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An Investigation into Some Major Difficulties Encountered by English as Foreign Language Learners in Group Work as an Active Learning Strategy: The Case of Master One Students at Biskra University

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a

Master Degree in Sciences of Language

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Declaration

I, Rofaida RECHID, hereby declare that this research study is my original work. Any reviewed literature in this study has been duly acknowledged and properly referenced, except for this; all the present words in this work are the product of my own efforts. Additionally, I ratify that this work has been carried out in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Master of Sciences of Language at Biskra University, as well as has not been submitted in any university or institution in order to obtain a degree or qualification.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to

My beloved mother and father

My dear brothers, Anes and Sohaib

My partner in my university journey,

Hayette

My relatives also cousins, who showed

support and love

My friends

And finally, to you my dear reader

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Abstract

Since the introduction of the communicative language teaching approach, the English language teaching recognised significant adjustments towards communicative competence achievement. To be specific, such modifications targeted both English as foreign language teachers and students roles in order to produce active learners who are responsible for their own learning process in communicative settings, and group work is one of the used methods. In light of the multiple investigations that have been conducted concerning the utility of group work in improving learners' language skills, the researcher endeavours to look for some difficulties faced by EFL students at English department of Biskra University, particularly Master one students, during group tasks. In an attempt to, the researcher adopted the interpretative paradigm through conducting a qualitative research; and, for an in depth investigation, we relied on a Case Study design. On this account, two different data collection methods were used: an unstructured questionnaire and two focus groups. The results of the questionnaire and focus groups were thematically analysed. The findings revealed that EFL students lacked the necessary skills and knowledge for a satisfied group learning. During which, the difficulties they met were influenced by communication Barriers, individual differences, and prior learning experiences together with teachers' design, evaluation and supervision of the group task. Additionally, the internal factors also played a turn in creating these difficulties, along with their furthest impact on students' involvement and participation in group settings. In respect of these findings, the research hypotheses of this study were confirmed in terms of the different elements that affect the efficacy of a group learning.

Keywords: communicative language teaching approach, group work, active learners

List of Acronyms

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

TL: Target Language

CC: Communicative Competence

GW: Group Work

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

APA: American psychological Association

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General Introduction

1.   Background of the Study

Teaching languages has been a subject of concern over the years. Linguists have conducted various studies in an attempt to explore the different procedures that facilitate second and foreign language education. Consequently, multiple approaches to teaching languages have been introduced. This evolution has witnessed notable shifts over time because of theoretical alterations in terms of educational philosophies. Teaching and learning languages were conceived from one discrete element, which is the structural aspect of language, overlooking the functional interactive communicational aspect of language. Through adjustments to the objectives of learning languages, with an emphasis on reaching communicative competence (henceforth, CC), new approaches and teaching procedures have been proposed to meet this objective. Moreover, learners' roles were also redefined; instead of considering them as passive recipients of knowledge, they are now seen as active participants who are engaged in the learning process.

In light of these changing perspectives, the communicative language teaching approach (henceforth, CLT) emerged in the 1970's as a result of these shifts, with the aim of developing learners' communicative competence (Richards, 2006). This instructional approach emphasises communication as a means for knowledge construction while targeting the communicative nature of a language. Communicative language teaching approach promotes the interactional collaborative atmosphere that triggers learners' authentic communication. One common teaching practice advocating this concept is the use of Group Work (henceforth, GW). Through group work, students actively engage in the learning process, cooperating and collaborating to achieve shared learning goals, further transforming perspectives and understandings.

Group work has gained notable recognition in English as a foreign language classroom (henceforth, EFL). Owing to its incorporation as a communicative and interactive strategy to teach English. This tendency was depicted in works such as, Michael Long and Porter (1985), Wilga Rivers (1987), and Michael Long (1990) in respect of communicative and interactive learning. In a similar vein, CLT was proposed as a result of the traditional teaching approaches and methods' shortcomings, particularly in terms of preparing learners to communicate and interact using the target language, as well as to take on conversations in different contexts. This shift towards CLT, emphasising effective and meaningful communication, meaning-negotiation, and classroom interaction, necessitates group work integration in the English language classroom. Overall, the concept of GW emerged as a natural evolution of changing perspectives in language education towards the communicative approach.

2.   Statement of the problem

As a consequence of the change towards the communicative approach, teachers embrace GW as a teaching strategy to cope with this trend. This pedagogical procedure offers learners authentic communicative opportunities, where students jointly work to perform specific tasks. They may take part in group discussions, engage in problem-solving activities, and make presentations. Through active participation, negotiation of meaning, and classroom interaction, learners construct and co-construct knowledge, achieve the learning objective, and further enhance their communicative abilities.

The growing interest, in addition to the prevalence of such instructional strategy, has made it a subject of research. The effectiveness of GW has been approved as a motivational strategy, fostering classroom interaction, improving academic achievements, boosting willingness to communicate, and enhancing oral performance, reflecting favourable attitudes towards its use. Even though, some studies have

highlighted some issues concerning its application, specifically the challenges faced by learners, there remains a need for in depth investigation. Simply put, as long as these difficulties have been demonstrated, this topic should be singled out. These factors may influence students' active participation along with their engagement, thereby affecting the achievement of optimal outcomes and the ultimate goals of learning. Addressing such issues would offer further insights into how to ameliorate this teaching practice, granting its effective implementation.

This study addresses an important aspect of language education, namely the application of GW. It seeks to understand the difficulties and challenges encountered by EFL learners. Such realisation identifies the factors that influence the utility of GW, which should be overcome. In addition, it points out the vital role of teachers in designing, adjusting, and facilitating group work involvement. This includes establishing an inclusive, supportive, and productive environment. Moreover, such an investigation could aid in evaluating the success of language education by generating an engaging language-learning atmosphere, thus framing a functional teaching context.

3.   The Research Questions

This research work seeks to answer the following research question:

- **RQ1:** What are the major difficulties encountered by EFL learners when group work integrated as a classroom activity?

- **RQ2:** How do EFL learners perceive the difficulties associated with group work? And how do they perceive teachers' roles in facilitating and guiding group work?

- **RQ3:** How do internal factors affect EFL learners' group work participation?

4. The Research Hypotheses

Based on the aforementioned research questions, we propose the following research hypotheses:

- **RH1:** EFL learners experience difficulties in terms of communication, task design, group process, and group dynamic.

- **RH2:** The perception of these difficulties is influenced by prior learning experiences, individual differences, and communication barriers. During which, teachers have vital role in supervising successful group work activity.

- **RH3:** Internal factors shape the nature and the intensity of the difficulties faced by EFL learners.

5. The Research Aims

The general aim of this research work is to find out what impede the effective implementation of the group work strategy.

More specifically, this research work aims to:

1. identify the best practices for structuring and facilitating group work activities,

2. gain in depth insights about EFL learners' perceptions and experiences during group work situations, and

3. provide a better understanding of group work, enabling educators to design appropriate activities, further to establish an inclusive and productive educational experience.

6. The Research Methodology for this Study

Based on Creswell's Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design (2007), this research work is framed under the interpretative paradigm. Due to the fact that this research investigation seeks to explore the difficulties faced by EFL students during group

work, further making sense of their experiences. This interpretative stance demands a qualitative approach in order to provide a detailed understanding of the matter of concern. For this purpose, the researcher relies on a Case Study Design in which the case EFL learners at English Department of Biskra University will be explored.

In this regard, two different sources of information for data collection methods have been chosen. A questionnaire is intended to identify students' overall perceptions along with the common difficulties encountered. For profound sensations and thorough interpretations of the marked difficulties, a focus group is meant to point out specific topics for further knowledge of the perceived experiences. Concerning data analysis methods, thematic analysis seems to be appropriate for this study, where the detectable difficulties are analysed and reported in terms of themes and patterns.

Population and sampling techniques

As it has been clearly stated before, the population of this research work is EFL learners at English Department of Biskra University. With reference to sampling techniques, the researcher opts for the purposive sampling that meets the specific criteria of the study. Besides, generalising the findings is not the aim of holding such research. On this account. The sample incorporates Master one students at the Department of English at Biskra University.

7.   Referencing style for this dissertation

The researcher framed this research work in accordance with the specific requirements of the 7th edition of the American psychological Association (Henceforth, APA). The researcher's choice is justified by the suitability of such writing style to the particular criteria of the educational research, hence both in-text citation and list of references were organised with regard to particular guidelines of the 7th edition of APA.

Nevertheless, after the discussion with the supervisor and for aesthetics purposes, the body of this work was justified for consistent alignment and appearance.

8.   Delimitation of the study

Within the outlines of this investigation, the delineation of research scope would be as follow:

- Owing to the fact that the former studies in the context of Biskra University emphasised the undergraduate students, the researcher will target master one students at the Department of English Language and Literature.

- The researcher selected this sample as a result of the implementation of group work in different subjects than the oral expression module, on which prior researchers based their finding.

- This selection is justified by the researcher's focus on the use of group work in different contexts where students use other language skills along with the oral performance.

- Master one students, as research students, are supposed to have an advanced level compared to undergraduate students. Thus, they are expected to provide valid and useful data concerning the difficulties. In other words, the investigated difficulties will not be restricted to the linguistic level.

9.   Demystifying terminology/Glossary

For clarity purposes, several terms demand clarification to comprehend how the researcher is using them and in what context.

Group Work: is a teaching method where students jointly work in groups to achieve a certain learning goal or complete a given task.

Group Dynamics: simply, refers to the different elements that effect the communicative nature and patterns of interaction in a group work.

Group Process: it is the act of interaction itself where the communication occurs, in which learners work together to attain a particular learning objective.

Communicative Language Teaching: an approach to language teaching that is concerned with enhancing learners' communicative skills as well as developing their communicative competence.

Communicative Competence: refers to the ability to communicate using the target language in accordance with the linguistic community's social norms and cultural conventions.

Interactive Learning: is concerned with students' active participation in the classroom, where they engage in ongoing communication exchange with peers and the instructor in order to construct and co-construct knowledge.

Learner-Centred Instruction or Active Learning: takes place where students are engaged in the learning process and participate in the construction of knowledge instead of passively receiving information from the teacher.

Internal Factors: refer to the cognitive characteristics that are intrinsic to learners, such as learning style and personality.

Approach: stand for the theoretical foundation that directs the overall design of language teaching and learning. In other words, how language education is perceived.

Method: is the specific strategy that reflects the theoretical aspect of an approach to practical procedure in a classroom.

Technique: it is the practical side of a method where a specific classroom's activities and task are used to accomplish a certain learning goal.

Activity: any act of performance or classroom action that involves learners' engagement as a part of the learning process.

Task: any sort of goal-oriented assignment that requires to be accomplished, during which learners rely on both current knowledge and prior knowledge.

10. A Provisional Structure of the Dissertation

This research work will be structured into four chapters. These are presented in the following:

The First Chapter is devoted to the communicative language teaching approach. Wherein, basic assumptions about CLT will be reviewed. This chapter will tackle CLT as a teaching approach in EFL classrooms, including teaching practices.

The Second Chapter is intended for group work as a teaching method, where the focus is on group work learning and the implementation of such a strategy in the EFL teaching context. It also provides an overview of the group process.

The Third Chapter tackles the methodology of the study by means of providing the theoretical background on which this study is grounded. Moreover, it provides a detailed explanation of how this research work was conducted. This section also defines the research design in addition to the methods and procedures used to collect and analyse data.

The Fourth Chapter deals with the fieldwork and data analysis. It demonstrates the process of analysing and interpreting data, besides a comprehensive description of the findings in relation to research questions.

1   Chapter One: Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the communicative language teaching approach (henceforth, CLT). The researcher endeavours to provide a clear and a comprehensive view of the latter; wherein, we commence by introducing CLT as an approach to language teaching, moving to the set of trends attached to this paradigm shift, where the researcher illustrates the effect of these trends on the perception of learning and language education in general. The impact of such an approach on the language classroom is also depicted in relation to communicative curriculum and the initiation of new syllabi that aim to develop learners' communicative competence, incorporating the different activities that are meant to foster such learning purposes with reference to the roles of learners and teachers. This chapter also demonstrates the implementation of this approach in different contexts, including barriers to such application. Furthermore, it sheds a light on the misinterpretations relevant to CLT.

1.1   What is Communicative Language Teaching Approach?

Providing a comprehensive definition to communicative language teaching approach may be challenging due to various interpretations of the latter, to be specific, to the notion of "communicative". However, Richards (2006) claimed that CLT can be perceived as "A set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom"(p.2). To rephrase, language learners are supposed to actively participate in the classroom activities, which are based on meaningful and authentic interaction also meaning-negotiation, in order to make use of the target language (henceforth, TL), further to develop communicative competence (henceforth, CC).

For that purpose, learners are often engaged in communicative activities as group work (henceforth, GW), so that they cooperate, collaborate, and exchange knowledge while language learning occurs concurrently. In this case, teachers are regarded as facilitators and monitors of

the learning process rather than mere transmitters of knowledge, where learners take on their own learning process (Richards, 2006).

In the same vein, Savignon (2002) regarded CLT as a multidisciplinary approach, which is concerned with both the process and purpose of learning in an attempt to reach CC. In this respect, the latter enables learners to effectively function in real-life situations as a result of their active participation in English as a foreign language (henceforth, EFL) classrooms. However, teachers have to ensure that the designed and implemented teaching methods as well as strategies align with the principles of CLT.

In simple terms, CLT can be defined as an instructional approach to language teaching that transcends the structural aspect of language learning towards the communicative aspect. Thus, EFL learners would be able to undertake and maintain the flow of conversations in different contexts through the actual use of language in EFL classrooms.

1.1.1   Principles of CLT

Berns (1990) organised CLT around eight assumptions as follow

- Language teaching is based on a view of language as communication, that is, language is seen as a social tool which speakers use to make meaning; speakers communicate about something to someone for some purpose, either orally or in writing.

- Diversity is recognized and accepted as part of language development and use in second language learners and users as it is with first language users.

- A learner's competence is considered in relative, not in absolute, terms of correctness.

- More than one variety of a language is recognized as a viable model for learning and teaching.

- Culture is recognized as playing an instrumental role in shaping speakers' communicative competence, both in their first and subsequent languages.

- No single methodology or fixed set of techniques is prescribed.

- Language use is recognized as serving the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual functions and is related to the development of learners' competence in each.

- It is essential that learners be engaged in doing things with language, that is, that they use language for a variety of purposes in all phases of learning (p.104).

1.2   Background of CLT

Before delving into the attributes of communicative approach, there should be an elaboration of how the latter was developed. That is, the different elements that led to its introduction along with the impact of such a movement on the conceptualization of language education.

1.2.1   The Emergence of CLT

Essentially, communicative language teaching approach emerged as a result of the changing perspectives in relation to learning goals. To be specific, CLT appeared as a reaction to the shortcomings of the traditional approaches to language teaching, in terms of communication, that emphasised the grammatical competence (Richards, 2006).

To make it explicit, in light of the spread of English together with the need to acquire it as a global language, grammatical competence was not sufficient to make use of the target language for different purposes. That is, language learning, indeed, extends beyond mere mastery of grammatical patterns and vocabulary acquisition with reference to real-life situations. In other words, meaningful communication is not restricted to accurate language use alone, but also includes other factors that determine the appropriate language use for various purposes. Therefore, language learning should be perceived from a broader perspective of communicative competence rather than a narrow perspective that is limited to grammatical competence.

On this account, teaching language goals were shifted towards developing CC, as Richards (2006) claimed, "What was needed in order to use language communicatively was

communicative competence" (p. 9). Subsequently, CLT appeared to reflect the concept of CC in the 1970's; in which, the latter have known acknowledgment worldwide to reshape teaching methods and materials in order to line up with such a shift.

Jacobs and Farrell (2003) named this radical change as "paradigm shift", where t eight changes were portrayed to be relevant to language education.

➢ **learner autonomy**

It is concerned with providing room for learners to be responsible for their learning journey, far from teachers' control. During which, they take part in decision-making in terms of selecting content, teaching methods, and techniques, as well as in determining learning objectives, further reflecting on the learning process. That is, the EFL classroom is no longer teacher-fronted by means of learners' involvement in the learning process since they are the centre of attention.

➢ **Social nature of learning**

Learning should be perceived as a social activity that entails cooperation and collaboration not only with teachers but also with peers. During which, learners are required to engage in meaningful interactions and discussions in order to exchange ideas also to learn from each other, as a result of information sharing and the exposure to new perspectives . Hence, learning takes place through the co-construction of knowledge with the environment, where meaning is transmitted and negotiated.

➢ **Curriculum integration**

Learners should be involved in a comprehensive learning experience. Thus, they can make connections between the various areas of knowledge, further, to recognise the interrelatedness of knowledge. Therefore, different subject areas should be taught as allied entities, so that learners can develop a holistic view of the matter of concern.

➤ **Focus on meaning**

Language learning is not restricted to the mastery of linguistic patterns and forms; instead, it should be viewed from a broader aspect. That is, learners should be able to produce, comprehend, and negotiate meaning in different situations in order to develop meaningful communications in accordance with the particular context. In other words, language is not just a set of vocabulary and structures but also a vehicle to convey meaning, which is bounded by particular social, cultural, and linguistic norms.

➤ **Diversity**

Teachers have to consider individual differences in EFL classrooms. This diversity should be conceived as a resource for the provision of varied learning experiences rather than as an obstacle to learning. That to say, instruction should be diversified in accordance with the needs of learners, the nature of the subject matter, and the objectives of learning. This, in turn, would assist in yielding fruitful as well as enriching, further inclusive learning experiences.

➤ **Thinking skills**

Learning is not a mere process of earning knowledge; instead, it is about how to use this knowledge beyond the language classroom in different contexts. In other words, in language teaching, the emphasis should be on the different processes and strategies that promote learners' performance, thus they can handle various communicative events when it comes to real-life application.

➤ **Alternative assessment**

Since language education became delineated by communicative approach, teachers should rely on new forms of assessment that consider both process and product. During which, the different stages learners go through to reach the final product are both taken into account and estimated, unlike traditional assessments that focus on accuracy and output. In simple

terms, teachers have to follow continuous methods of assessment where learners are evaluated from multiple aspects as learning occurs from the start to the end of the course.

> ➢ **Teachers as co-learners**

Learning is a lifelong journey for both teachers and learners because of the changing nature of the world and its development, which requires the adaptation to the new research to become acclimatised to the new world. In other words, through teaching, teachers are enhancing their knowledge and skills, where they gain insights in relation to the subject area, further in terms teaching methods and how to adjust them according to the different teaching context.

In the same vein, Brown (2000) shed a light on new trends in language teaching. They was regarded as set of concepts that reflected the present shift of CLT paradigm. In attempt to provide a clear view on these concepts, Brown (2000) portrayed them as follows:

> ➢ **Learner-centred instruction**

It can be conceived as both curricula, which are based the student-teacher negotiation concerning learners' overall learning process, shaping the learning journey. Also, as a technique whereby learners autonomy is promoted. In both cases, learners' specific needs and preferences are considered towards skills development, allowing them to exercise control over instruction, further to be responsible for their learning.

> ➢ **Cooperative and collaborative learning**

This includes students working together, either in pairs or in groups, in order to reach certain learning goals, as a learner-centred instruction. However, it is crucial to realise that cooperation does not indicate collaboration. Cooperative learning follows a more directive process of predetermined procedures relative to the technique used in addition to learners' different roles and their contribution towards task performance. On the other hand, collaborative learning is less organised since the focus is on the act of interaction as learners

seek and share knowledge, also provide assistance and guidance, far from the stereotype of teachers as the main source of knowledge and support.

> **Interactive learning**

A successful act of communication entails the successful transfer of the intended message. To put it in another way, communication contains the exchange of meaning through the process of producing and receiving messages. This interactive nature together with the communicative purpose of language led to the establishment of an interactive classroom in an attempt to enhance communicative skills in term of

- Doing a significant amount of pair work and group work,

- Receiving authentic language input in real-world contexts.

- Producing language for genuine, meaningful communication.

- Performing classroom tasks that prepare them for actual language use "out there"

- Practicing oral communication through the give and take and spontaneity of actual conversations

- Writing to and for real audiences, not contrived ones (Brown, 2000, p.48).

> **Whole language education**

Two essential perceptions should be realised with regard to whole language. First, the wholeness of language, language have to be viewed from a holistic approach in relation to language use, instead of relegating it into separate and unattached components. That is, the four language skills should be integrated in EFL classrooms as they are in real-life situations. The second perception is related to the social aspect of language, i.e., the relationship between language and society. Simply put, it stands for how does language function in casual situations so that meaning is constructed and world realities are grasped.

➢ **Content-based instruction**

This tendency contains learning language via content, highlighting the importance of teaching knowledge of the specific content area with respect to language skills. In different terms, language learning occurs through teaching the specific content in accordance with the learners' specific context. That is, language is a means of knowledge transfer in which the area of study is of importance while learning is taking place simultaneously.

➢ **Task-based instruction**

Task based instruction is concerned with the completion of tasks where language learning occurs as a result of such performance. It includes engaging learners in activities that are relative to real-world situations in order to be involved in authentic communication, and language competence would be fostered. Therefore, they can function effectively in future settings.

1.2.2 Communicative curriculum

Communicative curriculum according to Savignon (2002) contains five components, where each component entails a set of language related activities that revolve around certain concept. These components provide a framework for instructors, concerning teaching methods and strategies, towards communicative competence.

