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An Attempt to Investigate Students' Collaborative Competence to Enhance Learning Autonomy

A Case Study of 1st Year Students at the Department of English, University of Batna 2

Thesis Submitted in Partial Requirement for the Degree of "Doctorate" Third Cycle LMD in Applied Linguistics and TEFL

Submitted by:

Hichem RABHI

Supervised by:

Dr. Charif BENBOULAID

Board of Examiners

President	**Pr. Amel BAHLOUL**	**University of Batna 2**
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Examiner	**Dr. Salim OUNIS**	**University of Khenchela**
Examiner	**Dr. Hanane SAIHI**	**University of Biskra**

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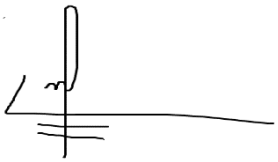
Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled “An Attempt to Investigate Students’ Collaborative Learning to Enhance Learning Autonomy. A Case of 1st Year Students at the Department of English, University of Batna2” and supervised by Dr. Ben Boulaid Charif is undertaken and written by me. Besides, all the research activities, mainly data collection and analysis methods, respected in this study are outlined and reported by me. This thesis is an original piece of research work solely submitted to Batna-2 University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctorate in Applied Linguistics and TEFL. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and the list of references provided. No part of this thesis was previously presented for another degree or diploma at this or any other institution.

Signature



Hichem RABHI

Abstract

Over the past few decades, higher education in Algeria has witnessed many reforms. Each of these brought new demands, expectations, and challenges to the Algerian educational system. Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in the Algerian context is of no exception. The learning demands and requirements have changed to comply with modern education starting with the paradigm shift from teacher-centered teaching methods to learner-centered teaching methods. Although the many attempts to meet these demands, the learners remain struggling with learning as they remain passive in the classroom, and show signs of severe teacher dependence. In order to overcome these learning challenges, Learner Autonomy (LA) emerges as the desired learning goal that may enable the Algerian EFL learners to achieve independence in learning and cope with the learning demands of modern education. In the process of finding an optimal way through which a higher level of LA is achieved, Collaborative Learning (CL) appeared. The present research is an attempt to investigate the Algerian EFL learners' collaborative learning competence to enhance their learning autonomy level. To meet the research objectives, a descriptive method was chosen, where a quantitative questionnaire mainly encompassed of 5-Point Likert Scale was administered to the first-year students of the English Department of Mostefa Benboulaid Batna 2 University during the academic year 2018-2019. In general, the findings revealed the CL approach's faculty to enhance, develop, and promote LA in the Algerian EFL context.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy; Collaborative Learning; English as a Foreign Language.

Dedication

To my dear parents,

To my beloved sisters,

To treasured nephews and nieces,

To precious family members,

To cherished friends.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to praise Allah the Almighty, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful for the blessing He gave me during this fruitful journey.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

CALL: Computer-Assisted Language Learning

CL: Collaborative Learning

CLA: Collaborative Learner Autonomy

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FIGS: Freshman Interest Groups

FLCs: Federated Learning Communities

ICLC: Implementing Collaborative Learning in the Classroom

L2: Second Language

L3: Third Language

LA: Learner Autonomy

LAM: Language Awareness Movement

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

SAC: Self-Access Centers

SPSS: Statistical Packages for Social Sciences

USA: United States of America

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

Based on our classroom observation of the 1st year students of English at Batna 2 University, and our discussions with some teachers, we came to the conclusion that the learners have a severe lack of learning autonomy, and exhibit strong signs of teacher dependence, characteristics that do not reflect an adult learner. As the teacher is no longer the sole provider of information, preparing a self-dependent, or autonomous learner became a must. Palmer (1998) emphasized this idea stating:

> *I have no question that students who learn, not professors who perform, is what teaching is all about. ... Teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal--or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions. (p. 6)*

He believes that true teaching is about changing the role of professors from the providers of the information to the guiders of the learner; however, doing so is far from enough. Achieving Learner Autonomy (LA) in the EFL classroom is not just about changing the teachers' role, but also involves changing the learners' role; Dickinson, for instance, defined LA as "*an attitude to learning that the learner develops in which the learner is willing and able to make the significant decisions about her learning ...*" (1999, p. 2 as cited in Jacobs, & Tan, 2015, pp. 3-4). In other words, learners should acquire a certain degree of authority over their learning process that enables them to be a part of the decision-making when it comes to what they need to learn.

In an attempt to achieve this goal; the current research suggests the collaborative learning approach as a possible solution that may enhance the learners' autonomy.

Collaborative Learning (CL) is a teaching approach where learners are divided into small groups and involved in active learning with their peers under their teacher's supervision; It "*..is an approach in which students study together as one vehicle for learning*" (Jacobs & Tan, 2015, p. 1), meaning although learners are engaged in group work, their individual effort affect the general outcome of the group, which gives group members a sort of responsibility toward each other that motivates them to carry on their share of the task. A characteristic that is; from the researcher's perspective; a basic component of LA.

2. Statement of the Problem

At the start of the academic year 2018-2019, classroom observation and informal discussions with some teachers and colleagues revealed that the first-year students of the English Department at Batna 2 University have a severe lack of autonomy. Apart from a few individuals in the classroom, they just sit there without participating, asking questions, or paying attention to the teacher; outside of the classroom, they do not seem to expand on what they learned, being university learners, limiting themselves to what was provided by teachers in class; moreover, they do not seem to do their homework, or even revise their lessons. In sum, they seem to be losing interest in learning.

To carry on this work, we present the problem as follows:

First-year students of the English department at Batna 2 University find certain difficulties in learning in an autonomous way. The learners depend mostly on the information provided to them by their teachers, and avoid making any effort outside the classroom to learn more. Moreover, they show passive behavior

inside the classrooms where they do not participate, ask questions, or impart their opinions and ideas.

3. Aims of the Study

The study investigates the effects of adopting CL on the development of LA; hence, its main aims are:

1. Motivating the learners to take control over their learning process through seeking knowledge outside the classroom and expanding on the limited information given by teachers in the classroom.
2. Familiarizing the learners with the CL approach and engaging them in peer-to-peer learning in order to provide them with a better understanding of the subject matter and enable them to exchange knowledge and experience.
3. Preparing learners to be future independent members of society by giving them some responsibilities

4. Research Questions

The following research questions are the core elements of our investigation:

1. Does adopting Collaborative Learning as a teaching approach for the first-year students of English at Batna 2 University enhance their learning autonomy?
2. What are the attitudes of the first-year students of English at Batna 2 University towards the concept of learning autonomy?

5. Hypotheses

The hypothesis under which the study is conducted to answer the above-mentioned research questions is the assumption that **engaging first-year students of English at Batna 2 University in collaborative learning tasks, assignments, and activities may enhance the students' LA.**

CL is defined as a learning state in which "*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. Then, the teacher's role becomes one of facilitating these goals*" (Macaro, 1997, p. 134). Macaro's definition of CL puts emphasis on two principles to promote LA: First, encouraging the learners to work with each other rather than with the teacher; thus, they learn to be self-dependent. Second, changing the teacher's role from the provider of the information to the facilitator of the learners' goals; thus, they grasp the notion of "*learning how to learn*". All of which supports the assumption that CL enhances LA.

6. Significance of the Study

LA is a crucial aspect for university students. Autonomous learners develop a sense of awareness and responsibility which enables them to be responsible members of society in the future. In terms of education, learner autonomy helps students to accumulate as much as possible of knowledge during the least possible time. In addition, when LA is achieved, the load on university teachers will be eased giving them more time to do research. Moreover, this work presents both teachers and learners with a learning approach (CL) that may enhance and develop LA. Finally, the results of this research can be used as a platform for further investigation. Thus, this study is.

7. Research Methodology and Design

7.1. Choice of the Method

The selection of the research approach, or the research method relies on many factors such as the researcher's philosophy, the issue to be investigated, the constraints inherent to the situation… etc. (Allwright, & Bailey, 1991; Merriam, 2002). Due to the unpredictable nature of the research subjects in education, human being behavior, it becomes challenging to experiment; thus, we opted in this research for the descriptive

method. The method can be applied to humans to study human behavior and facilitates recording the learners' attitudes towards abstract concepts like LA. Furthermore, it enables the researcher to gather a lot of information in a minimum period of time.

7.2. Data Gathering Tools

The data-gathering tool used in the present work is a detailed questionnaire of a quantitative nature that consists of 58 elements designed to investigate the Algerian EFL learners' collaborative competence to enhance the learners' level of autonomy. Each element of the questionnaire takes the form of a five-point Likert Scale. Moreover, the questionnaire is divided into five sections to properly answer our research questions. The data-gathering tool was chosen because it was known to facilitate gathering a considerable amount of data within a short period of time.

7.3. Population and Sampling

The first-year students of the English language departments existing in the Algerian universities represent the target population of the present study. The accessible population of the present study; however, is the first-year students of the English language department of Mostefa Benboulaid, Batna 2 University. The accessible population comprises of 546 students divided into ten groups. For data collection, a questionnaire was administered to a sample of 198 students from the accessible population during the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019. The sample of the study represents 36.26% of the accessible population. The sample of the study was selected via the use of the cluster random sampling method.

8. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into two parts:

The first part is the theoretical part; it deals with the literature review and the previous studies on the research subject. It consists of (02) two chapters. Chapter one

deals with LA; it seeks to define the term, and clarify the various denotations related to it. The chapter, also, clarifies the misconceptions related to LA. The different versions, components, and levels of LA are introduced in this chapter as well. Moreover, the first chapter introduces the concept of LA in practice. The first chapter closes by documenting the arguments that support the application of LA, and defends against the criticism that opposes LA application. Chapter two deals with CL as a teaching approach. It includes the approach's related definitions, and draws a comparison between it and certain associated learning concepts. It, also, identifies the broad set of sub-approaches that fall under CL as an umbrella term. The second chapter covers presenting CL as a successful model for application in practice alongside the merits expected from such implementation. The second chapter closures by linking the CL approach with LA, and advocates for the use of the former as a scaffold to enhance the latter.

The second part is the practical part; it explains the fieldwork in detail. It consists of (03) chapters. Chapter one describes in detail the research design, research method, and the research methodology used when conducting the research. Chapter two is concerned with analyzing the gathered data from the fieldwork, and providing an interpretation of the findings. Chapter three is concerned with proposing some recommendations concerning the enhancement of LA through CL for first-year students of Batna 2 University based on the research results.

PART ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: LEARNER AUTONOMY

Introduction

The concept of autonomy itself is not novel, but has roots that go far back in history. An example of that goes as follows:

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." (Lao Zi, 571 B.C.–471 B.C. as cited in Teng, 2018, p. 2)

The quote denotes a lifelong problem-solving philosophy in which teaching a person the skills that enable him to depend on himself, a permanent solution, is far better than providing him with his daily needs binding his survival with someone else's presence for him, which is a temporary solution.

Another example that demonstrates the concept of autonomy in the ancient era is:

"You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself." (Galileo, 1564–1642 as cited in Teng, 2018, p. 2)

This quotation is much similar to the first one. They both emphasize the importance of self-dependence in learning. The first quotation linked independence with survival; the second quotation conditioned independence for learning to happen. In addition to emphasizing the importance of self-dependence or independence in learning, they described, indirectly, the teacher's role as the guider. Two aspects that represent the basic characteristics of LA.

Although the idea of autonomy goes back to ancient history, the first definition of LA was the one of Holec (1981), which paved the way for the proliferation in the literature of the above-mentioned notion, which will be the core element of this chapter.

1.1. Defining Learner Autonomy

Although the tremendous proliferation that the concept of LA had witnessed, it is found that Holec's definition that he presented to the Council of Europe under the title

Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning is the most quoted and agreed on definition; It is considered to be the cornerstone definition of the field that the other definitions were derived from. In it, Holec defined LA as: "*the ability to take charge of one's learning*" (1981, p. 3). In other words:

[...] to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning,

i.e.:

- determining the objectives;
- defining the contents and progressions;
- selecting methods and techniques to be used;
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.);
- evaluating what has been acquired. (ibid)

In his definition, Holec is trying to shift the authority and responsibility of the teaching/learning process from the teacher to the learner. By doing that, the learner will assume responsibility, power, and authority over his learning, which will make him more serious about it, and change the way through which he as well as the society sees himself; he will be making decisions about the content of the lessons, the strategies used to deliver them and also acquiring the ability to evaluate oneself progression. Here Holec wants to highlight "*the need to develop the individual's freedom by developing those abilities which will enable him to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which he lives."* (Holec, 1981, p. 1). On the other hand, Holec did not diminish the teacher's role in helping the learners achieve autonomy where *"he insists that it must be developed with expert help. Inevitably, the need for such help becomes a central factor in redefining the role of the teacher in adult education."* (Little, 1991, pp. 7-8). A lot of researchers were influenced by his theory, which to a certain point

disregarded the old and traditional way of teaching clearing the way for fresh minds to come up with new learning theories more suited to the learners' needs.

The researchers started to work on their definitions for LA based on Holec's work. Little, for instance, defines autonomy as "*a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action.*" (1991, p. 4). He argues that being an autonomous learner means acquiring a psychological ability that allows the learner to build a link between the what and the how he learns, being able to process and transfer what he has learned, and showing a tendency for independence through having a high degree of freedom concerning decision-making, which must be limited by the society. In addition to the psychological aspect he gave to autonomy.

Little gives it a social nature, which is the mainstream for the current research, arguing that "b*ecause we are social beings our independence is always balanced by dependence; our essential condition is one of interdependence"* (1991, p. 5). Thus, basically, he is saying that being an autonomous learner does not refer to severing our relationship with society, because "*total detachment is a principal determining feature not of autonomy but of autism*" (Ibid). In addition to that, "*our capacity for self-instruction probably develops out of our experience of learning in interaction with others: in order to teach ourselves, we must create an internal substitute for the interaction of home or classroom*." (Ibid). Gathercole (1990) provided another perspective for autonomy in which he described it as "*when the learner is willing to and capable of taking charge of his own learning*" (p. 16), which is very similar to Holec's definition with a slight improvement; "*willing*" and "*capable*" are two key words in his definition that represent the learner's positive attitude towards learning and his ability to carry out this attitude to practice. As mentioned above in this chapter, the definitions of LA were derived from Holec's one; thus, not only they will be similar to

his definition but also, they will be close to each other. For example, Teng's definition of learner autonomy (2019):

> *...three main components that determine autonomous learning can be identified as ability, desire and freedom. Ability refers to a learner's skills and knowledge in two broad domains: Study and language. Desire refers to the intensity of a learner's intention to learn a language or carry out a particular learning task initiated with a particular purpose. Freedom refers to the extent to which learners are allowed to control their learning. (p. 3)*

is so similar to Gathercole's (1990) one. The same case with Benson's definition of LA in which he sees it as "*the capacity to take control of one's own learning, largely because the construct of 'control' appears to be more open to empirical investigation than the constructs of 'charge' or 'responsibility'*." (2011, p. 58); he put emphasis on the word "*control*" because, according to him, using this word makes more appropriate for empirical investigation. Plus, it is a better representation of the multidimensional aspect of LA; otherwise, it is very similar to Holec's definition. Another definition for LA was presented by Macaro (1997); the definition connotes its cognitive characteristics:

> *Autonomy is an ability which is learnt through knowing how to make decisions about the self as well as being allowed to make those decisions. It is an ability to take charge of one's own language learning and an ability to recognize the value of taking responsibility for one's own objectives, content, progress, method and techniques of*

> *learning. It is also an ability to be responsible for the pace and rhythm of learning and the evaluation of the learning process*. (p. 168)

It is safe to say that LA is a mental skill that enables learners to contemplate on their learning and make a decision concerning the content, the strategies, the objectives… of their learning; nevertheless, no credit, nor regard was given to the societies' role in accumulating those skills in the learner's mind, for "*no man is an island*".

Some researchers took the learners' social aspect into consideration and built their theories accordingly. Among these researchers, there is Sinclair (2000) who proposed a more detailed definition for LA in which he mentioned, in addition to the psychological characteristics of LA, its social aspect:

> *autonomy is a construct of capacity which is not inborn; autonomy consists of learners' willingness to be responsible for their own learning; there are degrees of autonomy which are unstable and changeable; autonomy can occur both inside and outside the classroom; autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension; and that promotion of autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process. (*p.5)

He also mentioned that autonomy can take place in both inside and outside the classroom setting. Kohonen is another researcher who took the course of this orientation, which appears clearly in his view of LA:

> *Personal decisions are necessarily made with respect to social and moral norms, traditions and expectations. Autonomy thus includes the notion of interdependence,*

> *that is being responsible for one's own conduct in the social context: being able to cooperate with others and solve conflicts in constructive ways.* (1992, p. 19)

A revolutionary perspective through which he sees that LA can only be achieved by regarding the social and moral norms of learners; thus, interdependence and cooperation are considered to be vital requirements for autonomy in learning contexts. Little (1995) supports the idea adding that "*since learning arises from interaction and interaction is characterized by interdependence, the development of autonomy in learners presupposes the development of autonomy in teachers"* (p. 175). He suggests that the growth and progress of learner autonomy relies on the growth and progress of teacher autonomy; thus, creating a relationship of interdependence between the teacher and the learner rather than one of dependence might be the answer. Dam, one of the leading contributors to the field of LA, is another researcher who shed light on the importance of the social factor when aiming for autonomy. According to her, an autonomous learner is:

> *an active participant in the social processes of classroom learning…. An active interpreter of new information in terms of what s/he already and uniquely knows…knows how to learn and can use this knowledge in any learning situation s/he may encounter at any stage in his/her life* (1995, p. 102).

She implies, in her definition, that even the classroom can have a social context where, instead of being passive, learners can be a part of the learning process by negotiating meaning with their teacher as well as their peers in the classroom.

Briefly said, LA is the learners' awareness and actions toward their learning process, cognitive skill, which, if acquired, enables the learners to carry out their learning without the need for external help, making it a lifelong skill for learners; on the other hand, for this skill to be acquired and developed in the first place, guidance must be provided from teachers, and involvement in social learning activities in and outside the classroom setting must take place.

