

Collaborative Learning, Self-Regulated Learning, and English Communication Competence Among Students in Islamic Higher Education

Rijnan¹

¹. STIT Palapa Nusantara Lombok, Indonesia

Email: rijnannanda@gmail.com¹

ABSTRACT

English communication competence has become an essential competency for students in Islamic Higher Education, yet many learners continue to experience difficulties in developing effective communicative abilities despite growing interest in learner-centered English language instruction. This study aimed to systematically synthesize recent empirical evidence concerning collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence, examine the relationships among these three constructs, and identify current research gaps and future research directions within Islamic Higher Education. The study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA 2020 framework. Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2026 were retrieved from major academic databases using predefined search strategies and explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selected studies were analyzed through thematic synthesis to identify recurring themes, methodological characteristics, conceptual developments, and empirical findings. The review revealed a substantial increase in research on collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence, with recent studies emphasizing learner-centered, technology-enhanced, and communication-oriented pedagogies. The findings consistently demonstrated that collaborative learning promotes authentic interaction, peer engagement, and communicative practice, whereas self-regulated learning strengthens learner autonomy, motivation, strategic learning, and self-monitoring. Their integration was found to enhance English communication competence, including speaking performance, communicative confidence, intercultural awareness, and digital communication skills. However, studies integrating these three constructs within Islamic Higher Education remain limited. Overall, this review provides an integrated conceptual framework that contributes to English language education theory while offering practical guidance for lecturers, curriculum developers, and researchers in designing learner-centered and technology-supported instructional practices that strengthen English communication competence in Islamic Higher Education.

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Correspondance Author:

Rijnan

Dept. of Early Childhood
Islamic Education STIT Palapa
Nusantara Lombok, Indonesia.
Jln Palapa No. 01 Selebung
Keruak, Lombok Timur, NTB,
Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of higher education in the twenty-first century has significantly reshaped the objectives of English language teaching (ELT), particularly in preparing graduates who are capable of communicating effectively in increasingly interconnected academic, professional, and multicultural environments. English is no longer perceived merely as a foreign language subject but has become an essential medium for academic collaboration, scientific communication, and global competitiveness. Consequently, higher education institutions are expected to design learning environments that not only improve students' linguistic knowledge but also develop higher-order communication skills, collaborative competence, and autonomous learning abilities. These competencies have become particularly important for students in Islamic Higher Education institutions, where English proficiency is increasingly required to access international scientific literature, participate in academic mobility programs, and disseminate Islamic scholarship within global academic communities.

Despite the growing importance of English communication competence, many students enrolled in Islamic Higher Education institutions continue to encounter substantial challenges in developing effective communicative abilities. Previous studies indicate that students often experience difficulties in vocabulary mastery, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, speaking confidence, and authentic language use because English exposure remains limited to classroom settings and examination-oriented instruction (Wulandari & Assapari, 2024). As a result, students frequently demonstrate satisfactory theoretical knowledge while lacking the confidence and communicative competence required for real-life academic and professional interactions. This condition highlights the necessity of implementing instructional approaches that actively engage learners and encourage continuous language practice beyond conventional teacher-centered instruction.

Current developments in language education emphasize that effective English learning should promote active participation, meaningful interaction, and learner autonomy. Rather than positioning students as passive recipients of knowledge, contemporary pedagogical approaches encourage learners to construct understanding collaboratively while simultaneously regulating their own learning processes. Collaborative learning has therefore emerged as one of the most influential instructional approaches because it facilitates peer interaction, cooperative problem-solving, knowledge sharing, and communicative practice. According to Adams and Oliver (2023), collaborative interaction provides valuable opportunities for language learners to negotiate meaning, exchange feedback, and construct linguistic knowledge collectively, ultimately improving both oral and written communication. Similarly, Li (2025) reported that collaborative learning significantly enhances student engagement through peer support, resulting in greater classroom participation, stronger learning motivation, and improved communication skills.

The importance of collaborative learning has also been demonstrated in various international educational contexts. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), for instance, enables students from different countries to interact through technology-mediated learning environments, thereby strengthening intercultural communication competence and preparing students for global academic collaboration (Hackett et al., 2023). Likewise, Ibrahim et al. (2023) found that collaborative learning implemented in post-pandemic English classrooms successfully improved learners' communicative competence by increasing speaking confidence, collaborative problem-

solving abilities, and active classroom participation. Furthermore, Cai and Zhang (2023) revealed that mobile-supported collaborative dialogue significantly enhanced English oral communication performance because students were encouraged to negotiate ideas, practice communication strategies, and provide immediate peer feedback throughout learning activities. These findings collectively suggest that collaborative learning creates authentic communicative situations that facilitate meaningful language acquisition and improve students' communicative competence.

In addition to collaborative learning, self-regulated learning (SRL) has become another critical factor influencing successful English language learning in higher education. Self-regulated learning refers to learners' ability to establish learning goals, select appropriate strategies, monitor their own progress, and evaluate learning outcomes independently. As explained by Teng (2022), successful language learners are characterized not only by linguistic competence but also by their ability to regulate cognitive, motivational, behavioral, and emotional aspects of learning. Students who possess effective self-regulation tend to become more independent, reflective, and persistent in overcoming learning challenges.

The importance of self-regulated learning has been consistently supported by recent empirical evidence. Zhang et al. (2022), through a comprehensive meta-analysis, concluded that self-regulated learning interventions significantly improve second-language achievement, strategy use, and learners' self-efficacy. Similarly, Ismail et al. (2023) demonstrated that authentic assessment enhances students' self-regulation, learner autonomy, and confidence by encouraging continuous reflection throughout the learning process. Marzuki et al. (2023) further reported that the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) model effectively strengthens learner autonomy and English writing proficiency because students become more capable of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning activities. Comparable findings were reported by Muharom et al. (2022), who found that students with stronger self-regulated learning strategies achieved higher academic performance in online English learning due to better motivation management and independent learning behaviors.

Technology-enhanced learning environments have further strengthened the relationship between collaborative learning and self-regulated learning. Wang (2023) found that online collaborative flipped classrooms simultaneously improved English reading performance and students' self-regulation by encouraging learners to prepare independently before participating in collaborative discussions. Similarly, Suárez and El-Henawy (2023) argued that digital learning platforms provide diverse opportunities for learners to practice communication skills through synchronous and asynchronous interaction while fostering independent learning habits. In addition, Diamantopoulou and Ørevik (2022) emphasized that multimodal English learning integrating text, audio, video, and digital media creates more meaningful communication experiences and encourages students to participate actively in various communicative contexts.

Within Islamic Higher Education, the integration of collaborative learning and self-regulated learning has become increasingly relevant because graduates are expected not only to master English but also to communicate Islamic values effectively within international academic settings. Noviyanti (2024) argued that English language instruction in Islamic Higher Education should move beyond linguistic competence by integrating intercultural communicative competence, enabling students to communicate globally while maintaining their religious and cultural identity. Similarly, Darmayenti et al. (2024) emphasized that establishing a supportive English-speaking environment through continuous language habituation significantly improves students' English competence in Islamic universities. These findings indicate that creating collaborative,

autonomous, and communicative learning environments is essential for enhancing English communication competence among students in Islamic Higher Education.

Overall, recent literature consistently demonstrates that collaborative learning promotes meaningful interaction, peer engagement, and communicative practice, while self-regulated learning strengthens learner autonomy, motivation, and strategic learning behaviors. Nevertheless, existing studies generally examine these variables separately or focus on specific instructional contexts. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of how collaborative learning and self-regulated learning collectively contribute to English communication competence among students in Islamic Higher Education remains limited. This issue provides a strong rationale for conducting a systematic literature review to synthesize recent evidence, identify emerging research patterns, and establish a more comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships among these three constructs.

Although collaborative learning, self-regulated learning (SRL), and English communication competence have attracted considerable scholarly attention over the last five years, the existing body of literature remains fragmented. Most previous studies have investigated these variables independently or examined only the relationship between two variables, while comprehensive evidence explaining their interconnected roles within Islamic Higher Education remains scarce. Consequently, synthesizing the existing literature is essential to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how collaborative learning and self-regulated learning jointly contribute to students' English communication competence in Islamic universities.

Recent empirical studies consistently demonstrate that collaborative learning positively influences students' English language development through active interaction and peer engagement. Ibrahim et al. (2023) reported that collaborative learning implemented in post-pandemic English classrooms significantly enhanced students' communicative competence by improving speaking confidence, classroom participation, and collaborative problem-solving skills. Similarly, Li (2025) found that collaborative learning strengthened student engagement because peer support encouraged greater participation, motivation, and communication during English learning activities. Comparable findings were reported by Mansoor et al. (2025), who revealed that university students developed more positive attitudes toward English learning when collaborative approaches were systematically integrated into classroom instruction. Students became more confident in expressing ideas, exchanging opinions, and participating in academic discussions conducted in English.