➢ **Language arts**

Language arts, also referred as language analysis, put emphasis on developing learners' skills with regard to language patterns and mechanics for accurate language use. That is, its focus is on the structural aspects of language, including syntax, morphology, phonology, and grammar. For instance, it may take the form of spelling tests, translation, drills, dictations, and memorisation. Simply put, it seeks to develop the grammatical, as well as discourse competences of learners; however, this kind of activities should be judiciously incorporated into the communicative classroom, depending on the teaching context.

> **Language for a purpose**

Language for a purpose component acknowledges the idea of languages learnt for various purposes, where the acquired language is the primary language in the target situation. Therefore, learners have to experience an authentic use of the target language, in which teaching materials are tailored to their specific language and communicative needs, and that is why it is referred as language experience. In other words, language, here, is perceived from a communicative perspective, which is considered as a means of both interaction and knowledge acquisition. Accordingly, learners would be able to successfully to function in target situations as a consequence of the emphasis on developing their strategic competence, thus they can keep the natural track of a conversation.

> **My language is me: Personal second language use**

My language is me entails the integration of internal factors into language learning. Simply put, instructors have to recognise that learners have different personalities and preferences that reflect their ways of learning also how do they perceive and express meaning. There should be room for personal use of a second language (henceforth, L2), where learners are encouraged to develop their learning identities in order to make use of the L2 as a medium to understand, as well as to express their view of world realities. In other words, language should be perceived as a part of an individual identity for self-expression, not only a tool for communication; hence, learners would be engaged in a meaningful and effective learning experience.

> **Theatre arts**

This component stems from Shakespeare's line of "all the world's a stage", which evokes the idea that a society is a play that contains actors on stage (individuals) who have specific roles to perform, yet these roles are shaped by society's different socio-cultural norms. This idea is extended to language classrooms, where learners ought to perform various roles.

During which, they discover the way they should perceive, negotiate, and produce meaning, using the second language. That is, the classroom should simulate real-life situations so that learners develop their L2 personalities and discover diverse ways for self-expression.

> ➤ **Language use beyond the classroom**

This component is concerned with the actual use of the acquired knowledge outside the classroom. To illustrate, language classrooms are considered as a rehearsal whereby learners are prepared for real-life interactions. This promotes the idea of incorporating how language takes place in ordinary life into the learning process. Wherein, learners experience the actual use of language, beyond classroom, through exposure to L2 community.

In summary, Savignon (2002) pointed out that these components are interconnected and complementing each other, where there is no prescribed sequence to follow in order to grant their functionality. It all depends on the teaching context.

1.2.3   Communicative language teaching syllabus

The shift towards communicative approach necessitated the evolution of language syllabi to accommodate such paradigm shift. Based on Van Ek and Alexander (1980) teachers should take into account the following considerations in an attempt to design a language syllabus that seeks to develop learners' communicative competence (as cited in Richards, 2006).

- Learners' objectives of learning the target language.

- The communicative events as well as the setting in which learners would use TL.

- The social role of learners also their interlocutors in the target communicative event.

- Language functions and notions to be involved in the communicative event.

- Discourse stretches and rhetorical skills relevant to the specific event.

- Variety of English to be taught.

- Grammatical and lexical content to be tackled.

Such recognition led to the introduction of new syllabi, such as skill-based and functional syllabi. The former mainly emphasised the integration of the four skills, where both micro and macro skills are taught. Whereas the latter intended for the communicative function of language as a means to reach CC. wherein, language instruction is organised around teaching the specific communicative purposes of language in relation to the specific context, in order to convey meaning (Richards, 2006).

Moreover, CLT proponents indicated that some learners acquire English for specific purposes in relation to the academic and occupational settings. This, in turn, led into English for specific purposes movement (henceforth, ESP), which is a specialised approach to language teaching, where the focus is on meeting learners' specific needs within their particular field or profession, instead of targeting the broad range of language skills. Thus, the field of needs analysis was introduced in order to gather information concerning the language and communicative skills learners need as well as will need for well performance in future situations (Richards, 2006).

1.3   Communicative Language Teaching Classrooms

As it was stated before, communicative approach seeks to promote the communicative competence of students. Necessarily, CLT classrooms would differ from the ordinary language classrooms in an attempt to reach this purpose. Therefore, the following section is devoted to highlight the essential elements of the latter.

1.3.1   Characteristics of a CLT classroom

Brown (2000) distinguished CLT classroom in terms of

- Classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, dis- course, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence, Goals therefore must intertwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic.

- Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

- Fluency and accuracy arc seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.

- Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the classroom. Classroom tasks must therefore equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.

- Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.

- The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Students are therefore encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others (p.43).

1.3.2   CLT classroom activities

Since the introduction of CLT, scholars have been looking for establishing classroom activities that embody the fundamentals of the latter. Richards (2006) discerned CLT activities in terms of

> **Fluency VS accuracy activities**

Fluency activities seek to enable learners to take on meaningful discussions without breakdowns, regardless of their limited mastery of language. For that purpose, learners are engaged in activities where they negotiate meaning, relying on their communicative skills, in order to secure the act of communication and prevent misunderstandings. Unlike accuracy

activities, which emphasise the proper use of language and correctness. To be specific, fluency-oriented tasks should

- Reflect natural use of language

- Focus on achieving communication

- Require meaningful use of language

- Require the use of communication strategies

- Produce language that may not be predictable

- Seek to link language use to context (Richards, 2006, p.14).

On the other hand, accuracy-oriented tasks should

- Reflect classroom use of language

- Focus on the formation of correct examples of language

- Practice language out of context

- Practice small samples of language

- Do not require meaningful communication

- Control choice of language (Richards, 2006, p.14).

➤ **Mechanical, meaningful, and communicative practice**

Mechanical practices are led activities that require little knowledge since the objective is to reinforce skills, such as drills. In meaningful practices, guidance is still provided, yet learners are required to justify their actions, i.e., to make meaningful decisions based on their knowledge. Communicative practices, on the other hand, are concerned with the contextualisation of language use, in which classroom activities are aligned with real-life situations as the act of communication occurs. Simply put, it aims to trigger learners' authentic use of language for effective communication.

Richards (2006) also noted that this distinction is identical to Littlewood's (1981) classification of pre-communicative and communicative activities. The former can be

considered as a base for language use where learners are prepared for further interactions, thus they are devoted to Structural as well as Quasi-communicative activities. While the latter are meant to provide a context for language use, enabling learners to effectively function in the communicative events. Functional communication activities together with Social interactional activities seem to appropriate for such purposes.

> **Information gap activities**

This kind of activities reflect the informative nature of communication. To illustrate, in real authentic communicative events, individuals do talk in order to became enlightened by the knowledge that they are not familiar with, and this stand for information gap. Therefore, in an attempt to promote authentic use of language beyond mere mastery of language forms, CLT classrooms should rely on activities that require learners to use their knowledge of both language and communication in order to perform certain tasks.

> **Jigsaw activities**

Jigsaw activities are essentially centred on the information gap concept of people communicating to get knowledgeable about a specific matter of concern. However, it contains breaking up language-related tasks into manageable parts. Wherein, students are arranged into small groups, in which each group is assigned to handle a specific part of the task. In other words, through the collaboration and cooperation of learners, in terms of working on different parts, the whole task is completed by linking those parts.

Along with these activity types, teachers may rely on other classroom activities in relation to CLT classrooms such as role-play activities. Nonetheless, instructors have to make sure to adapt these activities in accordance with learners' preferences, levels, and needs. Further, according to the teaching context where learning actually takes place.

1.4   The Validation of Communicative Teaching Approach in EFL Context

Multiple studies were conducted in the field of language education concerning the efficacy of communicative language teaching approach. In general, many scholars approved CLT as a functional approach, however; the successful implementation of the latter highly depend on the teaching context in which it is applied.

Mouada (2019) proved the role of CLT in the betterment of students' communicative competence, where learners' favourable attitudes towards CLT were reported in terms of boosting their interaction, motivation, interests, and learning in general. Obenza and Mendoza (2021) also demonstrated how did communicative language learning activities afford students' communicative competence enhancement. To be specific, in terms of fostering the functional use of language in the form of meaningful negotiation and authentic communication. On the other hand, Farooq (2021) marked the inappropriate use of grammar and vocabulary by Pakistani learners in spite of their positive attitudes, as they became confident enough to communicate in both groups and whole-class discussions together with presentations.

Despite the supporting reports concerning the use of CLT, Islam (2016) affirmed that the inadequate implementation of the communicative language teaching approach impedes its workability and that what accounted for the ineffectiveness of such an approach in Bangladesh. Otherwise, Ferdous (2011) called for an educational agenda that recognises the adaptation of CLT and its applicability in Bangladesh.

In this respect, Jacobs and Farrell (2003) claimed that despite the extended use of CLT, the latter still implemented inadequately due to educators' tendency to fragment this paradigm shift. Wherein, each change is perceived in isolation with regard to the other aforementioned changes. Moreover, they indicated that these changes are interrelated, completing each other, where they should be approached in cooperation for a holistic implementation of such an approach further to guarantee its success.

1.4.1   Impediments to the use of communicative language teaching approach

Mulat (2003) classified the difficulties encountered by teachers as CLT was incorporated into English classroom to internal and external constraints. The internal constraints was concerned with the teacher himself, including language competency. The external constraints, on the other hand, entailed the teaching context with reference to students and facilities, which fell out of teacher control.

In the same regard, Li (1998) indicated that Korean teachers experienced a number of impediments as they adopted communicative language teaching approach. Accordingly, the main sources that obstructed the use of CLT in the Korean context were teachers, students, educational system, and CLT itself. Li (1998) declared that these difficulties originated from the following reasons:

Difficulties caused by the teachers

- ➢ Deficiency in spoken English.

- ➢ Deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence.

- ➢ Lack of training in CLT.

- ➢ Few opportunities for retraining in CLT.

- ➢ Misconceptions about CLT.

- ➢ Little time for and expertise in material development (p. 687).

Difficulties caused by students

- Low English proficiency.

- Little motivation for communicative competence.

- Resistance to class participation (p. 687).

Difficulties caused by the educational system

- Large classes.

- Grammar-based examinations.

- Insufficient funding.

- Lack of support (p. 687).

Difficulties caused by CLT itself

- CLT's inadequate account of EFL teaching.

- Lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments (p. 687)

1.5   Common Misperception of Communicative Language Teaching Approach

In the face of acknowledgment and positive attitudes towards the communicative language teaching approach, there is still a lack of clarity especially among teachers concerning its practical application in the classroom. Thompson (1996), Savignon (2002), Wu (2008), Diana (2014), and Spada (n.d.) listed the frequent misunderstandings about CLT that was summarised as follow:

1.5.1   Grammar

Communicative language teaching approach was never meant to eliminate grammar. On the contrary, it was intended to contextualise grammar by means of incorporating discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences. In other words, to enable learners to make use of the target language, tackling language in the form of isolated drills will not suffice. Instead, it should be supported by the particular context of how the TL is used in the ordinary real-life situations since one competence is not enough to communicate the target messages.

Accordingly, grammar instruction in CLT necessarily would differ from the traditional instructions. In this respect, grammatical patterns are taught in an inductive manner, where learners are supposed to discover the rules rather than being covered by teachers. That is, learners, indeed, are acquiring the necessary grammar for an accurate and meaningful expression through the actual use of the target language in communicative and interactive learning settings. Through which, learners first became acquainted with the context of the proposed language structure in order to comprehend the meaning as well as the communicative

purpose, and then teachers, as facilitators, may draw learners' attention to the grammatical structure used in order to convey such a message.

In short, CLT aims to aid learners in developing a sense of grammatical awareness as they engage in language use. This awareness supports their self-correction and prompts their language use, rather than relying solely on the memorization of the rules. (For further understanding, check Burns, A. (2011), Grammar and Communicative Language Teaching: Why, When, and How to Teach It?).

1.5.2   Speaking/listening skills

The primacy of speaking and listening skills had been the case for a while in second language instruction, such as in the Audio- Lingual teaching approach. This tendency of learning languages to be able to speak with foreigners along with the fact that CLT promotes communicative activities, led to the misperception of that CLT is concerned only with the speaking and listening skills.

Savignon (2002) corroborated the applicability of CLT to both reading and writing activities, as readers and writers are involved in interpreting, expressing, as well as negotiating meaning. Despite this notion, many teachers found it difficult to engage students in communicative reading and writing tasks, indicating teachers' lack of the necessary knowledge to design variety of tasks due to the inadequate training. Moreover, communication is not only restricted to the spoken form, but also encompasses the written form. In this respect, a question should be raised: how would learners imply meaning through written words and infer meaning if they were not familiar with the writing norms and reading strategies?.

In short, emphasising meaningful communication through CLT was meant to integrate the four linguistic skills in a meaningful way, as they naturally occur together in real-life situations. Therefore, CLT would advocate any practice that promote engaging learners in a contextualising meaningful communication, including both forms of spoken and written

communication. Moreover, this approach is pursuing the production of competent learners who are able to transfer and interpret the intended messages appropriately in accordance with the particular social context.

1.5.3   Teachers' roles

In CLT instruction, teachers are no longer the primary source of information. They play the role of learning process facilitators, guiding learners in building meaning, where learners are supposed to co-construct their knowledge through linguistic interaction with others.

By means of designing a communicative lesson plan, it is assumed that it is sufficient to make students naturally construct the target meaning, overlooking classroom diversity and learner differences. Indeed, in communicative classes, intense guidance is necessary. To be specific, as facilitators of learning, a mere guide to construct meaning will not suffice; some students require supervision and monitoring. That is, as long as teachers' interventions do not affect students' autonomy, teachers may alter their roles occasionally, depending on the instructional situation.

Moreover, teachers believe that there is no place for explicit teaching in CLT due to the notion that learners construct their own knowledge through interaction. Though implicit teaching is favoured for an authentic communication, incorporating explicit teaching would be necessary whenever the instructional situation demands support or supplementation for further comprehension.

To conclude, while encouraging meaningful interaction, teachers should leave room for the needs as well as the differences of learners.

1.5.4   Error correction

In an attempt to ensure learners 'engagement in communicative activities and classroom interaction, fluency tends to be emphasised over accuracy to maintain the flow of

students' talk. However, such tendency does not necessarily imply neglecting the appropriate use and usage of the target language. Furthermore, any form of direct error correction and corrective feedback is frequently deemed undesirable and simply replaced by implicit forms of correction, typically via recasting. This contains teachers rehearsing students' improper expressions while preserving the intended meaning.

The fact that CLT classes encourage students-talk does not denote that implicit feedback is more effective than the explicit one. The explicit feedback demonstrated its vital turn in improving student accuracy as well. The key consideration here is teachers' roles in selecting and providing error correction while ensuring learners' flow of ideas. Teachers should be careful and selective in terms of error correction, taking into account the nature of error, the timing when the feedback should be given, and the manner in which the feedback is delivered, all without triggering students' affective filter that may hinder their flow and make them reluctant.

Overall, the significance of feedback and error correction in fostering the learning process in instructional settings cannot be doubted, despite the constraints on its effective delivery (Brandl, 2008). However, for effective error correction, teachers should assess the worth of an error then determine the appropriate way to address and remedy it (Brown & Nation, 1997).

1.5.5   Group work

The fact that communicative approach seeks to increase learners 'opportunities to use the target language for an authentic communication is usually interpreted as boosting students taking time while reducing teachers talking time. Simply, by grouping learners into pairs or small groups to accomplish a common goal while engaging in meaningful interaction. Although group work has been approved in many contexts as a means to encourage students-talk, it

should not be perceived as a fundamental tenet in CLT because, in some educational situations, it can be inconvenient.

According to Roger and Johnson (1994), not any group work can be considered cooperative learning. They emphasised the importance of distinguishing between cooperative learning and a simple students grouping. Cooperative learning is intended to contribute to students' achievement of t specific learning goals. However, not every group assignment is meant to accomplish these goals. There should be a line of distinction between communication for the sake of opinion- sharing together with knowledge construction and communication for task accomplishment along with attaining the desired learning outcomes.

Moreover, it is assumed that the active participation of learners signals the successful design of a communicative activity, and therefore, learners are achieving the goal. Nevertheless, not all communicative tasks fell under CLT. Indeed, CLT tasks demand the incorporation of the learning objective within meaningful communication. Besides to this not any group work ensures the fulfilment of the target goal in a meaningful way, thus CLT cannot be restricted to group work alone.

Furthermore, in their research concerning group work, Long (1990) indicated that the perception of group work, whole-class work, and individual work should be integral. In simple terms, the benefits of each of these elements cannot be neglected in terms of the learning process; hence, they should be recognised as interrelated complementary components rather than independent competitive ones. The global dominance of whole-class and individual work was what led to the growing support for group work; otherwise, these components should be used in harmony, depending on the instructional situation. Concerning the tasks students ought to do together, Long and Porter (1985) emphasised considering meaningful interaction as well-meaning negotiation along with careful organisation.

Another misconception is that group work and pair work are often translated to take the form of role-playing. While role-play absolutely engages learners in meaningful practice within an authentic context, group and pair work encompasses a wide range of activities. Actually, the latter is a flexible technique where learners collaborate to solve problems, analyse a passage, and engage in different other activities.

Overall, group and pair work are one of the techniques used in CLT, which may take place in different ways. In addition, CLT communicative activities require a clear learning goal that is achieved via meaningful negotiation; thus, not all communicative activities embody this goal. Further, constructing meaning may include whole-class work, group work, or individual work, depending on the subject, lesson, and context,   negotiating meaning on the other hand is what demand collaboration and interaction with others whether in groups, or with the whole class. That is, CLT instruction is not limited to the group work alone.

1.5.6   The use of first language

As Spada and Wu (n.d.; 2008) pointed out, the use of the first language (henceforth, L1) in the second language classrooms has been controversial. Some scholars encouraged the use of L1 while others dismissed it. It is argued that using L1 impedes the necessary exposure to the target language, hence effecting the overall all learning purpose of being able to make use of L2. Nonetheless, such use in foreign language teaching is supported and even it is claimed that permitting this use aids in the process of learning.

In the context of CLT instruction, promoting the use of the L2 was often interpreted as the elimination of the L1. Definitely, the exposure to the target language is substantial, yet L1 can also take a place when necessary. To illustrate, it can be used to clarify instruction, explain complex concepts, and resolve misunderstandings. Turnbull (2001) revealed that incorporating the L1 may facilitates teaching in terms of saving time and further explanation, yet with an emphasis on the judicious use of the latter. Swain and Lapkin (2002) also confirmed

the role of the mother tongue language in completing tasks effectively. Despite the possibility of using L1, the fruitfulness of such use has to be seriously evaluated in attaining the learning goals.

To make things clearer, while adhering to the CLT principles, and pursuing an immersive experience of the L2 learning, the use of the L1 is minimised in favour of maximizing the use of L2. However, when it comes to the use of L1, it is crucial to recognise how, when, and where to incorporate it, depending on the academic situation.

1.5.7   Communicative language teaching as an approach not method

In accordance to Savignon (2002), CLT has to be perceived as an approach to teaching languages rather than a one size fits all teaching method. Anthony (1963) highlighted the difference between approach and method. An approach is the general philosophy of the objective of language education, which is reflected in a body of concepts about language teaching and learning. A method, on the other hand, refers to the set of instructional procedures and strategies designed to align with the main concepts of an approach (i.e., How to teach). That is, CLT provides a theoretical framework to achieve the communicative competence goal, which determines the teaching practices to attain such a goal. However, it is important to note that CLT only provides guidance for the classroom instruction without prescribing a fixed set of teaching practices. Thus, the teaching procedures will always be a place for an ongoing research and adjustments in accordance with the specific teaching context.

To conclude, teachers should be careful when selecting a given teaching method in order to fit the teaching context and learning purpose. Further, there should be a correspondence between the selected method and the adopted approach.

Conclusion

In short, this chapter was intended to establish a better understanding of the communicative language teaching approach for proper implementation. There was portrayed

how CLT classrooms ought to be, including the different instruction tasks that promote such approach. Further, it provided a holistic prospect on how CLT should be perceived in relation to language learning. Moreover, this chapter also sought to offer a framework for interactive, communicative, and active learning in order to ground the next chapter, which is meant for group work, moving from general to specific.

Therefore, the following chapter concerned with the main variable of this study, where the researchers would offer an explanation of group work as a teaching method

2   Chapter Two: Group Work as an Active Learning Strategy

Introduction

The second chapter is designated for group work as an active learning strategy, wherein there is a elucidation of what is meant by both active learning and group work. On account of the fact that group work is the anchor of this research study, we put emphasis on this variable as a teaching procedure. Moreover, the researcher tackles the necessary concepts in relation to the effective application of GW, including group development and group dynamics. Furthermore, the different forms of group learning together with the recognised negative and positive aspects of such a teaching method are also highlighted.

2.1   Active Learning

Active learning, simply, can be referred to the process whereby learners' autonomy is promoted, in which they undertake the accountability of their learning journey in learner-centred classrooms.

Bonwell and Eison (1991) claimed that active learning takes place when learners perform a set of activities, depending on their abilities. They define it as "anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (p.2). Moreover, the authors depicted active classrooms through students' engagement in different tasks because of the dependency on their own thinking skills together with expertise in order to complete certain assignments. That is, the emphasis is on enhancing learners' capacities in the track of discovering their weaknesses and strengths.

In the same vein, Felder and Brent (2016) interpreted active learning as students' involvement in activities relative to the course content, either individually or in groups, where new knowledge is constructed. In other words, active learning can be perceived in opposition to passive learning of mere representation of knowledge where the teacher is the main source of knowledge along with the recipient students.