1.2. Misconceptions about Learner Autonomy

In addition to defining LA, a better understanding of its abstract nature can be achieved and its broad meaning can be narrowed by explaining "*what autonomy is not*". Little (1991) clarified this idea and covered five misconceptions about LA that may confuse readers and researchers.

The first misconception mentioned by Little regarding LA was that it is similar to self-instruction; that is autonomy is regarded as simply "*deciding to learn without a teacher*", which is not an issue if it was considered as one aspect of LA; however, to represent it as the whole picture of LA dismisses the multidimensional characteristic of LA. Without a doubt, self-instruction may lead to autonomy, but our main concern in this part is to draw a sharp distinction between what is and what is not LA rather than to investigate what may or may not provide the best results.

Little's second misconception about LA targets the teacher's role in the classroom. The assumption is that the teacher should relinquish his control over the classroom and assume a more passive role when teaching, which contradicts Holec's idea mentioned by Little (1991), which states that LA "*must be developed with expert help"* (little, 1991, pp. 7-8). Little (1991) sourced this misconception to two principal reasons. First, is the belief that achieving autonomy makes teachers disposable. Second,

is the belief that the teacher may destroy the learners' autonomy through his interaction with them, which will make them teacher reliant.

The third misconception about LA is that it is a new methodology applied by teachers in the classroom in order to develop their LA. It is true that the learners' involvement in the classroom may indeed help to enhance their autonomy; however, *"it is certainly not the case that the development of learner autonomy can be programmed in a series of lesson plans"* (Little, 1991, pp. 3-4).

The fourth misconception about LA is regarding it as "*a single, easily described behavior*" (Little, 1991, p. 4) neglecting its complex and abstract nature. Here, Little (1991) argues that even though the possibility of recognizing autonomous learners through their behavior, LA should not be viewed as a constant behavior, that is, numerous factors may affect it such as the learner's age, their progression in learning, their needs and so on. In other words, autonomy *"can manifest itself in very many different ways."* (Little, 1991, p. 4)

The fifth and last misconception mentioned by Little (1991) about LA is the idea that autonomy can only be attained by certain learners, intellectuals, whereas the truth is that autonomy is likely to be the outcome of hard work and persistence, plus *"its permanence cannot be guaranteed; and the learner who displays a high degree of autonomy in one area may be non-autonomous in another."* (Ibid)

1.3. Versions of Learner Autonomy

The second indicator of Little's (1991) argument that says that LA has many manifestations is that we can recognize multi-versions of LA. *"Benson (1997) was among the first to open this discussion in a paper that identified technical, psychological and political 'versions' of autonomy."* (Benson, 2011, p. 62). Although criticized himself later on in a more recent work stating that *"I have found the idea of*

versions of autonomy less useful" (ibid) because his categorization was limited to a certain point and did not cover all the aspects of the field of LA, it still is considered a credit deserving modal since it was the first of its kind and since that it covered critical versions of LA. Thus, in this section, we will try to go through Benson's versions of LA, technical, psychological, and political versions of autonomy, in detail. In addition to that, we will be covering one more version of LA that is most related to current research, which is the sociocultural version of LA.

1.3.1. Technical Version of Learner Autonomy

Benson (2011) asserts that the technical version of LA is mainly concerned with learning management. In his opinion, the technical version of LA refers to *"the act of learning a language outside the framework of an educational institution and without the intervention of a teacher"* (1997, p. 19). Thus, it is a matter of providing the learner with the required skills and instruments that allow him to gain control over his learning process. An attribute that makes this version very similar to Holec's (1981) *"five key components of the learning process, from specifying the objectives and contents, through selection of methods and techniques, to monitoring the acquisition procedure and evaluation of both what s/he has learnt and of the learning process itself"* (Sudhershan, 2012, p. 11)

Despite being the closest version to Holec's definition of LA, the technical version of autonomy holds two drawbacks that do not make it the better representative of LA. First, it, similarly to Holec's definition, identifies the end result of being an autonomous learner, the what, and ignores the process through which the learner must go to obtain the end result, the how. Second, it neglects the teacher's role in developing the learners' autonomy which leads us back to Little's second misconception about LA.

1.3.2. Psychological Version of Learner Autonomy

The psychological version of LA gives it a cognitive attire; the idea here is that the development of LA is achieved through raising the learners' awareness about their learning process and equipping them with, "*a construct of attitudes and abilities which allows"* them *"to take more responsibility for their own learning"* (Benson, 1997, p. 19). Thus, the implication here is "*a shift in learning from acquiring patterns of linguistic behavior through drills, repetition and reinforcement by teacher to the construction of linguistic knowledge in a dynamic social context*." (Blidi, 2017, p. 8) where the learner is seen as "*a contributor and a role player in this development*" (ibid). This idea agrees with the constructivism's theory concerning how learning takes place. "*Constructivists all view learning as an intelligent, conscious and active process, and learning is achieved by means of grasping the meanings of things in a way that can be transferred for the solution of new problems*" (Hsu, 2005, p. 18). So, the active role of learners is appreciated, and encouragement toward involving the learners' cognitive skills is observed. Kelly (1955) in agreement with constructivism adds: *"it is not the events and texts themselves that are ingrained in his [the learner] memory but the object of his attentions"* (p. 35).

With the learners' role being clarified in the psychological version of LA, Huttunenen (1986) pointed out the teacher's role as:

> *to guide the student in this development of the logical, psychological and ethical aspects of personal progress towards autonomy, to find ways of enriching, balancing and clarifying the student's experience, to guide him to seek new experiences to structure and simplify experiences when needed, and to find ways of connecting*

> *the student's experiences with the diverse ways of life in his culture, including its heritage.* (p. 19)

As a conclusion, it is safe to say that "*the development of LA gains support from the notion that knowing and thinking develop through experiences "*(Teng, 2019, p. 8). However, for experience to be acquired in the first place, involvement and interaction with the surroundings, the social factor, must take place, which was not mentioned or explained in this version of LA.

1.3.3. Political Version of Learner Autonomy

The political version of LA views learners from a whole different perspective. It regards them as grown-up adults who are expected to have an active role in their societies, "*man should no longer be the 'product of his society', but a 'producer of his society'*" (Teng, 2019, p. 6), which *"means developing in learners a set of targeted skills and competencies that are generated from current economic, social and job market needs, not only providing them with pure academic knowledge without addressing practical field issues"* (Blidi, 2017, p. 7). Thus, the political version of LA aims to prepare learners for the burdens and responsibilities that their community charges them with after their graduation. An ultimate purpose that agrees with the Language Awareness Movement (LAM), founded by Eric Hawkins in the 1970s as an attempt to solve "*certain problems in UK schools at that time. These problems included functional illiteracy in English, difficulty in learning foreign languages, and prejudices in the increasingly multicultural society*" (Teng, 2019, p. 7), goals which entail that "*the betterment of society, and that critical awareness and social action to promote emancipation are desirable results of any educational intervention*" (Collins & Hammond, 1991, p. 13). Although LAM was founded in the UK, it managed to spread

beyond Europe and made out of itself a ‘global endeavor’ paving the way for LA to thrive based on its ideals.

From a moderate point of view, we can say that LA, according to the political perspective:

> *shakes us by the shoulders, forcing us to question assumptions and to critique existing power structures. It causes us to think hard about accepting the status quo. It creates an internal (and sometimes an external) struggle. It reminds us that we can critically analyze the discourses that frame our lives, we can create new alternatives for ourselves, and we can challenge our students to do the same.* (Oxford 2003, p. 90)

Although the primary concern of the political version of LA is to prepare learners for beyond their academic life, the real world, where they seek to find their own “*insurgent voices, voices that speak in opposition to the local and global discourses that limit and produce the possibilities that frame their lives*” (Pennycook, 1997, p. 49) and even though it covered the main issues of the technical and psychological versions of LA, learning management and cognitive skills respectively, within a social context, we can touch that it seeks to prepare and develop citizenship in the individuals of society and not LA. Hence, the political version of LA is not the best option for the enhancement of students’ LA within the academic framework.

1.3.4. Socio-cultural Version of Learner Autonomy

The foundation of the sociocultural version of LA rests upon Vygotsky’s theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is defined as:” *the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving*

and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, p. 86). In his ZPD theory, Vygotsky suggests that the potential learning level to be reached when learning in a social context surrounded by peers' assistance and under experts' guidance far exceeds the potential learning level to be reached when learning independently, and that is due to the tremendous benefits the learner may acquire through his interaction with his community in terms of experience, exchanging ideas with peers, and obtaining new knowledge from experts.

Deci and Ryan (1982), in support of the socio-cultural version of LA, came up with the notion of 'relatedness' which refers to "*the vital role and positive impact that learners' identification with their learning can play in helping them develop autonomy. In other words, relatedness refers to contact, support and community with others*" (Blidi, 2017, p. 98); much similar to the ZPD theory, relatedness spots the role of the community's members in enhancing autonomous sense in learners. Little (1991) was among the advocates of this version of autonomy; he argued that "*our essential condition is one of interdependence*" (p. 5) with emphasis on the importance of balance between our independence and dependence for "*autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension*" (Sinclair, 2000, p. 11) since "*it is too ambitious to believe in the existence of an entirely independent learner free from the influence of any classroom, teacher, peer, textbook and course requirements*" (Blidi, 2017, p. 98), which agrees with his Collaborative Learner Autonomy (CLA) perspective that sees the autonomous learner as "*a learner who learns collaboratively in an environment that respects his individualist inclination, need for teacher's guidance and support and openly exploits peer scaffolding opportunities offered in their learning environment*" (ibid). In addition to the above, Schmenk (2005) raises our attention to the flexible nature of LA; therefore,

any attempt to manipulate it must be within its "*specific social, cultural, or institutional learning contexts*", which "*leaves the concept devoid of specific characteristics and thus facilitates its homogenization*" (p. 112).

On the account of the above, the socio-cultural version of LA appears to be the best representative of learning autonomy being a version that covers all of the above-mentioned versions' theories as demonstrated in Dam et al (1990) definition of LA:

> *Learner autonomy is characterized by a readiness to take charge of one's own learning in the service of one's own needs and purposes. This entails a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person*. (Dam et al. 1990 p. 102)

The definition entrails that the achievement of LA occurs when the learner takes charge of his learning, which refers to learning management, a basic feature of the technical version of LA, through his capacity and attitude of independence, which refers to the learner's cognitive skill, a basic feature of the psychological version of LA, and collaborate with others as a socially responsible person, which refers to a productive adult, a basic feature of the political version of LA, within an academic framework where is the society is used to enhance autonomy in learners without taking any non-academic advantage of him.

1.4. Components of Learner Autonomy

Littlewood (1996) defined an autonomous person as:

> *one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions. This capacity depends on two main components: ability and*

> *willingness. Thus, a person may have the ability to make independent choices but feel no willingness to do so (e.g. because such behavior is not perceived as appropriate to his or her role in a particular situation). Conversely, a person may be willing to exercise independent choices but not have the necessary ability to do so.* (p. 428)

In his definition, he identified two fundamental elements of autonomy, ability and willingness, that can be divided into two other components. For ability, it refers to the state of possessing the knowledge about all the possibilities and options among which a person has to make a choice, and acquiring the necessary skills that will allow him to proceed with the choice that he sees most appropriate. On the other hand, willingness refers to the motivation that an individual has towards proceeding with his choice, and the confidence that he made the right choice which he is capable to carry on with. Thus, for a successful development of autonomy, these four components must be addressed properly since they complement each other as illustrated by Littlewood in his example:

> *…a person may feel highly motivated to learn outside class but lack the necessary knowledge or skills to organize his or her time effectively; a person may have ample opportunities to develop knowledge and skills for organizing learning, but not wish to do so because he or she sees this as the teacher's role.* (ibid)

1.5. Levels of Learner Autonomy

Littlewood elucidates the meaning of 'levels of autonomy' as *"the level of behavior at which a person makes independent choices"* (1996, p. 429). It is a behavior

that can be categorized using a hierarchy system where the low level of LA resides at its bottom, and the high level of LA resides at its top.

Reviewing the literature, three models of 'levels of LA' introduced by Nunan (1997), Littlewood (1996), and Macaro (1997) appeared to have the most influence:

1.5.1. Nunan's Model (1997)

In his model, Nunan (1997) presented five levels of LA, '*awareness'*, '*involvement'*, '*intervention'*, '*creation'*, and '*transcendence'*, as demonstrated in Table 1.1 below. At the awareness level, the learner's awareness is shifted towards the content to be covered in the academic year, the goals that the learner is aiming to achieve after going through his courses and the materials to be used during these lessons by '*allowing him to identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles / strategies*'. At the involvement level, by offering multiple options to the learners, they are expected to be involved in choosing their goals among a set of alternatives. At the intervention level, a certain degree of freedom is given to the learners to manipulate their tasks so that they adapt to their goals. At the creation level, unlike the involvement level, the learners are expected to be able to identify and create their own goals rather than selecting them among a set of options. Finally, at the transcendence level, the learners are no longer bound to the classroom setting when learning. At this level, they become '*teachers and researchers*' where they are supposed to be able to apply what they have learned in the classroom setting outside of it.

Table 1.1: Autonomy: levels of implementation. (Nunan, 1997, p. 195)

Level	Learner Action	Content	Process
1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own

		content of the materials they are using.	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 program.	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.

1.5.2. Littlewood's Model (1996)

Littlewood (1996) presented a model that determined the progression of LA as follows:

- *learners are able to make their own choices in grammar and vocabulary (e.g. in controlled role-plays and simple tasks involving information exchange). This is the initial step towards "autonomous communication".*
- *learners choose the meanings they want to express and the communication strategies they will use in order to achieve their communicative goals.*
- *learners are able to make more far-reaching decisions about goals, meanings and strategies (e.g. in creative role-playing, problem-solving and discussion).*

- *learners begin to choose and shape their own learning contexts, e.g. in self-directed learning and project work; learners become able to make decisions in domains which have traditionally belonged to the teacher, e.g. about materials and learning tasks.*
- *learners participate in determining the nature and progression of their own syllabus (cf. Budd and Wright, 1992).*
- *learners are able to use language (for communication and learning) independently in situations of their choice outside the classroom.*

(pp: 429-430)

According to Littlewood, each pair of steps refers to a level of autonomy. Being able to manipulate the grammar and vocabulary choices and opting for the appropriate communication strategy refers to '*autonomy as communicators*'. Being able to make decisions about their own goals and strategies in addition to shaping their own learning contexts refers to '*autonomy as learners*'. Finally, being able to share the teacher's responsibility of determining the nature and progress of their own syllabus as well as using the language independently in different contexts outside of the classroom refers to '*autonomy as a person*'.

The figure below sums up Littlewood's model of components of LA and levels of LA:

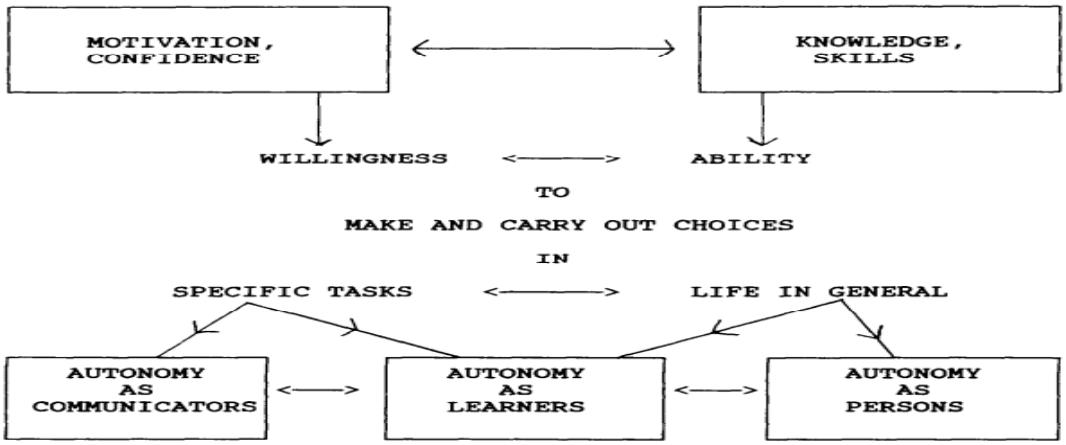

Figure 1.1: Components and Domains of Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning. (Littlewood, 1996, p. 430)

1.5.3. Macaro's Model (1997)

Macaro presented a three-level model for LA which was somehow similar to Littlewood's model. According to him, the first stage of LA was referred to as '*autonomy of language competence'*. The learners' main focus at this stage is acquiring proficiency in communication when using the second language (L2) and relinquishing their dependence on experts as it clearly appears in his explanation: "*The main development in the learner here is the ability to communicate having acquired a reasonable mastery of the L2 rule system. In addition, s/he should be able to operate by and large without the help of a more competent speaker of the target language (in most classroom cases, the teacher)"* (Macaro, 1997, p. 170). '*Autonomy of language learning competence'* represents the second stage of Macaro's model. Its main concern is *"the reproduction and transference of L2 learning skills to many other situations including a possible future L3"* (ibid). In other words, the second level advances the learners from communicative proficiency toward creativity and flexibility when using L2 and possibly a third language L3. Macaro's third and last stage of LA is "*autonomy of choice and action".* At this level, he argued that in order for learners, especially adolescents, to develop their required skills, and goals, they must be able to:

- *develop a coherent argument as to why they are learning a foreign language even if they may not have the choice of not learning that language.*
- *perceive their immediate or short-term language learning objectives (e.g. 'I can't seem to get to grips with talking about the town I live in. I'll spend some time this lesson practicing that').*
- *perceive their long-term language learning objectives (e.g. 'I want to use languages in my future work; therefore, I'll really concentrate on telephone skills).*

- *perceive the range and types of TL materials and have access to the range and types of materials which will help them fulfil those personal objectives.*
- *come to an understanding of the ways in which they learn best ('I remember best if I write words down no matter what the teacher says!').* (1997, p. 171)

In brief, Macaro's third level of autonomy is a reminder for teachers about the importance of the learners' decision-making opportunities that they are being denied by the educational system whether intentionally, or unintentionally.