The effectiveness of collaborative learning has also been supported through technology-enhanced instructional practices. Cai and Zhang (2023) demonstrated that mobile-supported collaborative dialogue significantly improved students' academic speaking performance because learners actively negotiated meaning, exchanged immediate feedback, and employed various communication strategies throughout collaborative discussions. Likewise, Hackett et al. (2023) emphasized that Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) not only enhanced intercultural competence but also strengthened students' ability to communicate effectively with international peers. These findings suggest that collaborative learning provides authentic communicative opportunities that extend beyond classroom interaction and prepare learners for global academic engagement.

Alongside collaborative learning, self-regulated learning has emerged as another determinant of successful English language acquisition. Zhang et al. (2022), through a meta-analysis of second-

language learning studies, concluded that self-regulated learning interventions significantly improve language achievement, learning strategies, and students' self-efficacy. Supporting this conclusion, Teng (2022) argued that effective language learners continuously regulate their cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes by planning learning objectives, monitoring progress, and evaluating outcomes independently. Such regulatory abilities enable learners to become autonomous and lifelong language learners capable of adapting to diverse learning contexts.

Subsequent empirical investigations have further confirmed these theoretical perspectives. Marzuki et al. (2023) demonstrated that Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) substantially improved learners' writing proficiency and autonomy because students became more strategic in organizing and evaluating their learning activities. Likewise, Muharom et al. (2022) found that students possessing stronger self-regulated learning strategies achieved better academic performance in online English learning due to their ability to manage motivation, learning resources, and independent study habits. In addition, Ismail et al. (2023) reported that authentic assessment significantly promoted self-regulation, learner autonomy, and self-efficacy by encouraging continuous reflection throughout the learning process. These findings collectively indicate that self-regulated learning plays a central role in sustaining students' academic performance and communication development.

Another important trend emerging from recent literature concerns the integration of collaborative learning with technology-supported instruction. Wang (2023) found that online collaborative flipped classrooms simultaneously improved English reading achievement and students' self-regulated learning because learners prepared learning materials independently before participating in collaborative classroom discussions. Similarly, Suárez and El-Henawy (2023) explained that digital learning environments provide opportunities for learners to practice communication skills through both synchronous and asynchronous interaction while simultaneously promoting independent learning. Furthermore, Diamantopoulou and Ørevik (2022) emphasized that multimodal English learning environments integrating text, audio, video, and digital media encourage active participation and facilitate meaningful communication in diverse academic contexts.

Within Islamic Higher Education, several recent studies have highlighted the importance of contextualizing English language instruction according to institutional values and educational goals. Wulandari and Assapari (2024) observed that many students at Islamic universities continue to experience limitations in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and communicative confidence because English practice remains relatively limited outside formal classrooms. Meanwhile, Noviyanti (2024) argued that English instruction should integrate intercultural communicative competence so that students are capable of communicating internationally while preserving Islamic values and cultural identity. Likewise, Darmayenti et al. (2024) emphasized that establishing a supportive English-speaking environment through continuous habituation programs significantly contributes to improving students' English competence in Islamic higher education institutions.

Although these studies have substantially enriched the literature, several important limitations remain. First, previous research predominantly focuses on measuring the effectiveness of either collaborative learning or self-regulated learning separately, with relatively limited attention to their complementary relationship in fostering English communication competence. Second, most empirical investigations employ quantitative or experimental research designs conducted within specific institutional contexts, making it difficult to obtain a comprehensive understanding

of broader research trends. Third, studies explicitly focusing on Islamic Higher Education remain relatively limited compared with research conducted in general universities, despite the distinctive educational characteristics, religious values, and communication demands within Islamic higher education institutions. Finally, there remains a lack of systematic evidence synthesizing recent findings concerning collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence within one comprehensive analytical framework.

These limitations indicate a clear research gap that justifies conducting the present systematic literature review. Rather than examining a single instructional intervention or reporting findings from one educational setting, this study systematically synthesizes empirical evidence published during the last five years to identify research trends, theoretical developments, instructional strategies, and emerging patterns regarding the relationships among collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence. Through this synthesis, the study intends to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these variables interact in supporting English language learning among students in Islamic Higher Education.

The findings synthesized from previous studies clearly indicate that collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence are closely interconnected in promoting successful English language learning. Nevertheless, most existing studies examine these constructs independently or emphasize only one instructional intervention without comprehensively explaining how collaborative learning and self-regulated learning jointly influence students' communicative competence. Furthermore, empirical evidence focusing specifically on students in Islamic Higher Education remains relatively limited despite the unique educational characteristics of Islamic universities, which integrate academic excellence with Islamic values and intercultural awareness. This limitation suggests the need for a broader synthesis capable of integrating fragmented findings into a coherent conceptual understanding.

The present study addresses this gap by conducting a systematic literature review that synthesizes recent empirical evidence concerning the relationships among collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence in Islamic Higher Education. Unlike previous reviews that primarily focused on individual learning strategies or technological interventions, this study integrates three complementary constructs within a single analytical framework. Through a systematic synthesis of recent literature, the study seeks to identify dominant research trends, instructional approaches, theoretical perspectives, methodological characteristics, and consistent empirical findings that explain how collaborative learning and self-regulated learning contribute to the development of students' English communication competence.

The novelty of this study lies in several important aspects. First, it simultaneously examines collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence, three constructs that have generally been investigated separately in previous studies. Second, this review specifically focuses on the context of Islamic Higher Education, an educational setting that has received relatively limited attention in international systematic review studies despite its rapidly expanding contribution to global higher education. Third, the study synthesizes evidence published during the most recent five-year period, thereby providing an updated overview of contemporary developments in English language teaching, learner autonomy, collaborative pedagogy, and communicative competence. Finally, the review not only summarizes previous findings but also critically identifies research patterns, methodological tendencies, unresolved issues, and future research directions that may guide subsequent empirical investigations.

Theoretically, this review contributes to the growing body of knowledge on English language education by integrating social constructivist perspectives underlying collaborative learning with self-regulated learning theory and communicative language teaching. Collaborative learning emphasizes knowledge construction through meaningful social interaction, whereas self-regulated learning highlights learners' ability to independently plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes. The integration of these perspectives provides a comprehensive explanation of how social interaction and learner autonomy complement one another in facilitating the development of English communication competence. Such an integrated perspective remains relatively underexplored within studies conducted in Islamic Higher Education.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this review are expected to provide valuable implications for multiple stakeholders. For English lecturers, the synthesized evidence offers guidance in designing learner-centered instructional strategies that combine collaborative activities with opportunities for self-regulated learning. For curriculum developers and university administrators, the review provides evidence-based recommendations for developing English programs that strengthen students' communication competence while supporting autonomous learning. For researchers, the review identifies emerging themes and research gaps that may serve as references for future investigations concerning English language teaching, collaborative pedagogy, learner autonomy, and communication competence within Islamic Higher Education and comparable educational contexts.

Based on these considerations, this study addresses the following research questions: 1) How has recent literature discussed collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence among students in Islamic Higher Education?; 2) What relationships have been identified between collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and students' English communication competence in previous studies?; 3) What research gaps and future directions can be identified from the existing literature regarding these three constructs in Islamic Higher Education?

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to systematically review and synthesize recent empirical evidence concerning collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence among students in Islamic Higher Education. Specifically, this study aims to identify current research trends, examine the relationships among the three constructs, and highlight existing research gaps and future directions for English language teaching and learning in Islamic Higher Education.

Overall, this systematic literature review is expected to contribute to the advancement of English language education by providing a comprehensive synthesis of recent studies on collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence. The findings are expected to enrich theoretical perspectives, provide evidence-based recommendations for English language teaching practices, and serve as a valuable reference for educators, curriculum developers, and future researchers seeking to improve English learning quality in Islamic Higher Education.

METHODS

1. Research Approach and Design

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to comprehensively synthesize empirical evidence regarding the relationships among collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence among students in Islamic Higher Education. The SLR approach was selected because it enabled researchers to identify, evaluate, and synthesize findings

from multiple studies in a transparent, systematic, and reproducible manner. Unlike conventional narrative reviews, a systematic literature review follows explicit procedures for searching, selecting, assessing, and analyzing relevant literature, thereby minimizing bias and improving the reliability of research findings.

According to Snyder (2019), a systematic literature review provides a rigorous methodology for identifying knowledge development, synthesizing previous findings, and generating evidence-based conclusions that can guide future research. Similarly, Page et al. (2021) explained that systematic reviews should follow transparent reporting standards to ensure methodological rigor, reproducibility, and credibility throughout the review process. Therefore, the present study adopted a systematic review design based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework.