Put differently, active learning specifies a space for learners to dominate the learning process since they are the main concern in language education, enabling them to use their knowledge as well as develop their skills and abilities.

2.1.1 Active learning components

Active learning consists of three elements of engagement

Behavioural engagement: It entails students active participation, where they make use of the teaching material and interact with the content.

Cognitive engagement: It stands for the process of refection. To put it more plainly, the teaching materials are evaluated as well as critically analysed in order to make meaningful decisions and construct knowledge.

Social engagement: It is concerned with the social nature of learning, where learners exchange, transfer, and negotiate meaning for the sake of knowledge construction (Watkins et al., 2007 as cited in Drew & Mackie, 2011).

2.2   An Overview of Group Work

This section is intended to elaborate what is meant by group work through tackling both the definition and the implementation of group work in language classrooms.

2.2.1 Definition of group work

Group work simply can be referred to the process where learners are appointed to work together in groups in order to complete a certain task or achieve a particular learning objective.

Brown (2000) expressed group work as, "A generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self- initiated language (p.177). That is, group work encompasses all the diverse ways that require number of learners to function with each other for a common goal further to acquire knowledge. During which, they are expected to work

independently where they rely on their language together with communicative skills in order to transfer and negotiate meaning.

It is assumed that through group work, learner talk will be maximised, in comparison to traditional instruction, where there would be great use of the target language in the classroom. Thus, learners will naturalise the flow as well as their performance using TL. Moreover, engaging learners through group work activities would promote yielding motivated learners, where knowledge acquisition takes place (Richards, 2006).

2.2.2 Group development

Tuckman (1965) claimed that individuals go through a set of stages as they are joined to work in groups. Subsequently, a framework for how group work evolves as learners work together was introduced. In which, there were suggested four stages, and later on, the framework was modified to include another fifth stage (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

> **Forming stage**

It is the first stage of group development where a number of learners are asked to joint in order to form a group. It can be referred to the acquaintance phase, during which group members are familiarised with each other as well as introduced to the assigned task. In addition, the different roles would be determined in order to complete the task together with highlighting the accepted and unaccepted behaviours.

> **Storming stage**

After the formation of the group along with assigning the different roles, formality would fade since the group members got in touch. In this case, there would be a room for argumentation among group members towards knowledge construction together with task

completion, where personal matters are incorporated and opinion expressed in extremes, leading to group control rebels followed by conflicts.

> **Norming stage**

In this stage, group members tend to normalise the group environment towards conflict resolution. In which, both positive group climate and group unity are established, further promoted. Moreover, new principles and roles are identified, where members demonstrate more supportive and cooperative attitudes towards both the group work itself as well as the other group members.

> **Performing stage**

Subsequent to conflict settlement, where new criteria for group work are established, in terms of norms and roles, group members in this stage are ready to collaborate, function, and support each other. In which the focus is on the different procedures that lead to task fulfilment.

> **Adjourning stage**

It stands for the phase where group members have actually completed performing the assigned task. In this case, group members are ought to conclude the group work that they have been part of.

2.2.3 Group work into classroom action

Group work activities should be carefully adopted and implemented. On this account, Brown (2000) suggested a set of practices teachers have to take into account as group work is incorporated into classrooms.

2.2.3.1 Selecting appropriate group technique.

In an attempt to design a functional group work activity, instructors have to ensure that the task type aligns with the concept of group work as well as the teaching context. That is, not any sort of classroom activity can be regarded as GW just because learners

are assigned to work together. GW is more than grouping learners and creating communities. Instead, it seeks to trigger their language use far from teachers' intervention, with the aim of attaining certain learning goals or performing certain tasks.

Accordingly, Brown (2000) mentioned a set of group tasks to which teachers may refer to, as GW is implemented. Some of these tasks are:

➢ **Games**

Games are one of the ordinary tasks in language classrooms. They contain dividing a specific classroom activity into measurable parts, where learners are rewarded in which they earn points based on their performance. To demonstrate, in the 20 question game, a member of the group puts in his mind a particular known personality, while the other members are trying to reveal this personality, via asking up to twenty yes/no questions. The one who figures it out will gain the score.

➢ **Projects**

Group work projects are concerned with engaging learners in empirical activities, where language skills are used in a purposeful way. Simply put, each classroom group is expected to carry out a specific project, wherein the group members are supposed to collaborate in order to achieve the desired outcome. During which, they rely on their abilities and expertise to fulfil the assigned task as well as to contribute to the overall project.

➢ **Brainstorming**

This kind of group task is intended to improve the natural flow of thoughts, regardless of their correctness, as well as foster creativity. In other words, group members, in this case, are expected to propose and list the different insights without making judgments, relative to the matter of concern. Brainstorming can be referred as the equipment stage before delving into complicated tasks.

➢ **Problem solving and decision making**

These sorts of tasks aim to promote thinking skills and reasoning. Problem solving tasks are concerned with finding alternatives to specific issues, where learners depend on their language skills and knowledge. Decision-making, on the other hand, refers to the act of selecting the appropriate resolution of the proposed alternatives, hence completing the assigned task.

2.2.3.2 Planning group work.

It is presupposed that through determining the learning objective together with the intelligible instruction, the desirable outcomes would be automatically attained, in relation to group work. However, the way GW initiated, organised, and conducted is also of importance. On this account, Brown (2000) claimed that there are seven rules, instructors have to consider for a successful GW implementation.

➢ **Introduce the technique**

It stands for the presentation of the selected technique to learners, to be held in the form of GW. In this case, teachers have to provide clear instruction in relation to the assigned while also highlighting the eventual objectives learners are supposed to reach.

➢ **Justify the use of small groups for the technique**

It is recommended to provide clarifications concerning the group task. Especially when learners are not fully convinced by the idea of working together and its importance to reach the desired learning outcomes. In this situation, teachers ought to widen learners' views in relation to the functionality of the group task. To be specific, learners should be enlightened in terms of what they will be able to do and develop through working in groups, so that, they get motivated to participate in the assigned task.

➢ **Model the technique**

For uncommon and complicated tasks, it is preferable to provide a model of the technique used, for demonstration purposes. Though such illustration is not required in the case of familiar tasks, yet it is supportive to the task completion, enabling learners to determine their accountabilities to fulfil the requirements.

➢ **Give explicit detailed instructions**

After the introduction of the technique, highlighting its significance, and providing a model when necessary, here it comes the phase of the specific conventions of the group task. That is, the way learners are expected to approach the task to fulfil its demands. This includes the time limits, the different roles of learners have to perform, and the specific instruction of what learners are allowed to use in order to complete the task.

➢ **Divide the class into groups**

Organising the classroom into groups is an intricate task. Indeed, it transcends specifying the number of members in each group together with determining where they are supposed to sit. Instead, grouping learners to work jointly requires a set of considerations that may influence the effectiveness of group work. Such considerations include personality type, proficiency level, interests, along with learning styles and strategies.

➢ **Check for clarification**

It takes place before learners commence accomplishing the assigned task. It aims to ensure that they have well grasped the requirements, further understand what they are supposed to do. In simple terms, teachers have to use comprehension checks for verification purposes.

> ➢ **Set the task in motion**

It refers to the moments where the group work is actually put into action by stating that learners are free to start working in groups. However, it is crucial to note that teachers have an important turn in facilitating as directing group work task, further in fostering its functionality.

2.2.3.3 Monitoring the task.

In this stage, a teacher plays the role of facilitator and resource, where there is a provision of assistance and direction as group work occurs. Nevertheless, without influencing learners' autonomy, nor intervening the group process. In other words, teachers have to point out that, whenever learners work in groups, group members are required to be responsible for their performance, demonstrating their willingness to offer support when necessary. Moreover, teacher frequent circulation as learners jointly work together is also of significance, since it provides insights with regard to group process, progress, as well as learners' use of the target language, regardless of help provision. Nonetheless, a teacher may purposefully avoid circulating in order to give opportunities for learners 'initiation of collaboration, further to develop their work independently.

 In this respect, Brown (2000) proposed practices teachers have to avoid as group work takes place

- Don't sit at your desk and grade papers

- Don't leave the room and take a break.

- Don't spend an undue amount of time with one group at the expense of others.

- Don't correct students' errors unless asked to do so.

- Don't assume a dominating or disruptive role while monitoring groups (p.189).

2.2.3.4 Debriefing.

Also known as processing, it refers to the closing stage where the group task is already accomplished, for whole-class debriefing. It entails two levels: reporting on task objectives and establishing affective support. The former is concerned with the phase of sharing and presenting what learners have achieved, leaving a room for the discussion and the exchange of information. The latter emphasises the whole class community, where every class member play an important role in knowledge acquisition. In this case, learners share their experiences during group work, including the difficulties they met, and their perceptions of the group task. Further, such a phase provides feedback concerning the overall implementation of group work task, for future consideration to be improved.

2.3   Group Dynamics

Scribner and Donaldson (2001) identified four main elements that shape as well as affect a group work learning.

2.3.1   Group climate

It stands for the prevailing atmosphere that characterises the group process and interaction, where a number of learners are asked to form and assigned to work in groups. It encompasses the different agreements, disagreements, as well as conflicts that occur within the group. Besides how group members deal with these facets of group communication. During which, group cohesion has a vital turn in framing the overall group climate (Scribner & Donaldson, 2001 & Castro, 2021).

In this respect, there are two aspects of group cohesion. Task cohesion is related to the fulfilment of the group task and reaching the predetermined learning objectives. Social cohesion stands for interpersonal relationships along with connections among group members. Referring to group communication, there two sorts of communication behaviours. Defensive communication that takes place when individuals tend to

demonstrate defensive attitudes because of the insecurity sense among group members. This, in turn, would make the focus shifted from the task achievement towards self-defence to save face, further to impose the presence in order to lessen that sense of being threatened and attacked. Unlike supportive communication, in which individuals tend to sustain group process where the focus is on the accomplishment of the assigned task together with group members' unity, far from any personal sensibility that may hinder the effectiveness of group work (Castro, 2021).

In short, the way group members manage interaction and reinforce group cohesion have crucial role in establishing an effective group work learning experience, as well as in determining group members' overall performance.

2.3.2 Group norms

Group norms are concerned with the way group members are supposed to act towards task accomplishment. In other words, they refer to the set of rules, which are developed as learners meant to work together in relation to the whole group work performance, including group interaction and individual behaviours. In which Castro (2021) stated, "A work group norm may be defined as a standard that is shared by group members and regulates member behavior within a group or organization" (p.44).

Feldman (1984) illustrated that group norms are meant to

- Promote group survival, especially when conflicts take place. In which group members adherence to the stated norms have a vital turn in overcoming these conflicts, further to the overall functionality, unity, and performance of group work members.

- Standardise predictable behaviours in relation to how group members are supposed to behave based on the group norms, i.e., what is anticipated from them.

- Help in avoiding unwelcomed issues through identifying what is allowed and forbidden.

- Define group identity and discern it from other groups, since group norms reflect the particular group's core values, highlighting that certain individuals are part of that particular group.

On that account, group members have to take into account group norms further to observe them for satisfactory learning outcomes. These norms resulted from group socialisation, and the adherence of group members is determined by both internal and external factors (Castro, 2021).

2.3.3 Group roles

It is concerned with the different roles the group members are intended to perform. In which there are roles that are determined by personality traits as by the different circumstances of the learning context (Castro, 2021). Accordingly, Castro (2021) singled out three classifications of group roles.

2.3.3.1 Task-related roles and behaviours.

It stands for the different actions that lead to the task fulfilment. It also entails:

➢ **Task leader**

Refers to the individuals who are supposed to sail the group process due to their capacities with regard to problem solving as well as theirs expertise in leadership. Task leaders tend to dominate the talking time and interactions because of the nature of their roles. Moreover, leadership takes two forms, substantive leadership that is related to the conceptual aspect of group work in terms of group discussion, unlike procedural leadership that is associated with the specific criteria of task completion. However, a good task leader is expected to perform both forms of leadership.

> ➢ **Expediter**

Stands for the one who manages group work progress in relation to the time, the quality of group work, as well as the fulfilment of the assigned task. In simple terms, an expediter is expected to supervise the overall group task. That is, to determine whether the group members are on the right path or not, with regard to what they have reached of what they supposed to. Further, whether the learning goals have been reached or not in order to make the necessary adjustments to facilitate goals achievement.

> ➢ **Information provider**

It is concerned with supplying group members with knowledge through sharing different insights and perspectives. In other words, information providers seek to expand the knowledge of group members towards the successful task accomplishment. However, the allocation of such a role depends on the learning context, including the nature of the topic along with the individual's expertise.

> ➢ **Information seeker**

The information seeker refers to the individuals who pursue knowledge, relative to the matter of concerns, or others' perspectives for clarification purposes. Such a tendency, may promote creativity and thinking skills, improve the quality of group work, as well as help in approaching the target learning objectives.

> ➢ **Gatekeeper**

The gatekeeper is the one who takes on the responsibility of managing group communication in order to assure that all members of the group have an opportunity to contribute to the assigned group task. In other words, it can be considered as a participation prompter, where each member has the right to take part of the group work in terms of collaborative spirit while boosting the establishment of an inclusive group climate.

➢ **Recorder**

Generally, in most cases only one member undertakes this role of registering what have been discussed and what have been agreed to be reported.

2.3.3.2 Maintenance roles and behaviours.

Such behaviours deal with the different roles group members play in order to promote the unity of group work as well as meet the specific needs of group members.

➢ **Social-emotional leader**

The individuals who perform such roles are meant to back up the task leader in relation to group dynamics as well as group climate. Simply put, the social-emotional leader is expected to create an encouraging atmosphere via the provision of support to both task leader and group work as whole, when necessary, for a harmonious group work process.

➢ **Supporter**

It is concerned with the act of communication, which is intended to reinforce the emotional state of group members. Such boosting of passion often takes place in private conversations, where concerns are openly expressed. Though such an act seems to be unessential, yet it plays an important role in improving both group work performance and the ultimate outcomes of group task.

➢ **Tension releaser**

It is known by the sense of humour as well as the alertness to other member traits and the different cues during group work. Although this funny side is assumed to reduce tension by getting rid of the negative mode, tension releasers have to use humour judiciously, depending on the situation, as in some cases humour may increase tension instead of minimising it. Moreover, such behaviour has to be shown occasionally where

the aim is to overlook an awkward situation, since at the end the main objective is to fulfil the group task not to create scene of comedy.

> **Harmoniser**

The harmonizer role occurs when individuals endeavour to treat conflicts before they arise. That is, a harmoniser is expected to observe group interaction in order to detect any marks of collision to be avoided. In such case, the harmonizer may intervene through shedding a light on the matter of concern or make the necessary rescript. Thus, issues are resolved before their eruption, where group members work in harmony.

> **Interpreter**

This act of interpretation takes place when individual and cultural diversity are evidenced, subsequent to future conflicts. Because of these differences, the interpreter role come into action where the aim is to maintain group unity within an inclusive climate, in which differences are seen as traits of effective group learning.

2.3.3.3 Negative roles and behaviours.

There are two sorts of negative roles, which in turn affect the successful performance of a group work task (Castro, 2021).

2.3.3.3.1 *Self-centred roles*

They refer to the individuals who desire attention and like being on spot. It may be

> **Central negative**

The central negative role stands for the members who often disapprove other members' thoughts and contributions along with the continuous argumentation of the discussed ideas within the group. This tendency is assumed to be a contribution for them, in which the leader, here, play crucial role in considering their views, further in avoiding conflicts, which may arise because of such behaviours.

➢ **Monopoliser**

A monopoliser is the one who tends to monopolise talking floors. Simply put, this role stands for the individuals that dominate the act of conversation, either intentionally or unintentionally. Such behaviour may hinder the participation of other group members. Hence, the collaborative nature of group work is affected in relation to the co-construction of knowledge in order to accomplish the assigned task.

➢ **Self-confessor**

This role is performed when the group work is considered as a place for stress release, where the focus is on personal issues rather than on fulfilling the assigned task. Indeed, such a release is allowed in group work settings, yet occasionally, not constantly, as self-confessors tend to do.

➢ **Insecure compliment seeker**

Such behaviour concerns the individuals who attract acknowledgment and recognition from other group members. However, such recognition is associated with personal attributes and traits rather than task completion. So that, they become identified as valuable members.

➢ **Joker**

The joker role can be identified as the member who over adopt the role of tension releaser, where jokes are always present even in the absence of tension. This tendency may influence the functionality of group work and hinder the completion of the task.

2.3.3.3.2   Unproductive roles.

They refer to the different behaviours that influence the overall production, as well as the progress of group members.

➢ **Blocker**

Blocker is the individual who play a part in the retardation of group task completion. The latter always requires group members to take into account further consideration as well as proposes extra treatment of the assigned task even though the decision is already made. A blocker may also take the form of missing group tasks or inadequate performance during group work.

➢ **Social loafer**

Social loafers are individuals who tend to isolate themselves from group work with minimal participation when compulsory. In other words, the completion of the task is out of their concerns, leaving it on the shoulders of the other members of the group.

➢ **Aggressor**

It refers to the member who tends to take aggressive actions against other members of the group. Through, attacking their ideas, unconstructive criticism, and even insulting them. In this case, group norms play an important role in controlling such behaviours.

➢ **Doormat**

The members who are conformable to the extent of being liable to perform such behaviour. They tend to underestimate their abilities in favour of other members of the group, considering them ideal. Such acts are generally clarified by members' conflict avoidance, lack of confidence, and approval-desire.

2.3.4 Contextual factors

There is no doubt that the aforementioned elements (group climate, norms, and role) have an influence on group work. Nonetheless, other contextual factors also determine the effective implementation of group work. To begin with, the nature of group work, in which educators are required to decide about the type of group learning, such as cooperative and collaborative approaches. Based on the selected approach to learning, the

group task will be designed and assigned in relation to the subject matter as well as to the concept of group work itself. Moreover, the time devoted for task completion as well has an effect on the group process. Because the fact that learners are bound by specific period of time to accomplish the assigned task, make the emphasis shifted from the process itself towards mere fulfilment of the task, neglecting the different phases learners have to go through to achieve this purpose (Hackman,1990 as cited in Scribner & Donaldson, 2001).

To conclude, group work extends the notion, which indicates that the latter is a mere assignment where learners are expected to work together. Instead, group work is a multifaceted approach to instruction determined by a set of elements that should be taken into consideration for a functional implementation of group work.

2.4   Types of Group Learning

Cranton (1996) identified three types of group learning, depending on the desired form of knowledge to be learnt.

2.4.1   Cooperative group learning

Usually, both cooperation and collaboration used interchangeably; however, when it comes to learning, there should be a line of distinction. Cooperative learning takes place when learners are meant to work together, yet under certain regulations, i.e., in an organised way. During which, knowledge is constructed through the fulfilment of the group task, where meaning is exchanged and negotiated.

This type of group learning is generally devoted to acquiring instrumental knowledge, where existed knowledge is perceived as a tool that guides learners towards task completion together while also reaching the targeted learning objectives and outcomes. In other words, it stands for learners' reliance on their expertise along with their abilities in order to perform a specific task. Nevertheless, the earned instrumental

knowledge should be based on evidence and facts rather than on a mere exchange of meaning without logical justifications.

Moreover, in cooperative group learning, understanding the content of the subject area is of primary while members are cooperating and contributing to the overall process of comprehending as well as fulfilling the assigned task.

2.4.1.1 Types of cooperative group learning.

There are three forms of learning as cooperative groups incorporated into classrooms, namely formal, informal, and base cooperative groups. A formal cooperative group is employed to join learners in order to work together, where roles and expectations are clearly defined towards task completion. On the other hand, informal cooperative groups are less structured since they are formed due to a particular learning situation, for short period of time. Further, they are held for focused-discussions before, after, and even during instruction in order to ensure that learners are grasping what is being taught. The third type of base cooperative group is concerned with the supportive aspect of cooperation. Wherein, group members back each other up in relation to their academic performance. However, in such case group members remain the same throughout the entire course to ensure coordination (Smith, 1996).

2.4.1.2 Elements of cooperative learning.

Roger and Johnson (1994) presented five condition that, in turn, would grant an effective cooperative learning.

➢ positive interdependence

It refers to the idea that during group work, members are interrelated. Thus, the success of a group is conditioned by other members' success. Wherein, each member has to comprehend the subject matter as well as affirm that the other members also do. That is, group members are conceived as supplementary components of the group, in which

each contribution leads to effective completion of the task. In simple terms, the success of GW is determined by the overall performance of the whole group along with individual achievements, reflecting the cooperative and supportive nature of cooperative learning.

➢ **Face to face promotive interaction**

It is concerned with the act of communication and information exchange during the group process. Wherein, group members are expected to help further to ease each other's learning towards task completion. Such conduct is fostered by positive interdependence, for a successful group work. In which they exchange and negotiate meaning also provide feedback, for the mutual profit of knowledge construction and task fulfilment.

➢ **Individual Accountability/Personal Responsibility**

Group members have to actively participate and contribute to the group work task. Hence, each member is expected to perform certain tasks and take on specific roles in order to obtain the targeted learning outcomes. Contributions are considered as well as evaluated in terms of both individual and whole group performance.

➢ **Interpersonal and Small-Group Skills**

They stand for the necessary skills and the different behaviours of working in groups as the way group members function in groups affect its effectiveness, including

- Group management skills.

- Role distribution together with the allowed conducts.

- Communications skills necessary for group interaction.

- The skills relevant to both group work and membership maintenance, in terms of emotional state along with creating positive group climate.