As a reflection on the above-mentioned models of LA, we can assume that LA is a "*developing potential in the learner*" (Macaro, 1997, p. 169) that can be achieved through arduous endeavor, and that "*what is in question is through which opportunities and to what extent we can develop further those abilities and skills.*" (ibid)

1.6. Learner Autonomy in Practice

1.6.1. The Shift from Teacher-centered to Learner-centered Classrooms

As the name entails, teacher-centered classrooms imply that the teacher holds the sole authority in the classroom; thus, he is responsible for presenting the lesson, explaining it, asking questions regarding it, preparing exercises, solving them, providing feedback, summaries, conclusions and so on. In brief, he is the sole transmitter of knowledge in the classroom while the learners have the role of mere receivers assuming no relevant role in the classroom. On the other hand, in learner-centered classrooms the focus changes from the teacher to the learners; the teacher is no longer the center of the classroom. The authority over the classroom and the responsibility of the teaching/learning process is shared among the classroom members, teacher/learners. The learners are proactive in terms of decision-making concerning the classroom management and the lessons to be taught within the curriculum's constraints and the teacher's approval since they seek the betterment of the learners.

Rogers & Frieberg (1994) provided a detailed analogy of the differences between the two teaching approaches as demonstrated in Table 1.2 below.

Based on the above and Table 1.2 below we find that in order to foster LA, a shift in the teaching approach from the teacher-centered approach toward the learner-centered approach is required since the former excludes the learner from having an active role in the learning operation, which disagrees with the essence of LA as demonstrated in section 1.1 above.

Table 1.2: Discipline comparison in teacher-centered and person-centered classrooms (Rogers & Frieberg, 1994)

Teacher-centered	**Student-centered**
Teacher is the sole leader. Management is a form of oversight. Teacher takes responsibility for all paperwork and organization. Discipline comes from the teacher. A few students are the teacher' helpers. Teacher makes the rules and posts them for all students. Consequences are fixed for all students. Rewards are mostly extrinsic. Students are allowed limited responsibilities. Few members of the community enter the classroom.	Leadership is shared. Management is a form of guidance. Students are facilitators for the operations of the classroom. Discipline comes from the self. All students have the opportunity to become an integral part of the management of the classroom. Rules are developed by the teacher and students in the form of a constitution or compact Consequences reflect individual differences. Rewards are mostly intrinsic. Students share in classroom responsibilities. Partnerships are formed with business and community groups to enrich and broaden the learning opportunities for students.

1.6.2. The Teacher's Role

Many researchers have tackled the issue of teachers' role in fostering or enhancing the learners' autonomy. As explained in section 1.6.1 above, we concluded that a shift in the teaching approach from teacher-centered to learner-centered is needed for LA to be fostered. However, if that is the case, the question is who is responsible for carrying out this shifting process? After a deliberate inquest regarding this matter, it was found that the teacher is the main responsible for altering the accredited teaching methods used in the classroom.

For instance, it is viewed that by providing scaffolding in terms of:

• Creating a learning environment where the learners sense that they are trusted.

• Creating a psychologically secure learning environment that alleviates stress and anxiety.

• Granting the learners learning options.

• Providing the learners with opportunities for discussion and negotiation.

• Granting the learners a voice when making learning decisions.

• Providing the learners with knowledge and information

• Revealing the rationale behind the decision made on behalf of learners so that the learners clearly understand the pretext of those decisions

• Encouraging and assisting the learners to reflect on the cognitive, emotive, and social components of learning. (Aoki, 1999)

The teachers will help the learners to develop their own autonomy; as it appears, she suggests that teachers are supposed to create a suitable atmosphere for learners to work on their autonomy by giving them some space for freedom and decision-making as they assume the role of guiding and supporting the learners when they seem to be in need.

Huang (2007); on the other hand, proposes six areas of the teacher's role:

> *I briefly describe the following six areas of teacher role , which are often argued in the literature as being crucial to the development of learner autonomy: (1) bridge (gap ─closing), (2) facilitation, (3) scaffolding, (4) negotiation and dialogue, (5) mediation, and (6) taking a critical political stance towards teaching.* (p. 34)

By "*bridge*", Huang (2007) quoting Crabbe (1993), addresses the gap "*between public classroom activities (shared classroom activities) and private learning activities (the learners personal learning activities)*" (p. 35). He claims that the promotion of LA will occur when bridging the gap between in and out-classroom activities, and that discussions and conversations about the nature of each type of activity is one way of doing that (Crabbe, 1993).

Huang's ideal role for teachers is facilitation, *"providing support for learning"* (Huang, 2007). Huang (2007), building on Holec (1985) and Voller (1997), distinguishes two features of the teacher as a facilitator. First, providing learners with psycho-social support in terms of "*being caring, supportive, patient, tolerant, empathic, open, non-judgmental), a capacity for motivating learners, and an ability to raise learners' awareness*" (Huang, 2007, p. 35). Second, providing them with technical support in terms of "*helping learners to plan and carry out their independent language learning by means of needs analysis, helping learners to evaluate themselves, helping learners to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to implement the above*" (ibid).

Scaffolding is the teacher's third role according to Huang (2007). Scaffolding is much similar to facilitation in that they both are concerned with providing support to learners; however, the former is based on the ZPD strategies:

> *teachers use scaffolding strategies (in connection with tasks and interaction) to balance challenge and support to promote autonomy within and towards the borders of the Zone of Proximal Development. Using scaffolding strategies and gradually removing them is a concrete example of challenge and support in action, and is at the core of the process of learning and teaching for autonomy.* (ibid)

which gives it a social attribute where the teacher is not the only provider of support, "*teacher-learner interaction*", for it is possible for learners to provide each other with support and scaffolding, "*learner-learner interaction*". "*However, in both types of scaffolding, the teacher plays an important role to engage learners in target language use and the learning process (the content and the process of learning).*" (Huang, 2007, p. 36)

Engaging in negotiation and dialogue is another role that Huang (2007) insists on teachers to carry out due to its importance in helping learners with their autonomy following Voller (1997) who advocates "*negotiation about syllabus, both with learners and external authorities (i. e., representatives of the educational institution, and professionals from the discourse communities to which learners are trying to gain admittance)* (ibid). In addition to negotiation about the syllabus, Voller (1997) suggested negotiation about meaning, which refers to the "*negotiation of learner goals or teacher-learner agendas, classroom methodologies and teacher-learner role relationships*" (Aoki, 1999; Crabbe 1993; Cotterall 1998; Huang 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Little 1995) to enhance the learners' autonomy.

Addressing the obstacles that may hinder the development of the learner's autonomy in an attempt to negotiate and deal with them will have a great effect on the pace at which the learner's autonomy is developing; therefore, Huang (2007) suggested mediation between constraint and ideals as a solution for this hindrance. Benson (2000) identified four constraints that hinder one's autonomy: policy, institutional, conceptions of language, and language teaching methodologies. In his opinion *"the way in which teachers interpret and enact this mediating role is the key factor in teacher autonomy",* because *"learner autonomy develops within the space that the teacher is able to open up for it in their interpretation of the broader constraints on the learners' freedom of action in learning*" (p. 116). Therefore, it is up to teachers to take upon themselves the responsibility of creating a balance between the constraints and ideals of autonomy.

Finally, Huang (2007) ends his task list for teachers in the autonomous classroom by charging them to take a critical stance toward teaching. A very close teaching view to the one of Lamb & Simpson (2003) whom argue that "*teachers themselves must feel in control of, or be able to take control of, what they are doing if their learners are to feel in control"* (p. 61).

Little (2006) adds that "*the development of autonomy in language learning is governed by three basic pedagogical principles*" (p. 2) which are:

• *learner involvement – engaging learners to share responsibility for the learning process (the affective and the metacognitive dimensions);*

• *learner reflection – helping learners to think critically when they plan, monitor and evaluate their learning (the metacognitive dimensions);*

• *appropriate target language use – using the target language as the principal medium of language learning (the communicative and the metacognitive dimensions). (ibid)*

And based on these three principles he suggested that the teacher should:

• Utilize the target language as the main method of communication in the classroom and demand that the learners do the same.

• Engage the learners in a constant search for productive learning activities, then share, discuss, analyze, and evaluate these learning activities with the whole class using the target language.

• Assist the learners to identify their own learning objectives and select their own learning activities, then, using the target language, encourage the learners to discuss, analyze, and evaluate these learning objectives and learning activities.

• Instruct the learners to collaboratively work with peers and classmates to pursue their individual goals.

• Require the learners to maintain a written documentation of whatever learning courses that they have experienced or produced including lessons, projects, lists of vocabulary…etc.

• Encourage the learners to regularly evaluate their learning progress at both individual and group levels using the target language. (Little, 2006)

After a closer look at Little's suggestions concerning the teachers' role, it is noticeable that they are dedicated to teachers of foreign languages emphasizing the importance of using the target language as the sole, if possible, medium of communication when indulging in a nonstop sequence of learning activities that the learners are supposed to analyze and evaluate in an attempt to involve the learners in their learning process as well as raising their awareness about the significance that derives from taking on these lessons and activities. Doing so will allow the learners to identify their own learning goals and select their own activities accordingly. He also suggested that pursuing the learners' individual goals through "*collaborative work in small groups*" will have a great effect on their autonomy development. Little ended his

teachers' task list by asking teachers to keep learners updated about their progress in the form of both individual and group, class, evaluations.

In conclusion, we can say that

> *responsible teaching involves the sharing of responsibilities, not merely (or even mainly) because they are too much for any one person to bear, but because assuming management responsibility has a very important contribution to make to the learning experience of the learners*. (Allwright, 1979, p.118)

1.6.3. The Learner's Role

If teachers are supposed to cope with the learners' needs in the autonomous classroom and change their course of action accordingly, then it is only logical for learners to respond to the teachers' efforts and change their behavior to what suits the classroom requirements for autonomy to be developed.

Dickinson (1994) presented five roles for learners in the autonomous classroom. First, learners are required to *"identify what is being taught. That is, they are aware of the teacher's objectives" (p. 6)* and in order to do that, she claims that

> *a learner has to be active; this involves things like reviewing the lesson beforehand; taking note of the statement at the top of the exercise saying what the exercise is trying to teach, and listening carefully to the teacher when she introduces the lesson and the activities.*
>
> (ibid)

Second, learners are supposed to "*state and follow-up their own purposes in addition to the teacher's. That is, they are able to formulate their own learning*

objectives" (ibid). Independence characterizes autonomous learners; therefore, setting one's own objectives is a sign of one's autonomy (Dickinson, 1994); however, she clarifies that the learners "*are not in competition with the teacher and the teacher's objectives, but are often objectives which develop out of the lesson being studied.*" (ibid). In other words, learners are supposed to set their own objectives within the framework of the teacher's lesson in an attempt to grasp and overcome the difficulties they encounter in the lesson.

Third, learners are supposed to *"select and implement appropriate learning strategies*" (ibid). By the word strategies, she refers to the "*techniques that learners use to understand a piece of language, to memorize and recall language, to perfect pronunciation and so on*" (p. 7).

Fourth, learners are expected "*to monitor and evaluate their own use of learning strategies"* (ibid). That is for every learning task, or activity there is an appropriate technique and strategy to be used, and it is up to the learner to figure out which strategy is designed for the given activities. In case of the existence of more than one strategy for a designated learning task, the learner is given the choice to opt for whatever technique that he sees suits him the most because "*some techniques are more useful for one learner than for another, and learners have to be encouraged to find the best technique for themselves*" (ibid). Finally, in his last role for learners, Dickinson expects the learners to "*monitor their own learning*" (ibid). She argues that

> *A very important aspect of being an active and independent learner, is your willingness to monitor your own learning; to check how well a piece of work was done, or how accurately a sentence was imitated and so*

> *on. A learner who is actively involved in her own learning is active in self-monitoring.* (ibid)

Blidi (2017) adds four roles for learners in the autonomous classroom. He introduced *Voluntariness* as the learners' first step towards LA; he claims that it "*is the first factor that plays a role in enhancing or inhibiting learners' perception and attitudes to learner autonomy*" (p. 13). In other words, being compelled to learn autonomy, or joining out of free will is what makes the difference. "*Learner choice of learning tasks, pace, location and related conditions*" (ibid) is Blidi's second role for the learner in the autonomous classroom. It involves the learner sharing the responsibility for his own learning process and having an active role in it "*which is perceived as central in directing students towards embracing learner autonomy*" (ibid). Blidi's third role for learners is for them to act in a flexible way; he declares that flexibility is "*found to be an important criterion for establishing a supportive environment that facilitates and fosters learner autonomy*" (p. 14); it also allows learners to change their learning objectives and learning strategies. The fourth and last role for learners presented by Blidi (2017) is peer support. He believes that the learner must engage in group work and collaborative activities if he aims at developing his LA skill arguing that "*being autonomous and self-directed does not necessarily mean learning alone only and discarding peer support. There is an implicit collaborative element in autonomous learning since learners have to interact, negotiate and collaborate with peers*" (ibid)

In conclusion, we can say that the learners' role in the autonomous classroom depends on and reflects on the teacher's role. If the teacher is to relinquish control over the classroom, the learner is to step up and take the lead; if the teacher is to take the role of support, the learner is to assume the main roles; and if the teacher is to open room

for negotiation and decision making, the learner is to argue, convince and make the decision. In the autonomous classroom, the teacher and the learners are considered to be partners in the teaching/learning operation where they share the responsibilities of their classroom. In brief, they represent two faces of the same coin.

1.6.4. Contexts of Application

Benson (2007), when discussed the contexts of application for LA, proposed two main settings: autonomy beyond the classroom and autonomy in the classroom.

1.6.4.1. Autonomy Beyond the Classroom

Benson (2007) presented this context for fostering autonomy outside of the traditional learning context, the classroom, in an attempt "*to challenge the idea that the classroom-based learning is the norm*" (Benson, 2007, p. 26). In it, he introduced seven learning modes for autonomy outside of the classroom context; Table 1.3 below presented by Blidi (2017) provides us with a clear insight into Benson's modes:

Table 1.3: Modes of learning (Blidi, 2017, p. 70-71)

Mode	Focus	Major reference works
Self-access	The difficulty of making SACs work independently of teacher support for autonomy	Gardner and Miller (1999)
	Shift of attention from the organization of SACs to the integration of self-access learning with coursework	Gardner (2006)
	Self-access advising as a particular form of teaching	Gremmo and Castillo (2007)
Computer-assisted Language Learning	Opportunities for learners facilitated by the advent of the Internet, computer technology	
	Importance of attention to autonomy in the development and use of CALL technologies	Corder and Waller (2006)
Distance Learning	Growth of distance language learning and its implications on autonomy	Hurd (2005)
Tandem Learning	Tandem learning and its long association with autonomy: the rise of the Internet 22	Little (2001)

	UK universities now offer tandem learning to their students and projects have developed in Europe, Japan, Russia and the USA	
Study Abroad	Visits incorporated in language learning programs allowing students to spend time in target language communities to learn autonomously through interaction with native speakers: "study abroad", "immersion", and "residence abroad	Bodycott and Crew (2001)
Out-of-class Learning	The efforts of learners taking classroom-based language courses to find opportunities for language learning and use outside class	Hyland (2004)
	Refers to the use of printed or broadcast self-study materials and this is what Benson calls "other-directed" mode of learning (2001: 62)	Fernandez Toro (1999)
Self-instruction	Refers to situations in which learners undertake language study largely or entirely without the aid of teachers and this is what is called in the literature "self-directed learning"	Benson (2006, 2007)

The learning modes presented above are proof that fostering LA is by no means limited within the classroom context. Therefore, teachers are required to surpass their borders and help their learners to work on their autonomy beyond the classroom framework.

1.6..4.2 Autonomy in the Classroom

Autonomy in the classroom can be viewed as an eighth learning mode for autonomy. Within a closer look at Table 1.3 above, it is noticeable that the major difference between the seven-learning modes is the setting, where every setting provides the use of certain kinds of materials that are not provided in the classroom; hence, they were categorized under the notion of "*autonomy beyond the classroom*". According to this perspective, "*autonomy in the classroom*" refers to the use of tools

and materials provided in the classroom for the sake of developing autonomy. Many papers tackled the issue application of "*autonomy in the classroom*", Blidi (2017) mentioned some major researches that dealt with this issue:

1. Group work and cooperative classroom decision-making and small-scale experiments (Hart 2002; Coyle 2003; Lamb 2004)

2. Larger scale curriculum-based approaches to autonomy in the classroom (Dam 1995; Breen and Littlejohn 2000; Little et al. 2002; Lynch 2001; Cotterall 2000)

3. Assessment of autonomy (Champagne et al., 2001; Lai, 2001; Rivers, 2001; Morrison, 2005)

4. Autonomy and language teaching and learning (Hedge 2000; Harmer 2001; Kumaravadivelu 2003; Thornbury 2005)

5. Learner autonomy and teacher development (Harmer 2001)

6. Learner training, classroom decision-making, and out-of-class learning (Hedge 2000)

7. "*Macro-strategies*" and the "*post-method condition*" (Kumaravadivelu 2003: 173): "*a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative metho*d" and a "*principled pragmatism*". (2017, p. 73)

Building on the above, we find that in order to foster LA and overcome the constraints that might hinder its development, the context of application must be a construct of both in and beyond the classroom setting.

