Satu kelompok terdiri dari 5-6 orang. Selanjutnya guru mengucapkan salam dan mengecek kehadiran serta mengenalkan materi baru dengan menanyakan gambar tentang objek wisata dan jenis binatang. Secara khusus guru membahas binatang khas dari Australia: Koala Bears. Guru membacakan teks tentang koala bears. Siswa menyimak deskripsi koala bears. Selanjutnya guru mengajak siswa untuk mengikuti melafalkan bacaannya. Semua siswa serempak menurukannya. Comment: Nampaknya ini untuk ice breaking saja. Satu dua group sudah selesai dan mempresentasikan pekerjaannya.	Ice Breaking
2 nd 7 minutes	10.27. Guru terus membacakan dan melafalkan bacaannya untuk diikuti oleh siswa. Guru mengecek apakah mudah atau susah. Guru mengulangi bacannya dan siswa berusaha mengikutinya. Selanjutnya guru membuat pertanyaan terkait dengan teks. Selanjutnya guru membagikan lembar kerja untuk dikerjakan secara berkelompok.	Group Work
3 rd 7 minutes	10.34.....	
4 th 7 minutes	10.41.....	
7 th 7 minutes	10.48.....	
6 th 7 minutes	10.55. Seorang siswa membacakan pekerjaannya. tetapi siswa yang lain sibuk dengan pekerjaannya. Guru memberikan applause kepada siswa yang sudah ke depan. Siswa yang lain maju dan yang lainnya lagi tampak asyik dengan pekerjaannya masing-masing. Lagi-lagi seorang anggota kelompok maju mempresentasikan pekerjaannya. Applause diberikan bagi siswa yang selesai membaca pekerjaannya.	Group Presentation
7 th 7 minutes	11.02.....	
8 th 7 minutes	11.09.....	
9 th 7 minutes	11.16..... Guru terus menjelaskan generic structure nya. Selanjutnya guru meminta siswa untuk membuat refleksi dari pembuatan teks report di rumah. Siswa bekerja dan menuliskan refleksinya dalam selembar kertas yang diberikan oleh guru. Tugas yang diberikan ke siswa adalah membuat teks report di rumah.	Self-Assessment
10 th 7 minutes	11.23.....	
11 th 7 minutes	11.30. 11.30. Kelas berakhir dan guru mengucapkan salam.	

Figure 2. Example of Thematic Analysis of The Classroom Activities with the Emerging Model

The Students' Perception towards the Implementation of Active Learning

This part is subdivided into three major issues: their impression with presented instruction, their experience with selected strategies, and weaknesses of active learning and the students' suggestions for better implementation.

The Students' Impression with the Presented Instruction

Most respondents give a specific answer with the most frequent words, *senang* (excited) or *menyenangkan* (exciting). The former comes with 21 responses (77.78%); meanwhile, the latter was stated by 6 respondents (2.22%). It means that the students feel excited with the active learning approach. In other words, the active learning approach practiced in the school is exciting the students.

It means that all students have a positive response to the implementation of active learning in their respective schools. In other words, the active learning approach practiced in the school is exciting the students. A negative response was put forward by one respondent at the beginning of implementation but it grew positive after several meetings.

Drawing from all the responses above, it is obvious that teaching strategies selected by the teachers and implemented by the schools give a positive impression to the students. Such a positive impression was supported by their reasons. The students can collaboratively work with their peers (R#02, R#04, R#12, R#12, R#18, R#19, and R#24); express their opinions deliberately (R#01, R#03, R#09, R#10, R#11); learn from others (R#10; R#14, R#17; R#23, and R#25.); and learn better (R#13, as well as, enjoyable (R#13).

The Perceived Benefit Gained after Attending Active Learning

Active learning was perceived to contribute to several aspects of the students' life: (1) social skills (52%), (2) effective learning (16%) and intrapersonal skills (8%). Social skills are indicated by their ability to: (a) to work together (R#04, R#06, R#09, R#10, R#13, R#16, R#19, R#19, R#23, and R#25; (b) to express his ideas (R#01, R#04, R#07, R#11, R#21, and R#25); and (c) to listen to

others (R#13). Intrapersonal skills are indicated with self-awareness (R#09); and control over himself (R#01). Furthermore, by effective learning, it means learning gets facilitated so it helps students learn better. It is expressed by 4 respondents (R#14, R#17, R#22, and R#25). Six selected statements elicited from the respondents may represent the types of benefits gained after attending active learning approach.

