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**Assessing the Effects of Collaborative Learning
on EFL Master “1” Learners’ Autonomy the Case
of University Center of Naama**

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Fulfillment of “Master” Degree in Linguistic

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Dedication

First, I dedicate this modest work to my lovely mother who was supporting, motivating, and praying for me from the start to the completion of this work.

To my dear father, who provided me with strength, help, encouragements and confidence.

To my beloved brothers: Mohammed, Abd elbasset and Younes for their precious love, motivation and care.

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Abstract

Nowadays, student-centered approaches are the new educational approaches used by teachers to develop learners' different skills mainly decision making, team work and problem solving. Student-centred approaches require from learners to be autonomous and take charge of their learning process. Thus, teachers have focused attention on developing learners' autonomy using many approaches like collaborative learning. Therefore, the main objective set out to this research work is to assess the effects of collaborative learning to develop learners' autonomy. In order to reach this aim, the researcher has opted for certain methodology which entails the use of exploratory case study. For data collection, a questionnaire for EFL first year master students and an interview for teachers are used. The collected data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The results revealed that EFL students learn best collaboratively and the use of collaborative learning has a great effect on developing learning skills, self confidence, and critical thinking. Furthermore, according to the main findings, collaborative learning enhances learners' autonomy.

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General Introduction

Education in the 21st classroom is no longer an act of transferring knowledge. The modern teachers, nowadays, believe that learning independently is an intellectual method. Therefore, they have shifted from the teacher approaches; where information are merely transmitted to students, to learner-centered approach that engages the students in the lesson through problem-solving activities, reflection activities, and group working in which students learn through collaboration.

According to Gokhale, A. A. (1995) "collaborative learning" refers to an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. The students are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own. Thus, the success of one student helps other students to be successful.

Indeed, collaborative learning is based on the idea that is a social act and learners learn best in groups, therefore, learning collaboratively is more beneficial for developing learning skills mainly: critical thinking, social, personal and leadership skills, and self confidence. Moreover, proponents of collaborative agree that through collaborative learning the students engage more in the lessons and improve self evaluation and decision making.

However, the shift from traditional to the new teaching approach imposes the learner to be more autonomous and take charge of their own learning; the fact that collaborative learning develops various learning skills encourages the researcher to investigate the usefulness of collaborative learning as a means to improve autonomy of first year master students at Naama university center.

Based on the analysis of the significant role of learners autonomy in EFL classes and the benefits of collaborative learning techniques, the main objective set out to this research paper is to assess the impact of collaborative learning in EFL learning classes focusing on the question of how may the use collaborative learning in EFL classrooms

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improve learners' autonomy? On this basis, the following research questions would be addressed:

1. To what extent, do EFL teachers use collaborative working groups at Naama university center?
2. What is the role of collaborative learning in improving students' autonomy?

To answer these questions, the researcher provides the following hypothesis:

1. EFL teachers use collaborative learning techniques because it gives the students the opportunity to share ideas, discuss in groups, and develop different skills.
2. Collaborative learning has a great role in improving students' autonomy in EFL classes, since it gives the students the ability to take charge of their own learning, make decisions and develop important interpersonal skills.

In this research work, the population chosen is EFL students. The sample is sixteen learners from first year master classes, they have been selected randomly. A questionnaire for students and interview for teachers have been selected as a research tools for data collection.

This research paper contains two chapters, the first one deals with the literature review of collaborative learning including definitions, its basic elements, some selected types, and the difference between collaborative and cooperative learning. Then the researcher introduces a clear definition to learners' autonomy including its importance, autonomous learners' characteristics, in addition to the role of teacher in promoting autonomy and the use of collaborative learning to develop learners' autonomy.

The second chapter consists of two parts, the first part, basically, is descriptive part of the research design, in which the researcher describes the sample population and demonstrate an explanations for the research type and the research instruments: the questionnaire and the interview. The second part is devoted to the results of the investigation, which are analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. By the end, the

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researcher tries to interpret the results and provide answers to the research questions by confirming or nullifying the research hypotheses.

Chapter One: Literature Review

Chapter One: literature Review

1.1. Introduction

1.2. Collaborative Learning

1.3. Collaborative Learning vs. Cooperative Learning

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1.1. Introduction

Collaborative learning is educational technique of teaching and learning that involves groups of students working together to complete an activity, solve problems, and construct knowledge. Macaro (1997) defines collaborative learning as a situation when learners are encouraged to achieve common learning goals by working together rather than with the teacher and when they demonstrate that they value and respect each other's language input.

Indeed, collaborative learning helps teachers to create a different learning environment that helps to develop students' personal skills and to encourage them to take control of their own learning i.e. create autonomous students.

The following chapter deals with the theoretical aspect of this research. It focuses on defining mainly collaborative learning including its basic elements, types and methods. It, also, sheds light on learner's autonomy, presenting its characteristics, importance, and the teacher's role to foster it. Additionally, it highlights the use of collaborative learning to develop learner's autonomy.

1.2. Collaborative Learning:

Generally speaking, collaborative learning reforms classroom learning by changing the students' role from passive to active to construct knowledge.

Collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. Usually, students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product (Smith and Macgregor, 1992)

Collaborative learning is an educational teaching technique that gathers students in small groups in order to fulfill a designed activity or reach a certain goal. According

to Dillenbourg (1999), it is “a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together”. Moreover, CL is, also, defined as the work of individuals as members of groups, and each member is linked to mental, emotional, and behavioural functions to achieve the objectives of the community and systems whose clear objectives help learners in the decision-making process and increase the sense of community. (Swan et al, 2006)

Furthermore, it is a learning approach in which the students help each other’s academic development by forming little groups for a mutual goal (Prichard, Bizo, & Stratford, 2006; Slavin, 2011), in which they are responsible for the group mate learning as well as their own learning.

1.3. Collaborative Learning vs. Cooperative Learning:

Many people fail in distinguishing between ‘collaborative’ and ‘cooperative’ learning yet they are sometimes used interchangeably. Oxford (1997) stated that cooperative learning is more structured and directive to students about how to work in teams than collaborative learning; it involves students working together to reach a common goal under conditions such as positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to face interaction, appropriate use of cooperative skills and group processing.

Panitz (1996) differentiated these two terms in the context of learning:

“Collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect the abilities and contributions of their peers, [whereas] cooperation is a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of an end product or goal through people working together in groups”.

Collaborative learning involves the joint work of the involved parts but does not involve the individual work of each one; the individual contributions are not modified by other work group members, whereas, the cooperative work presents the characteristic of interaction and joint work of the individual work.