2. Data Sources and Literature Search Strategy

The literature included in this review was collected from internationally recognized academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected because they index high-quality peer-reviewed publications in education, applied linguistics, and English language teaching.

The literature search was conducted between June and July 2026 using combinations of predefined keywords connected with Boolean operators. The primary search terms included *"collaborative learning," "self-regulated learning," "English communication competence," "English language learning," "Islamic higher education," "English language teaching,"* and *"EFL students."* Boolean operators such as AND, OR, and NOT were applied to optimize the search process and improve retrieval accuracy.

Xiao and Watson (2019) argued that systematic literature searches should employ carefully designed search strategies to maximize comprehensiveness while maintaining transparency and replicability. Likewise, Page et al. (2021) emphasized that documenting database selection, search terms, and screening procedures enhances the methodological quality of systematic reviews.

3. Eligibility Criteria

The study established explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance and quality of the selected literature. The inclusion criteria comprised: (1) empirical studies published between 2021 and 2026; (2) peer-reviewed journal articles written in English; (3) studies focusing on collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, English communication competence, or combinations of these variables; (4) research involving higher education students, particularly within English language education; and (5) articles with accessible full texts.

Conversely, conference abstracts, editorials, book reviews, duplicated publications, theses, dissertations, and studies lacking sufficient methodological information were excluded from the review. According to Page et al. (2021), clearly defined eligibility criteria reduce selection bias and improve the transparency of systematic review procedures. Snyder (2019) similarly emphasized that explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria ensure consistency throughout the article selection process.

4. Study Selection Procedure

The study selection procedure followed the four stages of the PRISMA 2020 framework, including identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. Initially, all retrieved records from the selected databases were exported into reference management software, where duplicate articles

were removed. The remaining articles were screened by reviewing titles and abstracts according to the predetermined eligibility criteria.

Subsequently, full-text articles were assessed to determine their methodological relevance and alignment with the research objectives. Only studies satisfying all inclusion criteria were retained for the final qualitative synthesis.

Page et al. (2021) suggested that employing the PRISMA framework enhances the transparency and reproducibility of systematic reviews by documenting each stage of the article selection process. This structured procedure has become an internationally recognized standard for evidence synthesis across educational and social science research.

5. Data Extraction and Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was a data extraction form developed by the researchers to systematically record essential information from each selected study. The extracted data included author(s), publication year, country, research objectives, participants, methodology, variables, instruments, major findings, and implications related to collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence.

The standardized extraction form ensured consistency during data collection and facilitated comparison across studies. Using structured extraction instruments is considered essential in systematic reviews because it improves reliability and reduces reviewer bias (Page et al., 2021).

6. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic synthesis. Initially, the researchers conducted repeated readings of all selected articles to gain an overall understanding of the findings. Subsequently, relevant information was coded according to recurring concepts related to collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, English communication competence, instructional strategies, research methods, and educational outcomes.

The coded information was then grouped into broader themes to identify similarities, differences, emerging trends, and research gaps across the reviewed studies. Finally, the synthesized findings were interpreted to answer the research questions and formulate recommendations for future research and educational practice.

Thomas and Harden (2008) explained that thematic synthesis enables researchers to integrate qualitative evidence systematically while generating higher-level analytical themes. Snyder (2019) further argued that thematic synthesis is particularly suitable for systematic literature reviews because it facilitates comprehensive interpretation of findings derived from multiple empirical studies.

RESULTS

1. Recent Research Trends on Collaborative Learning, Self-Regulated Learning, and English Communication Competence in Islamic Higher Education

a. Research Publication Trends

The systematic review revealed a substantial increase in scholarly publications addressing collaborative learning, self-regulated learning (SRL), and English communication competence between 2021 and 2026. Earlier publications during 2021–2022 primarily focused on learner autonomy and self-regulation in online English learning environments. Beginning in 2023, research gradually expanded to investigate the integration of collaborative learning, technology-enhanced instruction, and communicative competence. By 2024–2026, studies increasingly examined these constructs simultaneously within higher education contexts, particularly in response to digital

transformation and the growing demand for communicative and intercultural competencies in English language education.

The reviewed literature also indicated that self-regulated learning became one of the most frequently investigated topics. Meta-analytic and systematic review studies consistently demonstrated that SRL positively influenced English language achievement, learning strategy use, learner autonomy, and self-efficacy (Zhang et al., 2022; Dewi et al., 2026; Rochmawati et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2026). These findings suggest that researchers increasingly recognize learner autonomy as a fundamental component of successful English language learning in higher education.

Simultaneously, collaborative learning attracted growing scholarly attention because of its effectiveness in promoting communicative interaction and active student engagement. Recent empirical studies confirmed that collaborative learning significantly enhanced students' participation, peer interaction, and English communication performance across various instructional settings (Harun & Abdullah, 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Kalangi et al., 2024; Li, 2025; Nair et al., 2024). In particular, technology-supported collaborative learning environments, including virtual collaborative classrooms and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), emerged as dominant research themes because they enabled authentic communication and intercultural collaboration among university students (Hackett et al., 2023).

Regarding publication outlets, the reviewed studies were predominantly published in internationally recognized journals specializing in English language teaching, applied linguistics, educational technology, and higher education. High-impact journals such as *Frontiers in Psychology*, *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, *Language Testing in Asia*, and *Journal of Asia TEFL* contributed substantially to the dissemination of empirical evidence. At the national level, reputable journals including *ELTALL*, *Register Journal*, *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Indonesia*, *English Education Journal*, and *Al-Ta'lim Journal* increasingly published studies addressing English language learning within Indonesian and Islamic Higher Education contexts. This publication trend reflects the growing academic interest in developing learner-centered pedagogies that integrate collaboration, learner autonomy, and communication competence.

b. Geographical Distribution of Studies

The reviewed studies demonstrated broad geographical representation, indicating that collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence have become global research priorities in English language education. Most international studies originated from China, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, Australia, and several European countries, reflecting the increasing emphasis on learner-centered pedagogies and technology-enhanced English instruction across diverse educational systems. Meta-analytic and systematic review studies further synthesized evidence from multiple countries, confirming the international relevance of these three constructs (Zhang et al., 2022; Hackett et al., 2023).

Indonesia emerged as one of the most productive contributors to this research field, particularly regarding English language teaching in Islamic Higher Education. Several studies specifically investigated English learning within Indonesian Islamic universities, emphasizing communicative competence, intercultural communication, collaborative learning, and learner autonomy (Darmayenti et al., 2024; Juliastuti et al., 2023; Noviyanti, 2024; Sugiyanto & Sabat, 2025; Wulandari & Assapari, 2024). This trend reflects the increasing commitment of Islamic Higher Education institutions to improving graduates' English proficiency while maintaining Islamic values and intercultural awareness.

Another notable finding concerned the increasing international collaboration among researchers investigating English language education. Studies conducted across different educational settings consistently highlighted similar instructional priorities, including collaborative learning, digital learning environments, self-regulated learning, and communicative competence. Despite differences in educational contexts, the reviewed literature demonstrated considerable consistency regarding the positive effects of learner-centered instructional approaches on English language development.

c. Research Characteristics

The analysis revealed that quantitative research remained the dominant methodological approach adopted by previous studies. Experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, and survey designs were frequently employed to examine the effectiveness of collaborative learning and self-regulated learning on English achievement and communication competence (Kalangi et al., 2024; Sugiyanto & Sabat, 2025; Zhang et al., 2022). Several studies also adopted mixed-methods approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of learners' experiences and instructional outcomes.

Regarding research participants, most studies involved undergraduate EFL students enrolled in higher education institutions. A smaller number of investigations focused specifically on students attending Islamic universities, reflecting the relatively limited but growing attention devoted to this educational context (Juliastuti et al., 2023; Noviyanti, 2024). Consequently, Islamic Higher Education remains an emerging research context requiring further empirical investigation.

Various research instruments were employed across the reviewed studies, including questionnaires, self-regulated learning scales, English proficiency tests, speaking performance assessments, observation sheets, interview protocols, classroom recordings, and learning analytics generated through digital learning platforms. Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics, regression analysis, structural equation modeling (SEM), analysis of variance (ANOVA), thematic analysis, meta-analysis, and systematic literature review procedures. The methodological diversity observed across studies strengthens the robustness of current evidence while simultaneously illustrating the multidimensional nature of English language learning research.

d. Conceptual Development of the Three Constructs

The conceptual analysis indicated continuous development of collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence over the last five years. Collaborative learning has evolved beyond conventional group work toward technology-supported, interactive, and student-centered learning environments that emphasize peer feedback, knowledge co-construction, and authentic communication. Adams and Oliver (2023) argued that learning with peers provides meaningful opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, exchange feedback, and construct language knowledge collaboratively. Likewise, Yoon (2022) emphasized that effective collaboration creates supportive learning environments that strengthen students' participation and communication skills.