> **Group processing**

There should be room for learners' evaluation of both their performance and the overall group work task, as a group community. In which, they estimate the way group members function in the group in order to determine the useful behaviours to be reinforced together with the useless ones to be avoided. Moreover, such discussions provide constructive feedback concerning group work experience to be improved, further it foster the skills necessary for collaboration.

2.4.2   Collaborative group learning

Collaborative group learning is associated with communicative knowledge. In which, particular topics are best comprehended through the different viewpoints of different individuals. That is, knowledge is socially constructed by means of the various interpretations of group members. Through collaborative learning, learners are expected to form knowledge via producing and exchanging meaning, where members share opinions and come to consensus.

Moreover, both processes of interaction and content comprehension are of primacy in collaborative groups. In other words, the way individuals communicate and transfer meaning significantly leads to the collaborative acquisition of knowledge. Unlike cooperative groups where the content is prioritised.

Simply put, working together in collaborative groups is depicted through group members' interchange of insights as well as the discussion of different notions from multiple perspectives. So that, they come to agreements with regard to the matter of concern together with constructing and co-constructing new knowledge via the collective task completion. Therefore, developing the necessary communicative skills in order to appropriately to function in groups while in depth comprehension of the content is fostered.

2.4.3 Transformative group learning

Transformative learning, as the name indicates, takes place when the transformation of knowledge occurs, that is why it is associated with emancipatory knowledge acquisition. This type of group learning is simply concerned with the critical aspect of learning, in which learners reflect on their existing knowledge as a result of the exploration of novel perspectives. Simply put, group members, as autonomous learners, have to take on their learning, hence, they should not get sufficient with the current perception of input instead they should examine their understanding, where they look for other people perspectives of how do they perceive concepts. In other words, learners are free to go beyond their understanding and skills to be improved, further to see the world realities from different lenses in order to expand their knowledge.

Mezirow (n.d) claimed that transformative learning may takes place in both instrumental and communicative knowledge acquisition. In which the process of transformation entails

- reflecting critically on the source, nature and consequences of relevant assumptions – our own and those of others;

- in instrumental learning, determining that something is true (is as it is   purported to be) by using empirical research methods;

- in communicative learning, arriving at more justified beliefs by participating freely and fully in an informed continuing discourse;

- taking action on our transformed perspective – we make a decision and live what we have come to believe until we encounter new evidence, argument or a perspective that renders this orientation problematic and requires reassessment;

- acquiring a disposition – to become more critically reflective of our own assumptions and those of others, to seek validation of our transformative insights

through more freely and fully participating in discourse and to follow through on our decision to act upon a transformed insight (p.94).

In short, transformative group learning contained learners sharing their perspectives and understanding of the subject matter. In which, knowledge evaluated, insights extended, and new viewpoints formulated.

2.5   Merits and Limitations of Group Work

Brown (2000) stated that the incorporation of group work into EFL classroom would:

➢ **Generate interactive language**

Through assigning learners to work in groups, their talking time opportunities will be maximised, especially in large classes. This, in turn, would foster the interactional nature of language use, where learners transfer and negotiate meaning together with the co-construction of knowledge.

➢ **Offer an embracing affective climate**

Working in groups creates a supportive learning context. In which, group members are free to express their ideas far from any judgmental attitudes and negative feelings of discomfort and embarrassment. Moreover, the collaborative nature of group work in order to obtain certain learning outcomes would make learners motivated towards the achievement of this shared desire for task completion.

➢ **Promote learner responsibility and autonomy**

By setting learners to work together in groups, group members are compelled to take on the assigned task far from the teacher as well as other groups. Wherein, each member has a certain role to perform in order to fulfil the task.

➢ **Group work is a step towards individualising instruction**

Group work helps in targeting the different learning styles and the diverse skills of learners. In which, teachers may design tailored group tasks, by means of taking into account classroom diversity, in order to attain various learning objectives in relation to the specific needs and abilities of learners,

In light of the potential profit gained from group work, yet Brown (2000) singled out a set of rationales of why group work is avoided in language classrooms.

➢ **The teacher is no longer in control of the class**

Through the integration of group work into the language classroom, it is believed that teachers will lose control of the class. Especially, in teaching settings where a good management of the classroom is perceived via teachers' undertaking learning process while learners are operated by their commands. This, in turn, would hinder the interactive nature of language learning. Moreover, even when GW is incorporated, there is still certain amount of control by means of the different roles performed by teachers as facilitators of learning.

➢ **Student will use their native language**

In most cases, it is assumed that during group work the native language of group members is inevitable, as a shared language to communicate. This controversies the main concept of group work of completing the group task using the target language. Nonetheless, through clear instruction of group task together with highlighting learning goals to be achieved, native language can be avoided. In other words, learners have to be prepared to work in groups by means of demonstrating the significance of using the TL while approaching the desired learning outcomes, further through the provision of a vital group climate to reach these goals.

➢ **Students' error will be reinforced in small groups**

Learners' dominance of the learning process within a group setting does not necessarily indicate learning experiences free from error correction. Moreover, error commitment is part of the learning journey, and well run group work would trigger peer feedback along with error correction among group members, as a result of the supportive nature of collaborating during group work.

➢ **Teachers cannot monitor all groups at once**

There is no doubt that monitoring group tasks is an important part of group implementation. However, teachers have to recognise that feedback provision as well as class circulation take place only when necessary. Because ultimately group work is intended to promote interactive language use among group members, where meaning is negotiated meaningfully, depending on the content and nature of the group task.

➢ **Some learner prefer to work alone**

Instructors have to consider that there are learners who prefer to work individually, and working in groups may drain their energy. In such case, teachers play an essential role in expanding the perceptions of group work of this type of learners. In this regard, teachers may clarify why such classroom procedure is integrated into class. In terms of, group work is meant to promote the interactive learning since language proficiency is not restricted to the mastery of language skills only, but also includes the use of language in order to transfer meaning appropriately, in view of the fact that language is learnt and used to communicate with other individuals.

Moreover, with a proper management of group task, where members are aware of their responsibilities and tasks, individual diversity would be seen as a merit not as an obstacle. In which, the different abilities will be used to complete the assigned task towards obtaining the desired learning outcomes.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter intended to generate the essentials in relation to group process, as group work is incorporated into language classrooms. There was shed a light on the different steps instructors have to consider towards employing group tasks together with the various factors that influence the overall efficacy of group work activity. Learners' roles, where they are joint to work in groups, also was identified as functional group members. In addition, there was highlighted the different types of group work learning with reference to their particular forms of knowledge acquisition. Eventually, we concluded this chapter with the perceived limitations and assets of group work.

The following chapter is specified to provide a theoretical framework in relation to the methodology of this research study in attempt to justify the researcher's choices with regard to the different methods of collecting and analysing data.

3   Chapter Three: The Research Methodology for this Study

Introduction

The third chapter of this dissertation is concerned with the methodology for this research wok. Section one addresses the fundamental tenets relative to research methodology, highlighting their interrelatedness in order to corroborate the systematic nature of any research investigation, where every conduct is grounded. This section is also intended to justify the researcher's choices with reference to the selected methodology. The second section, on the other hand, is devoted to the particular methodology for this study, including the different decisions concerning the adopted research paradigm, approach, and design, as well as to the procedures of collecting and analysing data.

3.1   Research Methodology: Theoretical Background

In the field of educational research, it is plainly acknowledged that a research study contains a structured process of investigation, where the researcher ought to make careful decisions with regard to the specific criteria of the specific study. Therefore, researchers have to organise their works around a structured framework, which, in turn, would determine the different procedures of the research process.

In this respect, Rajasekar et al (2013) differentiate between two notions of research methods and research methodology. Research methods are concerned with the various techniques employed in order to investigate certain research problem, further to provide a solution to the studied problem. On the other hand, research methodology stands for how a research ought to be conducted, including the research methods. That is, the latter is broader with an emphasis on grounding the research study. Simply put, research methodology seeks to provide clarification in terms of

- Why is a particular research study undertaken?

- How did one formulate a research problem?

- What types of data were collected?

- What particular method has been used?

- Why was a particular technique of analysis of data used? (Rajasekar et al., 2013, p.6)

For a comprehensive understanding of research methodology, the four concepts of paradigm, approach, design, and research methods, along with sampling, will be discussed in the forthcoming parts.

3.1.1 Research paradigms in educational research

Khatri (2020), considered a research paradigm as "the theoretical or philosophical ground for the research work" (p. 1435). To put it in simple terms, any researcher needs to decide how the research study is going to be approached in order to conduct a reasonable investigation of the matter of concerns. That is, from what lenses the research problem is perceived and would be studied. In other words, research paradigm is "the researcher's worldview perspective, or thinking, or school of thought, or set of shared beliefs that inform about the meaning or interpretation of research data"(Khatri, 2020, p.1436).

On this account, a researcher has to consider four facets regarding the adopted research paradigm. To be specific, ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as it is cited in Khatri, 2020). Later on, Creswell (2007) noted that rhetoric also should be taken into account.

Ontology refers to the being of the matter of concern. It is concerned with the particular properties of the research problem in relation to the real world in order to

delineate both the stance of the researcher as well as the nature of the subject matter to be investigated. Epistemology stands for the nature of desired knowledge with regard to research study, including its credibility, validity, and the ways researchers obtain and transfer this knowledge. Besides to the type of relationship between the investigator and what is investigated (Cohen et al., 2007; Khatri, 2020). Methodology is interested in the different procedures researchers have to go through in order to attain the desired knowledge construction concerning the studied matter. Axiology concerns ethical values in relation to the conduct of a research investigation. In other words, it refers to researchers' awareness of the ethical and unethical behaviours regarding collecting, analysing, and reporting data (Khatri, 2020).

Referring to rhetorical assumption, Creswell (2007) stressed on the speciality of the research language in respect of knowledge transmission. In which, it was highlighted that the latter is determined by the nature of the study, including the specific terminology and reporting styles.

3.1.1.1 Philosophical worldviews.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) portrayed four philosophical worldviews with regard to the perception of the research problem

➢ **The Postpositivist worldview**

It is generally associated with quantitative research. This science research indicates that making definitive decisions in relation to human behaviour is questionable since we are dealing with human beings. Thus, there is no absolute truth in educational research, even though it follows the scientific method. Postpositivists are interested in the investigation of the causes of certain human behaviours together with determining what

led to them. Wherein, the studied problem is delineated into testable variables through objective observations as well as measurements of the subject matter.

In other words, Postpositivists perceive the social reality as quantified subject, and this reality is approached by means of scientific methods. In which, the researcher is detached and there is no interaction with the studied matter, for an objective outcomes. That is, knowledge is attained through the investigated subject itself, not through the perception of the researcher (Shah& Al-Bargi, 2013).

➢ **The Constructivist Worldview (Interpretivism)**

This worldview is often implied through qualitative research, where knowledge is constructed via researchers' interactions with the environment (social constructivism). Constructivists promote the perception of meaning by means of exposure to the different perspectives of participants. In which, the researcher endeavours to make sense of these perspectives, taking into account the social conventions of the particular context. Simply put, meaning in this philosophical framework is interpreted subjectively through the researcher's perceptions of the varied viewpoints of participants.

To rephrase it, this interpretative paradigm considers meaning construction as a dynamic process, depending on the particular context. That is, social reality in this case is subjective, where the aim is to interpret the different versions of reality according to different people, instead of pursuing objective realities as postpositivists (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013).

➢ **The Transformative Worldview**

The social reality, here, is viewed not only through sociocultural norms, but also in relation to social issues. That is, the emphasis is on highlighting the problems that take place within a society together with taking an action concerning these problems. Simply transformatives tackle public concerns with the aim of the reformulation, where

everyone's perspective matters in order to address as well as to understand the investigated research problem, for better human welfare.

> **The Pragmatic Worldview**

Through a pragmatic worldview, social reality is recognised by means of problem-solving. That is, it concerns the practical real world, where both actions and their outcomes are estimated in relation to the research problem of the particular study. According to pragmatists, researchers are opt to use any method in order to tackle the targeted issue. That is, pragmatic researchers may rely on multiple approaches as long as they serve the investigation, and provide a holistic study of the matter of concern. In which, the subject is profoundly conceptualised as well as treated, that is why this paradigm is typically related to mixed method research.

For a better understanding of these worldviews, Creswell and Creswell (2018) summarise these paradigms into the following Table 1, where the main features of each was highlighted.

Table 1

Key features of research paradigms

Postpositivist	Constructivism
• Determination	• Understanding
• Reductionism	• Multiple participant meanings
• Empirical Observation and measurement	• Social and historical construction
• Theory verification	• Theory generation

Transformative	Pragmatism
• Political	• Consequences of actions
• Power and justice oriented	• Problem-centered
• Collaborative	• Pluralistic
• Change-oriented	• Real-world practice oriented

Note. Adapted from Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.) by Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, D. J. (2018). SAGE Publications, p.6.

To conclude, for a significant investigation, any researcher needs to decide about the nature of the research study. Because the way the matter of concern is perceived, is what determines the stance of the researcher as well as the following steps of conducting the study, including both research methodology and methods.

3.1.2 Research approaches

As implied in the aforesaid sections, a research investigation contains systematic procedures of clearly defining the nature of social reality, and how it is going to be approached towards knowledge construction. In this case, the researcher is free to choose the appropriate approach for the investigated subject matter. Nonetheless, it should be considered that each approach has its own properties and methods of tackling the particular research problem.

First, there should be a demonstration of what is meant by a research approach. The latter can be recognised as an agenda of how the research study is going to be conducted, incorporating the specific phases of data collection and analysis. For clarification purposes, research approach can be perceived from Creswell and Creswell (2018) perspectives of

> Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. This plan involves several decisions, and they need not be taken in the order in which they make sense to us and the order of their presentation here. The overall decision involves which approach should be used to study a topic. Informing this decision should be the philosophical assumptions the researcher brings to the study; procedures of inquiry (call Ed research designs); and specific research methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The selection of a research approach is also based on the nature of the research problem or issue being addressed, the researchers' personal experiences, and the audiences for the study (p.1).

On this account there are three research approaches, and realising the distinct attributes of each approach is crucial for a functional investigation.

3.1.2.1 Qualitative approach.

It is an inductive approach to research study, wherein the emphasis is on comprehending the meaning of different individuals' experiences concerning certain phenomenon, authorising knowledge construction determination to the particular subject of the study. That is, the findings of the investigated matter of concern are shaped in accordance with the particular participants of the particular study, not to certain predetermined notions (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Simply put, qualitative research seeks to provide a thorough conceptualisation of the research problem through an in depth investigation, not to prove or disapproves certain notions.

Figure 1

The Inductive nature of qualitative research
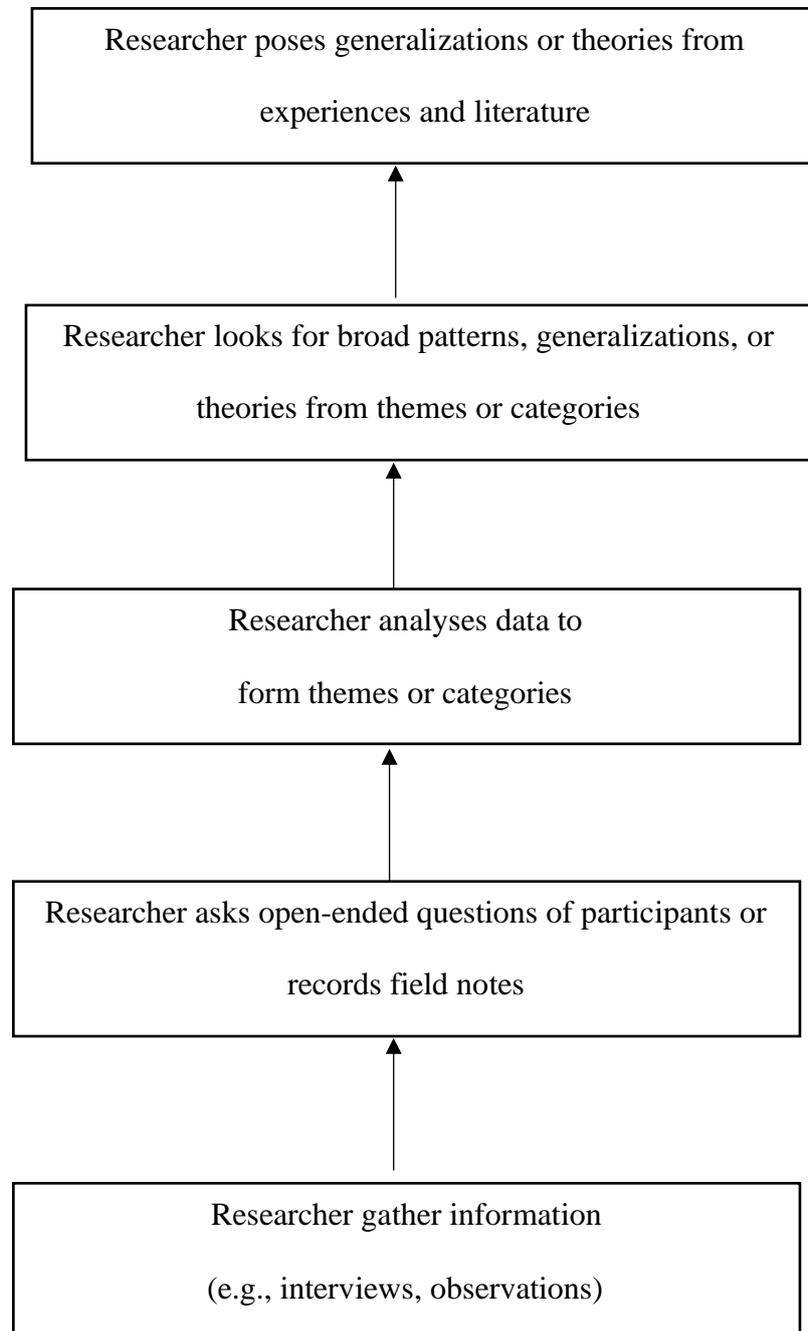
```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Researcher poses generalizations or theories from │
│         experiences and literature               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
                        │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher looks for broad patterns, generalizations, or │
│         theories from themes or categories       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
                        │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Researcher analyses data to              │
│            form themes or categories             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
                        │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher asks open-ended questions of participants or │
│            records field notes                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ▲
                        │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Researcher gather information            │
│         (e.g., interviews, observations)         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Note. Adapted from Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. SAGE Publications, p.50.

3.1.2.1 Quantitative approach.

Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research follows a deductive approach to study, in which the emphasis is on examining the quantified variables in order to determine their interconnectedness. Moreover, the investigation path in this research is based on a set of predetermined theories and notions. That is, the researcher is concerned with proving or disapproving these predicted theories and notions using statistical methods, for a generalizable or replicated finding (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In short, quantitative research adheres to the scientific method of gathering as well as analysing empirical data for verifiable findings and broader examination of these findings in a broader context.

Figure 2

The Deductive nature of quantitative research
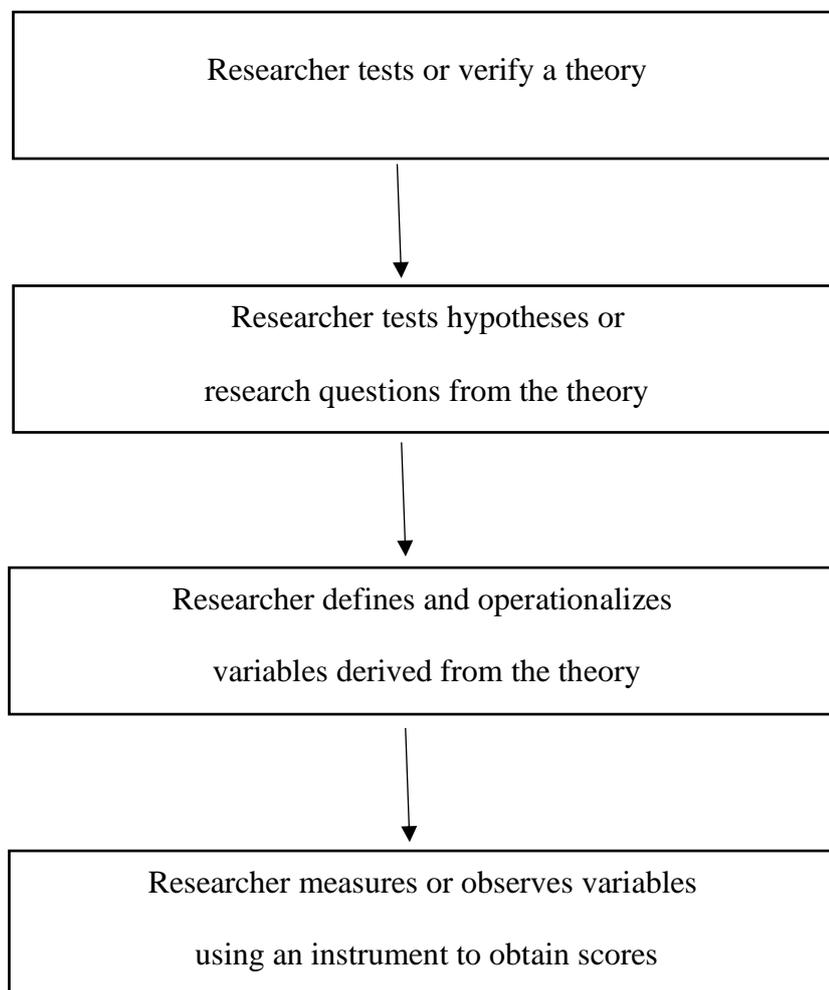
```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                   │
│          Researcher tests or verify a theory      │
│                                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Researcher tests hypotheses or           │
│                                                   │
│        research questions from the theory          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Researcher defines and operationalizes    │
│                                                   │
│           variables derived from the theory         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          │
                          ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│          Researcher measures or observes variables │
│                                                   │
│          using an instrument to obtain scores       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Note. Adapted from Creswell, J. W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. SAGE Publications, p.45.