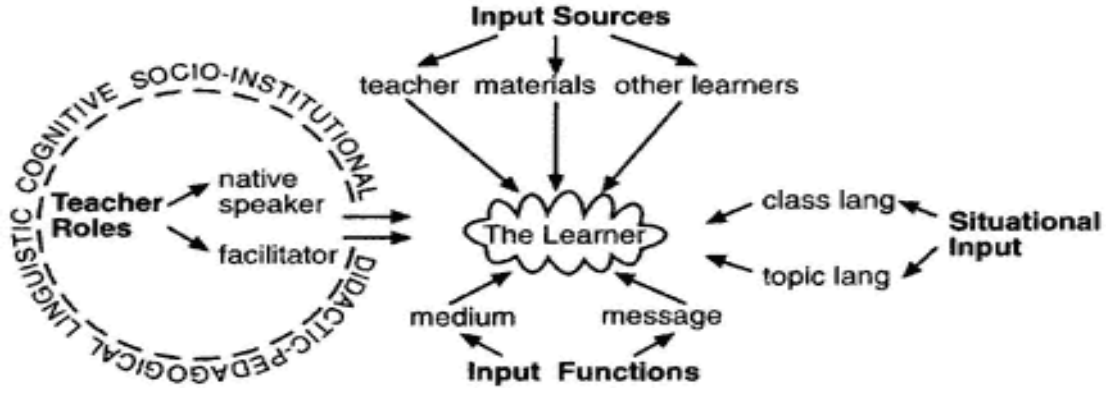

Figure 1.2: Learner autonomy in practice (Macaro, 1997, p. 55).

The teaching/learning approach, the teacher's role, the learners' role, and the context of application represent the cornerstones on which the application of LA should be built on; Macaro (1997) introduced us with a diagram, as shown in Figure 1.2 above, that demonstrates the role of each element when putting LA into practice.

1.7 Arguments for Learner Autonomy

Dickinson (1994) points out the importance of fostering autonomy from the point of view of the researchers pursuing the field of autonomy:

> *Those of us interested in autonomy believe that it is desirable that students ultimately become independent of teachers and teaching and become able to pursue learning projects autonomously. As teachers we do not want to be implicated in the development of teacher dependent adult students; we see the achievement of independence in learning as desirable - allowing the student to pursue his own learning objectives in ways and at times which most suit him, and so we adopt the additional teaching objective - to teach the student how to learn.* (p. 2)

She also clarified some teachers' mis worries about their jobs when fostering LA stating: "*helping learners to become autonomous is not a threat to the teacher's job*" (p. 4). On the contrary, she alleviates their anguish arguing that the nature of autonomy requires the teachers to accompany their learners through its process:

> *Students must develop autonomy, sometimes over several years, and the teacher has an important role in helping with this process. Of course, the teacher's*

> *primary job of teaching the language remains. The teacher remains the authoritative expert in the language and in language teaching, certainly until the student becomes autonomous; and even beyond that point, the teacher remains an authority in the language, and a consultant to the autonomous learner in language learning.* (ibid)

Little (2006), supporting autonomy, linked the presence of efficient learning to the presence of autonomy:

> *Precisely because autonomous learners are motivated and reflective learners, their learning is efficient and effective (conversely, all learning is likely to succeed to the extent that the learner is autonomous). And the efficiency and effectiveness of the autonomous learner means that the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom can be applied to situations that arise outside the classroom.* (p. 2)

In addition to that, autonomy is the bridge that makes the application of classroom knowledge outside of the classroom setting possible.

In agreement with Little, Legenhausen (2008) calls our attention to the learners' position in any successful learning process, being in the center, which will be better achieved through the implementation of autonomy:

> *there is growing evidence that it is the learners themselves who are the decisive agents in the learning process. It is their involvement in the learning process*

> *that decide learning success, and one of the most promising ways of getting the learners involved is to implement principles of autonomous language learning.* (p. 34)

Legenhausen adds that the diversity of learners and their needs in the classroom makes it almost unattainable to create a textbook that "*can grade the linguistic material according to the linguistic needs of all the learners*" (p. 35). Therefore, he suggested autonomy as a solution that targets the individual needs of each learner:

> *If learners need to be developmentally ready to acquire a certain linguistic form, and if it is the case that we as teachers cannot really tell what the linguistic needs of learners are at the various individual learning stages, then it follows that we have to leave it to the learners themselves to identify their linguistic needs. And we as teachers have to help them.* (ibid)

The above is clear evidence of the advantages that autonomous learners have over non-autonomous learners. Thus, the implementation of autonomy in the curriculum is desirable and called for.

1.8 Criticism Against Learner Autonomy

As a response to the strong support that autonomy received in the educational context, an emergence of criticism against LA was witnessed by some researchers whom questioned the value of autonomy in education. Cuypers (1992), for instance, was among the first researchers to criticize LA. He claimed that "*one of the most notoriously troublesome aspects of the hierarchical model of personal autonomy is the possibility of an infinite regress*" (p. 8). Referring to the process of "*self-identification*

by which desires are made internal or external" (ibid), he argued that if "*a person identifies himself with or withdraws himself from a certain desire depends on whether or not he desires this desire to be his will*" (ibid), then what constitutes this desire to desire or not desire a certain desire in the first place. If a higher attitude was invoked to determine this desire, he continued, "*then an infinite regress seems to be inevitable*" (ibid), which led him to conclude that "*the process of self-identification cannot entirely be rooted in autonomous 'acts of the will'*" (ibid). In this sense, Cuypers' (1992) argument is somehow restricted, that is one's "*self-identification*" is "*one of the most important outcomes of LA. When learners develop their autonomy, they have the opportunity to forge their own identity or, in other words, autonomy becomes a means for self-expression, self-discovery, and self-construction*" (Vázquez, 2016, p. 94), which makes LA "*a fundamental educational aim for learners' personal development*" (ibid).

In his arguments against LA, Hand (2006) presented two types of autonomy, circumstantial autonomy, and dispositional autonomy, both of which, according to him, do not serve the aim of education: *"I conclude that neither circumstantial autonomy nor dispositional autonomy will serve as an aim of education. The former is desirable but not learnable; the latter is learnable but not desirable*" (p. 539).

From his point of view, circumstantial autonomy refers to a person's freedom to "*determine her own actions*" (p. 537). In other words, a person "*is said to lack autonomy when she is deprived of this freedom, when she is enslaved, imprisoned or otherwise obliged to submit to the direction of others*", which makes autonomy "*a state of being one cannot confer on a person by educating her*" (p. 537); thus, being desirable but not learnable. This might be the case from a political perspective; however, autonomy is more than that. From the educational perspective for instance, "*the teacher can*

gradually enable learners to experience more freedom to think and act independently, so learners can eventually steer their own learning by taking increasing responsibility for it, making informed decisions, evaluating their learning outcomes, and so on" (Vázquez, 2016, p. 95), which is evidence that autonomy is learnable.

On the other hand, dispositional autonomy, claims Hand (2006), refers to having "*a preference for relying on one's own judgment, to be independent-minded, free-spirited, disposed to do things one's own way*" (p. 537); a property that makes autonomy in this sense learnable and fit to be an educational aim, but the issue lies on the relevance of such property in education. On this matter, Hand comments:

> *Dispositional autonomy would confer advantage only if it were always or generally the case that actions one has determined for oneself are more effective, appropriate or worthwhile than actions performed under the direction of others. And it seems obvious that this is not always or generally the case. Whatever the criteria of effective, appropriate or worthwhile action in a situation in which I find myself, there will very often be people in a better position than me to determine the actions that will satisfy those criteria.* (2006, p. 538)

This would be true if autonomy means total detachment from society, which is not the case as clarified by Little (1991) in section 1.1 above. Moreover, in his attempt to criticize autonomy, Hand points out the critical role that experts play in directing and guiding learners, which defines the essence of the teacher's role in the autonomous classroom as mentioned in section 1.6.2 above, which makes LA a required skill to be targeted by the educational system.

In the reviewed literature, it is found that the number of researchers advocating autonomy in education far exceeds the number of those whom do not. Plus, when weighing the pros of LA against its cons, it is noticeable that the pros far overweight the cons; and since the process of supporting novel ideas and theories is based on the balance between their advantages and disadvantages, for nothing is perfect, we came to conclude that autonomy is a desired skill for learners that should be targeted by the educational system and developed.

Conclusion

In this chapter, a literature review was conducted on the dependent variable of the current research, LA. Different definitions of the concept by different researchers from different perspectives were introduced with reference to the current research orientation; misconceptions about it were cleared for a better understanding of the concept. The chapter also covered a discussion over the most significant version of LA for academic purposes among the different versions available to ensure the objectivity of the research. In order to point out the life-long nature and universality of LA, three models presented by three different researchers covering the levels of LA were introduced. Moreover, the chapter dealt with four cornerstones to be addressed when dealing with LA in practice, the teaching/learning approach, the teacher's role, the learners' role, and the context of application. Finally, the chapter presented arguments for advocating LA as an educational goal, and defended the criticism against it found in the related literature concluding that LA is a desirable attribute for learners that the educational system, especially at the tertiary level, should target.

CHAPTER TWO: COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Introduction

LA, as previously demonstrated, is a desirable educational goal. To achieve this goal, the present chapter introduces CL as the teaching approach that will nurture, enhance and develop the EFL learners' autonomy.

The origins of CL can be traced back to the 20th century, the ZPD theory of Vygotsky (1978). Ever since numerous researchers attempted to figure out the essence of this notion to better implement it in learning. Jacobs and Tan (2015), for instance, defined CL as "*an approach in which students study together as one vehicle for learning*" (p. 1). In the same vein, Zhang (2012), perceives it as a learning approach that enables students to study together in groups to procure an academic goal. Both of these emphasize on sharing the learning responsibility among the group members as the key feature of CL. Such a feature "*gives learners an opportunity to engage in discussion and take responsibility for their own learning*" (Laal & Laal, 2012, p. 492), which will promote the learners' ability to learn independently; thus, promoting their autonomy level.

In the interest of advocating the use of the CL approach to promote LA, this chapter starts by defining the concept of CL and its connotations, delineates its related learning theories, and explores its main branches. The chapter, then, proceeds by delineating the benefits entailed in the approach as well as explaining the rationale behind the selection of this learning approach. The chapter concludes by linking the CL approach with LA.

2.1. Defining Collaborative Learning

Many terms were used in the literature to refer to the notions of Collaborative Learning (CL) such as Federated Learning Communities (FLCs), Freshman Interest Groups (FIGS), learning communities, collaborative learning groups, linked courses, interdisciplinary seminars, and joint student-faculty research efforts (Goodsell et al, 1992), yet the use of CL appear to gain prominence in the found literature.

Broadly defined, CL "*reforms classroom learning by changing students from passive recipients of information given by an expert teacher to active agents in the construction of knowledge*" (Goodsell et al, 1992, p 7). This connotation suggests that CL is a learning approach that has the faculty to put the learners at the center of the learning operation where the traditional lecturing, listening, and note-taking process of learning fades in favor of other learning processes that are based on the learners' active involvement (Smith & MacGregor, 1992); in other words, "*collaborative learning represents a significant shift away from the typical teacher-centered or lecture-centered milieu in college.*" (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 11). Furthermore, Smith & MacGregor (1992) add that CL is "*an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together*" (ibid) with emphasis on the learners' shared efforts to reach an understanding, derive meaning, or create a product. Roschelle and Teasley (1995) presented a similar definition stating that for CL to take place "*individuals must make a conscious, continued effort to coordinate their language and activity with respect to shared knowledge*" (p. 94) stressing the need for the learners' awareness to make cognitive efforts during the process of CL implementation.

Macaro (1997); on the other hand, stated that CL happens 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. Then, the teacher's role becomes one of facilitating these goals" (p 134). In his definition, Macaro sets two conditions for meaningful collaboration to occur. First, the group of learners must have a common learning objective to be reached. Second, mutual respect must be the prominent conduct among the group members. For CL is unlikely to happen if the group members do not have shared learning objectives, or do not seem to carry respect for each other. Macaro, then, redefined the role of the teacher from the source of information to the facilitator of the learners' goals. On the notion of redefining the teachers' role in the collaborative classroom, Foerster (2003) asserts:

> *Turn the teacher who is supposed to know into a researcher who is eager to know! And if you continue along these lines, the so-called pupils and teachers become collaborators who create knowledge together starting from a question that is fascinating to both of them*. (p. 71 as cited in Iborra et all., p. 53)

Within these lines, Foerster proposes a unique conceptualization for CL that considers the teachers not as lecturers, or instructors but rather as partners whom share a strong enthusiasm for learning along with their learners; and the outcome of this process will be the teacher-learner collaboration that has the potential to generate novel knowledge that fascinates both parties of this collaboration.

In addition to the above, Dillenbourg (1991) provided further insights concerning the concept of CL stating that "*it is a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together*" (p .1). According to him, the notion of

"*two or more*" depends on the context; it can be "*a pair, a small group (3-5 subjects), a class (20-30 subjects), a community (a few hundreds or thousands of people), a society (several thousands or millions of people)*" (p. 1). Whereas, "*learn something"* can take many forms such as *"follow a course", "study course material", "perform learning activities such as problem solving",* and *"learn from lifelong work practice"* (p. 2). As for the notion of "*together*", Dillenbourg explains that it is related to the form of interaction among the group members where it can be "*face-to-face or computer mediated, synchronous or not, frequent in time or not, whether it is a truly joint effort or whether the labor is divided in a systematic way*" (ibid).

Another perspective for CL was presented by Kaye (1992) stating that "*a broad definition of collaborative learning would be the acquisition by individuals of knowledge, skills, or attitudes occurring as a result of group interaction, or put it more tersely, individual learning as a result of group process*" (p. 13). In this regard, Kaye argues that the group affects the individual, i.e., for individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, or attitudes they have to indulge themselves in the process of interacting with each other. As per his view, the process takes precedence over the outcome where he considers

> *collaborative learning as any learning that takes place as a result of people working together, regardless of whether learning is the primary explicit goal of the collaboration (e.g. a training seminar or workshop) or is a secondary, incidental, outcome <e.g. a work team in which the individual members acquire new knowledge or skills from each other). Successful collaboration assumes some agreement on common*

> *goals and values, and the pooling of individual competencies for the benefit of the group or community as a whole.* (Kaye, 1992, P, 2)

Thus, what matters here is not the learning outcome itself, but rather the learning journey that the learners experience with each other where they, as individuals, share their ideas, experiences, skills, and competencies to overcome their learning challenges and hardships and gain benefit as a group. Ertl, Kopp, & Mandl (2007) seem to advocate Kaye's perception of CL stating that

> t*he collaborative learning outcome is the success all learning partners achieve together. Due to the interdependent nature of the group task that requires the various contributions of every group member to solve it, learning success can be measured through the quality of the group product.* (p. 215)

They steer the attention towards "*interdependence*" as the focal character of the CL approach that enables the learners to team up to solve a problem; the learners' success is, then, measured through assessing their product as a group and not through assessing their achievements as individuals. While the above emphasizes the power of the individuals' input over the learning group, individuals' learning seems to be the primary goal of collaboration, according to the acquisition framework, where group work, participation, and shared efforts serve as means that lead to the individual learning benefit (Strijbos, Kirschner, & Martens, 2004).

Equity appears to be another trait of the CL approach as demonstrated by Friend & Barron (2019) whom think that "*collaboration relies on parity, or a clear sense of*

value for each member's contribution, a mutual goal, shared responsibility for key decisions, joint accountability for outcomes, and polled resources" (p. 3). The trait might be regarded as a middle ground between the perception of CL as a learning approach that harvests the individuals' efforts for the sake of the group as a whole, and the perception of the CL approach as a means for the individuals' gains. Friend & Barron's (2019) definition stands for both assuming learning responsibilities and gaining learning benefits, as it advocates both developing individuals' products and promoting groups' products.

As for the most recent definition of the CL approach encountered in the reviewed literature, it was the one presented by Mahoney & Hall (2021) whom stated that "c*ollaboration is a groupwork process team may employ to reach a goal. Critical factors of collaboration needed to achieve a common goal are communication, interconnectedness, and open mindedness*" (p. 102). In addition to reiterating the importance of Macaro's (1997) notion of preconditioning the existence of "*common learning goals*" for the successful implementation of the CL approach, Mahoney & Hall's (2021) definition presents "*communication*", *"interconnectedness*" and *"open mindedness*" as the critical factors that assure the learners' attainment of these "*common goals*". According to Mahoney & Hall, "*communication*" occurs when the members of the learning group engage themselves in the act of sharing and exchanging knowledge, skills, and expertise with each other to achieve maximum benefit for all members of the group. *"Interconnectedness*" refers to the relationship between the learning group members, i.e., it refers to the "*team members' ability to work together and respect others' perspectives to work more effectively to reach a team goal*" (ibid). As for *"open mindedness*", it implies the learners' willingness to learn from each other; it functions under the assumption that the learners might be wrong, or that a learning situation might

be viewed from different angles and perspectives; thus, the learners should be flexible in their learning and ready to consider and accept their team members' input regarding the learning situation at hand.

Upon reviewing the literature related to the CL approach, it was noticed that there is no consensus among the researchers of the field concerning the definition of CL. Yet, it was deduced that instead of apprehending each of the definitions as the complete conceptualization of the concept given as granted, considering the possibility of addressing them as parts of a whole and pieces of a deeper and more complex concept might enable us to reach a higher understanding of the notion of CL. Thus, and within this pretext, the CL approach might be conceptualized as follows:

- It represents a paradigm shift from the teacher-centered to the learner-centered teaching approach.
- Its successful implementation requires the shared efforts of both learners and teachers.
- It requires the existence of a common learning goal to be achieved among the members of the learning group.
- The teachers in the CL classroom are supposed to be partners with the learners in their endeavor to accumulate new knowledge.
- The number of learners working together as a group can vary from a pair, a small group of 3-5 students to a class of 20-30 students, a community of thousands of people, or even a society of millions of participants.
- It serves the group members' development at both the individual and collective levels.
- Communication, interconnectedness, and open-mindedness are to be perceived as critical conduct for the successful implementation of CL.

2.2. Clearing Related Concepts

2.2.1. Collaborative Learning versus Cooperative Learning

On many occasions CL is confused with cooperative learning; sometimes the confusion reached the point where both terms were used interchangeably to refer to the same learning approach. For the purpose of the current research, providing an evident distinction between the two notions and presenting a clear framework for the CL approach is a must.