The concept of self-regulated learning has likewise expanded from individual learning strategies toward comprehensive regulation of cognitive, motivational, behavioral, and emotional processes. Teng (2022) explained that effective language learners continuously plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning while adapting strategies to achieve academic goals. Empirical evidence further confirmed that authentic assessment, self-regulated strategy development, and technology-enhanced learning significantly strengthen learner autonomy and language achievement (Ismail et al., 2023; Kang, 2022; Marzuki et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, English communication competence has increasingly been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing linguistic competence, communicative confidence, intercultural awareness, collaboration skills, and digital communication abilities. Recent studies emphasized that communication competence should be developed through authentic interaction rather than grammar-oriented instruction alone (Cai & Zhang, 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2023). Within Islamic Higher Education, this competence has been further enriched by integrating intercultural communication and Islamic values to prepare students for participation in global academic communities (Juliastuti et al., 2023; Noviyanti, 2024).

Table 1 summarizes the major research trends identified in the reviewed literature on collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence in Islamic Higher Education. It presents the key developments, methodological characteristics, and conceptual evolution of the three constructs reported in studies published between 2021 and 2026.

Table 1. Synthesis of Recent Research Trends on Collaborative Learning, Self-Regulated Learning, and English Communication Competence in Islamic Higher Education

Aspect	Key Findings	Research Implications
Research Publication Trends	Publications increased substantially from 2021–2026. Early studies emphasized self-regulated learning, while recent studies integrated collaborative learning, SRL, communication competence, and digital learning.	Research has shifted toward integrated learner-centered approaches supported by technology.
Dominant Research Topics	Self-regulated learning, collaborative learning, communicative competence, intercultural communication, digital learning, and technology-enhanced English instruction were the most frequently investigated themes.	Current studies emphasize the synergy between learner autonomy, collaboration, and communication competence.
Leading Publication Sources	Studies were published in high-impact international journals (e.g., <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> , <i>Language Testing in Asia</i> , <i>Journal of Asia TEFL</i>) and reputable national journals focusing on English language education.	The topic has gained strong international academic recognition and continues to expand within Islamic Higher Education research.
Geographical Distribution	Research was conducted across China, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Australia, and several European countries, with Indonesia emerging as a leading contributor in Islamic Higher Education.	The research field demonstrates broad international relevance while highlighting the growing contribution of Indonesian Islamic universities.
Research Characteristics	Quantitative methods predominated, including experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, and survey designs. Mixed-methods and systematic reviews were also increasingly employed.	Methodological diversity has strengthened the reliability of evidence while encouraging broader research designs.
Participants and Contexts	Most studies involved undergraduate EFL students, whereas investigations within Islamic Higher Education remained relatively limited.	Islamic Higher Education represents an emerging context requiring further empirical exploration.
Research Instruments and Analysis	Frequently used instruments included questionnaires, SRL scales, English proficiency tests, speaking assessments, interviews, and classroom observations. Data analysis commonly involved regression, SEM, ANOVA, thematic analysis, and meta-analysis.	The use of multiple instruments provides comprehensive evidence for understanding English language learning.
Conceptual	Collaborative learning evolved into technology-	The three constructs have become

Development	supported and interactive learning; SRL expanded toward cognitive, motivational, and behavioral regulation; communication competence developed into a multidimensional construct integrating linguistic, intercultural, collaborative, and digital competencies.	increasingly interconnected in contemporary English language education.
Overall Literature Synthesis	Recent studies consistently reported positive effects of collaborative learning and self-regulated learning on English communication competence, learner autonomy, engagement, and intercultural communication.	The literature supports an integrated instructional framework combining collaboration, self-regulation, technology, and communication-oriented pedagogy in Islamic Higher Education.

Source: Synthesized from the reviewed literature (2021–2026).

As presented in Table 1, the reviewed studies indicate a consistent shift toward learner-centered and technology-enhanced English language education. Research publications have increased considerably over the last five years, with self-regulated learning, collaborative learning, and English communication competence emerging as the dominant themes. The studies were conducted across diverse international contexts, although Indonesia has become a leading contributor to research within Islamic Higher Education. Methodologically, quantitative approaches remained predominant, while mixed-methods and systematic literature reviews have become increasingly common. Conceptually, collaborative learning has evolved into interactive and technology-supported pedagogy, self-regulated learning has expanded beyond cognitive regulation to encompass motivational and behavioral dimensions, and English communication competence has developed into a multidimensional construct integrating linguistic, intercultural, collaborative, and digital competencies. Overall, the synthesized evidence demonstrates a clear convergence toward an integrated instructional framework that combines collaboration, learner autonomy, digital technology, and communicative language teaching to enhance English learning outcomes in Islamic Higher Education.

2. Relationships among Collaborative Learning, Self-Regulated Learning, and English Communication Competence

a. The Contribution of Collaborative Learning

The reviewed studies consistently demonstrated that collaborative learning plays a significant role in promoting English language acquisition by creating meaningful opportunities for learners to interact, exchange ideas, and negotiate meaning during classroom activities. Unlike traditional teacher-centered instruction, collaborative learning encourages students to actively construct knowledge through discussion, problem-solving, and peer interaction. Adams and Oliver (2023) argued that peer interaction enables learners to receive immediate feedback, refine linguistic knowledge, and develop communicative competence through authentic language use. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2023) reported that collaborative learning significantly enhanced communicative competence by increasing students' participation and engagement in English classroom activities.

Peer learning also emerged as a major factor contributing to successful English language learning. The reviewed literature indicated that collaborative tasks encouraged students to share learning experiences, support one another, and solve language-related problems collectively. Harun and Abdullah (2024) found that virtual collaborative classrooms strengthened peer interaction and improved English proficiency because students actively exchanged knowledge through technology-mediated collaboration. Likewise, Li (2025) demonstrated that peer support significantly mediated the relationship between collaborative learning and student engagement, indicating that

collaborative environments foster greater motivation, classroom participation, and learning persistence.

Another important contribution of collaborative learning concerns the development of English communication competence. Studies consistently showed that collaborative instructional approaches improve speaking performance, communication strategy use, and interactional competence by providing authentic opportunities for language practice. Cai and Zhang (2023) reported that mobile-supported collaborative dialogue significantly enhanced students' academic oral English performance because learners were encouraged to negotiate meaning and apply communication strategies during collaborative discussions. Similarly, Kalangi et al. (2024) and Nair et al. (2024) concluded that cooperative learning effectively strengthened students' communicative competence by promoting active interaction, collaborative problem-solving, and continuous language practice. These findings collectively indicate that collaborative learning provides an effective pedagogical environment for developing communicative competence in English language education.

b. The Contribution of Self-Regulated Learning

The reviewed literature consistently identified self-regulated learning as one of the strongest predictors of successful English language learning. Students with well-developed self-regulation demonstrated greater learning autonomy, stronger academic performance, and higher levels of language achievement. According to Teng (2022), self-regulated learners actively establish learning goals, monitor learning progress, evaluate outcomes, and continuously adjust learning strategies to achieve desired objectives. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2022) concluded that self-regulated learning interventions significantly improve second-language achievement, strategy use, and learner self-efficacy across diverse educational contexts.

Self-monitoring and strategic learning behaviors were also identified as essential components of successful English learning. Marzuki et al. (2023) found that the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) approach substantially improved learners' writing proficiency because students became more capable of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning independently. Likewise, Kang (2022) demonstrated that self-recorded video-speaking tasks promoted learners' reflective thinking and self-monitoring abilities, resulting in improved speaking performance in online English courses.

Motivation and independent learning likewise emerged as dominant themes across the reviewed studies. Ismail et al. (2023) reported that authentic assessment significantly enhanced learner autonomy, motivation, and self-efficacy by encouraging students to continuously reflect on their learning progress. Similarly, Muharom et al. (2022) revealed that learners possessing stronger self-regulated learning strategies were more successful in managing independent online learning, maintaining motivation, and achieving higher English learning outcomes. More recently, Sugiyanto and Sabat (2026) demonstrated that self-regulated learning and positive technology perception jointly predicted English achievement among students in Islamic Higher Education, emphasizing the increasingly important role of learner autonomy in technology-enhanced learning environments.

c. Interaction between Collaborative Learning and Self-Regulated Learning

The findings of this review suggest that collaborative learning and self-regulated learning should not be viewed as independent instructional approaches but rather as complementary processes that mutually reinforce English language learning. Collaborative learning provides

meaningful social interaction through which learners exchange knowledge, negotiate meaning, and receive peer feedback, whereas self-regulated learning enables students to independently manage cognitive, motivational, and behavioral aspects of learning. Together, these approaches establish learning environments that simultaneously support social knowledge construction and individual learning responsibility.