However, Dillenbourg (1999) mentioned that collaborative learning involves two or more learners who are sharing responsibility, taking decisions and acting together in order to learn. Whereas, cooperative learning is defined as the structure that often requires some steps that helps people to achieve a specific goal. In cooperative learning, the emphasis is on the achievement of the product while the collaborative learning focuses more on the process of working together.

1.4. Basic Elements in Collaborative Learning:

Collaborative learning is not just learners in groups; in fact, it requires some basic elements to call a group learning a collaborative learning. Johnson et al. (1990) pointed out four basic elements in collaborative learning.

- a) **Positive interdependence:** group members need to rely on one another to achieve the learning goals. They have to believe that they are working together in a way that ensures that they all succeed together.
- b) **Considerable interaction:** the group members help and encourage each other to learn. They explain what they understand and share knowledge. They also have to interactively provide one another with feedback teach and encourage one another.
- c) **Individual accountability and personal responsibility:** All students in a group are held accountable for doing their share of the work and for mastery of all of the material to be learned.
- d) **Social skills:** learners are supported to improve and practice trust-building, leadership, decision-making, and communication.

1.5. How do Learners Collaborate?

Collaboration in classroom takes a variety of forms, according to Ernesto Maccaro (1997) there are three main forms namely: Teacher directed collaboration, Learner directed collaboration, and Learner generated collaboration.

- a. **Teacher directed collaboration:** is the most category used in classrooms. The teacher's premeditated intention for a particular type of class behavior or group behavior.
- b. **Learner directed collaboration:** this form of collaboration is when learners are required to form groups and prepare an activity eg; a play. Although the initial directive and instruction comes from the teacher the preparation stage is carried out by the learners independently.
- c. **Learner generated collaboration:** is probably the category which occur the most. But, no literature is available about it.

1.6. Types of Collaborative Learning Techniques:

Collaborative learning is based on the idea that learning is a social act where learners talk, share, and work together to achieve their learning goals. Indeed, to have a successful collaborative learning researchers have introduced many types of technique and activities. These are the main used types:

- a) **Think, Pair, Share:** is a collaborative learning strategy in which students work together to solve a problem or answer a question. It requires students to first think individually about the topic. Then, discuss the possible answers with a partner. Then, focus attention and engage students to share the right answers.
- b) **Informal collaborative learning groups:** it is based on how learners are organised. As its name implies, the students are divided randomly into small groups and each group is asked to do the task. This type of collaboration helps to improve the amount of material retained by students.

- c) Formal collaborative learning groups: this type is also based on how learners are organised. Learners are divided into specific groups, and they are required to stay together for many weeks or months to work on an extended project.
- d) Collaborative base groups: are stable, long-term groups; at least for a year. The group members are required to fulfill a given activity and share information. In most cases, every group members meet periodically to check on their progress. .
- e) Jigsaw collaborative learning: The basis of this type is to help each learner to become an expert in a subject and then to teach that information to the others. To do so, the teacher organized the students into small groups and gives the lesson resources, after a given period the teacher rearranged the learner in new groups to share the gained knowledge. It emphasizes interaction among group members thus it improves communication skills.

1.7. Learners Autonomy:

The word ‘autonomous’ comes from the Greek words ‘auto’ and ‘nomus’ referring to someone or something which lives by his/her own rule. The word ‘autonomy’ was firstly used in the fields of politics and moral philosophy. Otherwise, it has entered the field of learning and teaching through the council of Europe’s Modern Languages Project which was found in 1971.

Autonomy can be broadly defined as the capacity to take control over one’s own learning. It is “the ability to take charge of one's own learning, which is specified as to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning” (Holec, 1981, 3). This includes taking responsibility of all the learning process: the learning objectives, the content, the methods used and in the end a self-evaluation is required.

Indeed learner autonomy has been highly debated between researchers and its definition has been developed through time. First, it is generally considered as an ability of knowing how to learn (Wenden, 1991). Second, it is regarded as an ability to ‘control’ one’s learning activities (Cotterall, 1995). Third, it is seen as an ability for ‘detachment’ (Little, 1991) or ability to learn “without the involvement of a teacher” (Dickinson, 1987). Fourth, it is said to be a “capacity to make and carry out choices” (Littlewood, 1996) or an ability to perform rational decision-making processes over learning activities (Hunt, Gow, & Barnes, 1989). More specifically, it is viewed as an ability to give responses beyond usual instructions (Boud, 1988).

Additionally, according to Benson and Voller (1997) learner autonomy may be illustrated through four versions; namely:

- A. Technical perspective: emphasizing skills or strategies for unsupervised learning: specific kinds of activity or process such as the ‘metacognitive’, ‘cognitive’, ‘social’ and other strategies identified by Oxford, 1990.
- B. Psychological perspective: emphasizing broader attitudes and cognitive abilities which enable the learner to take responsibility for his/her own learning
- C. Political perspective: emphasizing empowerment or emancipation of learners by giving them control over the content and processes of their learning (Palfreyman, 2003)
- D. Social: the capacity to interact and collaborate with others.

However, learners’ autonomy does not aim to reduce the teachers’ role. In fact, the teachers have an important role in boosting learners’ autonomy, Little stated that: “in formal educational contexts learners do not automatically accept responsibility for their learning; teachers must help them to do so.” (Little, 1996:176)

1.7.1. Misconceptions about Learner Autonomy

Little (1990) stated that there are several terms used by some to refer to autonomy term in a wrong way. Therefore he listed the statements to correct this misconception:

- Autonomy is not a synonym for self-instruction; in other words, it is not limited to learning without a teacher.
- In the classroom context, autonomy does not entail an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher; it is not a matter of letting the learners get on with things as best they can.
- On the other hand, autonomy is not something that teachers do to learners, that is, it is not another teaching method.
- Autonomy is not a single, easily described behavior.
- Autonomy is not a steady state achieved by learners.

1.7.2. The Characteristics of Autonomous Learners

Autonomous learners can understand the purpose of their learning program, certainly recognize the conscientiousness for their learning; divide the set of learning objectives, take initiatives in planning and implementing learning activities, and regularly review their learning and evaluate its effectiveness (Little 2003).

Depending on little description and according to other researchers, the characteristics of autonomous learners can be summarized as following:

- Autonomous learners have insights into their learning methods and schemes.
- Autonomous learners take a vigorous attitude to the learning task at hand.
- Autonomous learners are eager to take risks, i.e., to connect in the target language at all costs.
- The autonomous learner takes on a proactive part in the learning process.

In a nutshell, autonomous learners have confidence in themselves, good foresight, love to learn, plan to learn, knowing how to learn and take responsibility of their learning process.