There exist several distinguishing features that separate CL from cooperative learning. For a starter, Roschelle & Teasley (1995) distinguishes between "*collaborative*" versus "*cooperative*" problem solving arguing that "c*ooperative work is accomplished by the division of labor among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving*" whereas they perceive collaboration as "*the mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve the problem together*" (p. 70). That is to say, in cooperative learning, the task is divided among the group members to invest time and effort, and each learner is responsible for solving one small piece of a bigger problem; the emphasis here is on the end product. In CL; however, the learners are encouraged to join their effort to find the best possible answer for the problem as a whole; the emphasis here is on the process.

Advocating this view, Panitz (1999) presented cooperative learning as "*a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product or goal through people working together in groups*" (p. 3) and CL as 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*" (ibid). According to him, CL is a learning philosophy, not a learning technique,

that entails a process of sharing the learning authority and accepting the learning responsibility among the members of the learning group. A process that seems to be absent in the cooperative learning technique.

Myers (1991) presented additional distinguishing features between the two notions stating that in cooperative learning the learning process tends to be more teacher-centered as the learners appear to rely on their teachers to form their groups, structure a positive interdependence relationship between them as group members, or teach them the cooperative skills. On the other hand, in CL the learning process tends to be more learner-centered as the learners appear to have a sayi in group forming decisions, learners make their own groups without the teachers' interference, communication and talk seem to be used as means to solve problems and work things out, and learning takes place when the learners indulge themselves in the process of discovery using contextual approaches to create a link between learning in the classroom and real-life situations.

Although CL and cooperative learning approaches might both share some learning techniques such as using groups, assigning specific tasks, and sharing the groups' products in plenary class sessions (Rockwood, 1995), it is imperative for researchers, instructors, and teachers interested in group-based learning approaches to be able to differentiate between the two concepts, for they do not share the same learning objectives, the same application process, or the same level of learners involvement; thus, they require different procedures of implementation.

2.2.2. Collaborative Learning versus Traditional Learning

Distinguishing between the CL approach and the individualistic traditional learning approach is another requirement for the fulfillment of the current research.

Harasim et al. (1995) differentiated between the two learning approaches. They proposed an eight-criteria model through which these two learning approaches might be compared. Table 2.1 below summarizes these criteria.

Table 2.1: ***Collaborative versus traditional approaches to teaching (Harasim et al.1995)***

	COLLABORATIVE	**TRADITIONAL**
Role of Instructor	Goal-Setter Instructional Designer Facilitator Resource Model Learner	Teacher Evaluator
Class structure	Students in Groups from 2 to whole class	Individual students seated in rows
Text	Contributions generated by students and teacher in addition to textbooks	Commercial textbooks and published works
Audience	Student writing to each other	Students writing only for the instructor
Lecturing	Student-centered approach based on discussion of issues and questions raised by students	Formal lessons (e.g., grammar and rhetoric)
Revision	An ongoing process based on feedback from group members	Suggestions given by instructor after completed paper has been submitted
Evaluation	Evaluated by class members, including the instructor	Evaluated by instructor alone
Collaboration	Students work with peers guided and advised by instructor	Students work alone or with instructor only

The instructor's role in the classroom is Harasim's et al first criterion of comparison. They argue that in the traditional learning approach, the instructor assumes the role of a teacher whom is responsible for delivering the information, and the role of an evaluator whom is responsible for assessing and grading the learners, while in the collaborative classroom, the instructor's role is redefined and expanded to include aiding the learners to establish their learning objectives, facilitating their process of attaining knowledge and information, directing

them towards relevant resources and even assuming the role of a learner to be indulged with the learners in a process of knowledge creation. These roles in addition to other acts will be addressed in detail in a later section of this chapter.

The second criterion is the class structure. According to Harasim et al, the setting in traditional classrooms is limited to learners seated in rows, while in collaborative classrooms, depending on the number of the learning groups and the number of learners in each group, the classroom setting might undergo through a variety of setting structures.

The third criterion of comparison is the learning content. As per Harasim et al, the learning content in the traditional learning approach is derived from commercial textbooks and published works, while the learning content in the CL approach is generated as a result of the contribution of two parties: the teacher and the learners, this in addition to using textbooks as learning materials.

Harasim et al referred to their fourth criterion for comparison as "a*udience*", which refers to the selection of the learning partners whom the learners are allowed to interact with. The traditional learning approach proposed the teacher as the sole party that the learners are permitted to communicate with regardless of the nature of communication, verbal or written. The CL approach; on the other hand, expanded the learners' "a*udience*" to include, in addition to the teacher, the learners' peers, and classmates, which provides more opportunities for interdependence to take place.

The form of lecturing provides another distinction between the traditional learning approach and the CL approach. Harasim et al assert that in the traditional learning approach, lecturing takes the form of formal lessons provided in an organized manner by the teacher, whereas in the CL approach lectures become more learner-centered where learning is based on the learners' discussions and debates about issues and questions that they have decided to tackle.

The next element is revision. Here, Harasim et al assert that in the traditional learning approach revision takes the form of suggestions imparted from the part of the teacher or instructor to the learners after they completed and submitted a given assignment, whereas in the CL approach, revision seems to be an ongoing process that involves the feedback of the entire members of the learning group. Similarly, evaluation in the traditional learning approach is performed by solely the teacher or the instructor of the classroom, whereas in the CL approach, evaluation is performed by both the instructor and the class members. Collaboration is Harasim's et al last criterion of comparison between the traditional learning approach and the CL approach. As clearly indicated above, collaboration appears to be absent in the traditional learning approach where the learners seem to either work alone or with the instructor only, which is not the case in the CL approach where the learners are allowed to work in groups or with peers under their instructor's supervision.

Based on Harasim's et al (1995) comparison, it is found that the CL approach is more flexible than the traditional learning approach. Additionally, it appears to provide more learning opportunities for the learners, which provides more arguments for advocating its implementation in this research.

2.3. Collaborative Learning Approaches

Describing the CL approach, Smith & MacGregor (1992) stated that the "c*ollaborative activities can range from classroom discussions interspersed with short lectures, through entire class periods, to study on research teams that last a whole term or a year*" (p. 14). The conceptualization asserts that the CL approach in itself covers a broad set of learning approaches to be implemented in the collaborative classroom. In this section, some of the relevant and most used approaches will be mentioned and discussed.

2.3.1. Cooperative Learning

The cooperative learning approach was the first learning approach proposed by Smith & MacGregor (1992) to fall under the umbrella of the CL approach. Such perception provides another distinction between these two learning approaches as the latter is viewed as a part or a sub-branch of the former. In addition to the emphasis on positive interdependence, individual accountability, and personal responsibility in this approach as the learners are to be assessed individually, a great deal of importance was given to the development of the learners' interpersonal skills, for they determine the quality of the group work (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). As for the strategies used in this approach, Smith & MacGregor (1992) pointed to assigning roles for each member of the group such as (recorder, participation encourager, and summarizer) as the most common and most used strategy in this learning approach.

2.3.2. Problem-Centered Instruction

The problem-centered instruction approach is based on discussion-based teaching methods. The approach revolves around preparing the learners for the real world by exposing them to real-world problems, then expecting them to analyze and solve these complex problems together as a group. Through this process, the approach seeks to "*develop problem solving abilities, understanding of complex relationships, and decision-making in the face of uncertainty*" (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, pp. 16-17).

2.3.3. Guided Design

Guided design is another teaching approach implicated in the CL approach. It is a structured extension of the problem-centered instruction approach. It requires the learners to operate in small groups to develop their decision-making skills. It differs from the former approach in that the process of solving the presented complex problem is divided into five steps: a situation or problem definition, statement of the goal,

generation of possible solutions, evaluation of solutions, and development of a plan of action. Each of these steps entails a series of open-ended questions that require the learners to "*marshal both information and the thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation*" (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 17). The learners are also required to build on "*their social skills to work in a team, reconcile differences, and reach a common decision*" (ibid). At the final stage of this approach, each learning group receives written feedback from the instructor whom has been following every step of the approach. The feedback includes notes and comments about "*the strengths, weaknesses and implications of their decision*" (ibid).

2.3.4. Simulations

The simulations approach is another extension of the problem-centered instruction approach. As the name entails, the simulation learning approach is designed to "*ask students, working individually or in teams, to play the roles of opposing stakeholders in a problematic situation or an unfolding drama*" (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 19). The process involves taking on the characters' values as well as their points of view. Thus, it makes the learners emotionally invested. The simulation, then, is followed by a period of discussions and reflections where the learners usually compare their own values and perspectives with the ones of the characters they assumed. And thus, learning takes place.

2.3.5. Writing Groups

In his conceptualization of writing, Elbow (1973) states that

> *Meaning is not what you start out with but what you end up with. Control, coherence, and knowing your mind are not what you start out with but what you end up*

> *with. Think of writing then not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and cook a message*. (p. 15)

The premise features writing as a lengthy process that requires diligent preparation. In order to facilitate the learners' experience with such a rigorous process, many educators have adopted the writing groups approach, for it is believed to improve the learners' critical thinking and writing skills (Gere, 1987). The writing groups approach involves learners working with peers or in small groups where they go through generating ideas, establishing arguments, and a lengthy process of discussion that entails the learners exchanging feedback based on the written drafts they received from each other. Smith & MacGregor (1992) described the process as a challenging process that "*requires students to read and listen to fellow students' writing with insight, and to make useful suggestions for improvement*" (p. 21). Thus, the approach is believed to produce better writers, for "*good writing grows out of good talking*" and "*good talking means focused dialectical conversation where students can practice creating and testing their own arguments on an audience of peers*" (Bean, 1991,1990 as cited in Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 21).

2.3.6. Peer Teaching

Peer teaching is a collaborative learning approach based on learners helping and teaching each other. It involves "*student pairs, called "learning cells," practice structured approaches for completing out-of-class assignments, as well as for teaching and quizzing each other on new material*" (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 21). Whitman (1988) presented a taxonomy of the approach that consists of two teaching types, "*near peers*" and "*co-peers*". In near peers teaching, generally, "*undergraduate teaching assistants who successfully complete a class and then return to assist the instructor in*

teaching it by leading discussion groups or help sessions" (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 22). The typology might as well refer to tutors whom work with students in need in a one-to-one situation where they teach them a wide set of competencies that might include writing skills, study skills, or academic advising (Smith & MacGregor, 1992). On the other hand, co-peers teaching generally refers to a teaching situation where two or more learners of the same level embark upon a process of teaching each other in order to achieve a shared objective.

2.3.7. Discussion Groups and Seminars

The emphasis of discussion groups in this approach is put on the process of discussion and its two forms, formal, and informal. The approach adopts a learning situation where instructors and learning groups engage in an active process of exchanging ideas, opinions, information, and expertise about a point in question (Ewens, 1989 as cited in Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 24), whereas seminars are based on advanced learners taking turns in presentations performed for the purpose of "*discussion and critical feedback from student peers as well as the teacher*" (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 24).

2.3.8. Learning Communities

Although the CL field's practitioners generally describe all collaborative learning approaches as learning communities, here the term is used for the intentional reconfiguration of the curriculum. In other words, the approach seeks to change the traditional learning approach that has weakened the learning quality and inhibited the development of the community. Thus, in order to counter these outcomes, a "*purposeful restructuring of the curriculum to link together courses so that students find greater coherence in what they are learning and increased interaction with faculty and fellow students*" (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith,1990 as cited in Smith &

MacGregor, 1992, p. 25). The purposeful reconstruction of the curriculum includes creating a meaningful relationship between the content of the different syllabi included in the curriculum and creating a meaningful relationship between the learners of different classrooms.

In addition to the aforementioned collaborative approaches, there exist other sub-collaborative approaches and models that might be opted for when implementing the CL approach such as cases, problem-centered instruction in medical education, supplemental instruction, writing fellows, and mathematics workshops. All of these are to be implemented depending on the learners' needs. Such variability in the learning approaches entailed in the CL approach makes it an approach that "*holds enormous promise for improving student learning and revitalizing college teaching. It is a flexible and adaptable approach appropriate to any discipline*" (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 10).

2.4. Benefits of Collaborative Learning

The flexibility and adaptability features of the CL approach made it a learning model that holds a wide range of learning benefits for learners. Hence, among these learning benefits, it is considered that:

- Collaboration facilitates the process of problem identification and the process of problem-solving.
- Collaboration helps in acquiring learning abstractions.
- Collaboration adopts interdisciplinary thinking which helps in knowledge transfer and knowledge assimilation.
- Collaboration develops critical thinking and deepens understanding of others.
- Collaboration results in higher levels of achievements.

- Collaboration facilitates perfection.
- Collaboration involves the whole learners in active learning; it affiliates diverse learning aspects such as reading, talking, writing, and thinking to produce activities that engage the learners' synthetic and analytic skills.

(Lunsford, 1991)

A closer look at Lunsford's (1991) benefits of CL leads to the conclusion that these benefits are mostly cognitive in nature as they vary from developing the learners' critical thinking, or enhancing their ability for learning via immersing them in deep thinking to fostering interdisciplinary thinking and increasing their achievement level. In the same vein, based on the works of Johnsons (1989) and Pantiz (1999), the benefits of the CL approaches are divided into four major categories and summarized as follows:

- **Social benefit**

- CL provides the learners with a system of social support.
- CL prompts the development of understanding between learners and faculty.
- CL creates a favorable environment for designing and practicing group activities.
- CL results in the growth of the learning communities.

- **Psychological benefits**

- Learner-centered guidance boosts the learners' confidence.
- Cooperating with peers and classmates reduces stress and anxiety.
- CL leads the learners to develop positive attitudes towards their teachers.

- **Academic benefits**

- CL builds, develops, and promotes the learners' critical thinking skills.
- CL engages the learners directly in their learning process.
- CL improves the learners' results.
- CL provides the learners with suitable problem-solving methods.

- CL enables the creation of personalized lessons that meet the learners' needs.
- CL is very useful in motivating the learners to learn a given curriculum.

- **Alternate student and teacher assessment techniques**

- Collaborative teaching involves the use of a variety of techniques for assessment.

(Laal & Ghodsi, 2012)

Besides the academic benefits that are somehow similar to Lunsford's proposed benefits, Laal & Ghodsi presented three categories of benefits to be acquired when learning via the CL approach, social, psychological, and assessment benefits. The social benefits, for instance, focus on the learners' gains as members of society. The benefits include developing the learners' oral communication skills, resolving conflicts, and diverse understanding. On the other hand, the psychological benefits focus on mentally preparing the individuals for learning. The benefits include alleviating the learners' stress and anxiety, increasing their motivation and willingness to learn, and reshaping their image of their teachers. Finally, assessment in CL is flexible and can take many forms, which helps evaluate the learners from different angles and provides more room for feedback and development.

Nokes-Malach et all (2015) add pooled knowledge, explanation, cross cueing, error correction, reduced memory load, and observational learning as the potential benefits learners can gain from learning collaboratively. Pooled knowledge refers to sharing information and knowledge among group members, which creates a learning situation where every member of the learning group acquires the knowledge of the entire group in addition to his own knowledge. Explanation refers to peers teaching each other and explaining complex issues to their peers in a simple manner; cross-cueing refers to a process of discussion that enhances the learners' memory, or a recalling process where the individuals' input in these discussions serves as a stimulus

or cue to retrieve information from the memories of the other individuals involved in these discussions. As for error-correction, it refers to a learning situation in which the members of the learning group check for errors and mistakes in their groupmates' work and correct them, whereas reduced memory load refers to the process of distributing the load of some difficult and complex tasks across the members of the learning group. Finally, observational learning that simply refers to learning by observation; in other words, the learners passively assimilate the knowledge, experiences, and techniques of their teammates through careful purposeful observation.

Over the above, Chandra (2015) attaches four more benefits to the CL approach. First, celebration of diversity, which is similar to what Laal & Ghodsi (2012) refer to as "*diversity understanding*". It involves "*students learn to work with all types of people*", which helps them "*better understand other cultures and points of view*" (p. 5). Second, interpersonal development that involves "*students learn to relate to their peers and other learners as they work together*", which *"can be especially helpful for students who have difficulty with social skills*" where "*they can benefit from structured interactions with others*" (ibid). Third, acknowledgment of individual differences, which clearly appears when different learners impart a variety of responses regarding raised questions. These responses, then, "*can help the group create a product that reflects a wide range of perspectives and is thus more complete and comprehensive*" (ibid). Finally, increased chances for personal feedback. "*Because there are more exchanges among students in small groups, students receive more personal feedback about their ideas and responses*" (ibid).

The CL approach proved to carry a large and varied set of benefits for the learners whom adopt it. These benefits serve as motives to implement the CL approach when teaching. Additionally, the aforementioned benefits seem to go in line with the

characteristics of the autonomous learner embedded in the definition of LA presented in chapter one, which supports this work's claim to use CL to enhance LA and calls for more insights regarding the implementation of the CL approach in practice.

2.5. Collaborative Learning in Practice

Despite the proven merits of the CL approach for learning and autonomy in the reviewed literature, designing a successful model for application in practice within or beyond the classroom setting remains a challenging endeavor that requires a variety of conditions and joint efforts, mainly of teachers and learners whom to be considered the building stones of the approach; therefore, the emphasis on this section will be put on the roles of both of them during the implementation of the approach.

2.5.1. The Teachers' Role

As illustrated earlier, the CL is an umbrella term that includes a wide variety of collaborative learning models, approaches, and sub-approaches, each of which has particular demands that depend on its learning goals and objectives, which made the process of designating the teachers' role in each of these models or approaches an arduous one. Macgregor (1990); however, succeeded to outline a four-stage process through which the teachers' planning for collaborative work should undergo.

First, *sketching in the possibilities,* which is a stage where the teacher decides the appropriateness of the course for CL implementation and checks the existing opportunities for CL in the course undertaken as a whole or in mere parts of it.

Second, *developing the collaborative task* where the teacher decides on the nature of the tasks, assignments, and activities that the learners should undertake together. The teacher's decision is based on the course's objectives to be achieved and the intellectual experiences that the learners must have.