Several studies demonstrated that collaborative environments naturally encourage the development of learner autonomy. Clayton Bernard and Kermarrec (2022) found that peer assessment and video feedback promoted not only collaborative learning but also self-, co-, and socially shared regulation of learning among university students. Likewise, Wang (2023) reported that online collaborative flipped classrooms significantly enhanced both English reading achievement and self-regulated learning because students independently prepared learning materials before engaging in collaborative classroom discussions. These findings indicate that collaborative activities can strengthen self-regulatory behaviors by encouraging learners to assume greater responsibility for their own learning.

Technology-enhanced instructional models further illustrated the integration of collaborative learning and self-regulated learning. Suárez and El-Henawy (2023) argued that digital learning environments facilitate collaboration while simultaneously encouraging learners to regulate their own learning processes through flexible access to instructional resources. Similarly, Dewi et al. (2026) concluded that technology-enhanced English learning environments provide favorable conditions for developing learner autonomy, strategic learning behaviors, and collaborative engagement. Overall, the reviewed studies indicate that integrating collaborative learning with self-regulated learning creates more effective and sustainable English language learning environments in higher education.

d. Impact on English Communication Competence

One of the most consistent findings across the reviewed studies concerns the positive impact of collaborative learning and self-regulated learning on students' English communication competence. Communication competence extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include speaking fluency, interactional skills, communication strategies, confidence, and intercultural awareness. The reviewed evidence demonstrated that collaborative learning provides authentic opportunities for learners to practice speaking, negotiate meaning, and communicate effectively within meaningful social contexts.

Several empirical studies reported significant improvements in students' speaking competence following collaborative learning interventions. Cai and Zhang (2023) found that collaborative dialogue supported through mobile technology significantly enhanced academic oral English performance and communication strategy use among EFL learners. Similarly, Wulandari and Assapari (2024) observed that communicative English proficiency among students in Islamic universities improved when instruction emphasized active interaction, communicative practice, and learner participation rather than traditional grammar-focused approaches.

In addition to speaking performance, collaborative and self-regulated learning contributed substantially to students' communicative confidence. Ibrahim et al. (2023) reported that collaborative classroom activities increased learners' willingness to communicate because students experienced supportive learning environments characterized by peer encouragement and active participation. Mansoor et al. (2025) likewise found that positive perceptions of collaborative learning significantly influenced students' attitudes toward learning English, resulting in greater confidence during classroom communication.

The reviewed literature also highlighted the growing importance of intercultural communicative competence within English language education. Hackett et al. (2023) demonstrated that Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) effectively enhanced intercultural competence by enabling students to collaborate with international peers through virtual learning environments. Likewise, Juliastuti et al. (2023) and Noviyanti (2024) emphasized that English language teaching in Islamic Higher Education should integrate intercultural communication with Islamic values, enabling students to participate confidently in global academic communities while preserving their cultural and religious identity. These findings suggest that English communication competence should be understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing linguistic, communicative, intercultural, and social competencies.

e. Integrated Conceptual Framework

The synthesis of previous studies indicates that collaborative learning and self-regulated learning function as complementary predictors of English communication competence in higher education. Collaborative learning primarily strengthens students' communication competence through meaningful peer interaction, collaborative problem-solving, and authentic language use. Simultaneously, self-regulated learning enhances communication competence by promoting learner autonomy, strategic learning, motivation, and continuous self-evaluation. The interaction between these two pedagogical approaches creates learning environments that support both social engagement and independent learning, ultimately leading to improved English communication competence.

The reviewed literature further identified several contextual factors influencing the effectiveness of these relationships. These factors include instructional design, digital learning technologies, peer support, authentic assessment, learner motivation, technology perception, and institutional learning environments (Harun & Abdullah, 2024; Ismail et al., 2023; Sugiyanto & Sabat, 2026). Within Islamic Higher Education, additional factors such as language habituation, intercultural communication, and institutional values also contribute to students' English communication development (Darmayenti et al., 2024; Noviyanti, 2024). Therefore, English communication competence should be viewed as the outcome of interactions among pedagogical, psychological, technological, and sociocultural dimensions rather than as the result of a single instructional strategy.

Overall, the conceptual synthesis derived from the reviewed studies demonstrates that effective English language learning in Islamic Higher Education requires an integrated instructional framework combining collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and communication-oriented pedagogy. Rather than emphasizing isolated language skills, future instructional practices should promote collaborative knowledge construction, learner autonomy, authentic communication, and intercultural awareness simultaneously. Such an integrated framework provides a comprehensive foundation for improving English communication competence while responding to the educational demands of the twenty-first century and the internationalization of Islamic Higher Education.

Figure 1 illustrates the overall synthesis of recent research trends on collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence in Islamic Higher Education. It presents the progression from publication trends and research characteristics to the conceptual development and integrated outcomes identified in the reviewed literature.

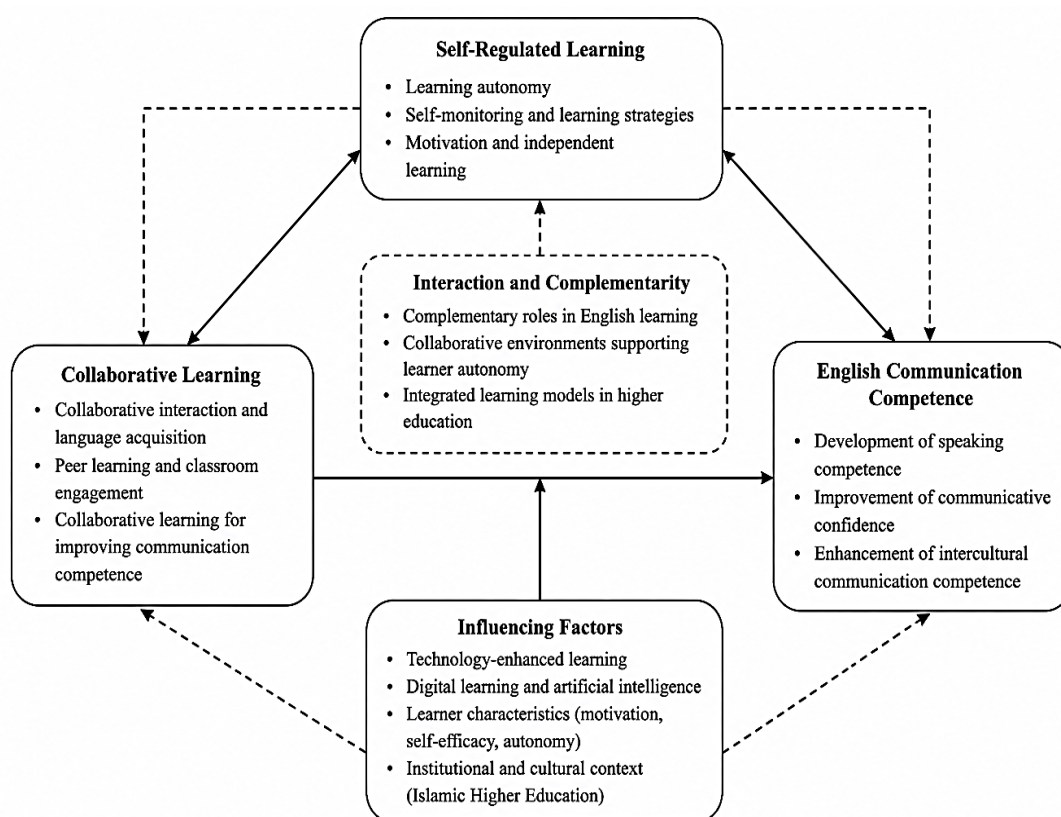


Figure 1. Integrated Conceptual Framework of Collaborative Learning, Self-Regulated Learning, and English Communication Competence in Islamic Higher Education

As illustrated in Figure 1, the reviewed studies demonstrate a coherent progression in English language education research over the past five years. The increasing number of publications has been accompanied by broader geographical coverage, more diverse methodological approaches, and the continuous development of collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence as interconnected constructs. The synthesis further indicates that technology-enhanced learning and learner-centered pedagogies have become the dominant direction of current research, supporting active collaboration, learner autonomy, and authentic communication. Overall, the figure highlights that these developments collectively contribute to an integrated instructional framework that strengthens English communication competence and promotes more effective English language learning within Islamic Higher Education.