The students' social skills may grow since most of the time, the students are given a lot of space to work to gather, to express their idea, and to listen to others in a group work. Similarly, by engaging in a group work, the students become aware of their ability and can control themselves from talking while other people talk. At the same time, by a group work, the students can learn from others and collaboratively solve the problem.

Weaknesses of Active Learning and the Students' Suggestions for a Better Implementation

Despite their positive responses, the implementation of active learning at the schools needs to be made better in terms of the following aspects: (1) classroom management, (2) frequency of group work, and (3) teachers' voice.

Classroom management has the following weaknesses and, therefore, needs to be improved: (a) a lot of noise, (b) lack of control, (c) inaudible instruction, (d) students' reluctance, and (e) the big number of group work participants. Noise comes from the students who were having a chat during teachers while the teacher was giving an instruction (R#20 and R#26). The teachers have a lack of control/supervision (R#10 and R#12). The teachers' voice is inaudible (R#05). Some students are reluctant to work in group (R#18); and (e) there are too many participants in one group (R#27).

The analysis on the field notes (obs. #03:09.07) proves that the students did not pay any attention to the teacher's explanation (09.07). It may happen due to the sitting arrangement; some students cannot directly see the teachers. They also tend to talk to themselves, rather than to listen to the teacher explanation (obs. #05: 09.18). Teachers' low voice and elaborate instruction are assumed as its main factors why this comes to happen.

With several weaknesses of active

learning the students experienced, they bring with some ideas to cope with them. The following suggestions were posted to reduce the weaknesses of active learning implemented in the schools. Dealing the frequency of group work, some students suggested that group work be employed once in a while (R#02 and R#03). The frequent use of group work makes the teaching content hard to complete within the allotted time.

Discussion

The Active Learning Strategies Implemented in the Schools

The schools have implemented active learning by selecting number of active learning strategies as frequently mentioned, and recommended by some scholars: group work, including group discussion (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Mulatu & Bezabih, 2018; Momani *et al.*, 2016), role playing (O'Neal & Pinder-Grover, 2005; Mulatu & Bezabih, 2018), brainstorming (O'Neal & Pinder-Grover, 2005; Momani *et al.*, 2016), pair work (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Daouk *et al.*, 2016;), group presentation (Bonwell & Eison, 1991) self-assessment, including self-reflection (O'Neal & Pinder-Grover, 2005; Momani *et al.*, 2016). The strategies mentioned above fit with active learning approach in which students are involved in more than passive listening, engaged in activities (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). In the context of ELT, the criteria of active learning is even more flexible. When a teacher asks his students to practice listening (including reading, and writing), he implements an active learning approach (see Momani *et al.*, 2016).

Group Work

Group work, including group discussion, has been the most frequently selected strategy in the implementation of active learning approach. The strategy provides students with a greater opportunity to participate in discussing, team work, peer learning, collaborative and cooperative learning. This social context of learning is given more emphasis in active learning (Drew & Mackie, 2011). Therefore, group work is identical with active learning, and is oftentimes found to be inseparable from it. Within a continuum of active learning, group work belongs to a simpler task (O'Neal &

Pinder-Grover, 2005) The strategy is believed to promote interpersonal skills among group members (Galton, 2010), and help hold human relationship (Drew & Mackie, 2011).

Group Presentation

Group presentation, as well as, individual presentation, is classified as a high risk active learning strategy (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). By high risk, it means group presentation makes the students less comfortable in their learning. Parallel to this, Barry (2012) states that group (oral) presentation is the most daunting experience a student will undertake. It is also found that group presentation is not considered an interesting and stimulating way to work with group member (Chou, 2011). However, it is widely understood that a successful presentation generates a self confidence among group members. Therefore, it is also the most rewarding activity in another side. Group presentation is a common part of many students' university experience that may be found beneficial to be experienced since early as preparation for further academic life as well as future career.

Pair Work

Pair work, is frequently classified as another type of group works in which two or more people work together to achieve a particular learning goal or to complete an assigned task. O'Neal & Pinder-Grover (2005) put pairwork on active learning strategy continuum which approaches simple task activity, in the form of think-pair-share. It urges students to be reflective about course content (Hermann, 2013, in Daouk *et al.*, 2016). Within the context of ELT, pair work is commonly practiced in performing a dialogue between two people, or administrating an interview simulation or role playing. Both of them make students active in posing questions, listening and responding them.