Third, *thinking through how evaluation will work*; this stage is about feedback and accountability, two elements that Macgregor (1990) perceived as "*critical elements in any collaborative enterprise*" (p. 25). The stage concerns with the ways in which the evaluation of multiple groups taking part in a collaborative task takes place, as well as the ways in which the members of each group are evaluated.

In this regard, Wiener (1986) suggested four roles to be assumed by what he referred to as *the classroom observer of collaborative learning* in order to successfully evaluate the learners in the collaborative classroom. Wiener's first recommended role is *the teacher as task setter*. Wiener argues that "*the success of the collaborative model depends primarily upon the quality of the initial task students must perform in groups*" (1986, p. 54), which can only be achieved given that the task itself has the possibility to lead to an answer or solution that represents the collective judgment of the learning group as a whole (Bruffee, 1984). Thereby the first act of the teacher of the collaborative classroom, and beforehand any form of evaluation or assessment comes to pass, is for him to "*scrutinize the task and then comment on it in the evaluation report in the same way he or she would comment on the teacher's preparation for any lesson*" (Wiener, 1986, p. 54), and thus he can ensure that the task is actively engaging the learners and aiming at generating consensus among the learning groups members (Wiener, 1986). Next, there is *the teacher as classroom manager.* In order to proceed with the teachers' responsibility of evaluating the collaborative classroom, it was found that the teacher is supposed to administer the classroom management in terms of organizing the classroom setting, allocating adequate time for tasks, and ensuring collaboration among the members of the collaborative classroom. Then comes the *teacher's role during group work.* Here Wiener advises the teachers to tread with care during CL activities and regularly check their behavior not to hinder learning groups while working since aiding

the learners to achieve authority over knowledge through interdependence is the purpose of CL (Bruffee, 1984). Thus, it would be better for teachers to just relinquish their authority to the learners themselves, and that is in order not to undermine the learners' development and progress towards gaining control over their learning. Plus, the teachers' interference with the work of the learning groups may compromise an objective evaluation or assessment of the groups' work. Last but not least, there is the teacher as a synthesizer. This role occurs after the collaborative work or activity is complete. The teacher, here, makes sure that each of the learning groups shares its results with the remaining learning groups, and the classroom as a whole. The teacher then "*must help the class as a whole to make sense and order out of the sometimes conflicting and contradictory reports*" (Wiener, 1986, p. 58). Finally, the teacher opens a session of overall discussion and evaluation about each learning group's results where he "*helps students synthesize each group's results with the results produced by other groups. The teacher should lead the class to consider the similarities and contradictions in the recorded points of view and should unite them all*" (Wiener, 1986, p. 59). The process guarantees transparency in evaluation and assessment and provides an opportunity for the learners to comment on their peers' work and perhaps suggest further adjustments and recommendations for future works.

Returning to Macgregor's (1990) stages of planning the collaborative work, he proposed *practice: the best teacher* as the teachers' fourth and final stage of the planning. In this stage, the teacher is required to relate to his teaching experiences to manage the collaborative classroom. The teacher may include the teaching experiences and teaching advice of his colleagues and the formal and informal feedback of the learners to improve the quality of his design of collaborative learning.

Flannery (1994); on the other hand, when investigating the teacher's role in the collaborative classroom, centered his focus on the locus of authority. According to him "*if anything is certain, it has to be that collaborative learning does not simply occur when an instructor places several students together and asks them to work together on an assignment*" (1994, p. 20); thus, there must be an authoritative figure in the classroom to ensures the implementation of CL in the classroom. However, the exerted authority or control must not be similar to the one of the traditional classrooms, especially since CL represents a significant shift from teacher-centeredness towards learner-centeredness. Therefore, the solution would be creating a balance between fully controlling the collaborative classroom and totally relinquishing authority over it.

Similar models that tackle the teachers' role in the collaborative classroom were presented over the years. Kaendler et al (2014), for instance, presented the framework for Implementing Collaborative Learning in the Classroom (ICLC). The framework includes the researchers' proposed phases of implementing the CL approach, as well as the teachers' expected roles at each level as shown in figure 2.1. The framework exhibits a resemblance to Macgregor's (1990) stages of planning the collaborative work

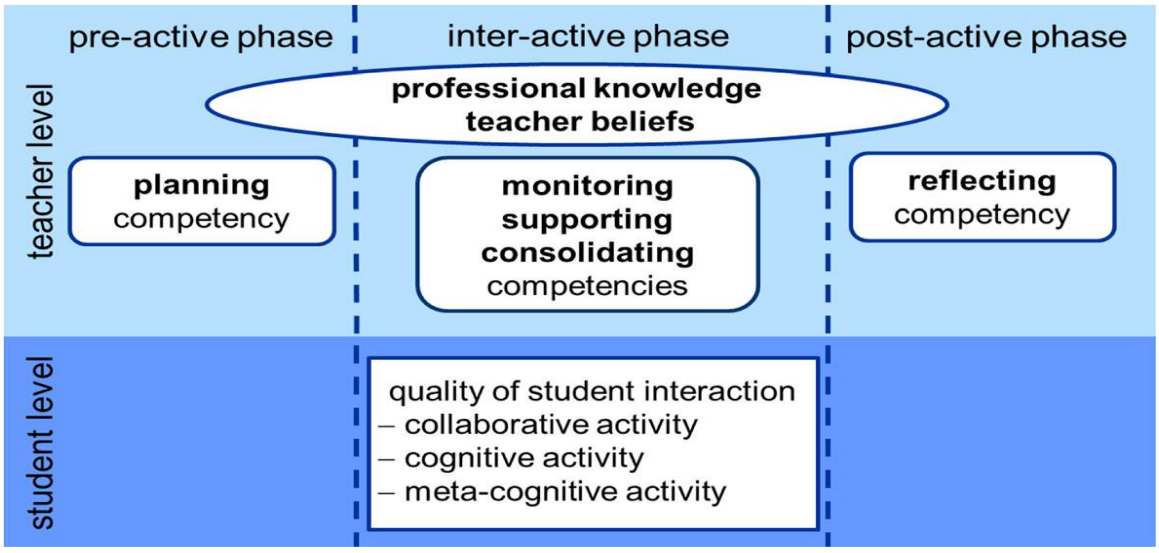

Figure 2.1: The ICLC framework (Kaendler et al, 2014)

Kaendler's et al (2014) framework consists of three phases of implementation: the *pre-active phase, the inter-active phase,* and *the post-active phase* respectively. Kaendler et al (2014) explained the learning process implied in the three phases as follows:

> *the pre-active phase includes the teacher's preparation of the lesson and the introduction of the collaborative learning setting to the whole class before students start working in groups. During the inter-active phase, students find solutions to the problem at hand, which are eventually reviewed with the whole class. Finally, the post-active phase takes place after the teaching lesson, when the teacher reflects on the previous phases.* (p. 4)

Each of the phases, Kaendler et al (2014) add, entails certain demands, especially from the part of the teacher. In the pre-active phase, for example, *planning* appears as the required role or competency to be performed in the collaborative classroom. Competency entails the teacher "*defines the learning goal(s) and identifies characteristics of the present classroom situation in which collaborative learning should be implemented*" (Kaendler et al, 2014, p. 5). In the inter-active phase; however, three roles or competencies seem to be required from the teacher, *monitoring*, *supporting*, and *consolidating*. In monitoring, the teacher observes the learners while engaged in CL activities and checks if they are actively participating in the activity. Based on these observations the teacher decides on the nature of his intervention if needed; hence, supporting the learners. In consolidating, "*the teacher's task is to ensure learning gain by compiling and acknowledging each group's solution to the problem that the students have been working on*" (ibid). Finally, in the post-active phase comes *reflecting*. The competency is fundamentally some sort of contemplation on the whole

implementation process of CL. It measures the success of the CL implementation taking into consideration the learners' behavior in the process, the achievement level of the learning goals, and the depth of the learning gained at the individual, group, and class levels. The objective of reflecting, comment Kaendler et al (2014), is to help "*develop alternative strategies for the next implementation of collaborative learning in the classroom*" (p. 6).

As a conclusion, it is safe to reject the fallacy that benches the teachers' role during the implementation of CL and condemns it as a passive role, which is by no means the case. The above has proven the vitality of the teacher's role in the implementation of the CL approach where the teacher challenges himself to "*remain a central figure in supporting CL, without taking control of the moments in which opportunities to learn arise for students*" (Van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019, p. 86).

2.5.2. The Learners' Role

In accordance with the paradigm shift towards learner-centeredness entailed in the CL approach, a shift in the nature of the learners' roles in the collaborative classroom was required. Tinzmann et al (1990), for instance, managed to delineate the learners' roles before, during, and after the learning process.

Goal setting comes at the top of the list. Tinzmann et al (1990) perceive it as a preparation phase for learning. At this stage, the learners are expected to set their learning goals and objectives, but since the teachers are, usually, responsible for this task, it becomes their liability to provide the learners with choices. The learners, then, discuss the presented learning goals with each other and make their decision based on their discussion. Note that the learners are to be given the freedom to either choose a personalized learning goal for each member of the learning goal, set a learning goal for

the learning group as a whole, adopt each other's learning goals, or even generate their own learning goal provided that it is related to the goals set by their teachers.

Designing learning tasks and monitoring emerges as the learners' second role in the collaborative classroom as per Tinzmann's et al (1990) model. The learners, here, are expected to plan their own learning activities within the general course and task planning of their teachers, which makes the teachers' thoughtful planning of the course the key factor that ensures the learners' success. The second part of this role is monitoring. The role is manifested when "*students learn to take responsibility for monitoring, adjusting, self-questioning, and questioning each other*" (Tinzmann et al, 1990, p. 6). The learners, assert Tinzmann et al, start by checking their progress towards their learning goals, and based on this they make adequate changes. The learners, then, can go further by sharing their ideas with the other groups and exchanging feedback.

Assessment concludes Tinzmann's et al (1990) model for the learners' roles in the collaborative classroom. They have presented this role as one that is *"intimately related to ongoing monitoring of one's progress toward achievement of learning goals*" (p. 7), where instead of being concerned with assigning grades to the learners, assessment becomes more related to

> *evaluating whether one has learned what one intended to learn, the effectiveness of learning strategies, the quality of products and decisions about which products reflect one's best work, the usefulness of the materials used in a task, and whether future learning is needed and how that learning might be realized.* (ibid)

In other words, assessment is a learning role and skill that allows the learners to evaluate the collaborative learning process covering as many learning angles as possible and decide upon the appropriate adjustment in further implementation of the learning approach that might lead to even better future outcomes.

In the same vein, MacGregor (1992) mapped the role shifts to be encountered with from the part of the learners when engaging in CL activities. These role shifts were presented as follows:

- The learner shifts from being a passive recipient in the classroom where he listens, observes, and take notes to an active participant who engages contributes and discusses.

- The learner's expected input in classroom preparation shifts from low to high.

- The learner shifts from being a silent learner in the classroom who takes no risks to an explicit learner who takes many risks.

- The learner's attendance shifts from being determined by personal preference to an attendance that is determined by community expectation.

- The nature of the relationship existing among the learners in the classroom shifts from one of a competitive nature to one of a collaborative nature.

- The learners' responsibilities shift from being of intrinsic and of independent nature to being related to interdependent learning.

- The learners' perceptions shift from perceiving texts and teachers as the sole sources of authority and knowledge to include themselves, their peers, and even their society.

(MacGregor, 1992)

In general, the focus was given to placing the learners at the center of the learning process and ensuring their active participation in it.

A more detailed depiction of the learners' roles in the collaborative classroom was introduced by Inaba & Mizoguchi (2004). In their model, Inaba & Mizoguchi (2004) presented nine types of behavior and thirteen types of roles to be assumed by learners in CL. Table 2.2 is an illustration of Inaba & Mizoguchi's (2004) model of the learners' roles in the collaborative classroom. The model maps thirteen roles to be assumed by the learners during the CL activity, each of which entails a certain behavior to be exhibited by the learners. In some cases, more than one role may exhibit the same behavior. The model, then, provides the learners with definitions for the nine behaviors that set the context of application for each role.

Table 2.2: Behavior and Roles of Learners in Collaborative Learning Sessions (Inaba & Mizoguchi, 2004)

Behavior	Definition	Role
Advising	To diagnose problems and give some advice to other learners	Anchored instructor, Diagnoser
Guiding	To demonstrate something to other learners and then guide the learners' behavior	Master
Imitating	To imitate other learners' behavior	Apprentice
Observing	To observe other learners' behavior	Observer
Passive learning	To be taught something new from other learners	Peer tutee
Presenting	To explain something in his/her mind to other learners	Problem holder, Panelist, Client
Problem solving	To solve problems	Peripheral participant, Full participant

Reviewing	To compare and review other learners' opinions and his/her thinking process	Audience
Tutoring	To explain something he/she already knows to other learners	Peer tutor

Based on the premise that "*educational benefits depend on how learners interact with each other: what roles they play in collaborative learning*" (Inaba & Mizoguchi, 2004, p. 6). The model follows by setting the conditions upon which the distribution of the roles depends as well as the predictable benefits to be attained given that the conditions were met. Table 2.3 below presents the required characteristics to be present in the learners for each role.

Table 2.3: Roles, Conditions for role assignments, and Predictable educational benefits (Inaba & Mizoguchi, 2004)

Role	Condition	Predictable benefits
Anchored instructor	* having the target knowledge * knowing how to diagnose others - not having experience in diagnosing others	Acquisition of content specific knowledge (tuning) Development of cognitive skill (associative stage)
Apprentice	- not having the knowledge how to use the target skill - not having the experience to use the target skill	Development of cognitive and/or metacognitive skill (cognitive stage & associative stage)
Audience	* having the target knowledge * having experience in using the knowledge * having related knowledge in the domain	Acquisition of content specific knowledge (restructuring)
Client	* knowing how to use the target metacognitive skill	Development of the metacognitive skill (associative stage)
Diagnoser	knowing how to use the target cognitive skill	Development of the cognitive skill (associative stage)

Full participant	* having the target knowledge * having experience in using the knowledge * having related knowledge in the domain * knowing how to use the target cognitive skill * having experience in using the cognitive skill * having how to use target metacognitive skill * having experience in using the metacognitive skill	Acquisition of content specific knowledge (restructuring) Development of the cognitive skill (autonomous stage) Development of metacognitive skill (autonomous stage)
Master	* knowing how to use target cognitive skill * having experience in using the cognitive skill * having how to use target metacognitive skill * having experience in using the metacognitive skill	Development of cognitive and/or metacognitive skill (autonomous stage)
Observer	- not having the target knowledge - not having the knowledge how to use the target skill	depending on what to observe
Panelist	* knowing how to use a skill for self-expression * having his/her own opinion - not having experience in using the skill for self-expression	Development of skill for self-expression (associative stage)
Peer tutee	- not having the target knowledge	Acquisition of content specific knowledge (accretion)
Peer tutor	* having the target knowledge - not having experience in using the knowledge	Acquisition of content specific knowledge (tuning)

	- misunderstanding the knowledge	
Peripheral participant	* knowing how to use the target cognitive skill * knowing how to use the target metacognitive skill - not having experience in using the cognitive skill - not having experience in using the metacognitive skill	Development of cognitive skill (associative stage) Development of metacognitive skill (associative stage)
Problem (Anchor) holder	* having a problem - having related knowledge to solve the problem	Acquisition of content specific knowledge (tuning)

The above summarizes the learners' roles in the collaborative classroom and reiterates the vitality of their active participation for the success of the learning process.

The learners' roles in the collaborative classroom in addition to the teachers' roles in it, the connotations of the CL approach, and the paradigm shift towards learner-centeredness implicated in its implementation place the CL approach in line with the concepts and standards of LA. And since LA is perceived as a learning state whereas CL is perceived as a learning approach, the present work advocates the use of the learning approach to achieve the learning state. In other words, the use of the CL approach as a means to achieve a high level of LA.

2.6. Collaborative Learning as a Means to Enhance Learner Autonomy

2.6.1. Rationale

Although the two concepts, CL and LA, might seem paradoxical, the thought of using the former as a means to promote the latter was crossed upon on many occasions in the reviewed literature. Vygotsky's theory of ZPD, for instance, might be considered as the origin from which the idea emerged. As per this theory, as discussed in an earlier

section of this work, CL possesses the faculty to further develop the learners' learning achievement level and autonomous capacity when compared to the individual effort exerted by the learners. The second rationale that supports the use of CL to promote LA stems from the fact that both of the notions are built upon the same core principle, learner-centeredness, which creates a strong source for compatibility between these notions. Dam's (2011) model shown in Figure 2.2 below represents a good example of this compatibility.

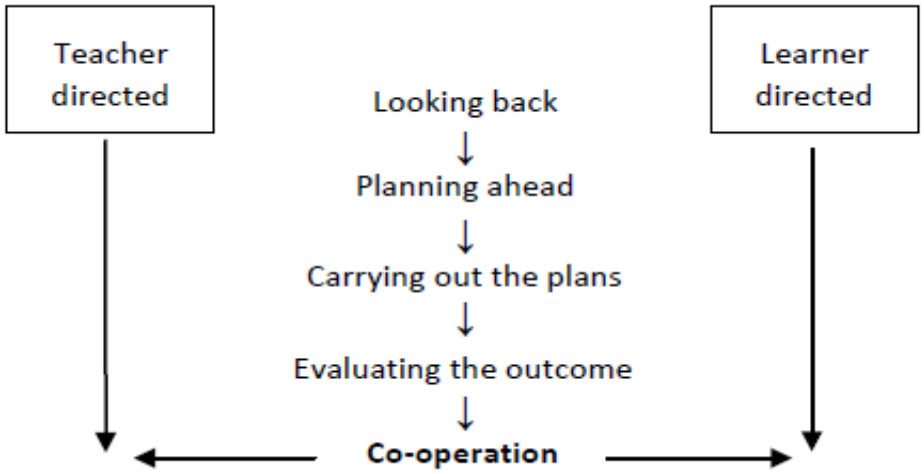

Figure 2.2: Developing learner autonomy – a simplified model (Dam, 2011)

Furthermore, many researchers have advocated for this apparent oxymoron combination such as Holliday (2003) who claims that "a*utonomy resides in the social worlds of the students which they bring with them*" (p. 117), or Geary who argues that learners can go "*from dependence toward independence via interdependence*" (1998, p. 1). Not to mention the similarities perceived from the teachers' and learners' roles in both the collaborative and autonomous classrooms that mainly depict the teachers as instructors, facilitators, and partners, and the learners as learning partners and active participators. All of these provide further evidence that support the implementation of the CL approach as a means that promotes LA.