1.7.3. The Importance of Learner's Autonomy

Nowadays, autonomy got an increased interest in different educational fields. Learner autonomy has benefits in helping learners to be more creative and fulfil their learning goals independently. The importance of autonomy has been debated by many researchers, like Harmer (2007) who suggested that to recompense for the limits of classroom time and to enhance the chances for successful language learning, learners need to be encouraged to develop their own learning strategies so that as far as possible, they become autonomous learners.

However, Holec (1987) pointed out that learners autonomy allows to learn freely and apply their knowledge and skills outside the immediate context of learning. Thus autonomous learning extends beyond a school context: it is a life-long process of constantly developing awareness.

Autonomy allows learners to be more efficient in their learning, because the learning will be more personal and focused. Moreover autonomous learners are more proactive in their learning, they will usually succeed even though they may not always feel positive towards their learning or may sometimes lack motivation.

Autonomous learners are able to learn from their own successes and failures by strategies that will help them to be more competent learners in the future (Crabbe, 1999).

1.8. Teachers' Roles in Fostering Learner Autonomy

It is important to highlight the main role of the teachers in enhancing learners' autonomy. Indeed, teachers are expected to act as counsellors or facilitators in a

classroom where learners are supposed to be highly active and responsible for the whole learning process.

Little (1995) stated that it is difficult for learners in formal education contexts to accept responsibility immediately for their learning, thus, it is the teachers role to help them by equipping them with sufficient materials and with opportunities to practice.

Additionally, according to Voller (1997), the teacher's roles in promoting autonomous language learning are: facilitator, counselor and resource.

1. **Facilitator:** is usually considered as a helper who makes learning easier to happen. A facilitator provides the psycho-social support by being supportive, helping learners to overcome obstacles, being prepared to enter into a dialogue with learners and raising learners' awareness of the importance of independent learning (Voller, 1997).
2. **Counselor:** It refers to someone who provides advice to those who need it. Counseling assists learners to talk to someone about their achievements, problems and the ways to solve these problems (Kongchan, 2008).
Voller (1997) stated that counseling emphasizes on a one- to-one interaction. The role of a counselor is more like a supervisor who helps learners to be more self-directed.
3. **Resource:** A teacher as a resource means "a source of knowledge and expertise" (Benson & Voller, 1997). In other words, a resource makes his or her knowledge and expertise available to the learners whenever it is necessary.

Moreover, Yan (2012) added another role to the teacher which is manager and organizer; he stated that the role of the teacher as manager and organizer is considered as the first and foremost role teacher needs to play in an autonomous leaning setting.

These different roles help the teacher to develop learners' autonomy. Indeed, Nunan (1997) proposed a model of five degrees of the development learners' autonomy based on learners' actions, namely:

Level	Learner action	Content	Process
1	Awareness.	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical and content of the materials that they are using.	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles /strategies
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer	Learners make choices among a range of options
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning programme	Learners modify/adapt tasks
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives	Learners create their own tasks
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world beyond	Learners become teachers and researchers

Table1. Five-level Model of Learner Autonomy (Nunan, 1997, 195)

The teacher's role changes gradually from a provider of information, promoter of students' learning and thinking, to a guide, motivator for students to think creatively, to an adviser in Nunan model.

1.9. Collaborative Learning for Developing Learner Autonomy

Macaro (1997:89) explains that through collaborative learning, learner can be empowered to be more responsible and highly controlled on their learning and have a greater awareness of the learning process itself. Through collaborative learning, students can open mind to learn in social interaction so that it could improve their critical analysis. As well, Goodsell et al. (1992) explain that in collaborative learning, students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions or meanings, or creating a product. Hence, learners have the chance to take charge of their learning without the involvement of the teacher.

1.10. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a theoretical overview mainly on collaborative learning as a teaching technique to develop learner's autonomy. First of all, the researcher has presented a definition of collaborative learning including the different between collaborative and cooperative learning, basic elements of collaborative learning and types of collaborative techniques

Additionally, the researcher has presented learners' autonomy definition including its importance, its main characteristics and the teacher's role in developing learner's autonomy.

The next chapter will be devoted to the analysis and interpretation of data. Furthermore, the chapter will seek to answer the research questions by confirming or disconfirming the research hypotheses.

Chapter Two: Research design and procedures

Chapter Two: Research Design and Procedure

2.1. Introduction

2.2. Research design

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2.2.2. Research Approach

2.2.2.1. Quantitative Approach

2.2.2.2. Qualitative Approach

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B. Students' Profile

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2.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

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2.3.2. Analysis of Teacher Interview

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2.3.3. Summary of the Results

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2.1. Introduction

The educational system nowadays put a great emphasis on promoting learners autonomy. Different teachers are using diverse methods to encourage students “to determine the objectives, to define the contents and progressions, to select methods and techniques to be used” in their learning (Holec, 1981, p. 3). Indeed, researchers and scholars have indicated that one of best approaches to enhance learners’ autonomy is collaborative learning. Therefore, in order to explore the usefulness of collaborative learning in enhancing learners’ autonomy in EFL classrooms the researcher has opted for a certain methodology.

Thus, this chapter outlines the methodology design used in this study. It aims to describe the data collection procedures that the researcher used in this research. Additionally, it provides a description of the case study and the sample population. It also contains a detailed description of the used instruments, namely an oral interview for teachers and a questionnaire for students. Lastly, the collected data will be analyse both qualitatively and quantitatively.

2.2. Research design

Undoubtedly, a research design is a detailed outline of how an investigation will take place. It includes how data will be collected, what and how instruments will be used, and the intended means for analyzing data collected. According to Kerlinger (1986), “Research in the plan, structure and strategy of study conceived in order to get answers to research questions and also to control variance”. Moreover, Mc Millan & Schumacher (1993: 31) pointed out that a research design describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom and under what conditions data were collected. It aims at providing valid and accurate answers to research questions.

2.2.1. Case study

The present study is an exploratory case study that aims at identifying the main effects of collaborative learning on learners' autonomy. In fact, a case study is a research methodology that has commonly used in social sciences. According to Yin (1984: 23) "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used".

It is, also, defined as a credible, valid research design that facilitates the exploration of complex issues. It investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context. Case studies are based on an in-depth investigation of a single individual, group or event to explore the causes of underlying principles.

2.2.2. Research Approach

In any research paper, the general goal adopted by the researcher is to give answers to the research questions in a valid way using a particular research approach based on the type of the research. Accordingly, there are three basic approaches to research, quantitative approach, qualitative approach and mixed methods. With reference to what has been mentioned before, this research study is carried out in order to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative learning techniques in enhancing learners' autonomy at university, more precisely for first year master students.