Self-Reflection/Assessment

Self-reflection is an active learning strategies advocated by some scholars (see, for example, O'Neal & Pinder-Grover, 2005; Momani *et al.*, 2016). The students conducting a self-reflection is mentally active in thinking, analyzing, and learning from their experience (Hilloran, 2016). These activities are inherent in self-reflection and are relevant to the core

concept of active learning. Shen & Xu (2015, 82) put forward that “The core concept of active learning involves engaging students not only in actively exploring knowledge but also in reflecting on their own learning process in order to become more effective learners”. Self-reflection is mostly likely to be carried out at the end of classroom sessions in which a learning experience becomes points to reflect.

Ice Breaking

Ice breaking is an active learning strategy that encourages students to listen to the teachers’ instruction, and to take an action afterwards. It is commonly used in the beginning of classroom sessions, or beginning of the workshop (Almethhib, 2009). Kilannowski (2012) argues that ice breaking can help participants to bond, form a new team, get to know people from different backgrounds, and become involved with learning about new subject matter. Besides, it helps the leader become acquainted with the participants and with interpersonal interactions in the group. Almethhib (2009) suggests that any training workshop of one full day or more should have an “ice breaking” session of approximately 50 minutes. This implies that ice breaking should be limited not to take more than 10 minutes in each classroom session, assuming that one- full-day training takes 8 hours long.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is one of active learning strategies suggested by O’Neal & Pinder-Grover (2005). It belongs to middle continuum in between simple task and complex task active learning categories. By employing brainstorming technique, students are active to share their thoughts and ideas (Al-Samarraie & Hurmuzan, 2018) and to ask questions “That evoke their interest and natural curiosity” (Unin & Bearing, 2016: 607). The technique is often used to begin with reading class to activate students’ prior knowledge. Otherwise, it is used in writing class to generate their ideas and document them by using sketches or words from which they develop their ideas into writing project.

Role Playing

Role playing makes the students active from the beginning of the session; reading a script, rehearsing their role, and acting it out in front

of audiences. Within Group work, some roles are played: a leader of the group, a moderator, a presenter, and a cardboard decorator. Role playing is important to provide students an opportunity to practice the transformational leadership style (Hamdani, 2018). In addition to this, it may develop active listening and problem-solving skills, show, empathy, promote teamwork, and create effective communication (Vizeshfar, Zare, & Keshtkaran, 2019). According to Momani *et al.* (2016) role plays integrate real-life stories and real-world situations. This may facilitate the students to properly use English within appropriate context.

The Students’ Perception towards the Implementation of Active Learning

The discussion on this part will address three major issues above: (1) The students’ impression with the presented instruction; (2) the perceived benefit gained after attending active learning, and (3) the students’ suggestions for a better implementation.

The Students’ Impression with the Presented Instructions

The implementation of active learning is generally responded positively by teachers. Study conducted by Mulatu & Bezabih (2018) strengthens the assumption. It is also positively responded by most students, for example, R#07 states, “I feel excited and the instruction doesn’t make me easily bored.” Similarly, R#9 says “I feel more comfortable and have more space to express [my thoughts].” Daouk *et al.* (2016) report their research findings after surveying 37 education students. The research reveals that there is positive perception towards active learning strategies. The findings of the present study may temporally infer that active learning is positively responded by college students and teachers, as well as, students of junior secondary schools.

Their positive perception seems to be rooted from the different roles and responsibilities they have/play, among other things: (1) the learning benefits perceived and experienced by the students under study, and (2) learning atmosphere shared by them. Swiderski (2011), for example, identifies that active learning helps in building learners’ self-esteem. The following section is going to be devoted to explore what

benefits gained after attending active learning.

The Perceived Benefit Gained after Attending Active Learning

The finding of the present study strengthens those of the previous study that active learning is beneficial for several aspects of students' academic life, as well as, their social life. For example, an academic benefit was acquired by R#09m stating: " [I am] able to learn better." Meanwhile, a social benefit was gained by R#10: "Able to discuss with others, to mutually help, to work collaboratively." First, and for the most, is that it helps students develop social skills. The skills are acquired from their participation and cooperation in a group work and other active learning strategies. Daouk *et al.* (2016: 367) state that "active learning techniques lead to increased students' participation and cooperation." Meanwhile, Coorey (2016) suggests that active learning, particularly peer learning, fosters a collaborative learning community, increases leadership skills and creates lifelong learners. Relevant to this, Baxton *et al.* (2008) state that class discussion, a form of active learning, positively influence social integration.

Students' academic life grows better from their effective learning activities. It is widely believed that active learning can promote a better outcome. A survey conducted by Daouk *et al.* (2016) report that active learning

motivate students and engage them in the lesson, and develop their higher-order thinking. Additionally, active learning, particularly group work, enables students to learn from one another (Cohen & Lotan, 2014). They have a space to confirm their understanding to others, to get feedback from them, and to consult teacher's vague instruction with them. Compared to traditional teaching method, active learning helps students learn more, retain the information longer, and enjoy the class more (Gholami, Attaran, & Moghaddam, 2014). Relevant to this, Braxton *et al.* (2008) state that student knowledge and understanding of course content benefit from the use of active learning by college and university faculty.