2.6.2. Stages of Application

For a successful implementation of the CL approach as a means to develop LA, Murphey (1998b) conceptualized a five-stage model as a process through which the learners should pass in order to become more autonomous. The stages include: *socialization*, *drawing metacognition*, *initiating choice*, *expanding autonomy,* and *critical collaborative autonomy*.

For instance, *socialization* involves granting opportunities for the learners to join groups, which is a prerequisite to initiating the implementation of the CL approach. The learners, then, are to be given the chance to introduce themselves and to know their fellow group members. The process aims to aid the learners to feel comfortable in their learning groups and seeks to create in the learners a sense of belonging to their learning groups that will, hopefully, develop to become part of their identities (Murphey & Jacobs, 2000). One way to achieve this state is by simply knowing each other's names and having the opportunity to exchange a few words with as many members of the learning group as possible.

Drawing metacognition; however, is more concerned with enabling the learners to examine their learning process. Learning groups provide the best conditions for this examination because in them "*students can discuss their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors, and each student can compare their own with those of their groupmates*" (Murphey & Jacobs, 2000, p. 8). This concept is manifested when the learners explain to each other the process through which they went to reach an answer instead of merely disclosing it, exchange ideas during assignments and activities, manage conflicts politely, and allocate appropriate time to reflect on their work as a learning group pondering about the possibilities for improved collaboration in the future (Murphey & Jacobs, 2000).

Initiating choice is Murphey's third stage of application towards an enhanced level of autonomy. The stage might overlap and co-occur with the previous two stages. In this stage, the learners are introduced to the concept of choice where they are to be given the opportunity to make choices about their learning including "*selecting from among a variety of activities to do, choosing from a number of options as to how to present their work, and having input on how assessment will be conducted*" (Murphey & Jacobs, 2000, p. 9). The learners might also choose their learning roles in the CL tasks and activities. This stage might be the junction point between CL and LA since it represents an initial shift in control and authority from teacher to learners.

The fourth stage of application is *expanding autonomy.* At this stage, the learners take a further step deeper into the realm of autonomy. The stage is based on the results of the previous ones. The learners, here, are to be considered experienced with socializing, reflecting, and making choices. And since the purpose of this stage is to create lifelong learners, the next step, then, involves engaging the learners in a process of self and peer assessment, enabling them to initiate their own learning activities within and beyond the classroom setting and allowing them to impart feedback to their teachers as to how instruction is to be shaped to provide maximum learning benefits (Murphey & Jacobs, 2000).

The fifth and final stage of application towards LA is *critical collaborative autonomy*. It depicts the pinnacle of the learners' autonomy. According to Jacobs & Tan (2015), the stage represents

> *a step outside the first four movements also because students extend their vision beyond empowering themselves or the members of their small group of peers*

> *to examining how they can use what they learn to benefit society more generally, especially the less powerful members of society.* (p. 3)

Shor (1993) explains the process through which the successful application of this stage, collaborative learner autonomy, is achieved, where he asserts that only by means of using the learners'

> *analytic habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking, or discussing which go beneath surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions, and routine clichés understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter; discovering the deep meaning of any event, text, technique, process, objects, statement, image, or situation; applying that meaning to your own context.* (p. 32)

the state of collaborative learner autonomy is achieved. Of course, within the constraints of the community they are working in, the learning groups, which include "*linguistic and cultural awareness, study and heuristic skills and also social skills, an understanding of what is best done alone or in pairs and groups and in the latter case a willingness to engage in democratic decision making*" (Trim, 1997, p. 15). After all, to "*find the right mix between working with others and doing one's own thinking*" (Murphey & Jacobs, 2000, p. 10), and to establish stability between the learners' perceptions of their individual identity and their identity as members of a group or a society is what collaborative learner autonomy really about.

2.6.3. Challenges and Opportunities

Despite Murphey's (1998b) proposed collaborative model of application towards promoted autonomy, the learning groups might find themselves encountering challenges, difficulties, and uncertainties that hamper a successful implementation of the model. Although conflicts in CL "*can present opportunity in the form of mutual respect, understanding, and even contribute to the generation of new ideas*" (Lencioni, 2002, p. 233 as cited in Jarvie, & Waldow, 2021, p. 233), unmanaged conflicts might have negative effects on the learning groups' "*cohesiveness and willingness to collaborate*" (ibid). Thus, awareness of the possible conflicts to raise in the collaborative classroom contributes to "*better group functioning and more effective workflow towards the end goal and the learning environment*" (ibid). Among these conflicts to be wary of in the collaborative classroom are Lencioni's (2002) *five dysfunctions of a team* (see Figure 2.3 below). The dysfunctions include: *absence of trust* that might arise, especially, among learners working with each other for the first time, *fear of conflict*, for, unfortunately, conflicts are inevitable as they "*might arise as group members' level of dedication to the desired outcome differs or resistant to the outcome in general*" (Lencioni, 2002, p. 234 as cited in Jarvie, & Waldow, 2021, p. 234); *lack of commitment, avoiding accountability*, and *lacking attention to results.*

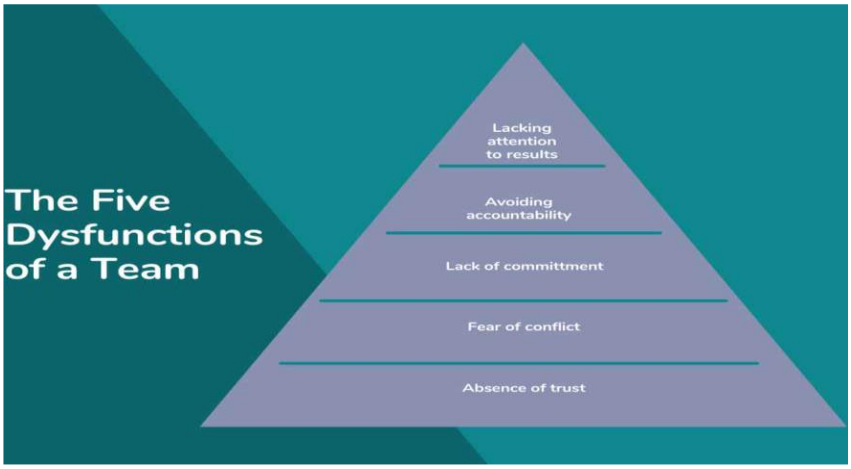

Figure 2.3: The Five Dysfunctions of a Team (Lencioni, 2002 as cited in Jarvie, & Waldow, 2021, p. 233)

In the same vein, other challenges might include:

(1) Unlike the traditional classroom where lecturing is the main form of teaching, managing group activities necessitates long periods of time.
(2) The learners' lack of competence might lead them to impart incorrect information and mislead their peers and classmates.
(3) Learning groups might lose focus and go off task.
(4) Learning groups might have poor performance due to some malpractices of some of the group members such as not doing their fair share, or attempting to dominate the learning group.

(Jacobs & Tan, 2015)

In order to overcome the above challenges and lead a successful implementation of Murphey's (1998b) proposed collaborative model of application towards promoted LA, Jacobs & Tan (2015) suggested four collaborative learning principles, *maximum peer interactions*, *equal opportunity to participate*, *individual accountability* and *positive interdependence*, as the means that manages and regulates the learners' roles in the collaborative classroom.

The first principle, maximum peer interactions, for instance, affects the learning outcome from two aspects. The first aspect is concerned with raising the number of peer interactions occurring in the collaborative classroom. In the traditional classroom, Jacobs & Tan (2015) assert, when the teacher calls upon a student to speak, only one peer interaction will be taking place in the classroom, and it will be between the called-upon student to talk and the classroom as a whole; however, in the collaborative classroom, twenty-five (25) potential peer interaction is likely to take place given that the class is consisting of fifty (50) students divided into pairs. The second aspect of this principle is concerned with the quality of peer interactions. This involves the learners'

use of higher order of thinking skills that will enrich their interactions in terms of learning, engagement, and depth of processing (Järvelä, Hurme, & Järvenoja, 2011). Moreover, the second aspect involves "*students' use of collaborative skills, such as praising and thanking others, requesting and providing examples, listening attentively and disagreeing politely*" (Jacobs & Tan, 2015, p. 5). Jacobs & Tan (2015) rationalized this principle arguing that "*learner autonomy for TEFL instruction fits well with the principle of maximum peer interactions because the principle involves students in the active shaping of their learning environments*" (Jacobs & Tan, 2015, p. 6).

The second principle is equal opportunity to participate. It addresses and seeks to eliminate the issue of class domination practices performed by one or more members of the learning groups that result in restricting the participation of the remaining members of the learning groups, for these practices negatively affect both parties the dominating and the excluded learners. On one hand, "*students whose participation is restricted by groupmates are deprived of opportunities to exercise control over their own learning*"; on the other hand, "*the rest of the group members lose the benefits of interacting with the excluded person(s)"* (ibid). One way to avoid these malpractices, add Jacobs & Tan (2015), is via ensuring a turn for each group member to work on the given assignment or task while the remaining members provide assistance and feedback.

Individual accountability comes as Jacobs & Tan's (2015) third collaborative learning principle. Here, the researchers assert that "*the principle of individual accountability seeks to put pressure on students to do their fair share in the groups. In other words, students have pressure to contribute what they can to the learning of their group members*" (p. 7). The principle further encourages the development of LA as it ensures that each member of the learning group assumes an active role in his learning;

thus, gaining control over learning, which is a characteristic of autonomous learners. One way to enforce this principle in the collaborative classroom is for the teacher to randomly call on a group member to present the work that they have been working on, instead of calling on a group and letting them choose whom will represent them. This "*encourages everyone to be ready and to help their group members to be ready*" (Jacobs & Tan, 2015, p. 8).

The fourth principle presented by Jacobs & Tan (2015) is positive interdependence. Whereas the previous principle requires each learner to contribute to fulfilling the group's tasks and assignments, the current principle requires the learning group as a whole to provide feedback, assistance, and support for each member, for their learning outcome is correlated and whatever benefits/hinders individual members of the learning group, will benefit/hinder the learning group as a whole. As for the principle's importance for LA, Jacobs & Tan (2015) assert:

> *learner autonomy is not mainly about individual students going off by themselves to learn, although learning alone can be one important mode of learning. Instead, learner autonomy represents students choosing how they want to learning from a range of options. Cohesive groups, in which members collaborate towards the benefit of all, present students with what could potentially be an attractive option for learning.* (ibid)

One good means to enact the principle is for the learning group to establish unified learning goals. Another is to convince the group members that their success or failure is dependent on their learning outcome as a group. This prospect not only will motivate

the learners to be genuinely invested in their learning outcome, but will motivate them to be genuinely concerned with the learning outcomes of their partners as well.

Indeed Jacobs &Tan's (2015) proposed collaborative learning principles play a crucial role in moderating, managing, and ensuring the success of Murphey's (1998b) proposed collaborative model of application that seeks to enhance, develop and promote LA.

2.6.4. Related Studies

Many studies were encountered in the reviewed literature that investigated the authority of the CL approach over the promotion, development, and enhancement of LA, the majority of which showed positive results.

Assinder (1991), for instance, conducted a practical experiment in which the learners were tasked to operate in groups to prepare video materials to present to each other. The findings revealed the learners' increased motivation for learning, participation in the classroom, communication among each other, and in-depth understanding of the subject matter, in addition to their increased sense of responsibility for learning, self-confidence, and mutual respect, not to mention the variance in the accumulated language skills and strategies (Assinder, 1991).

Furnborough (2012) carried out another study that investigates the ways in which adult beginner distance learners of French, Spanish, and German "*engage with tutors and with other students, and the extent to which these interactions enhance their learning*" (p. 99). The findings; on one hand, demonstrated that "*many of the participants in the study felt able to take control over their learning, and others were making good progress in this direction*" (p. 113); on the other hand, "*highlighted areas where learners could benefit from a more strategic approach and where they might need support to reflect on different options for collaborative learning*" (ibid). The

findings reiterate the CL approach's capacity to promote LA even in distance learning situations.

In the same vein, Shi & Han (2019) conducted another study that aims to "*explore how cooperative group learning helps to improve learner autonomy*" (p. 30). The study was conducted in a Chinese context with non-English major college students exploring the influence of cooperative group learning on the development of LA via the use of news sharing as the learning technique and the English language as the learning medium. The findings indicated that the implemented learning procedure increased the learners' interest in learning English as well as their participation rate. Moreover, it improved the learners' learning strategies, language competencies, language skills, autonomous learning ability, and critical thinking (Shi & Han, 2019).

All of which accentuate the CL approach adequacy to promote LA. However, the most relevant study to the Algerian EFL context encountered in the reviewed literature, and the one upon which the current research is built was the study conducted by Blidi (2017) on Omani students representing what he called the MENA region, the Middle East and North Africa. In his study, Blidi (2017) introduced the concept of CLA as a learning approach that fosters the gradual development of LA. The findings revealed the learners' readiness, willingness, and motivation to develop autonomy, valued the teachers' and peers' support in the process, and stressed a need for creating a "*cooperative and collaborative learning environment where learners feel confident and secure, and can gradually develop confidence, self-esteem and learning skills required to develop autonomy*" (Blidi, 2017, p. 135).

The reviewed studies proved the CL approach to be a flexible learning approach that has the ability to foster, promote, and develop LA regardless of the learning setting

as the studies proved that the approach passed the trial of time, from Assinder (1991) to Shi & Han (2019), the trial of place, from face to face to distance learning, and the trial of learning context, from the English language to other fields of study.

Conclusion

The present chapter started with conceptualizing the independent variable of the research, CL. It documented the different connotations of the CL approach, then presented a unified conceptualization for the approach based on the documented connotations. The chapter, then, proceeds with clearing the entanglement of the CL approach with two related concepts, cooperative learning, and traditional learning. The chapter also covered the approaches and sub-approaches entailed under the umbrella term of CL. Additionally, the chapter delineated the merits of implementing the CL approach by reporting its benefits. The approach's appropriate process of implementation in practice was covered as well in this chapter with an emphasis on the teachers' and the learners' roles. The chapter concluded by linking the two paradoxical appearing concepts, CL and LA, advocating the use of the former as a scaffold to promote, develop and enhance the latter, where it started with rationalizing the process, then proceeded to explain its stages of application, pursued with proposing solutions to overcome the potential challenges, and finished with documenting related studies in order to provide further evidence that supports the CL approach's adequacy to enhance LA.

PART TWO: PRACTICAL PART

Table of Contents

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Following the theoretical part of the current research that presented a fundamental review on LA, CL, and the use of the latter as a scaffold to promote the former, a practical part takes place aiming to situate the reviewed issues within the Algerian EFL context since the issues of dependence and lack of autonomy in learning have affected the Algerian EFL learners of tertiary level. However, prior to immersing in the application of the study, and noting the relevant statistics, findings, and interpretations, a well-structured introduction to the employed research design and methodology is required. Answering this requirement, the present chapter delves into outlining the overall process followed to answer the research questions asked at the beginning of this research. This includes the implemented research method, the research approach, the population, the sampling, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis.

3.1. Research Approach

Research approaches are defined as the "*plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation*" (Chetty, 2016, p. 3). There exist three research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, yet they are not to be perceived as rigid and distinct categories, especially for the qualitative and quantitative approaches since a study can be "*more qualitative than quantitative or vice versa*" (ibid). The mixed method approach stands in the middle between the qualitative and quantitative approaches incorporating elements that belong to both of them (Chetty, 2016).

However, on the distinction between these research approaches, the quantitative approach is mainly used for testing theories and hypotheses via the examination of relationships that might exist between variables; and the collected data take numerical form so that they can be measured and analyzed using statistical procedures. Furthermore, the obtained results are deductively generated and can be generalized and replicated (Chetty, 2016). The qualitative approach; on the other hand, refers to the research approach used for "*exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem*" (Chetty, 2016, p. 4). Chetty adds: "*The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data*" (ibid). As mentioned earlier, the mixed method is a research approach that involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data under the assumption that believes in the ascendency of utilizing both approaches, qualitative and quantitative, over the use of either of the approaches alone in terms of understanding the research problem (Chetty, 2016).

The above has proven the particularity of each of the research approaches. Therefore, the overall decision determining the research approach to be implemented in a research work must respect the particularity and attributes of each type of the research approaches. Furthermore, the decision must adhere to the researcher's philosophical assumptions he brings to the study, the techniques used in the investigation, the research methods, the framework of the research problem, the researcher's actual encounters, and the target audience (Chetty, 2016). Thus, to ensure trustworthy and reliable results, and in order to conduct an objective research work, after consulting the above-mentioned conditions, a quantitative research method was

opted for, since it best answers the aims of the current research, and best meets the requirements of the research.

3.2. Research Method

The determination of the research method to be applied is largely dependent on the aims of the research itself as well as the type of the variables under investigation. Amongst the aims targeted in this research, there is exploring the Algerian EFL learners' attitudes towards the concept of LA, their attitudes towards its vitality for their learning, and their attitudes towards the use of the CL approach as the independent variable that steers them towards higher levels of autonomy. All of these represent research aims that are best achieved via the use of a research method that seeks to record the learners' attitudes towards a certain learning situation rather than a research method that is based on experimentation. Furthermore, the dependent variable of the current research, LA, is one of abstract nature, which makes the attainment of accurate results via the use of experiments a difficult procedure with unreliable outcomes. Thus, again, seeking the learners' thoughts and positions seems to be the best procedure to be followed. Taking into consideration these factors, in the current research we have opted for the descriptive method, for it was defined as a "*research method used to describe the existing phenomena as accurately as possible*" (Atmowardoyo, 2018, p. 198); thus, facilitates the attainment of the research's aims.