2.2.2.1. Quantitative Approach

Quantitative research is a formal objective, systematic process in which numerical data are used to obtain information about the world. It is used to describe variables; to examine relationships among variables; to determine cause and effect interactions between variables (Burns & Grove. 2005: 23). In addition, it is used to

answer questions on relationships within measurable variables with an intention to explain, predict and control a phenomenon (Leedy 1993).

Additionally, Quantitative approach is based on testing a theory, measured with numbers, and analysed using statistical techniques and it particularly emphasizes objectivity and reproducibility (Smith et al., 1979)

Quantitative approach involves data collection procedures that results primarily in numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by statistical methods. Typical example: survey research using a questionnaire analyzed by statistical software like SPSS. (Dörnyei, 2007: 25).

2.2.2.2. Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research is a type of social science research that collects and works with non- numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that, it helps the researcher to understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places. Hancock and Algozzine define qualitative approach as, “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at through statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (2007: 86).

According to Dörnyei (2007), qualitative approach involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analyzed by non-statistical methods. Typical example: interview research, with the transcribed recordings analyzed by qualitative content analysis. It is concerned with assessing the participant attitudes, opinions, and behaviors subjectively. It is usually conducted in natural setting and focuses on studying people behaving in real life situations.

2.2.2.3. Mixed Methods Approach

Mixed methods research represents research that involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of

studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007: 5)

The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches will provide a complete understanding of the research problem than either approach alone (Given, 2008: 527). Therefore, the researcher has used this approach to assess the effectiveness of collaborative learning techniques in promoting learners' autonomy.

2.2.3. Sample Population

When researching an aspect in social sciences researchers simply cannot collect data from every single individual in most cases. Instead, they choose a smaller sample of individuals that represent the larger group. A sample is a subset of a population that is used to represent the entire group as a whole. It is a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole (Webster, 1985).

In this current research, the researcher tries to assess the effects of collaborative learning techniques on EFL students autonomy, therefore, the sample was selected randomly from the total population. This sample was chosen from second year master students at the department of English at SALHI Ahmed university center.

a) Teachers' Profile:

The researcher has tried to interview five EFL teachers from SALHI Ahmed university centre but due to some issues in the department of English, teachers were always busy in meetings and sessions. As a result, the researcher has interviewed only three teachers.

Teachers were selected randomly regardless their age; sex or experience in teaching the English language. The first teacher is a young lady who has been teaching English for eight years. She used to teach methodology, linguistics and applied linguistics. The second teacher is, also, a young woman who has been teaching English for eight years. She used to teach grammar, TTU, and teaching methodologies and communication. It should be mentioned that both teachers used collaborative learning techniques while teaching. The third teacher is a young lady who has been teaching English for fourteen years. She is teaching mainly linguistics and ESP, she teaches also applied linguistics, neurolinguistics and corpus linguistics.

b) Students' Profile

The researcher had randomly taken twenty EFL learners aged between 20 and 35 years old (males and females) first year master from SALHI Ahmed university center. They are studying different modules like ICT, educational psychology, applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, in which collaborative techniques was used sometimes.

2.2.4. Instrumentation

In order to answer the research problem, researchers need to collect data using different instruments. For this work, the researcher has used an exploratory case study in order to explore the usefulness of collaborative learning in enhancing learners' autonomy in EFL classrooms. Therefore, a triangulation technique is used to improve validity. Indeed triangulation occurs when the researcher uses more than one data collection method. In this research, an interview for teachers and a questionnaire for learners are used to collect data.

2.2.4.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire is, generally, a document consisting of a limited number of questions or other forms of items designed especially to ask for information appropriate to explain and test research problems (Jonker and Pennink, 2010, as cited

in Yaiche, 2013). It is a written document employed in order to collect large amounts of data from a large sample of informants during a small period. Dornyei (2007:101) pointed out: “that the popularity of questionnaires is due to the fact that they are relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile, and capable of gathering a large amount of information, quickly in a form that is readily possible”.

Depending on how they are structured, planned and ordered, the questions or items used in a questionnaire must be designed carefully to obtain valuable qualitative and quantifiable results.

2.2.4.1.1. The Design of the Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaires is collect data about learner’s autonomy. It, also, seeks to know learners’ perceptions and attitudes towards CL techniques. Therefore, the questionnaire start with an introductory paragraph to inform the respondents about the purpose of the questionnaire and to ask them to answer the questions appropriately by putting a tick on the choice or express their opinions.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first one seeks to attain demographic information about the participants, mainly age and gender. The second part consists of eleven questions. Two of them are open-ended because they required detailed answer in which the respondents express their opinions. The other questions are close ended; five questions are dichotomous where the informants answer either with yes or no, and the last four questions are multiple-choice in which the respondents are required to choose the appropriate answer.

The first question in the second part seeks to know how often learner practice on classroom. The second and the third questions try to see if the learners are autonomous. The fourth, the fifth, the sixth, the seventh and the eighth attempt to gather information about CL techniques, how do learners prefer to learn and is it difficult to learn in groups.

The ninth and the tenth questions sought to find the difficulties and the advantages of CL techniques while the last question asks about the respondents opinions towards the usefulness of CL in developing learner’s autonomy.

2.2.4.2. Interview

An interview is typically a face-to-face conversation between a researcher and a participant involving a transfer of information to the interviewer (Cresswell, 2012). According to Cohen et al (2000:267) Interviews enable participants –be they interviewers or interviewees to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live in, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view.

Actually, researchers have agreed that there are many types of interviewing, such as, one to one interview, group focus interviews, telephone interview and email interview. For this work the researcher has adopted one to one interview, in which the interviewer asks only one interviewee and records its answers.

2.2.4.2.1. Description of the Interview

The researcher has selected structured interview which consists of ten questions mainly open-ended. In addition, the interviewer started first with the informed consent to give the interviewee the purpose of this interview. It should be mentioned that the interviewer has used note taking to record information.

The first two questions are personal questions asked to get information about the interviewees. Questions number three and four seeks to know how teacher used to teach and if they prefer learner-centered approach. Whereas, the questions number five, six and seven talk about CL, i.e., do learners prefer it, which types the teacher usually use and what are the advantages of using it. The eighth and the ninth questions try to see whether CL helped learners to be more autonomous and get more self-control or not. Finally, the last question requires the interviewee to summarize his experience with CL.

2.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

As was previously stated, the researcher has collected data using two research instruments; questionnaires for students and interview for teachers. The collected data will be systematically analysed and interpreted in order to answer the research questions.