3.1.2.2 A Mixed-methods approach.

A mixed-methods research, as the name indicates, entails both features of qualitative and quantitative research. That is, the study can be framed under both inductive and deductive approaches to investigation. Moreover, this tendency, of incorporating both facets of these approaches, is intended to conduct a thorough investigation of the matter of concern as well as to gain rich data, transcending the

findings that are obtained via qualitative methods or quantitative methods alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To sum up, through mixed- method approach, the research problem is tackled from multiple perspectives, and this kind of issue treatment would in turn grant an effective probe of the particular matter of concern.

3.1.3 Research designs /strategies

As stated earlier, each research approach has its own properties; necessarily; each approach has its own delineation of the research problem in order to be studied. Creswell and Creswell (2018) considered research design as "types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in a research study" (p.11).

3.1.3.1 Qualitative research designs.

In light of educational research development, it was identified five main qualitative designs in relation to inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Creswell &Creswell, 2018).

➢ **Narrative Research**

This type of design is utilised when the researcher is concerned with the interpretation of one or two individuals 'accounts regarding a certain phenomenon or event (Creswell, 2007). That is, the narratives of people, either in spoken or written form, are the anchor of such an investigation.

➢ **Phenomenological research**

As the name indicates, the phenomenological design is devoted to studying a particular phenomenon. However, the researcher, in this case, is concerned with the description of the experiences of multiple individuals, unlike narrative research, which tracks the experiences of one or two participants in relation to the investigated

phenomenon. Through This tendency, the researcher is assumed to track the shared insights of these individuals in light of the various perspectives concerning the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

- ➢ **Grounded theory research**

This sort of inquiry is not only restricted to the description of human experiences, as in previous designs, but also pursues theory development. The latter is grounded in the data obtained from the diverse point of views of participants concerning the investigated issue (Creswell, 2007).

- ➢ **Ethnography research**

Such design takes place through the study of the particular manners of a particular group community. In other words, ethnographic researchers seek to conduct an in-depth investigation of a considerable number of participants, who have shared values and culture, in an attempt to understand the merits of the investigated cultural group in their ordinary settings (Creswell, 2007).

- ➢ **Case Study research**

As denoted by the name, case studies are interested in investigating a particular case or cases in order to demonstrate certain situation or occurrence within a specific context. Wherein, the researcher relies on different data collection methods for a profound investigation (Creswell, 2007).

However, a case study can be considered as both methodology and design. The former tendency stands for the general framework of how the research problem is going to be studied. That is, whether the researcher is going to conduct an experiment, measure variables, or describe and explore certain phenomenon, further looking for relationships between variables. While the latter refers to the particular research design within the qualitative approach , which specifies the different methods of analysing and gathering

data in relation to the specific case to be investigated within a certain context. In other words, any study in educational research is indeed a case study since it targets a particular aspect of human science (Creswell, 2007; Cohen et al., 2018).

Moreover, providing a definitive definition to a case study seems to be such hard task, yet it is crucial to recognise that both research methodology and design are essential elements in any effective investigation. Additionally, Creswell (2007) provided a summary of the five approaches in comparison and contrast, and for comprehensive understanding, the reader is advised to check Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. Because part of a section would not suffice to cover all information regarding these five designs, the researcher only mentioned the necessary knowledge to differentiate between them.

3.1.3.2 Quantitative strategies.

Based on the reviewed literature of Cohen et al. (2018) along with Creswell and Creswell (2018) in relation to quantitative design, there were identified three designs. To begin with the experimental design, which entails true experiment and quasi-experiment in addition to single subject experiment. The latter is also referred as applied behavioural analysis. The non-experimental design, on the other hand, is concerned with the relationship between variables. Thus, it include casual comparative research and correlational research. Longitudinal design is another type of quantitative research that is interested in experiments that are more complicated over extended period of time, with multiple variables and treatments. In an attempt to comprehend how the variables of the specific study alter overtime.

In this respect, it is crucial to point out that quantitative research is an extensive domain, and providing a holistic view of the latter in a section is out of the question. Each design has its own features and measurements. Besides that, owing to the nature of this

research investigation, which is framed under qualitative research, we come to the conclusion of setting the fundamentals concerning quantitative designs without delving into the details, since such an act is assumed to not to serve this study.

3.1.3.3 Mixed-methods strategies.

As clearly highlighted, a mixed-methods research composed of both qualitative and quantitative procedures. Nonetheless, such an integration is determined by the particular design, depending on the nature of the study.

➢ **Convergent mixed methods**

In this type of design, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously. In which, the obtained data is overlapped in the analysis stage for a unified representation of findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

➢ **Explanatory sequential mixed methods**

In this case, a researcher commences first with collecting and analysing quantitative data, where the finding of this practice are promoted by means of a qualitative investigation. That is, the quantitative persuasion of results are followed by a qualitative explanation (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

➢ **Exploratory sequential mixed methods**

In this kind of design, the qualitative phase precedes the quantitative phase. In this case, qualitative investigation is meant to ground the quantitative one. Wherein, based on the perception of individuals' meanings, the researcher will determine the specific subject of matter that is going to be quantitatively studied (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

3.1.4 Data collection methods

Data collection methods is one of the fundamental stages in any research study. The latter is concerned with the different procedures researchers utilise in order to gather information relative to the research problem. The selection of these methods depends on

the nature of targeted data (qualitative or quantitative data) along with the level of determination with reference to open-ended and close-ended questions (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

➢ **Questionnaires**

As an EFL learner and researcher, who used to believe that designing a questionnaire is an easy task, where a number of participants are demanded to answer a set of questions in relation to the research problem. However, through engaging in this process, of designing a questionnaire, together with the literature of Cohen et al. (2007) and Cohen et al. (2018), arranging a questionnaire is indeed a serious task that transcends seeking responses from participants. Actually, in order to pursue the desired data, researchers have to take into account a set of considerations. On this account, Cohen et al. (2018) organised these consideration into the following Figure 3.

Figure 3

The Different stages of designing a questionnaire

Define the purposes/objectives of the questionnaire

↓

Formulate research questions/hypotheses

↓

Define the target population

↓

Decide the sampling frame and sampling

↓

Generate the topics/constructs/concepts/issues to be addressed and data required

↓

Decide the kinds of measures/scales/questions/responses required

↓

Write the questionnaire items

↓

Address the sequence, length, design, and format of questionnaire

↓

Check that each issue has been addressed with several items for each issue

↓

Pilot and refine the questionnaire

↓

Administer the final questionnaire

↓

Send reminders

Note. Adapted from Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). Research methods in education (8th ed). Routledge. p.472.

In this respect, when organising a questionnaire, it is essential to decide about the level of structure of the questions that are intended to inspect the research problem. Simply put, the researcher needs to select the suitable sort of questionnaire, depending on the nature of the study. Structured questionnaires stand for the closed items of a predetermined set of answers. On the other hand, unstructured questionnaires are generally associated with open items of undefined responses, restricted to the words of respondents. Semi-structured questionnaires integrate both features of clear-focused questions and multifaceted questions, guaranteeing a comprehensive data collection of personal insights and those related to the outlined notions to be investigated (Cohen et al., 2018).

Besides that, there should be a careful thought concerning the way a questionnaire is presented to respondents, including both the layout and language (Cohen et al., 2018). That said, at the end, the questionnaire is used to gain knowledge from the participants regarding the investigated research problem. Thus, the emphasis should be on how to attain the data that serves the studied subject matter.

➢ **Focus group**

A focus group is one of the facets of interviewing that contains number of individuals who are asked to form a group discussion in order to tackle certain topics. In other words, the focus group method is concerned with obtaining data through the exchange of perspectives in interactional settings. Unlike the ordinal interviews, which are interested in the binary interaction of two pairs, focus group interviewing emphasises multi interaction, where knowledge is not restricted to a couple of people. That is, it considers the various perspectives of participants in a group setting, allowing for a better perception of the discussed matter of concern (Cohen et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 2018).

To conclude, there are other data collection methods besides to the stated methods such as tests and observations (Cohen et al., 2018). However, covering all the dedicated methods for gathering data in a section seems to be infeasible. Thus there were highlighted only the adopted procedure s this study for investigation purposes.

3.1.5 Data analysis methods

Due to the fact that each research conduct targets a particular form of data, necessarily each type of data has its own unique methods to be analysed. The distinction between qualitative and quantitative data lies in the nature of the collected form of data. Qualitative data deals with the meanings of individuals, which in turn, cannot be quantified, i.e., non-numeric data. Unlike quantitative data that deals with quantified realities, i.e., numeric data. With regard to analysis, quantitative data is expressed in form of statistical interpretations using statistical methods. Whereas, qualitative data that is translated into words to be expressed informs of themes and patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

For further clarification, qualitative data analysis involves researchers making sense of the gathered information, yet in relation to the views of the particular participants in the study. For that purpose, the researcher should select one of the qualitative approaches to data analysis. That is, from what aspect the gained qualitative data is going to be interpreted, such as thematic, content, narrative, and ground theory analysis, depending on the nature as well as the objectives of the research study. Moreover, researchers also have to consider that the interpretation of data in terms of patterns and themes is preceded by the systematic phases of preparation, organization, and categorisation of data towards the target finding (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Quantitative data analysis, on the other hand, follows more structured procedures of analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics for generalizable findings. Furthermore, these statistical procedures are bound by set of factors. To be specific, the design of the research study together with its appropriate statistical test. Therefore, it crucial to ensure that the selection of inferential tests based on four assumptions (Amrate, n.d.; Cohen et al., 2018).

Amrate (n.d) summarised these assumption into the following Table 2, pointing out the importance of aligning these assumption to the specific type of statistical test.

Table 2

Conditions of choosing the statistical test

ASSUMPTIONS	PARAMETRIC TESTS	NON-PARAMETRIC TESTS
Type of data	Numerical data	Categorical data
Sampling approach	Random sampling	Non-random sampling
Distribution of results	Normal distribution of data	Non-normal distribution of data
Homogeneity of variances	Homogeneous variances	Heterogeneous variances

Note. Adapted from Amrate, M. (n.d). INTRODUCTION TO INFERENTIAL STATISTICS AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING (LECTURE 6). Statistics, department of English, University of Biskra. p.1.

In conclusion, the provision of a holistic coverage of data analysis methods in a section is quiet impossible. Thus the emphasis was on the basic notion concerning data analysis, and for more details check Cohen et al. (2018) and (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Nonetheless, Creswell and Creswell (2018) summarised the research methods into following Table 3

Table 3

Research methods in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches

Quantitative methods	Mixed methods	Qualitative methods
Pre-determined	Both predetermined and emerging methods	Emerging methods
Instrument based questions	Both ended- and closed-ended questions	Open-ended questions
Performance data, attitudes data, observational data, and census data	Multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities	Interview data, observation data, document data, and audio-visual data
Statistical analysis	Statistical and text analysis	Text and image analysis
Statistical interpretation	Across database interpretation	Themes, patterns interpretation

Note. Adapted from Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.) by Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, D. J. (2018). SAGE Publications, p.16.

3.1.6 Sampling techniques

Another important aspect of investigating certain research problem is the selection of participants. On this account, Amrate (n.d) define sampling as the act of choosing number of people to form a sample. Whereby a researcher can draw conclusions concerning the broader population, based on the specific features of the framed sample.

In this regard, there are two types of sampling techniques, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The former is used when generalization of results is pursued. In which, each individual of the population has an equal chance to be selected in the sample, where variables are controlled and randomisation takes place. Probability sampling promotes random, systematic, random stratified, cluster, stage and, multiphase sampling techniques. Unlike the latter, that is utilised when generalisation is out of concern, and there is no equal chance in relation to the selected participants. That is, the formed samples following this approach represent only the individuals of that sample. i.e., results cannot be extended to the population. Non-probability sampling entails convenience sampling, voluntary sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling, as well as purposive sampling, theoretical, and dimensional techniques (Amrate, n.d.; Cohen et al., 2018).

3.2 Research methodology for This Study: Choices and Rationale

As indicated in the previous section of the methodology, any research study should be based on a well-structured framework for how the investigation is going to be conducted, including the procedures and methods. Therefore, this section would provide a comprehensive view concerning how this study is conducted along with researcher's decisions in relation to the selected paradigm, approach, design, and methods of analysing and gathering data. That is, this section is indeed intended to justify the researcher's choices with reference to the preceding section.

3.2.1 The Research paradigm

As any research conduct, the investigator ought to decide about the perception of the social reality with regard to the research problem that is going to be studied. So that, the facets of the investigation would be determined along with the researcher's stance. On this account, this research study is framed under the interpretative paradigm in an attempt to detect the major difficulties faced by EFL learners during group work tasks in all their forms. Through delving into their experiences, the knowledge would be constructed by means of researcher's engagement with the subjects of this study. In simple terms, the researcher is going to track these difficulties via the interpretation of the different accounts of participants' group work.

3.2.2 The research approach

Considering the nature along with objectives of this research study, the researcher opts for qualitative approach to research. Moreover, this study seeks to address the difficulties encountered by students during group work tasks, and this reached only through an in-depth investigation of group work where these difficulties would be identified. Hence, the inductive nature of the qualitative approach serves our investigation.

3.2.3 The research design

This study is intended to understand the case of EFL learners at Biskra University, in particular the English department. Besides to the fact that group work is used in many subjects at the master level, the researcher relies on the case study design to qualitative approach to detect the difficulties faced by those students using different sources of data collection methods. Thus, conducting a thorough investigation for a holistic conceptualization of the matter of concerns in relation to the particular context.

3.2.4 Data collection methods

It can be inferred that a research study contains a series of interrelated actions, where one practice determines the path of the following practice. Subsequently, gathering data is clearly determined by the previous decisions of the research paradigm, approach, and design. In other words, the way a research problem is going to be framed is what determines the nature of the targeted data and it is approached in order to understand social reality.

With reference to the case study design, two data collection methods are used, where the researcher relies on a questionnaire along with two focus groups for detailed investigation.

3.2.4.1 Questionnaire: aim and structure.

➢ **Aim**

The questionnaire is devoted to capture the diverse experiences from multiple perspectives of a larger number of participants. Based on the perceived insights concerning group work, the researcher will determine the difficulties faced by students during group learning. Referring to research questions, the latter targets three main notions. To be specific, students' judgements regarding the use of group work, their beliefs, and the potential issues they may face as they work in groups. Through their expressed opinions, the researcher will endeavour to detect these difficulties as well as to make sense of their experiences through the 14 proposed open questions.

➢ **Structure**

The questionnaire was divided into three sections along with background information questions. The first section entails five questions that emphasis students' impressions of group work via targeting their psychological status of their involvement in group work learning. In which, they were requested to provide their judgements in

relation to the overall GW experience, the collaborative nature of GW, and evaluation in GW.

The second section also consists of five questions. The latter concern students' persuasions concerning group work, including the necessary skills and roles for a functional group process in relation to both students and teachers.

The last section of four questions is interested in the likely factors that may hinder students' engagement as well as participation within a group work task. Wherein, there where specified the second question of the thirds section to let students freely express where they find it difficult to get involved in group tasks.

These three sections were preceded by two factual questions relative to respondents in order to provide a context for data analysis in terms of how different individuals experience the matter of concern differently.

3.2.4.2 Piloting and validation.

The supervisor along with other three experts, one local unlike the other two experts validated the questionnaire. The experts provided their feedbacks concerning the different items of the latter, including grammatical error and layout. The feedback was seriously taken and the necessary changes was made. Regarding piloting stage, the questionnaire was attached by opinionaire and distributed to ten students. In this respect, some respondent met challenging questions hence these questions were overlooked. These comments were considered in the final version of the latter to be distributed for the actual data collection.

It crucial to point out that the responses of the piloted questionnaire were considered only for the revision of the ultimate production of the questionnaire and none of them was taken into account in relation to the eventual construction of knowledge regarding research problem.

3.2.4.3 Focus group aim and structure.

The focus group is used to extend researcher's insights into participants' experiences for a better understanding of the subject matter. The latter was arranged around six main questions, and due to the interactive nature of the discussion, there were added questions, depending on the nature of discussion within the particular group. It is important to mention that in order to ensure the natural flow of discussion, the six questions were proposed then rephrased in case of confusion and ambiguity as well as to promote the authentic collection of data.

The same experts, who validated the questionnaire items, also validated these questions. The necessary changes were made in accordance with the provided feedback.

Table 4

The focus group items along with their objectives

Item	Objective(s)
1	To gain insights in terms of the group process in light of the diversity among group members in order to complete the assigned group task.
2	This question, indeed, have dual goal of students' perceptions of the functionality group work task together with the student talk with regard to the successful task fulfilment.
3	To discover students' perspectives concerning the learner autonomy and accountability within a group task.
4	To pursue students' understanding of group work also to check their perception of their roles as EFL active students.
5	To recognise students' conceptualisation of the group cohesion element and its impact towards task accomplishment as well as to discover the factors that may affect that element.
6	To make sense of students' opinions concerning the implementation of group work, and whether the ways they being taught in past phases of learning (high, middle, primary school) actually affect their functionality and their overall performance.

3.2.5   Data collection procedures

In an attempt to, the researcher commences with the piloting and validation stages, seeking the credibility and reliability of the utilised methods. In accordance with ethical standards, there was obtained an informed consent from the head of the English department at Biskra University for a heads-on engagement with the target population of this study. Besides the validation forms in order to secure that data collection methods align with the particular criteria of the research. After the reception of the informed

consent together with validation forms, the actual process of gathering information start to take two weeks. The first week was devoted to the questionnaire including piloting. The second week, on the other hand, concerns the focus group method.

3.2.6   Data analysis procedures

Braun and Clarke (2006) claimed that thematic analysis provide a rich analysis of the data set in which they ratified that "thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set -be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts- to find repeated patterns of meaning"(p. 86). Accordingly, for a profound comprehension of the investigated subject matter, we thematically analysed the data collection results. This analysis method enabled the researcher to delve into the data set through the process of identifying the repeated meanings, which, in turn, helped in generating themes relevant to the proposed research questions for the interpretation phase.

In this regard, Braun and Clarke (2006) pointed out that there are two approaches of thematic analysis, namely inductive and deductive approaches. The former follows a data- driven path of tracking the repeated patterns of meaning and themes. That is, both coding and themes identifications are determined by the data set itself regardless of the research questions and researcher' presumptions. Unlike the latter approach of analysis that is restricted to specific research question together with researcher's preconceived notions. On this account, we opted for deductive thematic analysis since both of the repeated pattern of meaning and themes were identified in respect of the proposed research questions along with the suggested research hypotheses.

Concerning the procedures of analysis, the researcher followed the six stages for thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). These stages entailed familiarizing yourself with your data, generating initial codes, and searching for themes, together with reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, as well as to Producing the report. The

obtained data from focus groups were transcribed by the researcher with the assistance of the specific features of the researcher' cell phone of converting speech recordings into texts. Afterwards we coded the data using highlights in order to move to the final stages of generating, defining, and reporting themes. Moreover, on account of the fact that the questionnaire was divided into sections, where each section tackled particular theme; the researcher used the descriptive method. That is, the questionnaire results were reported in terms of descriptions and percentages using the software excel for the interpretation phase.

Furthermore, it is crucial to highlight that this research study was organised around three interrelated qualitative questions, one broad question that target the main subject of this investigation, along with two sub- questions in order to delve into the particular aspects of the broad questions. Therefore, the utilised data collections methods targeted both sub research questions, so that the research would be able to answer the broad research question, which pursues the difficulties encountered by EFL learning during group tasks.

3.2.7 Population and sampling

This study seeks to attain profound understanding of the subject matter. Thus, generalization of finding is out of concerns. On this account, EFL learners at English department of Biskra University was selected as the population for this investigation. To be specific, the sample of this study is master one students, depending on the purposive sampling techniques, since group work at this level is used in many modules hence it is assumed that this sample serves the specific criteria of this study.

In this respect, 30 students from group one and two were asked to answer the questionnaire items. In relation to focus group, 18 participants were requested to take part

in the group discussion. The first group composes of eight participants whereas the second one entails ten participants.

Conclusion

This chapter of methodology was intended to justify researcher's choices and decisions in relation to the different practices of conducting this study. Based on the nature of the research problem and the targeted knowledge, the researcher shaped the investigation of the subject matter, highlighting the dependency of the different entities of the research study. Also there was provided detailed information concerning data collection and analysis methods.

Subsequent to this, chapter four was meant to provide a detailed description and interpretation of the analysed data.

4   Chapter Four: Fieldwork and Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter tackles the fieldwork of this investigation. The latter contains a depiction of the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire and the focus groups. For the qualification of these data, the researcher opt the descriptive method in relation to the questionnaire data, and the thematic analysis is used for the focus groups data. Afterwards, the researcher moves to the interpretation phase in order to make sense of the portrayed perceptions and experiences in addition to the synthesis phases to answer the proposed research questions while confirming or disconfirming the suggested the research hypothesis.