3. Research Gaps and Future Research Directions

a. Research Gaps Identified in Previous Studies

The synthesis of the reviewed literature revealed several important research gaps concerning collaborative learning, self-regulated learning (SRL), and English communication competence in higher education. The first gap relates to the limited integration of these three constructs within a single conceptual framework. Most previous studies examined collaborative learning as an independent instructional approach (Harun & Abdullah, 2024; Kalangi et al., 2024; Li, 2025), whereas others primarily investigated self-regulated learning as a predictor of English achievement or learner autonomy (Sugiyanto & Sabat, 2026; Zhang et al., 2022). Although these studies consistently reported positive outcomes, only a limited number attempted to explain how

collaborative learning and self-regulated learning interact to simultaneously enhance students' English communication competence.

A second research gap concerns the limited number of studies conducted within Islamic Higher Education. While English language teaching has been extensively investigated in general universities, relatively few empirical studies have examined how collaborative learning and self-regulated learning operate within Islamic universities. Existing studies conducted in this context have mainly emphasized communicative competence, intercultural communication, or English language habituation (Darmayenti et al., 2024; Juliastuti et al., 2023; Noviyanti, 2024; Wulandari & Assapari, 2024). Consequently, evidence explaining the integrated relationships among collaborative learning, learner autonomy, and English communication competence in Islamic Higher Education remains limited.

Another important gap relates to methodological limitations observed in previous research. The majority of reviewed studies employed quantitative survey, correlational, or quasi-experimental designs, providing valuable statistical evidence but relatively limited explanations of learners' experiences and contextual influences (Kalangi et al., 2024; Sugiyanto & Sabat, 2026). Although recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses have strengthened empirical evidence (Dewi et al., 2026; Rochmawati et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2022), more comprehensive methodological approaches are still needed to explain the complex interaction among instructional, psychological, technological, and sociocultural factors influencing English communication competence.

b. Limitations of Existing Literature

The reviewed studies also demonstrated several limitations regarding geographical representation. Most international publications originated from Asian countries, particularly Indonesia, China, Malaysia, and South Korea, while relatively few studies investigated English language learning in Islamic Higher Education across the Middle East, Africa, Europe, or North America. This uneven geographical distribution limits the generalizability of current findings because educational systems, institutional cultures, and language learning environments vary considerably across countries.

Another limitation concerns sample characteristics and research contexts. Most studies focused exclusively on undergraduate EFL students enrolled in English language courses, with limited attention devoted to postgraduate students, pre-service teachers, or learners from other academic disciplines. Furthermore, many investigations were conducted within single institutions, making it difficult to compare findings across different educational settings and institutional characteristics.

The review also identified a shortage of longitudinal and mixed-methods studies. Most previous investigations measured learning outcomes over relatively short instructional periods and relied primarily on questionnaires or achievement tests. Consequently, limited evidence is available regarding the long-term development of English communication competence, learner autonomy, and collaborative learning behaviors. Future research employing longitudinal, mixed-methods, or multi-institutional designs could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these competencies develop over time.

c. Emerging Issues in English Language Learning

The reviewed literature demonstrated that digital learning technologies have become one of the most influential developments in contemporary English language education. Online learning

platforms, virtual classrooms, mobile-assisted learning, and learning management systems have significantly transformed the ways students interact, collaborate, and regulate their own learning. Recent studies consistently reported that technology-supported learning environments facilitate both collaborative interaction and learner autonomy, thereby improving English learning outcomes (Harun & Abdullah, 2024; Wang, 2023).

Another emerging issue concerns the increasing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into English language learning. Although AI was not the primary focus of most reviewed studies, current developments indicate that AI-powered applications, intelligent tutoring systems, automated feedback, and adaptive learning platforms are beginning to influence English language instruction. These technologies have considerable potential to personalize learning experiences, provide immediate feedback, and support students' self-regulated learning through data-driven instructional recommendations. Therefore, AI represents an important direction for future English language education research.

Technology-enhanced collaborative learning also emerged as a dominant instructional innovation. Studies investigating virtual collaborative classrooms, mobile-supported collaborative dialogue, and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) demonstrated significant improvements in communication competence, learner engagement, and intercultural communication (Cai & Zhang, 2023; Hackett et al., 2023; Harun & Abdullah, 2024). These findings indicate that collaborative learning has evolved beyond conventional face-to-face interaction toward more flexible and globally connected learning environments.

Finally, the literature revealed growing interest in personalized and self-regulated learning environments. Recent studies emphasized that future English instruction should accommodate learners' individual needs, learning preferences, motivation, and learning pace while simultaneously promoting learner autonomy through digital technologies (Dewi et al., 2026; Sari et al., 2026; Teng, 2022). Such personalized learning environments are expected to enhance students' academic performance while preparing them for lifelong learning in rapidly changing educational contexts.

d. Future Research Directions

Based on the identified research gaps, several directions for future investigation can be proposed. First, future studies should develop integrated instructional models combining collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, digital technology, and communicative language teaching within a unified pedagogical framework. Such models may provide stronger theoretical explanations regarding the mechanisms through which collaborative interaction and learner autonomy jointly influence English communication competence.

Second, future research should expand toward cross-cultural and international comparative studies involving Islamic Higher Education institutions from different countries. Comparative investigations may provide valuable insights into how cultural, institutional, and educational differences influence the implementation of collaborative learning and self-regulated learning. Such evidence would contribute to the internationalization of English language education while strengthening global perspectives on Islamic Higher Education.

Third, there is a need for longitudinal investigations examining the long-term development of English communication competence. Longitudinal research would allow researchers to investigate how collaborative learning experiences and self-regulated learning strategies evolve throughout students' academic programs and how these changes influence communicative competence over extended periods. Such evidence remains relatively scarce within the existing literature and represents an important opportunity for future empirical research.

e. Practical Implications

The findings of this systematic literature review provide several practical implications for English language education in Islamic Higher Education. For English language lecturers, the reviewed evidence suggests that classroom instruction should integrate collaborative learning activities with opportunities for self-regulated learning. Group discussions, peer assessment, collaborative projects, reflective learning journals, and technology-supported learning activities may simultaneously strengthen students' communication competence, learner autonomy, and collaborative skills.

The findings also provide important implications for curriculum development. Curriculum designers in Islamic Higher Education should consider integrating collaborative pedagogy, self-regulated learning strategies, intercultural communication, and digital literacy into English language programs. Such curriculum innovation would better prepare students to participate effectively in international academic communities while maintaining Islamic ethical values and cultural identity.

Finally, the review offers valuable implications for educational policymakers and future researchers. Policymakers should encourage professional development programs that equip English lecturers with competencies in collaborative teaching, digital pedagogy, and learner-centered instructional design. Meanwhile, future researchers are encouraged to investigate emerging issues such as artificial intelligence, adaptive learning technologies, intercultural communication, and integrated pedagogical models within Islamic Higher Education. Addressing these issues will contribute to developing more innovative, inclusive, and evidence-based English language education capable of meeting the demands of twenty-first-century higher education.

Overall, the identified research gaps and future directions indicate that the advancement of English communication competence in Islamic Higher Education requires a comprehensive instructional perspective that integrates collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, technology-enhanced pedagogy, and intercultural communication. Such an integrated approach provides a promising foundation for future research and educational practice while supporting the internationalization and quality improvement of English language teaching in Islamic Higher Education.

Table 2 presents a synthesis of the major research gaps, emerging issues, future research directions, and practical implications identified from the reviewed literature on collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence in Islamic Higher Education. It summarizes the current limitations of the field while highlighting opportunities for advancing future research and educational practice.

Table 2. Synthesis of Research Gaps and Future Research Directions in English Language Learning within Islamic Higher Education

Aspect	Key Findings	Future Implications
Research Gaps	Previous studies generally examined collaborative learning, self-regulated learning (SRL), and English communication competence separately. Studies integrating all three constructs, particularly in Islamic Higher Education, remain limited.	Future research should investigate the interaction among the three constructs within a comprehensive conceptual framework.
Limitations of Existing Literature	Most studies were conducted in Asian countries using undergraduate EFL students and quantitative designs, with limited longitudinal and mixed-methods research.	Broader geographical coverage, diverse participant groups, and longitudinal mixed-methods studies are needed.

Emerging Research Issues	Digital learning, artificial intelligence (AI), technology-enhanced collaborative learning, and personalized learning environments have become major research trends.	Future English language education should integrate AI, digital technologies, learner autonomy, and collaborative pedagogy.
Future Research Directions	Promising directions include integrated instructional models, cross-cultural comparative studies, and longitudinal investigations of English communication competence.	More comprehensive theoretical and empirical models are required to explain the relationships among collaboration, self-regulation, and communication competence.
Practical Implications	English instruction should combine collaborative learning, self-regulated learning strategies, digital literacy, intercultural communication, and authentic assessment within Islamic Higher Education.	The findings support curriculum innovation, lecturer professional development, and evidence-based educational policy to strengthen students' English communication competence.