2.3.1. Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

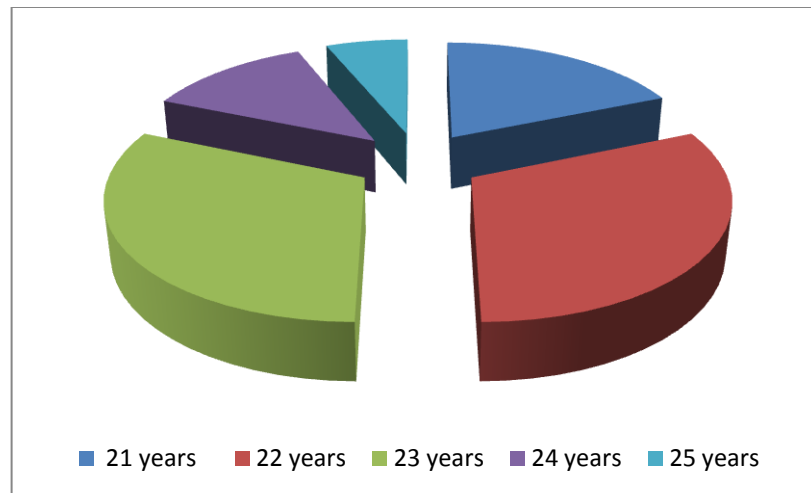
The researcher attempted to administer the questionnaire to twenty students from 1st year master, but not all of them responded. Thus, only sixteen students answered the questionnaire.

The administration of the questionnaire was made in the second and third week of April during the meeting of students and teachers to ensure that all the learners would fill and gave back the questionnaires. Indeed, filling the questionnaires took about five to ten minutes.

After administering the questionnaire, the researcher has treated the collected data in Pie-charts and analysed the items according to their appearance and order in the questionnaire.

❖ Part One

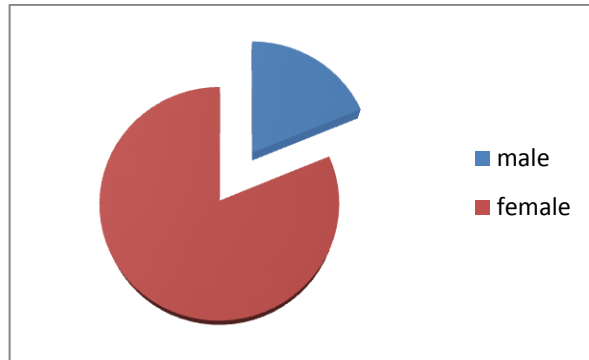
➤ Item One: students' age



Pie-chart: 2.1. Students' Age

As it is mentioned before, the questionnaire is distributed to sixteen students and all of them gave it back. The results show that all the participants are young adults aged between twenty and twenty five years.

- Item two: students' gender

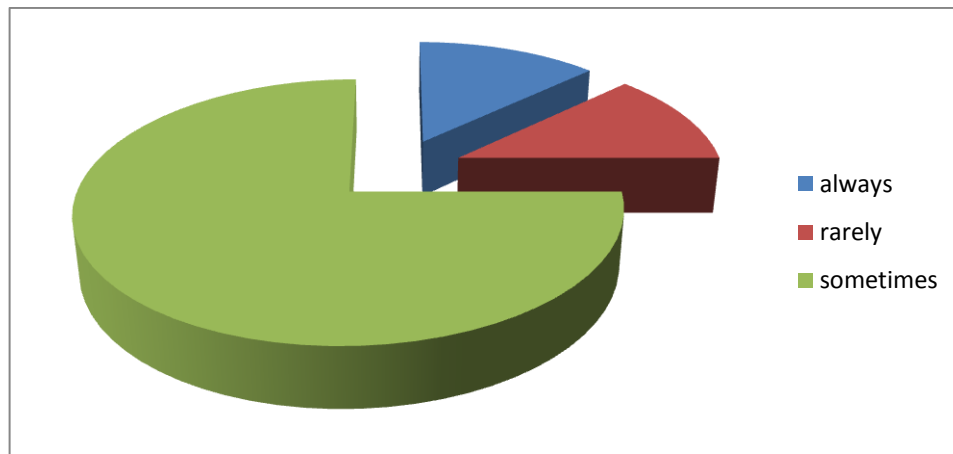


Pie-chart: 2.2. Students' Gender

As was previously stated, this population consists of sixteen students. The pie-chart shows that 81% are females and 19% are males. Thus, the collected data reflect both sexes of informants.

❖ Part Two:

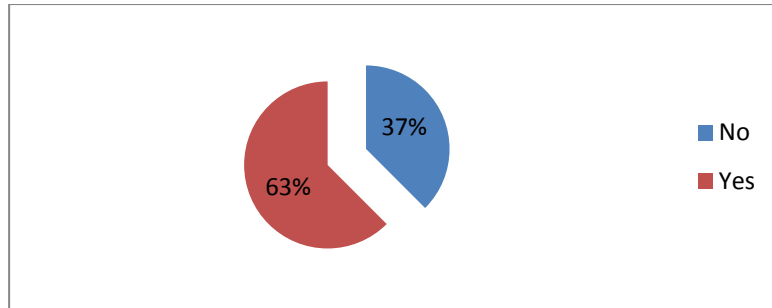
- Item one: how often do you participate in your classroom?



Pie-chart: 2.3. Students' Participation in their Classroom

As it is presented in the above pie-chart, (75%) of students participate sometimes in their classroom and (13%) of students participate always, while only (12%) from the sample said that they participate rarely in their classroom.

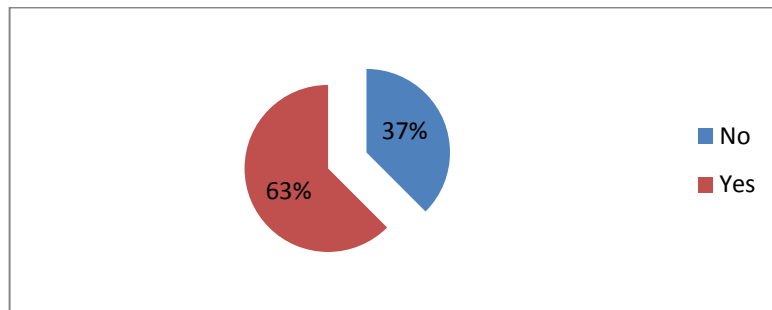
- Item two: do you consider yourself as autonomous learner?



Pie-chart: 2.4. EFL learners as autonomous learners

The results of the above pie-chart shows that (63%) of the informants consider themselves as autonomous learners. However, (37%) of the informants consider themselves as non-autonomous learners.