Dealing with intrapersonal skills, active learning can promote self-confidence and self-reliance (Momani *et al.*, 2016), and build self-esteem (Swiderski, 2011). Again, this strengthen the finding of the present study that active learning build students' self-confidence. Their engagement in group work and oral presentation seems to contribute their acquisition of the skills. This is evidently found in one of the respondents, (R#9): "feeling confident to express my thoughts"

Put briefly, the benefits of active learning perceived by the students and their corresponding findings from the previous research can be seen in the Table 4.

Table 4. The Perceived Benefits of Active Learning

No.	Improved Abilities	Relevant Theories and Assumptions
1.	Social skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work together (collaboration) • expressing ideas • listening to others 	Coorey (2016); Daouk <i>et al.</i> (2016); Braxton <i>et al.</i> (2008)
2.	Intrapersonal skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-confidence • self-awareness • controlling over oneself 	Momani <i>et al.</i> , 2016); Swiderski (2011)
3.	Promoting effective learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning from their peers • getting feedback from others 	Daouk <i>et al.</i> (2016); Cohen & Lotan (2014); Gholami <i>et al.</i> (2014)

Weaknesses of Active Learning and Suggestions for a Better Implementation

Implementing active learning approach does not always meet our expectation. Some weaknesses are frequently found, and problems are encountered by some teachers. As stated by R#20, for example “the students (who) talk to themselves out of the topics presented and this makes noisy.”

As put forward by the respondents and validated by the data from classroom observation, some students do not respond the teachers’ instruction and they frequently talk to themselves, rather than listening to the teachers. Besides, they find that the content subjects could not be delivered within available time range. Those phenomena are common in the practices of active learning.

Bonwell & Eison (1991: 4) states that, “You cannot cover as much course content in the time available.” Lack of cooperation from participants in group work and other active learning strategies are an important issue among practitioners and, therefore, they have proposed some tips to cope with it. Forehand, Leigh, Fatrell, & Spurlock (2015), and Davis (1993), for example, come with the same suggestion: the number of group work participants should be reduced. However, there is no an agreed-upon opinion dealing with the group size. The former suggested that the number of participants is not more than eight or nine members. Meanwhile, the latter recommends that the group size be made small with three to four members. This may promote more collaboration and shared work. Further, Forehand *et al.* (2015) advice that monitoring of group participation throughout the entire project process be carried out to promote an effective group work. In line with this, Fung (2014) suggests that the adults (instructors, teachers) involve to facilitate autonomous group functioning. Dealing with the second phenomena, it is suggested that students be given reading and writing assignment, examination, through their classroom examination, etc. (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Reading tasks assigned prior to classroom meeting seems to be important to equip them with background knowledge that may facilitate a better learning.

The respondent’s suggestion to reduce

the number of group members was frequently stated by the respondents. Specifically, R#27 suggests: “the number of participants in a group work is limited to 4 people.” It seems to be justified by some scholars and, therefore, is highly recommended to promote effective active learning strategies. By so doing, all members of group takes more advantages from implementing active learning.

CONCLUSION

The research brings with some important points to consider. *First*, the schools have implemented active learning approach by selecting active learning strategies. The strategy frequently used is group work with their accompanying activities (such as group discussion and group presentation). Group work becomes core learning activities preceded with brainstorming, ice-breaking or role playing, and is followed group presentation and self-reflection afterwards. By employing a group work, the students are engaged with their peers in listening the teachers’ instruction, collaboratively understanding, then, translating it into a project work, and later presenting it in front of the class. This student-centered teaching is evident in most EFL classrooms with different degree of students’ ‘activeness. *Second*, the students’ responds to the teachers’ selection of active learning strategies brings about a positive impact on the part of the students. It is generally claimed that the teaching help them develop their social skills, intrapersonal skills, and promote a better learning. *Third*, it is imperative that for an effective group work, ELT teachers limit the number of group work participants for not more than eight people. Besides, since active learning may take teachers’ preparing time, a teacher should involve other teachers and collaboratively work with them in selecting materials, designing lesson plan, and preparing instructional media. The present research left two major issues unexplored: how much course content is left if active learning is implemented along the year, and: how much burden is taken by both teachers and school managers to implement active learning in their respective schools. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore the phenomena.

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