Source: Synthesized from the reviewed literature (2021–2026)

As summarized in Table 2, the existing literature indicates that research has made substantial progress in examining collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence; however, important gaps remain. Most previous studies investigated these constructs independently, with relatively few integrating all three variables within the context of Islamic Higher Education. The review also reveals methodological and geographical limitations, particularly the dominance of quantitative studies conducted in Asian higher education settings. At the same time, emerging themes such as digital learning, artificial intelligence, technology-enhanced collaboration, and personalized learning environments have become promising directions for future investigation. Overall, the synthesized evidence emphasizes the need for integrated instructional models, cross-cultural and longitudinal research, and curriculum innovation to strengthen English communication competence and support sustainable English language education in Islamic Higher Education.

DISCUSSION

1. Results Analysis

a Recent Research Trends on Collaborative Learning, Self-Regulated Learning, and English Communication Competence in Islamic Higher Education

The first objective of this systematic literature review was to identify recent research trends concerning collaborative learning, self-regulated learning (SRL), and English communication competence within Islamic Higher Education. The synthesized findings indicate that research in this field has experienced substantial growth during the period of 2021–2026, reflecting a progressive shift toward learner-centered and technology-enhanced English language education. Rather than treating collaborative learning, learner autonomy, and communication competence as isolated constructs, contemporary studies increasingly conceptualize them as interconnected dimensions that collectively support successful language learning. This trend suggests that English language education has moved beyond traditional knowledge transmission toward a more integrated pedagogical perspective emphasizing interaction, autonomy, and authentic communication.

The identified publication trends also demonstrate a gradual conceptual transition in English language teaching research. Earlier investigations primarily concentrated on self-regulated learning as an individual cognitive process, whereas more recent studies increasingly incorporate collaborative learning, digital technologies, intercultural communication, and communication

competence within a unified instructional framework. This conceptual evolution reflects the growing recognition that effective English language learning depends not only on learners' individual cognitive regulation but also on meaningful social interaction and technology-supported learning experiences. Consequently, learner autonomy is no longer interpreted as independent learning in isolation but rather as an ability that develops through continuous interaction with peers, instructors, and digital learning environments.

Another important finding concerns the methodological and geographical expansion of the reviewed literature. The increasing diversity of research contexts, participants, and analytical approaches indicates that collaborative learning and self-regulated learning have become internationally recognized research priorities. At the same time, the review highlights the emerging contribution of Islamic Higher Education institutions, particularly in Indonesia, to the development of English language education research. This finding supports the growing institutional commitment to preparing graduates who are capable of participating in international academic communities while simultaneously maintaining Islamic values and intercultural awareness. Therefore, the observed research trends suggest that Islamic Higher Education is progressively positioning itself within global discussions concerning learner-centered pedagogy, digital transformation, and communicative language education.

The present findings are conceptually consistent with contemporary perspectives on collaborative learning and learner autonomy introduced in the literature. Collaborative interaction has been recognized as an essential mechanism for constructing linguistic knowledge through negotiation of meaning and peer feedback, enabling learners to develop communication skills in authentic learning situations (Adams & Oliver, 2023). Likewise, self-regulated learning has been described as a multidimensional process involving learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate cognitive, motivational, and behavioral aspects of learning, making it a fundamental component of successful language acquisition (Teng, 2022). Furthermore, technology-supported collaborative environments have been reported to facilitate authentic communication and intercultural interaction, thereby strengthening students' communicative competence within higher education (Hackett et al., 2023). Collectively, these perspectives reinforce the interpretation that recent developments in English language education increasingly emphasize the integration of collaboration, learner autonomy, and communication-oriented pedagogy.

b Relationships among Collaborative Learning, Self-Regulated Learning, and English Communication Competence

The second objective of this review was to examine how collaborative learning and self-regulated learning collectively contribute to students' English communication competence. The synthesized findings demonstrate that these two instructional constructs should not be interpreted as separate educational strategies but rather as complementary processes that jointly facilitate successful English language learning. Collaborative learning primarily strengthens communication competence through active interaction, peer collaboration, and shared knowledge construction, whereas self-regulated learning enables learners to independently manage their cognitive, motivational, and behavioral learning processes. The integration of these two dimensions creates learning environments that simultaneously encourage social participation and individual responsibility for learning.

The reviewed evidence further indicates that English communication competence develops through continuous interaction between collaborative engagement and learner autonomy.

Collaborative learning provides authentic opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, exchange feedback, and practice communication strategies within meaningful instructional contexts. Simultaneously, self-regulated learning encourages learners to establish learning goals, monitor progress, evaluate learning outcomes, and modify learning strategies according to instructional demands. Rather than functioning independently, these processes reinforce one another by enabling students to become both active collaborators and autonomous language learners. Such interaction contributes to more sustainable development of communication competence than instructional approaches emphasizing only one pedagogical dimension.

Another significant interpretation emerging from the synthesized findings concerns the multidimensional nature of English communication competence itself. The reviewed studies consistently indicate that communication competence extends beyond grammatical accuracy or vocabulary mastery to include communicative confidence, intercultural awareness, collaborative interaction, and digital communication abilities. Consequently, successful English learning requires instructional environments capable of simultaneously fostering linguistic competence, social interaction, learner autonomy, and authentic communication practice. Within Islamic Higher Education, this multidimensional perspective becomes increasingly important because graduates are expected not only to communicate effectively in English but also to represent Islamic values appropriately within international academic environments.

These interpretations are supported by contemporary theoretical perspectives presented in the reviewed literature. Collaborative learning has been shown to improve communicative competence by encouraging learners to negotiate meaning and participate actively in authentic classroom interaction (Ibrahim et al., 2023). Likewise, self-regulated learning interventions have consistently demonstrated positive effects on second-language achievement, learner autonomy, strategic learning behaviors, and self-efficacy, indicating that independent regulation is a critical determinant of language success (Zhang et al., 2022). In addition, technology-enhanced collaborative learning environments provide flexible opportunities for learners to simultaneously strengthen communication skills and self-regulation through meaningful digital interaction (Suárez & El-Henawy, 2023). These theoretical perspectives strengthen the interpretation that collaborative learning and self-regulated learning operate synergistically in developing English communication competence.

c Research Gaps and Future Research Directions

The third objective of this review was to identify existing research gaps and formulate future research directions concerning collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence within Islamic Higher Education. The synthesized findings indicate that although the reviewed literature consistently reports positive relationships among these constructs, the existing body of knowledge remains fragmented. Most previous investigations examined collaborative learning or self-regulated learning separately, while relatively few studies attempted to integrate both constructs into a comprehensive conceptual framework explaining English communication competence. Consequently, the current literature provides substantial empirical evidence regarding individual instructional approaches but offers comparatively limited understanding of how these pedagogical dimensions interact within complex educational settings.

Another important finding concerns the limited representation of Islamic Higher Education within international English language education research. Although recent studies increasingly acknowledge the importance of integrating English communication competence with Islamic values and intercultural awareness, empirical investigations conducted specifically within Islamic

universities remain relatively scarce. This limitation suggests that many conceptual models currently used to explain English language learning are largely derived from general higher education contexts and may not fully capture the distinctive educational characteristics, institutional missions, and sociocultural environments of Islamic Higher Education. Therefore, future investigations should expand empirical evidence within this educational context to strengthen both theoretical development and practical implementation.

The review also identifies emerging educational developments that are likely to shape future English language learning research. Digital learning environments, artificial intelligence, adaptive learning technologies, and personalized instructional systems increasingly influence collaborative learning and learner autonomy by providing flexible opportunities for interaction, feedback, and independent learning. Consequently, future instructional models should integrate collaborative pedagogy, self-regulated learning, digital innovation, and communication-oriented instruction within a coherent educational framework capable of responding to contemporary higher education demands. Such integration may contribute to more comprehensive explanations of how English communication competence develops in increasingly technology-mediated learning environments.

These interpretations correspond with recent theoretical developments discussed in the reviewed literature. Technology-enhanced English learning has been shown to strengthen learner autonomy while simultaneously facilitating collaborative engagement through flexible digital environments (Dewi et al., 2026). Similarly, personalized self-regulated learning has been identified as an important direction for future English language education because it accommodates learners' individual needs while promoting lifelong learning competencies (Teng, 2022). Furthermore, the integration of collaborative online learning environments has demonstrated considerable potential for enhancing intercultural communication competence and preparing learners for participation within global academic communities (Hackett et al., 2023). Collectively, these perspectives support the conclusion that future English language education should move toward comprehensive instructional models integrating collaboration, learner autonomy, technological innovation, and communication competence.