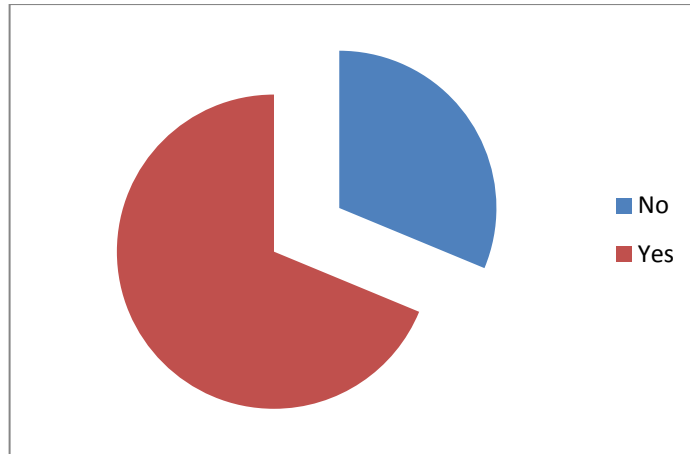
- Item three: do you evaluate yourself regularly?



Pie-chart: 2.5. EFL Learners Self Evaluation

The results show that (32%) the informants evaluate themselves regularly and (50%) of the informants evaluate themselves sometimes, while only (19%) do not evaluate themselves at all.

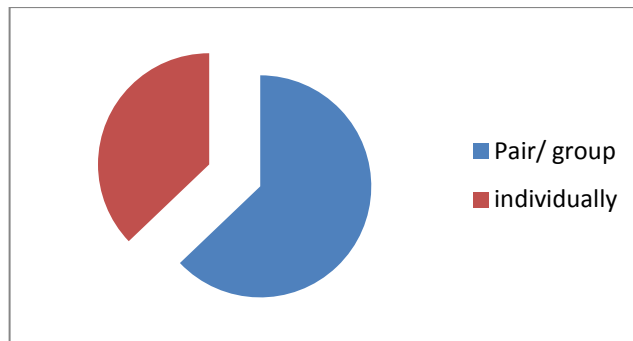
- Item four: do you like collaborative learning?



Pie-chart: 2.6. EFL Learners' Perception Regarding Collaborative Learning

Actually, this is a very important question, and a negative response to it may ruin this research work. Fortunately, the pie-chart result shows that (69%) of the participants do like collaborative learning and only (31%) of participants do not like collaborative learning.

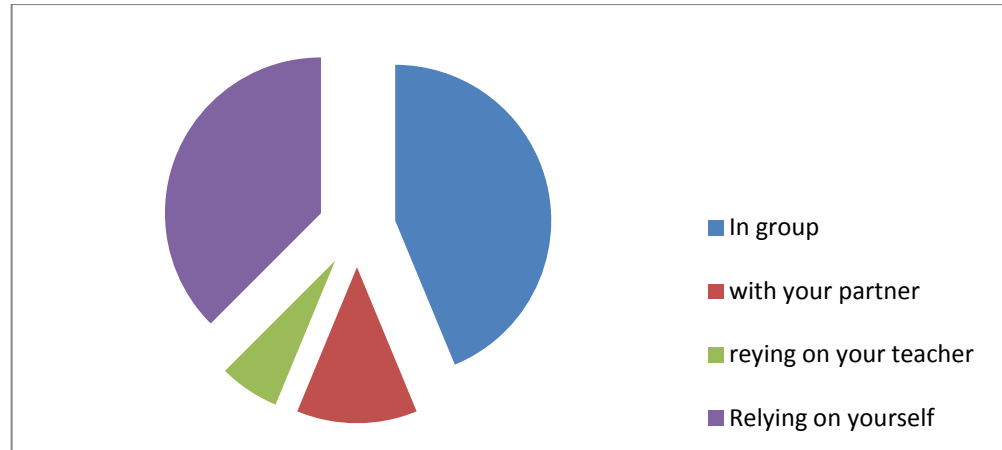
- Item five: do you prefer to learn in class: individually or in pair/ group?



Pie-chart: 2.7. EFL Learners' Preferable Way for Learning in Class

According to the result of the above pie-chart, the majority respondents prefer to learn in pair/ group, since (63%) of the respondents said that they prefer to learn in pair/ group while only (37%) of the respondents prefer to learn individually.

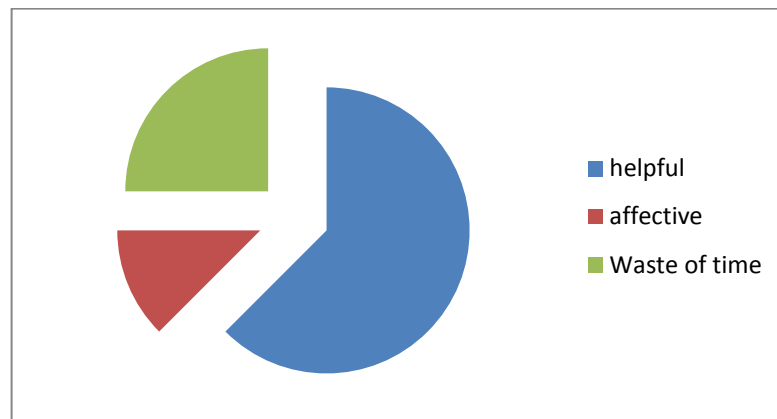
- Item six: you learn best: relying on yourself, relying on your teacher, with your partner or in group?



Pie-chart: 2.8. EFL Learners' Best Way to Learn

The above pie-chart demonstrates that (44%) of EFL learners' learn best in group, and (37%) learn best with their partners. While, a minority of (13%) said that they learn best relying on themselves and only (6%) reported that they learn best relying on the teacher.

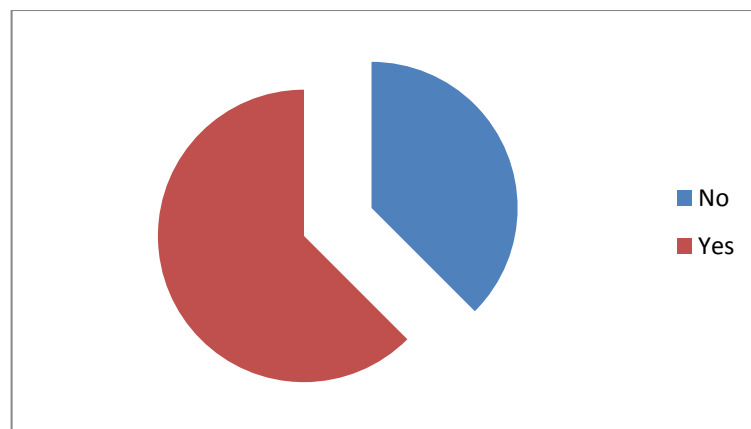
- Item seven: how would you describe the process of working in pair/ group?