4.1   Results

4.1.1   Questionnaire results

Background information

- Age

Table 5

Students' age distribution

Responses	21	22	23	24	26	29	No answer
Number of students	11	11	4	1	1	1	1
Percentage	36,67%	36,67%	13,33%	3,33%	3,33%	3,33%	3,33%

As the table above indicates, the majority of respondents' ages ranged from 21 to 22 years old. While the remaining respondents' ages can be divided into two categories of 23 to 24 and 26 to 29. Clearly, the former category was larger, including five respondents, unlike the other category of only two respondents. However, the table also showed that one of the respondents did not specify their age.

- Gender

Table 6

Students' gender

Responses	Male	Female
Number of students	3	27
Percentage	10,00%	90,00%

The table revealed that the female students exceeded the male students. Wherein, 90% of females form the sample while only 10% of males take part in this study. This implied female students' interests in learning English as a foreign language, showing their intentions for collaborating.

Section 1: Students perceptions of group work

Q1: How can you describe your overall experience of working in groups as an EFL learner in higher education?

Table 7

Students' overall experience of group work

Options	positive	Negative	Varied
Number of students	19	2	9
Percentage	63,33%	6,67%	30,00%

The results demonstrated that most students (63,33%) were involved in a positive group learning experience in general. Nevertheless, two students showed their negative attitudes towards group work tasks, while others could not judge their involvement in

such a classroom procedure, where 30% of respondents expressed their multifaceted experiences.

- Explain

1. Students' positive experience explanation

The words of respondents revealed that they had a positive experience due to following reasons

- Group work allows students to acquire, exchange, and transform knowledge.

- Group work benefits students, where they help and correct each other mistakes.

- The interactive nature of group work provides a comfortable atmosphere far from stress and judgement. Moreover, it helps students to manage the group task, where everyone tackles certain element. Furthermore, it facilitates exploring and understanding different perspectives.

- Group work enables students to make use of the target language. Also reduces anxiety for those who tend to be nervous, as they are required to speak and interact with others.

- Group work makes students motivated.

- The open nature of extrovert students makes working with others enjoyable.

2. Students' negative experience explanation

   The negative attitudes towards group work were illustrated due to two main reasons. The first reason stands for the unfair division of roles among group members, where some take the easy parts unlike the others who take on the challenging parts. In addition, the collaborative nature of group learning is assumed to distract concentration. The second reason was due to the inconvenient perspectives among group members.

3. Students' varied experience explanation

Some students could not decide about their overall experience of group work. That is, sometimes they enjoyed working together because their communication skills was promoted. Nonetheless, they found it unsatisfying the other times, for three factors. It is believed that not all tasks can be performed through group work, and some tasks require individual work. Moreover, the different levels among group members were also considered as a hinder to group process and the eventual completion of the group task. However, some students highlighted their preferences for individual work, yet as they are required to work in group, they can manage working with others.

Q2: How do you find collaborating with your classmates during group work?

Table 8

Students' estimation of the collaborative nature of group work

Options	Easy	Varied	Challenging	No answer
Number of students	9	15	5	1
Percentage	30,00%	50,00%	16,67%	3,33%

The results in the table above indicate that, according to the majority of students (50%), working with others is neither an easy task nor a challenging task. Nevertheless, the ones who found it easy (30%) was more than those who found it challenging (16.67%). Moreover, one of the respondents did not determine his stance in relation to this question.

- Explain

In respect of those who found working with others easy task, working with friends was the main reason that facilitated collaboration. Nonetheless, there were emphasised that since group members have the same interests, completing the task, thus the different insights and perspectives are welcomed for the construction of knowledge. During which, every member have their opportunities to contribute to the work, where their suggestions was shared, discussed, and then the group members agreed on certain idea that will be reported to the teacher. Furthermore, collaborating with others made them motivated to construct knowledge and exchange idea.

On the other hand, those who conceived that working with others was challenging, claimed that there is no room for diversity of insights in group settings. To be specific, the different styles, personalities, and mentalities among members prevented them from expressing themselves freely as everyone wanted to impose their perspective, in the presence of careless members in relation to task completion. Therefore, the assigned task is fulfilled only because of group members' restrictions on reporting the results. Moreover, some respondents assumed the group work created a competitive atmosphere, which, in turn, led to selfish members that desired attention in order to display their knowledge and abilities. In addition, other individual tended to overtake the leader role, in which they dominated the group process at the expense of the other members' contributions under the leadership motto.

The varied regards of respondents were portrayed as a result of their uncertain judgments concerning working with others. To demonstrate, sometimes they could easily engage and be active in group settings because of the group members, where an encouraging and supportive environment was established together with acquiring new information. While, the other times they faced some issues regarding the collaborative

nature of group work. These challenges were relative to the diversity in terms of intellectual and thinking abilities, proficiency levels, learning styles, and personalities. In addition to the issues that are associated with the variety of viewpoints concerning certain element of the task along with the lack of convenience skills in this case. However, several participants manifested that the tendency of some members to work alone made it hard to collaborate with them, thus you end up doing group work alone. Even though there were some difficulties when collaborating, yet the respondents emphasised that these issues can be managed depending on students' awareness and maturity.

Q3: Whenever the teacher asks you to work in groups, how do you feel about it?

Table 9

Students' enthusiasm towards group work tasks

Options	Motivated	Anxious	demotivated	No answer
Number of students	18	5	6	1
Percentage	60,00%	16,67%	20,00%	3,33%

Based on the table's results, most of students (60%) considered working in groups as a motivating practice, while 20% of them considered it a demotivating factor. However, 5% of students assumed group work was an anxious activity, where they felt stressed and nervous. Besides this, one the respondents did not answer this question.

- Why?

Table 10

Students' clarification concerning their enthusiasm towards group work tasks

Options	Justifications
Motivated	• Group work enabled students to exchange and acquire new knowledge, improving their social and team skills. • Working in groups was enjoying in particular for those who worked with their friends in which stress decreased specially in oral presentations. • Group work created encouraging and comfortable settings for self- expression without any fear. • Through group work, students could easily manage as well as handle the task to be fulfilled.
Anxious	• Unfamiliarity with group members. • Lack of knowledge in relation to the task. • The introverted students claimed that group work drained their energies, thus they prefer working alone. Moreover, their quiet nature could dissatisfy their mates in terms of being open as group members expected it. • The tendency of some individuals to impose their ideas. • Lack of seriousness among group members.
Demotivated	• Individual work seemed to be more beneficial. • The likelihood displayed by some students when it comes to making decision concerning the discussed ideas. During which, they took matters personally and contribution for them was in form of competitive members and their focus was only on the ideas that they will be considered in the ultimate report of group work. • Working with other impeded the introverted student from improving their thinking skills as the student was obliged to agree on some ideas even though he was not fully convinced.

	• The constant changing of group members.
	• The presentation of your ideas by others.
No answer	• The student's preference of individual work.

Q4: In your opinion, are the group members fairly evaluated?

Table 11

Students' assumption concerning their evaluation in group work tasks

Options	Yes	No	No selection
Number of students	7	22	1
Percentage	23,33%	73,33%	3,33%

According to the respondents, referring to the table above, group members were not fairly evaluated by the teacher. Whereas, 73,33% of students expressed their negation, yet 23,33% of students corroborated that they were fairly evaluated. Further. One respondent did not select any of the proposed options.

• Explain

The affirmations with regard to the fair evaluation resulted from the division of the group task into manageable parts, where every member is responsible for handling a specific part of the task, thus the members would be evaluated in accordance with their performance. Besides the specific criteria of teachers for evaluation, which contained considering all aspects of the group task, starting from group formation to the presentation of the work by students. Throughout, the teacher was observing the group process, as well as how did group members collaborate and interact in order to complete the assigned task.

On the other hand, the negative stands were demonstrated because of teachers' ambiguous criteria of assessment. To put it plainly, despite students' different contributions and efforts, they received the same mark further the same feedback, and sometimes this evaluation did not reflect the actual level of students, indicating teachers' unfamiliarity with the abilities and capacities of their students. The rationale behind this was due to teachers' excessive attention to the high performing students to the extent that they were praised only because the teacher recognised them, neglecting the rest of the students who also needed guide and attention. However, several respondents clarified their negation by individuals' exaggerations concerning the leadership, leaving little space for them to contribute. Hence, they would not be fairly evaluated since they did not have the chance to perform well.

With reference to respondents who did not select any of the options, the student claimed that the evaluation could not be judged as neither fair nor unfair because it depended on teachers' perspectives of participation and performance.

Q5: What do you like and dislike about group work?

The majority illustrated their favourable attitudes in terms of

- The exchange of knowledge that occurred within group tasks.

- Group work enabled language students to practice also to make use of English language.

- Group work made the task completion more feasible because of the division of the latter into manageable parts.

- Working with friends, which made it enjoyable.

Meanwhile the unfavourable attitudes were demonstrated in term of:

- Opinions conflict

- Working with passive, dependent, and incompetent members.

- Working with non-collaborative members who worked individually in a group work, as well as the competitive members.

- The comparison between the output the different groups.

- Teachers' neglect of the internal state of students regarding their comfortably of working with others and the relationship among group members.

- Unfair evaluation of group work.

- The narrow-minded members who was intolerant to the various perspectives and opinions during group discussions, and their tendency to impose their insights further to dominate the group process, ignoring the viewpoints of the other members.

Section 2: Students understanding of group work

Q1: How would you define a successful group work activity?

The respondents identified the successful group in terms of students' cooperation to fulfil the assigned group task. Nevertheless, there should be an equal opportunity for all members to freely express and discuss ideas in order to come up with a conclusion, on which the members agreed, where everyone is satisfied and content with the eventual product.

In this respect, the respondents portrayed set of features for functional group members as follow:

- A student should be an active listener who pays attention as well as endeavours to comprehend the words of other members of the group.

- Group members should have good communication skills, and embrace all different viewpoints.

- Students should be equipped that they will receive critiques and feedback from their peer, so that these comments would not be taken personally.

- Every member should has their own responsibilities and roles should be clearly divided with reference to leadership.

In the same vein, according to some respondents, the success of a group work is determined by the positive relationships among group members, where they work in cohesive small groups, and skills are improved. In addition, there was emphasised that the teacher should organise and structure the group, as well as provide feedback on the reported final product. Moreover, several respondents pointed out that students with similar abilities and levels should be in the same group.

Q2: How do you assign the different tasks and responsibilities among the members of a group work? In other words, how do you and the other members of the group figure out who does what to fulfil the task?

Overall, the respondents shared the same view of breaking up the group task into manageable portions, and then the responsibilities of the group members were assigned in accordance with students' interests, knowledge, skills, levels, and capacities. Even though, several ones expressed the randomization in assigning the roles of students within group tasks. Moreover, there was emphasised two main roles namely the leader and the recorder. The former was assumed to be responsible for outlining the task into different parts. whereas the latter, who was responsible for taking notes together with writing the eventual output, based on the consensus of group members, to be handed to the teacher. The other members, on the other hand, were responsible for the discussion of knowledge.

Q3: According to your experience, how teachers should behave as well as manage a group work when implemented in EFL classrooms?

As indicated by the respondents, teachers were believed to be facilitators and guiders of group work, where they provided the necessary feedback based on the learning situation. Additionally, for a fair and careful evaluation, they have to ensure that the students are actually engaged in the group work, considering the individual differences in an inclusive group setting, as well as the individual efforts along with the whole group effort. Moreover, it was suggested that teachers have to be careful when organising groups, letting students choosing their group members. Also, in order to avoid conflicts and uncomfortable situations, teachers was advised to provide clear instruction and assign the different parts of the latter to students. Further, teachers was expected to boost students' motivation.

Q4: Do you think that group work task should be restricted to promoting the speaking skill only?

Table 12

Students' conformations in relation to group work' restriction to prompting speaking skills

Options	Yes	No
Number of students	4	26
Percentage	13,33%	86,67%

With regard to the table above, the majority of students (86,67%) demonstrated their negation concerning the limitation of group tasks to the promotion of speaking skills alone. However, 13,33% of respondents believed that group work should be restricted only to foster speaking skills.

- Why?

For those who showed affirmative stances, group work was meant to improve their communication skills that were necessary in speaking. Furthermore, the aim of group work was to express ideas, and this was achieved through speaking since the latter required dealing with other individuals unlike the other language skills that can be performed individually.

Concerning the negative stands, group work, as language students, should concern all aspects of language to grant a comprehensive learning experience. Hence, it should be used for multiple purposes, depending on the learning objectives. To demonstrate, group work could be utilised in order to enhance social skills, communication skills, and sense of belonging. Besides this, within group settings, in a way or another, language skills took place, including reading, writing, listening, along with speaking, and these skills could also be boosted through group tasks.

Q5: Do you believe the active participation of group members and decision-making are influenced by student's academic achievement during group work?

Table 13

The Beliefs of students regarding the impact of the academic achievements on group process

Options	Yes	No	No answer
Number of students	18	10	2
Percentage	60,00%	33,33%	6,67%

The results of the table show that 60% of respondents agreed on the impact of the academic achievement of students on making decision as well as their involvement during group tasks. Even though two students chose not to answer this question.

- Explain

The majority of respondents confirmed that the success of group work was determined by the academic achievement of students. In simple terms, the high performing students were perceived as active participants, who tended to lead the group by means of helping, motivating, and supporting the members to take part in the group discussion. Further, they even corrected the committed mistakes and provided feedback. However, due to the nature of high academic achievers, some students would be liable for their perspectives, assuming that they were providing valid insights. However, some respondents justified this liability to students' interests in marks, in light of the productive members.

By contrast, the rest of the respondents argued the influence of academic achievement on group process. According to them, active participation was determined by the distinct personalities of students and their social skills. Students' experiences with group work also had an impact on the way they performed in groups. Also, there was students with high academic achievement, yet they tended to be quiet in group settings and vice versa. Moreover, decisions in groups was based on the way group members manage the task besides their background of knowledge. Thus, participation and decision making were bounded by the nature of students and their expertise respectively.

Section 3: Barriers to Group Work Implementation

Q1: What makes you not to participate further in a group work activity?

Table 14

Students' rationales of not participating during group tasks

Options	Discomfort	Lack of interest	Communication issues	Fear of making mistakes	Others	No answer
Number of students	11	6	15	8	6	1
Percentage	36,67%	20%	50%	26, 67%	20%	3, 33%

With reference to the table above, communication issues were the most commonly encountered obstacle to participation, followed by discomfort. Fear of making mistakes was also selected to take the rate of 26, 67% along with the lack of interest of 20% rate. However, 20% of students portrayed other factors in relation to the factors that may hinder their participation, while one student preferred not answering this question.

- Explain

The Respondents rationales of not participating clarifications were summarised into the following table

Table 15

Students' explanations of their choices with regard to the encountered issues during group tasks

Options	Arguments
Discomfort	- Working with strange and carless students. - Working with students of a high level. - Dealing with individuals who preferred working alone. - Misinterpretations. - Neglecting others' opinion.
Lack of interest	In relation to both working with other and their perspectives, as well as to the nature of the topic.
Communication issues	- The introverted nature of students. - Disability of students to express their ideas as they was intended, hence leading to misunderstandings and conflicts. - Lack of persuading skills.
Fear of making mistakes	- Committing speaking mistakes. - Provide wrong and invalid information. - Shyness. - Intolerance for the variety of perspectives.
Others	- Lack of knowledge. - Working with immature individuals. - Lack of motivation. - Fear of taking on the tasks of others members besides your task. - The variety of point of views, which made decision making difficult. - Trust issues due to the unserious individuals. - The different personalities. - The domination of the group work by certain individuals.

The researcher marked that the communication issues factor was noticeably associated with other factors even respondents' clarifications tackled this latter, indicating the interconnection of these factors.

Q2: Provide examples where you found it challenging to express your ideas in a group work setting?

Actually this questions was intended to pursue different challenges in relation to self-expression in group setting, yet the answers was quite similar to the previous item, emphasising working with strange, intolerant, and dominant individuals, as well as perspectives conflict. The Disapproval of contributions also was depicted along with lack of vocabulary. Besides this, the level of group members either high or low performers seemed to affect students' interaction in addition to communicative skills.

However, several students insisted that they did not face any problems when expressing themselves and their ideas should be discussed also negotiated by the members of the group.

Q3: Do you believe that a mismatch between the task design and the expected outcome of working in groups may influence your participation as well as your contribution as a group member?

Table 16

Students' beliefs in terms of the importance of aligning the task design with the targeted group learning objectives.

Options	Yes	No	No answer
Number of students	23	6	1
Percentage	76,67%	20,00%	3,33%

The above table indicates respondents' affirmation of aligning the task with the desired learning outcomes in relation to group work. That is, 76,67% of students believed that not any task can be designed to be performed in form of a group work. Nonetheless, 20% of respondents assumed that the task design did not influence their engagement and functionality. Moreover, one of the respondent decided not to determine their position in relation to this question.

- Why?

In accordance with the confirmations, group tasks should be carefully designed in relation to the group learning objectives. The mismatch may affect students' journey towards the predetermined learning goals through working with others. Thus, they get disappointed and even demotivated concerning working in groups, leading them to favour individual work. Students' frustration, in turn, would be reflected through their responses and performance during group settings in which they would be unsatisfied by the way knowledge was constructed because of the inappropriate establishment of the group task. Moreover, it was pointed that the unconsidered design of group tasks may lead the different groups develop different knowledge.

The disapproval, on the other hand, resulted from respondents' beliefs that focus should be on the task completion, and the students should be adaptive as well as manageable to any situation. Moreover, one of these respondents stated that they just enjoyed the act of expressing their perspectives regardless of the task itself.

Q4: Does being introvert or extrovert affect the acknowledgment of your contributions in group activities?

Table 17

Students' perspectives concerning their contributions recognition in relation to extrovert and introvert students.

Options	Yes	No
Number of students	24	6
Percentage	80,00%	20,00%

In respect of the table above, the majority of students (80%) was conceived that the contribution of introverted and extroverted members was not fairly recognised. However, some of the respondents (20%) demonstrated their negation, indicating some exceptions.

- Justify

With reference to the affirmative stands, the nature of introvert students seemed to be an obstacle for expressing themselves freely as a result of their poor communicative skills. Therefore, the extroverted student would seem more trustworthy because of their open nature, hence this, in turn, would affect the overall decision making. Furthermore, some students stated that due to the quiet nature of introvert students, they were regarded as incompetent students, and their views were neglected.

In opposition, according to the rest of the respondents, everyone has their own unique views and skills. Thus, it have nothing to do with being an introvert or extrovert since the focus should be on the credibility and quality of the proposed notion in relation to the accomplishment of the task, and then decision would be taken.

4.1.2   Focus group results

For the reason that that the participants of both focus groups received the same questions, the researcher opted for a combined thematic representation of the obtained data in order to avoid the repetition of themes. It is essential to declare that due to interactive nature of the focus group, there were added some questions for further clarification of the provided responses, depending on the particular group discussion.

Q1: Everyone has their own learning styles and strategies that further their own thoughts and perspectives. How do group members handle this diversity to fulfill the task?

Indeed the first item enabled the researcher to identify two themes based on students' accounts with regard to how do they managed this diversity.

1. Group process

The participants emphasised the way group members should behave in order to overcome the encountered issues in relation to the perspectives conflict and individual differences. To illustrate, the group members were required to be active listeners and opened to the different opinion of the other peers, in which every member had an opportunity to express their viewpoints concerning the subject matter, and then the decision was made based on the agreements concerning the validity of the discussed matters. That is, the group interaction ought to contain sharing ideas, debating as well supporting these ideas, and finally accepting to include or exclude them in the final report.

Moreover, there were suggested that this brainstorming should preceded by documentation, where each member should generate together with jotting down the proposed ideas before presenting them to the group members. Hence, there would be an equal change for all members to express their thoughts.

2. group members

Working with familiar individuals, was considered as an effective practice, allowing the group members easily to collaborate with others in a comfortable setting. The participants corroborated that grouping with friends made the task fulfilment more manageable. To be specific, in terms of organising the task into feasible parts in which every member was assigned to be responsible for tackling certain elements in accordance with their interests and capacities. Also, in regard to human nature of being empathetic to close people, which made them open minded and understanding members.

On the other hand, several students indicated that the friendship may impede the efficacy of task fulfilment, and the latter have to be set apart since the focus ought to be on the task itself. Furthermore, the group tasks should not be restricted to same members the whole course, allowing varied experiences through different group members.

Table 18

A sample of the students' narratives in relation to the diversity in group tasks.

Item	Responses
	➢ I personally, emm, I try to have a look on all opinions because everyone has a specific point, and then the group members agree on the idea that suits everyone.
	➢ Simply, I try to be an active listener, listen to all member and make a debate then we come to conclusion.
	➢ …, preferably, group members should rely on writing because in group work everyone is talking, and this may cause some member forget the idea that he want to share. This, of course, may not suit all individuals, but personally, I prefer once the teacher give the task, I immediately start writing. Also, I advise the other students to write first then we share what we write, so no one will out speak at the expense of the other.
1	➢ I personally, I ask students to back up their ideas with an evidence, and if we all convinced then we will use that idea. If not we will going to move to discuss another idea.
	➢ ...I don't reject others opinion and I accept them instead I try to add something else.
	➢ In my case, I always work with my friends…we always understand each other, everyone has specific role…, so we didn't face any difficulty.
	➢ Euh, I think when you know the group members, it make it easier to discuss because you already know each member, and their roles. Here, discussion will be flexible.
	➢ …we need to know each other. We have to be friends. So we would know how each one is thinking, his level, and his capacities.

> ➢ …when selecting the group members don not think about the friendship, think about the task.
>
> ➢ … the group members should change constantly, for better results.

Q2: Do you agree that student talk in group activities can be interpreted as a successful group work? Justify?