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this systematic literature review are largely consistent with previous theoretical and empirical studies emphasizing that collaborative learning has become one of the most effective learner-centered approaches for enhancing English language learning. The present review confirms that collaborative learning significantly promotes communicative interaction, peer engagement, and authentic language use, particularly when supported by technology-enhanced instructional environments. These findings reinforce the social constructivist perspective that language acquisition develops through meaningful interaction and collaborative knowledge construction rather than through isolated individual learning. Adams and Oliver (2023) similarly argued that collaborative interaction enables learners to negotiate meaning, exchange feedback, and construct linguistic knowledge collectively, while Ibrahim et al. (2023) demonstrated that collaborative classroom activities significantly improved students' communicative competence by increasing participation and speaking confidence. Likewise, Cai and Zhang (2023) reported that mobile-supported collaborative dialogue strengthened learners' oral communication performance because students continuously practiced communication strategies through peer interaction. The consistency between the present synthesis and previous studies indicates that collaborative learning

remains a robust pedagogical approach for developing English communication competence across diverse higher education contexts.

The present findings also strongly support previous research concerning the central role of self-regulated learning in English language achievement. Similar to earlier investigations, this review demonstrates that learner autonomy, strategic learning behaviors, and continuous self-monitoring are consistently associated with higher levels of English communication competence. The synthesized evidence confirms that students who actively regulate their cognitive, motivational, and behavioral learning processes demonstrate greater persistence, confidence, and language achievement. These findings are consistent with Teng (2022), who explained that successful language learners continuously plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning while adapting strategies to achieve instructional goals. Comparable evidence was reported by Zhang et al. (2022), whose meta-analysis concluded that self-regulated learning interventions significantly improve second-language achievement, learning strategies, and self-efficacy. Likewise, Marzuki et al. (2023) found that Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) enhanced learners' autonomy and English writing performance by strengthening planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation skills. Therefore, the present review further validates self-regulated learning theory as a critical explanatory framework for understanding successful English language learning in higher education.

An important contribution of this review lies in extending previous studies that generally examined collaborative learning and self-regulated learning independently. While earlier investigations predominantly focused on the effectiveness of either collaborative learning or self-regulated learning as separate instructional approaches, the present synthesis demonstrates that both constructs function synergistically in fostering English communication competence. This interpretation aligns with Wang (2023), who reported that online collaborative flipped classrooms simultaneously enhanced English achievement and students' self-regulation because learners independently prepared learning materials before participating in collaborative discussions. Similarly, Suárez and El-Henawy (2023) argued that digital learning environments naturally integrate collaborative interaction with learner autonomy by providing flexible opportunities for communication and independent learning. Furthermore, Clayton Bernard and Kermarrec (2022) emphasized that collaborative activities supported the development of self-, co-, and socially shared regulation, suggesting that collaboration itself can facilitate learners' regulatory processes. Compared with these previous studies, the present review provides a broader conceptual synthesis by positioning collaborative learning and self-regulated learning as complementary pedagogical mechanisms rather than separate instructional variables.

Another notable finding concerns the conceptualization of English communication competence. Previous studies have generally emphasized speaking proficiency, communicative interaction, or linguistic competence as primary indicators of successful English learning. However, the present review indicates that recent literature increasingly conceptualizes English communication competence as a multidimensional construct encompassing linguistic competence, communicative confidence, intercultural awareness, collaborative ability, and digital communication skills. This interpretation is consistent with Cai and Zhang (2023), who emphasized authentic communication and communication strategy use as essential components of oral English competence. Likewise, Hackett et al. (2023) demonstrated that Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) significantly enhanced students' intercultural communication competence through international virtual collaboration. Within the specific context of Islamic Higher Education, Noviyanti (2024) further argued that English communication competence

should integrate intercultural communication with Islamic values so that students can participate confidently in global academic communities while maintaining their cultural and religious identity. Compared with earlier conceptualizations that focused primarily on linguistic accuracy, the current review highlights a broader and more holistic understanding of communication competence appropriate for contemporary higher education.

Despite the overall consistency with previous literature, the present review also identifies several distinctive contributions that extend existing knowledge. Earlier studies were predominantly conducted in general higher education institutions and frequently relied on quantitative or experimental designs focusing on short-term instructional outcomes. In contrast, the current systematic review synthesizes empirical evidence specifically related to Islamic Higher Education while integrating collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence within a single analytical framework. Moreover, the review highlights emerging themes—including digital transformation, artificial intelligence, technology-enhanced collaborative learning, and personalized learning environments—that have received comparatively limited attention in earlier systematic reviews. Consequently, the present study not only confirms the validity of previous theoretical perspectives but also extends them by demonstrating that English communication competence in Islamic Higher Education is shaped by the interaction of pedagogical, psychological, technological, and sociocultural dimensions. This broader synthesis provides a more comprehensive explanation of contemporary English language learning and offers a stronger theoretical foundation for future research and instructional innovation.

3. Implications of the Findings

The findings of this systematic literature review contribute to the growing body of knowledge by providing an integrated perspective on the relationships among collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence within Islamic Higher Education. Theoretically, the review extends existing literature by demonstrating that collaborative interaction and learner autonomy function as complementary rather than independent mechanisms in promoting communicative competence. Practically, the findings suggest that English language instruction should integrate collaborative learning activities, self-regulated learning strategies, authentic communication tasks, and technology-enhanced pedagogy to strengthen students' English communication competence while supporting intercultural awareness and lifelong learning.

4. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, this review included only peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2021 and 2026, which may have excluded relevant studies published outside this period or in other publication formats. Second, the review focused primarily on English-language publications, potentially limiting the inclusion of valuable studies reported in other languages. Third, although the review synthesized evidence from multiple countries, research conducted specifically within Islamic Higher Education remains relatively limited, restricting the contextual generalization of the findings. These limitations indicate the need for broader and more diverse evidence in future systematic reviews.

5. Partial Conclusions

Overall, the findings indicate that collaborative learning and self-regulated learning are complementary pedagogical approaches that collectively enhance students' English communication competence. The review also demonstrates an increasing emphasis on learner-centered, technology-supported, and communication-oriented instruction within Islamic Higher Education.

These findings provide a coherent foundation for the final conclusions by highlighting the importance of integrating collaboration, learner autonomy, and digital innovation to improve English language learning and guide future research and educational practice.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review achieved its objectives by synthesizing recent empirical evidence on collaborative learning, self-regulated learning (SRL), and English communication competence among students in Islamic Higher Education. First, the review revealed a clear increase in scholarly attention to these three constructs between 2021 and 2026, reflecting a shift toward learner-centered, technology-enhanced, and communication-oriented English language education. The findings indicate that collaborative learning, learner autonomy, and English communication competence have become increasingly interconnected within contemporary higher education research. In particular, Islamic Higher Education has emerged as a growing research context, although empirical investigations remain relatively limited compared with those conducted in general higher education settings.

Second, the review demonstrated that collaborative learning and self-regulated learning function as complementary pedagogical approaches in fostering students' English communication competence. Collaborative learning promotes authentic interaction, peer engagement, and communicative practice, while self-regulated learning strengthens learner autonomy, strategic learning, motivation, and continuous self-monitoring. The synthesis further indicates that the integration of these approaches, supported by digital technologies and communication-oriented pedagogy, contributes not only to linguistic development but also to communicative confidence, intercultural awareness, and active participation in English learning. These findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of how social interaction and learner autonomy jointly facilitate English communication competence within Islamic Higher Education.

The findings also contribute to the theoretical and practical development of English language education. Theoretically, this review extends current knowledge by integrating collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, and English communication competence into a unified conceptual framework, offering a broader perspective than studies examining these constructs separately. Practically, the synthesized evidence suggests that English language lecturers, curriculum developers, and higher education institutions should design instructional practices that combine collaborative learning activities, self-regulated learning strategies, authentic communication tasks, and technology-enhanced learning environments. Such an integrated approach can better prepare students to communicate effectively in international academic settings while maintaining Islamic values and intercultural awareness.

Despite these contributions, the review identified several opportunities for future research. Future studies should develop integrated instructional models that simultaneously incorporate collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, digital technologies, and communicative language teaching. Cross-cultural comparative research involving Islamic Higher Education institutions from different countries and longitudinal mixed-methods investigations are also recommended to provide deeper insights into the long-term development of English communication competence across diverse educational contexts. Furthermore, emerging issues such as artificial intelligence, adaptive learning systems, and personalized learning environments deserve greater scholarly attention because of their increasing influence on English language education.

In conclusion, this systematic literature review demonstrates that improving English communication competence in Islamic Higher Education requires an integrated instructional

perspective that combines collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, technology-enhanced pedagogy, and authentic communication. By synthesizing recent evidence and identifying future research directions, this study contributes to the advancement of English language education and provides an evidence-based foundation for developing more innovative, learner-centered, and globally relevant instructional practices in Islamic Higher Education.

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