Pie-chart: 2.9. Description of the Process of Working in Pair/ Group

As it is shown above, the majority of students (63%) stated the process of working in pair/ groups is helpful, (13%) of students find it affective and (25%) reported that it is waste of time.

- Item eight: do you find difficulties when working in collaborative way?



Pie-chart: 2.10. The Amount of Difficulties of Working in Collaborative Way

It is noticeable from the above pie-chart that (63%) of students do not find any difficulties when working in collaborative way, but (37%) of students reported that they face some difficulties when using CL.

- Item nine: what are the different problems you face while learning collaboratively?

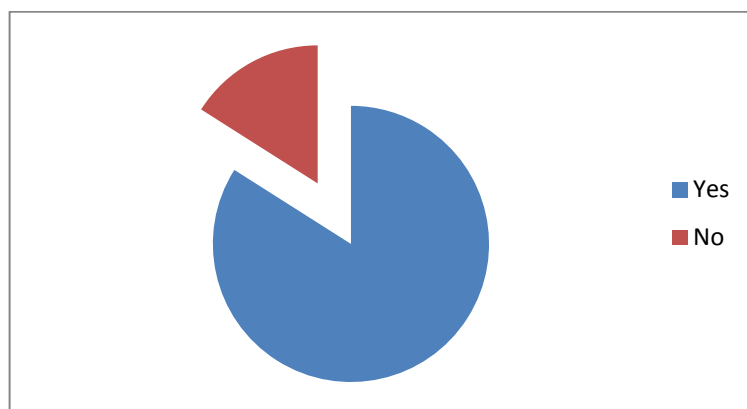
Regarding this question, some students stated that they do not face any problems when learning collaboratively. However, the majority of the respondents agree that the main problems they face are organizing the work, having many ideas to discuss and disagreements between the group members. It should be noted that (12,5%) of the students did not answer this question.

- Item ten: what are the advantages of using CL techniques in EFL classrooms?

Concerning the last question, the students have proposed some benefits of using CL techniques in EFL classroom. The majority of them have agreed that CL techniques helped them to improve communication, social and critical thinking skills, discuss different ideas and exchange information. Additionally, the respondents reported that through CL activities they get encouraged to talk in public and express their points of

view freely. Moreover, the informants stated that working collaboratively facilitates the difficulties and develops understanding. It should be mentioned that (16%) of the students did not answer this question.

- Item eleven: does the use of CL techniques help you to become autonomous learners?



Pie-chart: 2.11. Developing Autonomy through CL Techniques

From the above pie-chart, it can be inferred that CL techniques help EFL learners to be autonomous; the majority of the respondents (84%) agree that the use of CL techniques helped them to be more autonomous. They stated that collaborative learning facilitate the learning process, encourage them to express and share knowledge, understand more the purpose of learning and learn more without relying on the teacher.

However, (16%) of the informants reported that CL techniques did not helped them to be autonomous learners, since they find collaborative learning is a waste of time and they prefer to learn relying on the teacher.

2.3.1.2. Discussion of the Findings

The analysis of the collected data from the students' questionnaire showed that most of the respondents, who were young adults, have positive attitudes towards the use of CL techniques in learning. The quantitative analysis demonstrates that the majority of the informants prefer to learn collaboratively and they rely more on their

partner or group mates to learn. Additionally, most of students describe working in pair or in group as a very helpful process.

Moreover, the analysis of the qualitative data revealed that most of the students do not find difficulties in working collaboratively. However, they may face some problem especially in organizing the group, having lot of ideas to share and talking all together.

In addition, the respondents claimed that CL techniques helped them to express themselves more, understand the learning goal, develop their critical thinking and increase their leadership skills. Furthermore, the majority of students of informants (84%) stated that the use of CL techniques helped them to be more autonomous as collaborative learning allows them to learn how to manage and divide time, chose methods and the learning materials, and control their learning.

2.3.2. Analysis of Teacher Interview

The results of the interview; which aimed at gathering in depth data about the effect of collaborative learning in developing learners' autonomy and confirming the information gathered from other sources; have been also subject to discussion.

As it has been mentioned previously, the researcher has used a structured interview, i.e., the in interviewer has used a pre-prepared outline and did not use probing techniques.

The interview was conducted with three teachers, two teachers have taught for eight years and the other for fourteen years. These teachers prefer learner-centered techniques in teaching and they use CL techniques in their classrooms.

2.3.2.1. The Results

The interview questions have revealed a good amount of data that are analysed as follow.

- Items one and two: for how long have you been teaching? What are the modules that you used to teach?

Two respondents have been teaching for eight years and the other teacher has been teaching for fourteen years. These respondents taught namely methodology, applied linguistics, neuro-linguistics grammar, educational psychology, linguistics and corpus linguistics.

- Items three and four: how do you generally like to teach? Do you prefer teaching through learner-centered approaches?

All the respondents stated that they prepare the lesson and deliver it; also, they try to engage students in collaborative working groups and discuss the main points together. Moreover, the three interviewees highly prefer to use learner-centered approaches.

- Item five: do students prefer to work individually or collaboratively?

The first informants declared that working collaboratively, indeed, facilitates the lesson and helps learners to express themselves more. Thus, learners prefer to work collaboratively. The other teachers mentioned, it depends on the module and the learner himself, yet most of students usually like to work collaboratively more than individually.

- Item six: what is your most used type of collaborative learning?

The three interviewees usually use think-pair-share technique in their classrooms; sometimes they use collaborative base groups or formal CL groups.

- Item seven: what are the benefits of CL?

Regarding this questions, the teachers said that CL is very beneficial, especially in research projects. It enhances learners' self-confidence, helps the learner to feel more comfortable to answer with no fear and develops social and leadership skills.

- Item eight: after using CL methods, have you noticed that your learners get more self-control?

For this question, the three interviewees agree that the development will be noticed if the method is used as a basic strategy during almost all the sessions. However, teachers have noticed that some learners get more self-control, and they understand the learning goals and take charge in their learning process.

- Item nine: does collaborative learning help the students to be more autonomous? The respondents stated that if CL techniques are used appropriately, students will be more autonomous. Through collaborative learning students take charge of the learning process and be responsible of all the decision they made for their learning.
- Item ten: would you please summarize your experience with collaborative learning?

All the interviewees reported that in the beginning, the task was not easy, but through experience, they learn how to control the class and help students. In addition, one of the interviewee added that during the first session she evaluates the students to estimate which strategies she will use with them, then when working collaboratively she manages and organizes the class.