There was generated one main theme relative to this second item. However, the generated theme embraced set of considerations that accounted for the latter in the following manner

➢ The evaluation of the group task

The participants of both focus groups affirmed that teachers have to emphasis the final product of the group work. In details, despites the distinct learning styles, individual differences, and interests, the group members came together for a common purpose, which is the accomplishment of the group task. That is, the wordy atmosphere that was established by group members was not what determined their success or failure in contrasting knowledge and completing the task, i.e. the focus should be on the quality not the quantity of students talk.

Moreover, the way group members managed a group task was shaped by students' preferences. Indeed group settings entailed both talkative members, and less conversational students, who preferred listening along with writing. Therefore, students should not be judged in terms of the amount of talking since there were student who participated in group discussion just for the sake of self-expression even for attention , in light of the rarely debaters who provided rich information. The tendency of the former kind of student was justified by the teacher's bias to the conversational group setting.

Furthermore, there were pointed out that the nature of the group task also may affect student talk. To clarify, some group task did not require discussion or even collaboration with other members, thus the student opted to perform the task individually. Likewise Students' lack of interest concerning the topic of group task, where they tried to avoid discussion as well as interacting with the other members.

However, there was confirmed the importance of interaction in group setting regardless of the validity of the information because at the end the group work was meant to raise student talk in the language classroom.

Table 19

A sample of students' accounts concerning student talk in group tasks

Item	Responses
2	➢ Some students are quite by nature, and they prefer to write and listen more then to speak, … so we can't say that the talkative group members was successful group work and the other group fail just because they didn't talk as much as the other group. ➢ … some people talk in order give information just as sign of participation, however; there are those who little talk, but they are rich in knowledge. ➢ It depends on the nature of the group work. If the task require discussion, we are going to discuss… and if some talk and the others only listen this will affect the impression of the teacher. Whereas, if the topic for example require writing or something like that, this, in this case, student talk cannot be considered as a sign successful group work. ➢ …there should be taken into account other factors, and all individuals have their own characters and preferences. ➢ The aim of group work is to talk, and to be open even the ideas was wrong, and not the exact answer. At the end, group work is meant to make students interact. ➢ … maybe the topic is not interesting, and this will affect group work, and students will not be able to work together. ➢ …actually, it depends on the results of the group work. We can't judge based on whether students are talkative or not maybe the students who seemed to be silent are working and constructing knowledge. Maybe that talkative group are taking about other subjects then the assignment…. ➢ I think teachers like when group members are talkative, but clearly, this depends on the final results.

> ➢ … it depends on teachers and how do they evaluate members. Some decline on how much students say, but this is wrong because some students say less but in terms of the quality , they are better then the students who way lot.

Q3: Do you think that the collaborative nature of group work hinders students' autonomy, leaving little space for self-evaluation to recognize their strengths, weaknesses, and abilities? Explain?

Through the transcription of participants' words, the researcher elicited one major themes in terms of the patterns of interaction in a group work.

➢ Group dynamics

The participants underlined that every group member was expected to show collaborative attitudes in relation to the task completion. Further, to generate and argue notions, giving an equal chance for each individual to share their perspectives. Through which, students, actually, were working for the whole group simultaneously on themselves. They believed that via the exposure to others, especially as EFL students, would assist them to enhance their skills. Thus, student' autonomy indeed was promoted by mean of working with others. Nevertheless, this did not imply that they did not face issues during group tasks since there were denoted that working with individual who often dominated the group process affected their participation and performance within the group tasks.

Table 20

A sample of students' accounts in respect of group dynamics

Item	Responses
3	➢ Group work means all group members work the group, so automatically; the students would work for the group and on himself at the same time. Each member has to work. ➢ … and through this, students discover their weaknesses and abilities through the peer feedback. ➢ … there are strong personalities in the group work who dominate the work, so other members will not have the chance to participate. ➢ … this domination is not a form of a group work. ➢ …for example if I'm not good at writing, so if I work in a group that are good in writing my performance will be better. ➢ …actually working in groups allow you to know your weaknesses. ➢ T share my ideas, and people agree, so my autonomy will not be affected. ➢ ... they need to practice English because it provide the chance to use the language , we need others to make use of the language …

Q4: Do you think that teachers have a crucial role in ensuring that each member has an equal opportunity to contribute? Why?

The responses concerning the forth item was mainly around the teacher expected behaviour during groups tasks. Hence, we opted for the following theme.

➢ Teacher roles during group tasks

There was an overall consensus in respect of the teacher' supervision. The participants asserted that teachers should provide clear instruction of how the task should

organised and approached by the students. So that, they would be able to distribute the roles and responsibilities of students. For fair evaluation, they are required to monitor the group process in order to determine who is working and who is not working, securing the contribution of each member together with boosting students' motivation. Even when the researcher re-interrogated the participants concerning their roles as active learners_ do not you think that group members can do this without teachers' interference?_ they re-made a reference to the individuals who tended to dominate group work , preventing the other student from participation.

Table 21

A sample of students' accounts regarding the expected conducts from teachers during group tasks.

Item	Responses
1	➤ …sometimes group members rely only on one person, and this is not fair because they will be scored and take the same mark. ➤ …yeah, teachers have to ask questions, and see each member contribution. ➤ Simply, they need to supervise the group. ➤ …yes, because there people if supervision is not provided, they will not collaborate or work. ➤ There are students who want to shine, so if someone won't work, it will be okay for them because they want to be the centre of attention, so they take the opportunity from other, and they will be like… do that, do not do that, I'll do the work, and he will take the chance of other students. ➤ There must be instructions by the teacher to be applied by students.

Q5: What do you think about the cohesion in group task, and what may impair and weaken the unity of a certain group work?

Based on the fifth item answers, there were recognised two main themes,

1. The importance of group cohesion

The group cohesion was perceived as essential element in a group work. In which, the heterogeneity of group members in terms of levels and abilities was considered as the strength of the particular group. In other words, the group members ought to use these different perspectives and skills to support each other also to complete the assigned task. Moreover, the participants claimed that the leadership also influenced the unity of the group, highlighting the importance of the leader in guiding as well as in facilitating group interaction. However, the leader supposed to be carefully selected by the group members due to the tendency of some individual to misuse their power, as leaders, by means of governing the whole work, hence taking the opportunity from other members who sought participation and contribution to the work.

2. Impediments to group cohesion

According to the participants, the nature of personalities was what damaged the unity of the group, i.e. the characters of group members. To be specific, working with selfish, egoist, and competitive made collaboration difficult since this kind of characters like being on spot, where they was appraised, so that contributions were monopolised by them. Besides to, the passive and careless members who expected from other members to do everything for them.

The participants claimed that personal conflicts among group members also would prevent the group from reaching the expected unity. Therefore, the overall harmony of the group work would be influenced. When the researcher asked the participant how so

they handle these issues notably the first group agreed on being professional and the emphasis should be on the task. Unlike The second group who agreed on the silence as the solution.

Table 22

A sample of student' accounts with regard to conformity of group members

Items	Responses
	➢ Group unity is an important element in order to complete the task. If all members are working together, and collaborating this will lead to better results.
	➢ … each member has the skill that that are good in, if we collaborate we will do good job.
	➢ … here, the differences are key power.
	➢ … Selfishness affects group unity whether in giving information or participation … Selfishness is the distraction and destroys group unity.
	➢ Competition also affect group unity. Some want to be the best and this impact group unity.
	➢ … when someone clear the instruction, and this make the other members to rely on him to do the work.
5	➢ …Yeah ,students are reliable on the leader
	➢ …in any group work you found someone who take on the control of the group. He may did not introduce himself as a leader, but you can notice that is taking this role.
	➢ It is human nature to be guided by someone in a group work.
	➢ I think… leader is not required to show off… members should be let to choose the leader of the group.
	➢ The choice of the leader depends on the situation. Someone who is good in organising and managing the group should be the leader.
	➢ Any group needs a leadership, yet some leader tend to underestimate the other members leadership is taken wrongly leadership should not be given to anyone.
	➢ If one is sitting and not working and refuse to work. He only do whatever he want.

> ➤ Working with people that you have problems with… it would be uncomfortable…
>
> ➤ Take it impersonally, and be professional , put personal issues apart and focus on the task
>
> ➤ We keep silent.

Q6: Do the previous learning experience influence the ways EFL learners adapt to group work? How?

The sixth item, on the other hand, allowed the deduction of students' attitudes towards group work.

➤ Students' attitudes

The first focus group stated that the previous learning experience had an impact on their performance in group setting. In simple terms, most of times they were recipients of knowledge that presented by the teacher. Even though they experienced group work in early stages of high and middle school, they were not satisfied about the way group work was implemented specially as EFL students. In other words, when the students worked in groups, they did not have any clue concerning the process itself, of working with others, as result their behaviours was random, so they managed the situation the way they feel comfortable. This, in turn, created vague picture of how student should perceive and conduct during group tasks. Therefore, there were proposed set of suggestions as follow:

- Students should be taught about the group work along with necessary skills that enable them handling group tasks.

- The group work should organised by the teacher, so that every student would know their responsibility, and the evaluation would embrace all members.

- Teacher should be well trained in terms of the use of group work in their language classrooms, emphasising the psychological aspect of students.

- The group work should be restricted to the high and middle school, while focusing on individual work at the university level.

The second focus group, on the other hand, seemed to be biased to group work, confirming its importance to EFL student since they were practicing English. However, they did not neglect the impact of previous learning experience on students' performance, yet there were mentioned that student adaptability to new methods also should be considered.

Table 23

A sample of students' accounts in respect of their attitudes towards group tasks**.**

Item	Responses
	➢ … we used to have lessons that are presented by the teacher, and there is no collaboration, so this may affect the way student perform in group activities.
	➢ Actually it hard to adapt to group work, especially when we are used to consider teachers are the source of information, and we only receive these information.
	➢ ….you grow with lots of misconceptions. We may experience group work in past, yet the group work was not applied in the right way. Everyone is shy, everyone is working individually, and there is always one leader. We are no doing group work in the right way, and we grow with misconception.
6	➢ We are not familiarised with group work especially as EFL students because English material in the previous stages of learning (in the high and middle school) was not that important as mathematic and the other subjects. We were only had English two hours per week, so we could not engage in the language deeply due time constraints , so the teachers only give the necessary information and that is it .
	➢ I think there should be a course specified for teaching real life skills like public speaking and group skills.
	➢ I think group work should be left to high and middle school, and we should work individually at university.
	➢ … teacher have to organise the group work and give clear instruction. How to work , how to lead, and all members will be evaluated not only the leader….
	➢ Teachers have to be trained before starting teaching concerning all aspects of the classroom, especially the psychological aspect of students. … how to organise

> classroom, how to ensure that every student have time and space to participate.

➢ …past experiences of group work negatively affect how you engage in group task. For example, when your ideas are neglected.

➢ It depends on student' personality. There are flexible students who easily adapt to new ways of learning, and if students are not open to new methods, they will not easily engage and find it difficult.

➢ I did not face any problem while working in groups, and actually I do enjoy with in group work.

➢ Group work is important for EFL learners who need to practice the language. Otherwise, if we go out the classroom, we will not practice it with any one. Even if you are telling me you are using it through social media, you are only tapping not really using it.

4.2   The Discussion and Interpretation of Results

4.2.1   The discussion and the interpretation of the questionnaire results

The questionnaire assists the researcher to understand the overall experiences of EFL students concerning group work as an active learning strategy. The latter allowed us to make decisions relative to students' attitudes towards this classroom procedure, their conceptions, and their encountered difficulties.

The background information revealed that female students were more interested in learning English since they form 90% of the sample unlike male students who embody only 10% of the sample. With reference to the age range, there is considerable variation in the ages of respondents, yet most of students' age ranged from 21 to 22, which is the ordinary age at the master one level. Therefore, we can say that this category made up the sample of this study.

The first section of the questionnaire, Students perceptions of group work, authorised the researcher to conclude that the students' experiences of the group tasks is determined by four factors. Namely, group climate, nature of group task, individual differences, and the evaluation of the group work. Put differently, students' satisfaction of group work is mainly influenced by positive or negative climate group members create, in light of students' behaviours, roles and responsibilities, as well as patterns of interaction. During which, individual differences played crucial role in terms of how students deal with the distinct levels, perspectives, and preferences among the group members. The way the task is designed also impact the way students function within group tasks in comparison to individual work.

Moreover, the emphasis of respondents on the adaptability of students to working with others implies the importance of establishing a supportive, encouraging, and tolerant group climate for collaboration. In this respect, the respondents find it hard to express and transfer their intended perspectives, further to persuade the other members about their ideas due to the self-centred and unproductive members, indicating the lack of communication skills together with team skills. On this account, the positive climate that is established by group members, in terms of the exchange of knowledge, seem to be a motive for student to participate as well as to take part of the group discussion. Unlike the negative climate, which results frustrating and demotivated group learning experiences.

The specific criteria of evaluating students as they work in groups also shaped students' attitudes towards group work. To clarify, through engaging in group tasks, students expect from the teacher to evaluate the work from multiple aspects. The individual efforts should be assessed, and, accordingly, they are scored. For fair evaluation of contributions, the teacher have to monitor how student are working, further to ensure that every member is participating, taking into account the passive, dominant,

and careless members. Teachers also have to consider that contributions have different levels based on the individual differences in terms of skills, capacities, personality, and learning styles, thus members are not supposed to behave further to function in similar ways. Therefore, there should be no bias to the high performing as well as to the sociable students, where all students receive supervision and feedback.

The second section results assisted the researcher to recognise students' expected group process together with group learning objectives towards effective group work experience. Accordingly, a successful group work is based on the unity of group members, where everyone is supposed to perform certain task, and individual attempts appreciated together with the teacher' guidance, and feedback. Likewise, students' roles are limited to the leader, and the recorder, while the others are concerned with discussion, denoting students' cluelessness to the importance of the other roles relevant to the both task-completion and group-cohesion maintenance. In other words, group work seems to revolve around teachers' organisation of the task and the different role of students, followed by group communication that include leadership, debate, as well as documentation, and then teachers evaluation. That is, though the group work is meant to enable students to take on their learning, students strive teachers' instruction together with direction.

With reference to group discussion, decisions should be taken in accordance with validity of the discussed notions in relation to the subject of the group task. That is, in-group settings all members are equal regardless of their academic achievement, characters, and skills. In simple terms, the success of group work should be neither headed nor determined by high achieving members. Though some students tend to prevail the group work, in terms of participation or interaction, decisions are objectively taken based on discussed notion themselves.

Moreover, group work is a multifaceted strategy that boost both language and communication skills, including both productive and respective skills, as well as psychological aspect of students in terms of motivation and sense of belongings. To rephrase, the use of group work cannot be restricted to enhancing speaking skills only, but also improve the other skills for an effective interaction since in any ordinary group setting these skill are incorporated. However, the variation lies in the degree of use of each skill by students, depending on the nature of the group task.

The results of third section allows the researcher to make conclusion about the negative effect of unhealthy group climate, inadequate group task design, and negative behaviours of group members on the psychological state of students. Therefore, the students reflect through the low engagement and little participation, however; the lack of knowledge, vocabulary, motivation, and communication skills also decrease students' engagement and participation within group setting. Besides to this, being an extrovert or introvert as well affect both participation and engagement because of the sociable nature of extrovert students, which make collaboration easy, unlike the withdrawn nature of introvert students that imped them from being more interactive.

4.2.2   The interpretation and discussion of the Focus group results

The focus group results enabled the researcher to delve into students understanding of the group work as an active learning strategy, depicting their perceptions concerning group climate, group norms, and group cohesion, as well to the group task itself.

The extracted two themes, from the first item of the focus group, permitted the researcher to draw a conclusion about the vital turn group members play in the group process to create a healthy group climate. Put differently, the smooth group process indeed is determined by individuals' awareness of working together to fulfil the group

task. That is, it has nothing to do with working with friends or other classmates, yet it depends on the expected behaviours by group members towards positive group climate. Therefore, group members can overcome the struggles relative to individual differences, perspectives conflict, and the assignment of the different parts of the task to students.

Likewise, the themes elicited from the second and the fourth items implied that teachers have essential part in any group work, where they should consider other factors besides the final product of the group. To demonstrate, for fair evaluation of the group members, teachers have to recognise that any group performance is determined by the individual preferences of that group, i.e. the performance of groups varies based on the way group members tackle the group task, so there is no standard performance. During which, teachers are required to provide clear instruction of the task, and content supervision, as well as to monitor how students are working and promoting the group work. Further, teachers also are expected to interfere in order to motivate students, and to boost group unity, indicating that students are still bound by the notion of teacher-fronted classroom. Moreover, teacher ought to be careful when designing and organising the group task. To be specific in terms of the choice of the topic as well as to the alignment of the particular group learning with the targeted knowledge.

The group dynamic theme, from the third item, empowered the researcher's beliefs with regard to students' unfamiliarity with the importance of the stating the group norms when working with others. Simply students are anticipating teacher's intervention concerning their roles and participation also expecting from the other members to behave in accordance with their needs and desires without any declaration, indicating their unawareness of group work as an active learning strategy.

The themes of the fifth item indicate the significance of group roles for united group members. That to say, the way group members assign their roles also how do they deal with the diversity within the group can either damage or boost the group unity. Wherein, the self-centred behaviours and the unproductive behaviours, along with the personal conflicts seem to lead into detached members in an unhealthy group climate.

The last theme of attitudes highlight students' lack of knowledge concerning the necessary skills to collaborate with others. To be specific in terms of the roles and the conducts they are required to display, so that the group task is successfully completed. This indefinite situation, in turn, affect their internal state and perception of group work, making them to expect from teachers to consider their psychological status also to teach them how to work in groups. However, this tendency was argued by students' adaptability and flexibility to new methods of learning, yet this does not eliminate students unfamiliarity with how should they perform in group settings.

4.3   Synthesis of the Findings

Attached to the previous section of the description and interpretation of the results, this section is intended to make connections between the result of both the questionnaire and focus groups for a comprehensive interpretation of the findings. This section will tackle these findings with reference to the proposed research questions and hypothesis.

Based on the descriptions and interpretation of results, the researcher come up with the realisation of students' experiences of group work are actually determined by their attitudes towards both group members on the teacher performance. Put differently, the manner group members cooperate and exchange knowledge can either create comfortable or uncomfortable group settings. That is, if the group members set a supportive group climate, the collaboration as well as the exchange of ideas are going to be easy task.

However, this reassuring atmosphere is affected by personal traits especially in relation to extrovert and introvert students. To be specific, extrovert students like socialising with other, thus they are smoothly going to collaborate with other group members. Unlike the introvert interlocutors who find conversing with others is demanding, as well as requires much skills and efforts. Moreover, the encouraging and the discouraging group setting, lead to either motivated or demotivated group member, impacting their involvement.

Meanwhile, students are expecting from teachers to recognise their unique characters and preferences in evaluation. Besides their permanent provision of direction and feedback, further their security of the equal participation of group members, denoting teachers' significance in organising together with controlling the different group processes, also in boosting their sense of belongingness. Therefore, we can infer that students are still fostering the traditional roles of teachers in leading their learning journey, while they are carrying their ordinary roles as recipients of teachers' instructions.

In short, students' different attitudes and personality traits along with the diverse degrees of motivation and sense of belongingness have vital turn in determining the aspects of their engagement as well as participation during group tasks. Further in forming the impediment that prevent students' functionality in different levels, thus restraining the efficacy of the group task. This, in turn, provide a response to the third research question along with confirming the third research hypothesis.

Referring to the second research question, the overall process of the group process, in fact, is determined by both the group members along with the teacher' guidance. To put it in another way, among the challenges EFL students face within group tasks are the perspectives conflict and individual differences. That to say, students' deficiencies of how to manage the various opinions, learning styles and capacities harden their performance

in group setting in term of contributions and involvements, including the self-centred and unproductive performances. This, in turn, impairs the group cohesion as well as lead to unfavourable group atmosphere, in light of their lack of the necessary skills, both language and communication skills, for an effective group communication.

Additionally, students' prior learning experiences also embody their hardships relative to group tasks. In other words, most of language classrooms, especially in the high and middle schools, seems to be limited to the teacher-centred approach. Thus, students become used to the passive performance, where their role are restricted to the reception of information. Though Group work was applied by some teacher, students expectations concerning working in groups, with regard to both group members and the teacher, are not met, demonstrating their frustrations and how this shape their perception of group work.

In respect of teacher roles, students believe that teachers have an essential role in group tasks, though they are taking on their learning process. Accordingly, teachers ought to provide supervision in terms of organising, monitoring, and even interfering in order to secure students' participations and contributions. Further, the evaluation of the group task should entail multiple aspects from group formation to the final output of group members. Moreover, teachers are required to be careful when designing group tasks also to ensure the quality and the validation of latter in terms of the topic together with the targeted knowledge students ought to reach through the specific group learning.

Subsequently, this confirms the second research hypothesis of students' perception of the difficulties encountered within group setting are influenced by prior learning experiences, individual differences, and the communication barriers within group work. During which, teachers have vital role in supervising successful a group work activity.

On this account, the researcher determines the major difficulties encountered by EFL student as they are engaged in group tasks. They face difficulties in terms of group process, group dynamics, group communication, and the type of the group task, confirming the first research hypothesis as follow:

- Establishing and reinforcing positive group climate that promote the successful completion of the group task.

- Maintaining the group unity in light of the unhealthy group climate together with the diversity in the group.

- The inadequate task design and organisation, including the division of the group tasks into manageable parts along with the negative behaviours of group members.