Moreover, the three teachers claimed that CL strategies facilitate the lesson, make the session more enjoyable and encourage their learners to overcome shyness and take control of the learning. Actually, through CL, learners understand more, exchange various ideas and express their opinions freely.

2.3.2.2. Summary of the Results

To summarize, the interview results indicate that all the respondents, who are university English teachers, prefer to use learner-centered approaches and they have a good experience with CL techniques. The researcher has deduced that these teachers

promote learners' autonomy through collaborative learning and encourage learners to be more responsible of their learning.

However, the data obtained from the interview fit well with the gathered information from the learners' questionnaires. For instance, the benefits of collaborative learning stated by teachers are approximately the same benefits that learners mentioned. In addition, the researcher has noted that both teachers and learners agree that collaborative learning enhance learners' awareness about the learning process and develop their autonomy.

2.4. Data Interpretation

The students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview helped the researcher to collect a good amount of information concerning the effect of collaborative learning in developing learners' autonomy. Thus, an interpretation of the main results obtained from the research instruments is supposed to provide answers to the research questions and conforms or informs the suggestions expressed in the hypotheses.

Regarding the first hypothesis which states that EFL teachers prefer the use collaborative learning techniques, all the teachers in the interview agreed that the majority of students favor learning through collaborative techniques. Additionally, the previously collected data from the learners' questionnaire showed that the majority of students like collaborative learning and prefer to learn collaboratively more than individually. For validating these results the fourth, fifth, and sixth questions of the questionnaire have been used. The results revealed that the most of EFL students learn best in group. Moreover, there was a general perception among the majority of the students that learning collaboratively is a helpful process. Consequently, the first hypothesis was confirmed.

Concerning the second hypothesis which states that Collaborative learning has a great role in improving students' autonomy in EFL classes, the interview results

revealed that students get more self control after using collaborative learning, and through collaborative learning the students are more autonomous. Furthermore, the questionnaire results showed that the main advantages of collaborative learning are: developing critical thinking, social and leadership skills, enhancing awareness and encouraging the students to take charge in the learning process. These advantages create autonomous learners. In addition, the items eight and nine from the interview showed that collaborative learning enhances learners' autonomy since it gives learners the ability to take control of their learning and the chance to make decisions, set learning goals, and use the learning materials. Thus, one may deduce that the use of CL improve EFL learners' autonomy.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented the data collection methods and sample chosen for this research; then an analysis and discussion of the collected data were made. Firstly, the researcher presented a clear description of the research design and procedures, and then the researcher introduced the sample population chosen for data collection.

Finally, the researcher analyzed and interpreted those data quantitatively and qualitatively. Based on the entire findings, the research hypotheses have been tested and conformed.

General Conclusion

Creating autonomous learners is increasingly becoming a need in today's classes. EFL teachers seek to develop and enhance learners' autonomy using different methods and techniques, mostly, collaborative learning.

The major concern of this research work was the effects of collaborative learning in relation to students' autonomy, thus, to reach this end; the researcher has presented a clear literature about the two key words: collaborative learning and learners' autonomy. Scholars' definitions of collaborative learning have been provided, in addition to the differences between collaborative and cooperative, the basic elements of CL and its types, and forms of collaboration. Moreover, definitions of the term learners' autonomy have been mentioned, in addition to its misconceptions, importance. Also, the researcher has presented the characteristics of autonomous learners, the role of the teacher and the use of CL to improve learner's autonomy.

The objective of this research is to investigate the effects of collaborative learning in developing EFL learners' autonomy in Naama university center. In order to answer the research questions and test the proposed hypotheses, a case study has been designed in addition to the quantitative and the qualitative approach for data collection and analysis.

The researcher collected data using questionnaire for students and interview for teachers. The selected sample was a group of first year master students chosen randomly for the purpose of making generalizations. Furthermore, all the other procedures of the design of this work, including the description of the sample population, the research instruments, its description are provided in the second chapter.

Along the last part of the second chapter of this research project, the investigator attempts to analyze and discuss the obtained data from both the questionnaire addressed to EFL students and the teachers' interview, the main findings of the questionnaire indicated that the use of CL in classes gives the learners the opportunity to express themselves, take charge of their learning, and make decision in the learning process. Likewise, the interview results showed that through CL techniques the researcher noticed that the learners become more active and autonomous.

General Conclusion

Indeed, the collected data helped the researcher to deduce collaborative learning is a beneficial method that develops and improve learners' autonomy. Furthermore this result encourages the researcher to generalize that the use of collaborative techniques in EFL classes improves learners' autonomy.

Finally, based on the results interpretations, teachers and students may face number of challenges when dealing with collaborative learning, thus, the researcher suggest that the teachers need to know more about CL how does work and how to manage the class before during, and after applying this methods. Additionally, collaborative learning has many types that the teacher may use according to the lesson

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to assess the effectiveness of collaborative learning to develop EFL students' autonomy. Therefore, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions by putting a tick (✓) on the appropriate choice or expressing your opinions where necessary.

Thank you for your collaboration

I. Part one:

1. Age:
2. Gender: male female

II. Part two:

1. How often do you practice on your classroom?
Always sometimes rarely
2. Do you consider yourself as autonomous learner?
Yes No
3. Do you evaluate yourself regularly?
Yes No Sometimes
4. Do you like collaborative learning?
Yes No
5. How do you prefer to learn in class?
Individually In pair/group
6. You learn best:
Relying on yourself With my partner
In group Relying on the teacher
7. How would you describe the process of working in pair/group?
Helpful affective waste of time

8. Do you find difficulties when working in collaborative way?

Yes No

9. What are the different problems you face while learning collaboratively?

.....
.....

10. What are the advantages of using CL techniques in EFL classrooms?

.....
.....
.....

11. In your opinion, does the use of CL techniques help you to become autonomous learners?

Yes No

Why?

.....
.....
.....

Appendix 2

Teacher's interview

Dear teachers,

The following interview seeks to gather information about collaborative learning as a teaching method. It is, also, an attempt to assess the effectiveness of collaborative learning on enhancing learner's autonomy. Thus, you are kindly requested to answer the following questions.

1. How long have you been teaching English?
2. What are the modules you teach?
3. How do you generally like to teach?
4. Do you prefer teaching through learner- centred approaches?
5. Do students prefer learning individually or collaboratively?
6. What is your most used type of collaborative learning?
7. What are the benefits of the collaborative learning?
8. After using collaborative methods, have you notice that your learners get more self-control?
9. Does collaborative learning helped the students to be more autonomous?
10. Would you please summarize your experience with collaborative learning?

Thank you for your collaboration