- Producing authentic and meaningful group communication.

- Displaying the necessary actions and skills for the dynamics and patterns of interaction in relation to group norms and roles.

- Setting a soothing group process.

Conclusion

The forth chapter of the dissertation covered the practical side of the investigation. The researcher commenced with thorough description and interpretation of the results. The questionnaire results were mainly represented through tables, including the percentages. Whereas the focus groups were presented in terms of themes and patterns. Then, the researcher moved to the synthesis phase via the integration of both finding of the used data collection methods. Wherein, we answered the three research questions and confirmed their alternative research hypothesis.

General Conclusion

Group work is one of the used teaching methods to promote active learning via the provision of interactive environments. Moreover, because of the favourable attitudes towards the use of GW in enhancing English as foreign language students' language skills, the latter has become a matter of research from different aspects over the years. To clarify, the review of previous literature demonstrated that group work have been used to boost classroom interaction, students' motivation, and willingness to communicate, as well as to foster students' communicative competence and even in teaching grammar. This, in turn, raised the researcher's interests in such subject of matter.

The rationale behind this study also was shaped by the researcher's experience of group tasks, along with the peer discussions concerning the implementation of group work in English classrooms. To be specific, the disappointments towards the manner group work was applied, despite of the peers' approval to active learning, made the researcher interested in the elements that impact the efficacy of the GW together with the functionality of group members. In other words, this investigation concerns the major difficulties EFL students face within group settings.

For this purpose, we conducted a qualitative research in order to investigate the different experiences and perceptions of students concerning the use of group work. Therefore, this research study was organised around three research hypotheses in accordance with the proposed research questions. In this respect, there were hypothesised that EFL students encountered difficulties in relation to the group process, group communication, and group dynamics, along with the design of the group learning task. Wherein, students' individual difference, communication barriers, and prior experiences, together with teachers' roles in supervising the group task, influenced these difficulties.

During which, internal factors had an essential turn in shaping the nature as well as the intensity of the encountered difficulties.

In attempt to, the researcher opted for the master one students at the English Department of Biskra University. On this account, there were used two methods of data collection, namely a student's questionnaire together with two focus groups discussions. The analysis revealed that the overall group process was what determined students' experiences of group work. In different terms, the challenges EFL students faced in terms of the individual differences, prior learning experiences, communication barriers, and the anticipated performance from the teachers led to the awkwardness of the different patterns of interaction and dynamics within the particular group work, including group climate, roles , and norms. Subsequently, the internal status of students trembled, shaping their perception of the encountered difficulties.

Recommendations and Implications

This research work endeavours to raise educators' awareness of group work by highlighting teachers' roles in adapting such strategy according to learners. Moreover, pointing out the impediments that inhibit performance in GW will provide future investigators with additional perspectives for further research. To be specific, in terms of looking for alternative techniques or strategies to overcome these difficulties. Furthermore, based on local research, this study can be considered as a sequel to previous studies since it is an extension of the prior literature at Biskra University. Referring to the overseas literature, the majority of research rely on a quantitative approach. Therefore, tackling GW through qualitative lenses would be supplementary to the foreign context. Ultimately, this research work is an addition to the field of teaching English as a foreign language and to educational research in general.

Moreover, highlighting the hardships EFL students went through during group tasks, which impede the functionality of both group members and the task, would inspire teachers as well as students to create an effective group learning experience in terms of the design, evaluation, and the organisation of the latter. On this regard, we propose the following didactical as well as pedagogical recommendations

1. *Recommendations in relation to students*

- EFL Students should reinforce their knowledge with regard to both communicative approach as well as to group work as an active learning strategy.

- Students are required to be equipped to the critiques received from the group members as peer-feedback, further to be taught about the necessary actions for a soothing group process with reference to group roles, norms, and unity.

- Students should recognise that by means of working in groups, they are actually taking on the responsibility of their own learning process. Thus, teachers are not required to control their group communication.

- Group members have to realise that they are working towards a common goal, which is performing the group task; hence, they are required to manifest collaboration and support for a cohesive group work.

- At the end of the group task, group members are advised to reflect on their performance, so that they can enhance the areas that weaken their collaborative work.

2. *Recommendation in relation to teachers*

- Teacher ought to raise their awareness of group learning, where they may participate in developmental workshops, or seminars along with other instructional services that tackle the implementation of group work in language classrooms.

- Teachers have to provide clear instruction of the group task also to set clear criteria of evaluation that contains the consideration of the different aspect of a group work. Further to adapt their assessment methods to include both individual contributions along with the final group output.

- Accordingly, teachers should to set inclusive group work tasks, considering learner diversity in terms of preferences and personality traits of group members, further to ensure that all the different level of participation and contribution are taken into account for a fair evaluation.

- Though group work is intended to produce autonomous students, yet teachers are advised, from time to time, to show mentorship, and supervision even control of the group setting whens necessary, depending on the educational situation also to grant that each member have an equal chance to contribute.

3. *Recommendation in relation to administration*

- In light of the changes towards the communicative approach to teaching English, there should be a carefully designed agenda concerning both the interactive and active learning starting from the early stages of learning, i.e., primary, middle, and high school.

- There should be a pre-service training programme about the different aspects teacher have to consider in language classroom, especially the psychological aspect of students, in which they are trained of how to implement further to adapt group work tasks in their classrooms.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

One of the limitation of this research study is the researcher's lack of knowledge as well as skill concerning the use of software tools. To be specific, the MAXQDA

software for the thematic analysis of the focus groups discussions. Thus, we opted for the manual coding of the qualitative data, using Google Docs, due to the time constraints in relation to the submission of the final copy of the dissertation. The researcher also assumes that if we had the enough expertise to conduct qualitative research, as novice researcher, this investigation would be more valid and credible in terms of the procedure of collecting and analysing data. Therefore, we suggest from the methodology teachers at English department of Biskra University to gradually also systematically introduce this course to their students. Wherein, there should be a limited and profound coverage of certain notions in methodology in each academic level, starting from the research topic towards data analysis. During which, students ought to experience both designing data collection methods, as well as data analysis methods. So that, when it comes to graduation research they will focus on the process of investigation itself rather than on acquiring the knowledge necessary for conducting certain study.

Moreover, we assume that if we do a more thoroughly review of literature relative to group work, the research would be able to conduct even detailed investigation by means of targeting other concepts in relation to the subject of matter, and thus our insights concerning the encountered difficulties would be extended. Besides this some participants' bias to group work seemed to obstruct our investigation towards the difficulties EFL students faced during group tasks. Consequently, future researchers are advised to precede the phase of data collections method with an attitudinal questionnaire to identify the favourable and unfavourable attitudes. We believe that if the sample were made up of those who demonstrate unfavourable attitudes, the track and the recognition of these difficulties would be easier.

Though this research study does not seek generalisation of finding, yet if the sample size were larger, the researcher could delve into the different experiences of

individuals. Accordingly, the investigation would be more prosperous and the inspection

of these difficulties would be even operative.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Letter for the Head of the English Language and Literature

Department

Informed Consent

Dear Head,

I am currently conducting an investigation into the major difficulties encountered by EFL learners in group work. In this regard, we are going to get in touch with mater students at the department of English in Biskra University, since they will be the target sample of this research work, to find out the different elements that may impede the effective implementation of a group work.

 Hence, I am seeking your consent for a direct contact with master students over period of two weeks, wherein, the first week will be devoted for the piloting stage of the designed data collection methods, namely a questionnaire and focus group. Whereas, the second week will be concerned with the final stage of collecting data.

Confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of students' personal information and data gathered throughout the process of conducting this research work will be ensured.

If you consent to the participation of the previously mentioned EFL students in this study please sign the attached consent form.

Your permission and cooperation will be highly appreciated.

For further information, you are welcome to contact the researcher.

Regards,

Researcher Contact Details:

Rofaida Rechid

Email: rofaidare004@gmail.com

 Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

I have read and clearly understood the researcher request. I consent to the participation of master students at the English department in the research project being undertaken by Rofaida Rechid

Name:………………………………………………………………….

E-mail:…………………………………………………………………

University:………………………………………………………………..

Faculty:………………………………………………………………...

Department:…………………………………………………………....

Section:………………………………………………………………...

Date:…………..................

Signature:

Appendix B: The Focus Group Validation Form

Focus Group Validation Form

I hereby certify that I have read the focus group questions in the research study conducted by Rofaida RECHID, a master dissertation candidate at Biskra university.

I have provided feedback and suggestions to the researcher of the present study regarding both the layout and content of the focus group.

Background Information on the Expert:

Name:………………………………………………………………….

University:…………………………………………………………...

Present Occupation:…………………………………………………...

Degree:…………………………………………………………………..

Telephone Number:…………………………………………………...

Email Address:…………………………………………………………..

Signed:…………………………………………………………………..

Researcher Contact Details:

Rofaida Rechid

Email: rofaidare004@gmail

Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

Appendix C: The Questionnaire Validation Form

Questionnaire Validation Form

I hereby certify that I have read the students 'questionnaire in the research study conducted by Rofaida RECHID, a master dissertation candidate at Biskra university.

I have provided feedback and suggestions to the researcher of the present study regarding both the layout and content of the questionnaire.

Background Information on the Expert:

Name:…………………………………………………………….

University:…………………………………………………...

Present Occupation:………………………………………………...

Degree:………………………………………………………..

Telephone Number:………………………………………………...

Email Address:………………………………………………..

Signed:………………………………………………………..

Researcher Contact Details:

Rofaida Rechid

Email: rofaidare004@gmail

Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra

Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages

Department of English Language and Literature

Appendix D: A Sample of a Validated Questionnaire

Questionnaire for Students (The Piloting Stage)

Dear students,

This questionnaire is part of the fulfilment of a master dissertation. It aims to investigate the major difficulties encountered by English as foreign language learners in group work as an active learning strategy. You are kindly requested to answer the following questionnaire:

Your responses will significantly help in contributing to our research, and we sincerely appreciate your valuable assistance.

Please tick (✔) the appropriate box, and provide a complete answer when required.

Background information

- Age ☐

- Gender

Female ☐   Male ☐

Section 1: Students perceptions concerning group work

- **Q1:** How can you describe your overall experience of working in groups as an EFL learner in higher education?

Positive ☐   Negative ☐   Others ☐

Explain

_____

_____

_____

- **Q2:** <mark>do</mark> you find it easy or challenging to collaborate with your classmates during group work? <mark>(capitalisation)</mark>

Easy [   ]   Varied [   ]   Challenging [   ]

Explain

_____

_____

_____

- **Q3:** Whenever the teacher asks you to work in groups, how do you feel about it?

Motivated [   ]   Anxious [   ]   Demotivated [   ]

Why?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q4:** In your opinion, are the group members fairly evaluated?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Explain

_____

_____

_____

- **Q5:** What do you like and dislike about group work? (this question can be divided into two questions so that you can ensure that students will provide you with their likes and dislikes.

_____

_____

_____

Section 2: Students understanding of group work

- **Q1:** How would you define a successful group work activity?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q2:** How do you handle the different roles and accountability within the group? In other words, how do you and the other members of the group figure out who does what to fulfil the task?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q3:** what do you think about the major roles and responsibilities of teachers in a group work?

_____

_____

- **Q4:** As a university student, do you think that group work should be restricted to promoting the speaking skill, or can it be applied to develop other language and communication skills?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Why?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q5:** Does students' academic performance influence their engagement in group activities? Specifically, if a student with modest academic achievements responds similarly to a high-achieving peer, whose input is more likely to be given serious consideration?

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

How?

_____

_____

_____

Section 3: Barriers to Group Work Implementation

- **Q1:** ==What make you to do not participate== further to do not engage in a group work activity? ==(the first part needs revision)==

Discomfort   ☐

Lack of interest   ☐

Communication issues   ☐

Fear of making mistakes   ☐

Others   ☐

Explain

_____

_____

_____

- **Q2:** Can you provide an example of instances where you found it challenging to express your ideas in a group setting?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q3:** How comfortable do you feel when seeking clarification or asking questions during group work?

_____

_____

- **Q4:** Do you believe that the lack of alignment between group tasks and collaborative learning objectives influences your engagement as a group member?

Yes [ ]　　　　　　　　　　No [ ]

Why?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q5:** Does being an introvert or an extrovert affect the acknowledgment of your contributions in group activities, both verbally and in assessment?

Yes [ ]　　　　　　　　　　No [ ]

Justify

_____

_____

_____

Section 4: Opinionnaire

- Are the questions clear and easy to answer?

_____
Please try to revise what it is highlighted.
_____

- Is there any repeated or ambiguous questions?

No, there is not.

- If you could suggest a question to be included in the questionnaire, what would it be?

That depends on the aims of your study.

- Do you find this questionnaire lengthy? If you do, what do you suggest?

It is acceptable.

- Any other comments?

Appendix E: Focus Group Items

Focus group questions

- Everyone has their own learning styles and strategies that further their own thoughts and perspectives. How do group members navigate these differences to fulfill the task?

- Do you agree that student talk in group work activities can be interpreted as a successful implementation of group work? Justify?

- Do you think that the collaborative nature of group work hinders students' autonomy in terms of individual tasks, leaving little space for self-evaluation to recognize their strengths, weaknesses, and abilities? Explain?

- Do you think that teachers have a crucial role in ensuring that each member has an equal opportunity to contribute? why?

- As you engage in group work, what do you think about the overall cohesion and inclusiveness within your EFL learning group?

- Does the previous learning experience influence the ways EFL learners adapt to group work? Explain?

Opinionnaire

- **Are the questions clear and easy to answer?**

Yes, I believe they are easy to be answered.

- **Is there any repeated or ambiguous questions?**

I think that question number five can be revised to guarantee a greater degree of comprehension.

Any other comments?

No other comments.

Appendix F: Students Questionnaire (The Piloting Stage)

Questionnaire for Students (The Piloting Stage)

Dear students,

This questionnaire is part of the fulfilment of a master dissertation. It aims to investigate the major difficulties encountered by English as foreign language learners in group work as an active learning strategy. You are kindly requested to answer the following questionnaire:

Your responses will significantly help in contributing to our research, and we sincerely appreciate your valuable assistance.

Please tick (✔) the appropriate box, and provide a complete answer when required.

Background information

- Age ☐

- Gender

Female ☐   Male ☐

Section 1: Students perceptions of group work

- **Q1:** How can you describe your overall experience of working in groups as an EFL learner in higher education?

Positive ☐   Negative ☐   Varied ☐

Explain

_____

_____

- **Q2:** How do find collaborating with your classmates during group work?

Easy ☐   Varied ☐   Challenging ☐

Explain

_____

_____

_____

- **Q3:** Whenever the teacher asks you to work in groups, how do you feel about it?

Motivated ☐   Anxious ☐   Demotivated ☐

Why?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q4:** In your opinion, are the group members fairly evaluated?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Explain

_____

_____

_____

- **Q5:** What do you like and dislike about group work?

_____

_____

Section 2: Students understanding of group work

- **Q1:** How would you define a successful group work activity?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q2:** How do you handle the different roles and accountability within the group? In other words, how do you and the other members of the group figure out who does what to fulfil the task?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q3:** what do you think about the major roles and responsibilities of teachers in a group work?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q4:** As a university student, do you think that group work should be restricted to promoting the speaking skill, or can it be applied to develop other language and communication skills?

Yes [   ]   No   [   ]

Why?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q5:** Does students' academic performance influence their engagement in group activities? Specifically, if a student with modest academic achievements responds similarly to a high-achieving peer, whose input is more likely to be given serious consideration?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

How?

_____

_____

_____

Section 3: Barriers to Group Work Implementation

- **Q1:** What make you to do not participate further to do not engage in a group work activity?

Discomfort   [ ]

Lack of interest   [ ]

Communication issues   [ ]

Fear of making mistakes   [ ]

Others ☐

Explain

- **Q2:** Can you provide an example of instances where you found it challenging to express your ideas in a group setting?

- **Q3:** How comfortable do you feel when seeking clarification or asking questions during group work?

- **Q4:** Do you believe that the lack of alignment between group tasks and collaborative learning objectives influences your engagement as a group member?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Why?

- **Q5:** Does being an introvert or an extrovert affect the acknowledgment of your contributions in group activities?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Justify

Section 4: Opinionnaire

- Are the questions clear and easy to answer?

- Is there any repeated or ambiguous questions?

- If you could suggest a question to be included in the questionnaire, what would it be?

- Do you find this questionnaire lengthy? If you do, what do you suggest?

- Any other comments?

Appendix G: students Questionnaire (collecting stage)

Questionnaire for Students

Dear students,

This questionnaire is part of the fulfilment of a master dissertation. It aims to investigate the major difficulties encountered by English as foreign language (henceforth, EFL) learners in group work as an active learning strategy. You are kindly requested to answer the following questionnaire:

Your responses will significantly help in contributing to our research, and we sincerely appreciate your valuable assistance.

Please tick (✔) the appropriate box, and provide a complete answer when required.

Background information

- Age ☐

- Gender

Female ☐   Male ☐

Section 1: Students perceptions of group work

- **Q1:** How can you describe your overall experience of working in groups as an EFL learner in higher education?

Positive ☐   Negative ☐   Varied ☐

Explain

_____

_____

_____

- **Q2:** How do you find collaborating with your classmates during group work?

Easy ☐   Varied ☐   Challenging ☐

Explain

_____

_____

_____

- **Q3:** Whenever the teacher asks you to work in groups, how do you feel about it?

Motivated ☐   Anxious ☐   Demotivated ☐

Why?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q4:** In your opinion, are the group members fairly evaluated?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Explain

_____

_____

_____

- **Q5:** What do you like and dislike about group work?

_____

_____

_____

Section 2: Students understanding of group work

- **Q1:** How would you define a successful group work activity?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q2:** How do you assign the different tasks and responsibilities among the members of a group work? In other words, how do you and the other members of the group figure out who does what to fulfil the task?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q3:** According to your experience, how teachers should behave as well as manage a group work when implemented in EFL classrooms?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q4:** Do you think that group work tasks should be restricted to promoting the speaking skill only?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Why?

_____

_____

- **Q5:** Do you believe the active participation of group members and decision-making are influenced by student's academic achievement during group work?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Explain

Section 3: Barriers to Group Work Implementation

- **Q1:** What makes you not to participate further in a group work activity?

Discomfort   ☐

Lack of interest   ☐

Communication issues   ☐

Fear of making mistakes   ☐

Others   ☐

Explain

- **Q2:** Provide examples where you found it challenging to express your ideas in a group work setting?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q3:** Do you believe that a mismatch between the task design and the expected outcome of working in groups may influence your participation as well as your contribution as a group member?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Why?

_____

_____

_____

- **Q4:** Does being introvert or extrovert affect the acknowledgment of your contributions in group activities?

Yes ☐   No ☐

Justify

_____

_____

_____

Appendix H: Focus Group Guiding Questions

Focus group questions

- Everyone has their own learning styles and strategies that further their own thoughts and perspectives. How do group members handle this diversity to fulfill the task?

- Do you agree that student talk in group activities can be interpreted as a successful group work? Justify?

- Do you think that the collaborative nature of group work hinders students' autonomy, leaving little space for self-evaluation to recognize their strengths, weaknesses, and abilities? Explain?

- Do you think that teachers have a crucial role in ensuring that each member has an equal opportunity to contribute? why?

- What do you think about the cohesion in group task, and what may impair and weaken the unity of a certain group work?

- Do the previous learning experiences influence the ways EFL learners adapt to group tasks? Explain?

ملخص الدراسة

منذ ظهور المنهج التواصلي لتدريس اللغة عرف تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية تغيرات ملحوظة من اجل تحقيق الكفاءة التواصلية. استهدفت هذه التعديلات على وجه التحديد أدوار معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وطلابهم من أجل تكوين متعلمين نشطين مسؤولين عن عملية التعلم الخاصة بهم في بيئة تواصلية، وطريقة العمل الجماعي تعد من بين الأساليب المستخدمة لتحقيق هذا الهدف. في ضوء الدراسات المتعددة التي أجريت حول مدى فائدة العمل الجماعي في تحسين المهارات اللغوية لدى المتعلمين، تسعى دراستنا هذه إلى البحث عن بعض الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بسكرة ضمن الاعمال الجماعية. وتطبيقا لذلك اعتمد الباحث على النموذج التفسيري من خلال إجراء بحث نوعي، وللبحث المتعمق اعتمدنا على تصميم دراسة الحالة. وفي هذا الصدد، تم استخدام طريقتين مختلفتين لجمع البيانات، الاستبيان غير المنظم ومجموعتين من المناقشة الجماعية، من أجل الإجابة على أسئلة البحث، فضلا عن تأكيد أو عدم تأكيد الفرضيات المقترحة. بحيث تم تحليل نتائج الاستبيان والمناقشات الجماعية موضوعيا. كشفت النتائج أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يفتقرون إلى المهارات والمعرفة اللازمة للتعلم جماعي. وخلال هذه الفترة، كانت الصعوبات التي واجهوها تتأثر بعوائق الاتصال، والاختلافات الفردية، وتجارب التعلم المسبق إلى جانب تصميم المعلمين وتقييمهم والإشراف على مهمة الفريق. إضافة إلى ذلك، الحالة الداخلية للطلاب أيضا لعبت دورا في خلق هذه الصعوبات وتفاقمها، وأثرها الأبعد على انخراطهم واندماجهم في العمل الجماعي. وفيما يتعلق بهذه النتائج، تم تأكيد فرضيات البحث لهذه الدراسة من ناحية العوامل المختلفة التي تؤثر على فعالية التعلم الجماعي.