3.3. Population and Sampling

3.3.1. Population

Many interpretations have been given to the term "population" in research methodology. For instance, Marczyk et al (2005) defined the concept as "*all individuals of interest to the researcher*" (p. 18). A similar definition was presented by Sekaran

(2003) whom defined the term as "*the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate*" (p. 265). In the same vein, Fraenkel et al (2012) add that the population is "*the group of interest to the researcher, the group to whom the researcher would like to generalize the results of the study*" (p. 92). Moreover, "*a population can be any size and that it will have at least one (and sometimes several) characteristic(s) that sets it off from any other population*" (ibid). Fraenkel et al (2012), then, sorted the population into two categories, target, and accessible populations. The population to which the researcher is eager to generalize his results over represents the target population. The population to which the researcher is actually able to generalize his results over represents the accessible population. Thus, the former is perceived as the researcher's optimal choice, and the latter is perceived as the researcher's realistic choice (Fraenkel et al, 2012).

With reference to the present work, the target population is the first-year students of the English language departments existing in the Algerian universities. However, due to time and geographical constraints, the accessible population is the first-year students of the English language department of Mostefa Benboulaid, Batna 2 university during the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019. The accessible population comprises of 546 elements divided by the administration into 10 groups. The rationale behind selecting the first-year students as the population for the present work lies in the fact that this level represents a transitional point in the learners' academic career from secondary education that perceives the learners as dependent adolescents to tertiary, or higher education that perceives the learners as independent adults. This change is accompanied by changes in the learning prerequisites the learners are required to possess at this level, especially autonomy in learning. Thus, this work aims to build on the learners' level of autonomy in the first year of their tertiary education career.

3.3.2. Sampling

Burgess (2001) defined a sample as "*a sub-set of the population that is usually chosen because to access all members of the population is prohibitive in time, money and other resources*" (p. 4). Opoku et al. (2016) add that it is "*a subset of the population that is usually chosen to serve as a representation of the views of population*" (p. 37). Similarly, Fraenkel et al (2012) state: "*A sample in a research study is the group on which information is obtained*" (p. 91). In general, a sample is a designated representative group from the population under investigation. The intent behind sampling a representative group from a population is to overcome the constraint of time and money and obtain reliable data for analysis and interpretation. Random sampling appears to be the most convenient approach for achieving these goals.

Fraenkel et al (2012) discussed the four sampling methods that fall under the umbrella of random sampling (Figure 3.1). The first method is simple random sampling. In this method, every element of the population gets an equal opportunity to be chosen in the sample. This method is the most recommended in research, for it has a greater chance of assuring representativeness in comparison to the other methods. The second method is stratified random sampling. This method is opted for when certain subgroups or strata are found in the population. Thus, the researcher uses this sampling method to ensure that these subgroups or strata are present in the sample in the same percentage that they are present in the population. The example of gender is given here, where the sample must comprise of 50% males, and 50% females provided that the population is comprised of the same proportion. The third method is cluster random sampling. This method is used when it is not possible to randomly select individuals for sampling due to institutional or other restrictions. The issue is common in schools where the accessible population is divided into groups. In this case, the researcher resorts to

randomly selecting a sample from the already existing classes, groups, or clusters. This method is the closest one to simple random sampling; and if simple random sampling is more efficient with a large sample, cluster random sampling is more efficient with a large number of clusters in the sample. The fourth method is a two-stage random sampling. This method combines two sampling methods, simple random sampling and cluster random sampling. First, the researcher randomly selects representative clusters from a large set of clusters, then, he randomly selects representative individuals from each cluster of the previously selected clusters. Notice that this method is generally opted for when the population is too large.

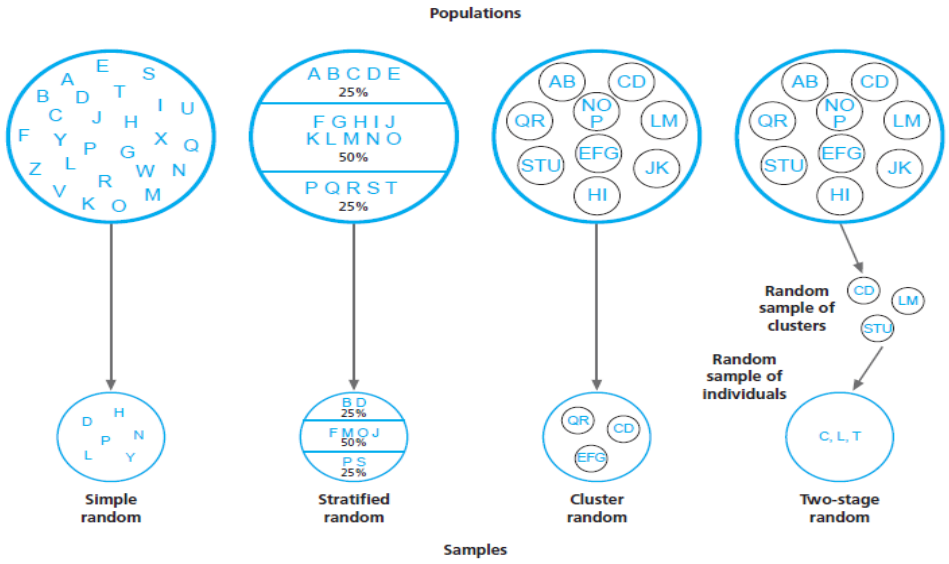

Figure 3.1: Random sampling methods (Fraenkel et al, 2012)

Based on the above, and with reflection upon our accessible population that was divided by the administration into 10 groups, the current research adopted the third sampling method, cluster random sampling. Among the ten groups, four groups were randomly selected to be the sample of the study. The sample was estimated to be about 40% of the population. The selected groups comprised of a total number of 230 elements from a total population of 546 elements, which represented exactly 42.12% of the total population. Unfortunately, only 198 elements participated in the study, which

made the sample percentage decrease to 36.26%. Although the sample was substantially decreased from 42.12% to 36.26% of the total accessible population, it was found that such a sample is quite representative.

3.4. Instrumentation

In order to achieve the current research's aims, a detailed questionnaire consisting of 58 elements was administered to first-year students of the English language department of Mostefa Benboulaid, Batna 2 university during the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019. The questionnaire was divided into five sections. The first section investigated the learners' learning styles and habits vis-a-vis LA. The section consisted of 19 elements and adopted Blidi's (2017) suggested aspects of the learners' learning styles and habits to be explored vis a vis the criteria of LA. These aspects are: "*Time*", "*Interaction with Peers*", "*What to study*", "*Guidance*", "*Self-reliance*" and "*Relaxation*". The second section dealt with the learners' actual experiences vis-a-vis the CL approach. The section was divided into two parts. Part A, consisting of 5 elements, explored the learners' participation frequency in CL activities, as well as their evaluation of these frequencies. Part B, consisting of 7 elements, investigated the learners' valuation of the CL approach in enhancing their language learning proficiency and developing their autonomy. The third section consisted of two parts as well. Part A, consisting of 2 elements, investigated the challenges that hinder the learners from engaging in CL opportunities alongside the potential solutions that aid to overcome these hindrances. On the other hand, Part B, consisting of 9 elements, investigated the learning conditions that encourage the learners to engage in CL opportunities in order to enforce these conditions. The fourth section, consisting of 11 elements, investigated the effect of the CL approach on developing and enhancing the

learners' level of autonomy. The fifth section, consisting of 5 elements, recorded the learners' perceptions of the teachers' expected roles in the CL activities.

3.5. Data Analysis

Since the data gathering tool used in the present study was a questionnaire of a quantitative nature that used a five-point Likert Scale in order to obtain numerical data, it was found that the most convenient method to analyze this type of data was using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25. After analyzing the data using the SPSS software, the data were, then, organized and presented in tables and graphs to enable their interpretation.

3.6. The Pilot Study

A successful study is one that responds to the research questions posed at the outset of that study. The pilot study is a pre-study to be conducted before the main study, in which modifications are performed upon the data gathering tools to ensure the relevance of the method used for the study. In relevance to the present study a pilot study was conducted on the first-year students of the English language department of Mostefa Benboulaid, Batna 2 university during the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019, where a first draft of the questionnaire was administered to the participants. After the data analysis of the pilot study, it was found that all the elements included in the first draft of the questionnaire were relevant to the study, and no modifications were sought to be needed. Thus, the final version of the questionnaire used in the main study was the same one that was used in the pilot study.

3.7. The Validity of the Study

Fraenkel et al (2012) stated that validity "*refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of the inferences a researcher makes*" (p.

147). Putting this more tersely, Field (2013) asserted that validity is "*whether an instrument actually measures what it sets out to measure*". The instrument implemented in the present study was adapted from the published work of Blidi (2017) whom conducted a similar study in the MENA region on CLA and based his study on the works of other prominent researchers, Cotterall (1995), Gardner & Miller (1999), and Reinders (2000). Thus, the instrument was perceived as valid. Moreover, the instrument was submitted to an expert from the English language department of Mostefa Benboulaid, Batna 2 university whom verified the validity of the instrument.

3.8. The Reliability of the Study

Fraenkel et al (2012) state that "r*eliability refers to the consistency of scores or answers from one administration of an instrument to another, and from one set of items to another*" (p. 154). Similarly, Field (2013) adds that reliability is "*whether an instrument can be interpreted consistently across different situations*". In relevance to the current study, a pre-study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019 before the main study, where the same instrument was administered to the same population to ensure its reliability. The findings of both the pre-study and main study were similar and consistent with each other, which proves the reliability of the instrument used in this study. Moreover, the results were in line with the results obtained from Blidi's (2017) study, which further supports the reliability of the instrument adapted for the current study.

Conclusion

The third chapter of this research dealt with the research method and the research methodology involved in carrying out the research. It started with delineating the rationale behind the selection of the descriptive method as the research method opted

for in the present work. In the same vein, it provided a justification for choosing the qualitative approach as the research approach used for data collection. The chapter, then, continued with determining both the target and accessible population of the research alongside the sampling method adopted in the process. A detailed description of the instrument used for data collection, as well as a reference to the involved data analysis procedures followed up. The chapter closures with a brief mention of the pilot study that guided the realization of the main study alongside the procedures followed to verify the validity and reliability of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to verifying the accuracy of the current research's hypothesis by analyzing and interpreting the overall results obtained from our questionnaire. Based on the premise that CL plays a critical role in developing and enhancing the learners' autonomous competencies, the questionnaire investigates the Algerian EFL learners' insights and attitudes towards the significance of CL's impact on LA in the Algerian universities. To answer the research's inquiry, the present chapter complies with the questionnaire's layout.

4.1. The Congruence of The EFL Students' Learning Styles with LA

Investigating the Algerian EFL students' learning styles and habits represents the main focus of the first section of our questionnaire. Consisting of nineteen statements, it explores the Algerian EFL learners' affinity to promote, develop, and enhance LA. In order to grasp a clear image of the issue, Blidi (2017) suggested six aspects of the students' learning styles and habits to be explored: "*Time*", "*Interaction with Peers*", "*What to study*", "*Guidance*", "*Self-reliance*" and "*Relaxation*".

The "*Time*" aspect refers to the learners' time management skills that they put in use to organize their learning beyond the classroom setting in particular, which includes their preferred timeframe for studying, revising, doing homework, and out-of-class activities, as well as the extent to which they respect the deadlines of their projects. The aspect of "*Interaction with Peers*" deals with the learners' insights and attitudes towards working with peers or in groups and their attitudes towards group assignments. As its name suggests, the aspect of "*What to study*" is concerned with the students' learning

preferences in terms of content and the degree of clarity and understanding they receive from their teachers and instructors when they are having their lessons and courses. The "*Guidance*" aspect investigates whether the learners seek counselling and supervision from the more knowledgeable peers and teachers when they immerse themselves in assignments and activities of problem-solving nature. The aspect of "*Self-reliance*" refers to the learners' self-dependence or independence when learning; it involves their own participation and engagement in learning through carrying out the learning activities and doing research in an individual manner. "*Relaxation*" is the last and final learning aspect that was suggested by Blidi (2017) to be investigated in this section of the questionnaire; it refers to "*the learners' need to use self-learning activities and opportunities as occasions for breaks between official learning sessions*" (p. 34), which he sees as the main aspect of learning that allows the "*detection of traces of autonomy and readiness to develop learner autonomy among students*" (ibid).

The first statement for instance, "*I work whenever time is there and do not follow a strict routine*", aims to explore the learners' time management skills. The results show that the majority of the first-year students of the English Department at Mostefa Benboulaid Batna 2 University, 61.1% (Totally agree: 17.2%, Agree: 43.9), exhibited a tendency towards flexibility when it comes to learning time; it appears that they learn whenever they want to and do not adhere to a rigid program. The responsibility involved in carrying out these decisions, learning time, pace, and setting, shows the learners' readiness to adopt and promote LA, as it entails the learners' control over their learning that Holec (1981) highlighted in his definition of LA. On the other hand, the results show that only a small proportion of 27.2% of our respondents (Disagree: 14.6%, Totally disagree: 12.6%) have negative attitudes towards flexibility in time

management when learning. The remaining 11.6% of the respondents dwell unsure about the time aspect of their learning habits.

Table 4.1: Work whenever time is there and do not follow a strict routine

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	34	14.8	17.2	17.2
	Agree	87	37.8	43.9	61.1
	Undecided	23	10.0	11.6	72.7
	Disagree	29	12.6	14.6	87.4
	Totally disagree	25	10.9	12.6	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

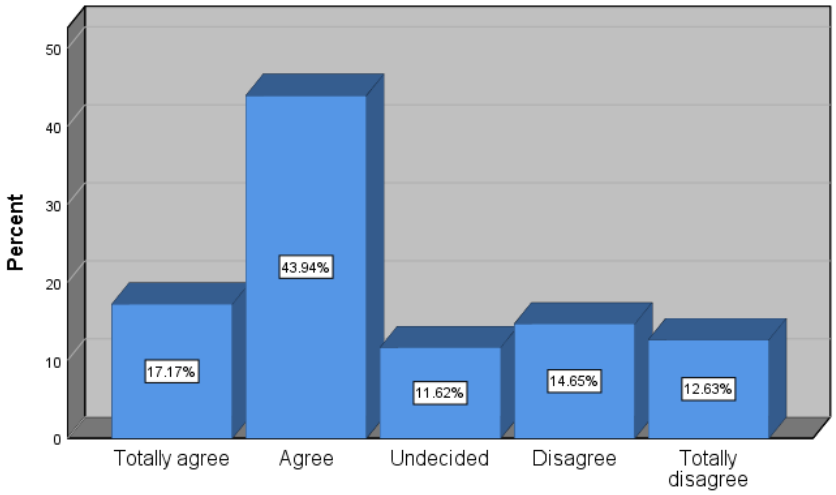

Figure 4.1: Work whenever time is there and do not follow a strict routine

To further investigate the learners' control over the aspect of "*Time*" in their learning, the third statement targets the learners' attitudes towards respecting deadlines. The results show overall compliance to deadlines among the learners (73.2%) (Totally agree: 26.3%, Agree: 47%), which attests to the learners' responsibility towards their learning. The results also indicate that the learners' tendency towards flexibility in relation to learning time shown in the data from the first statement is not the eventuality

of their negligence towards learning, but rather an evidence of the strong sense of responsibility for learning that the learners have, as well as the strategic view of the learners in terms of assessing the required time and effort needed in order for them to comply with their deadline and making decisions accordingly, both of which considered to be essential aspects of LA; thus, we invite the educators of the tertiary level to build on these characteristics in learners and develop them (Blidi, 2017). Contrarily, the minority of 17.6% of the respondent (Disagree: 13.6%, Totally disagree: 4%) seem to fail to meet deadlines; thus, seem to fail to control the "*Time*" aspect of their learning; and a percentage of 9.1 % of them failed to determine their preferences in learning.

Table 4.2: Always meet deadlines and submit work on time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	52	22.6	26.3	26.3
	Agree	93	40.4	47.0	73.2
	Undecided	18	7.8	9.1	82.3
	Disagree	27	11.7	13.6	96.0
	Totally disagree	8	3.5	4.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

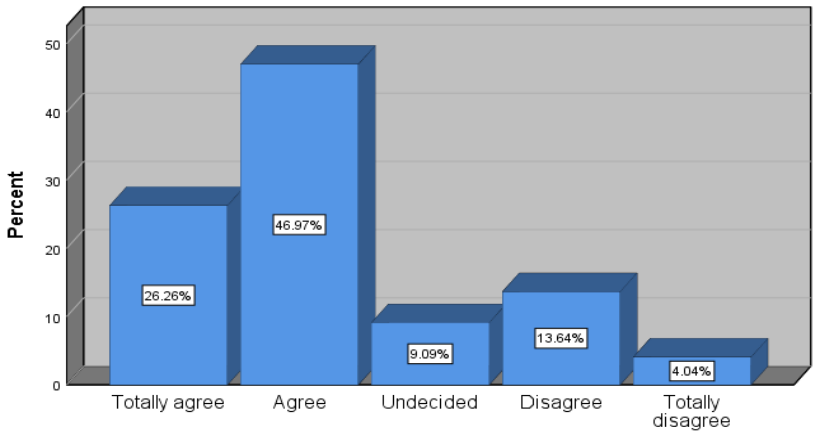

Figure 4.2: Always meet deadlines and submit work on time

Exploring the learners' "*What to study*" aspect serves as another purpose of this section of the questionnaire. The second statement, for example, inspected the issue in a straightforward manner. The results show that 68.2% of the respondents prefer to study what interests them (Totally agree: 24.2%, agree: 43%). The data indicate that

Table 4.3: Study what interests me and do not follow a strict timetable

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	48	20.9	24.2	24.2
	Agree	87	37.8	43.9	68.2
	Undecided	21	9.1	10.6	78.8
	Disagree	28	12.2	14.1	92.9
	Totally disagree	14	6.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

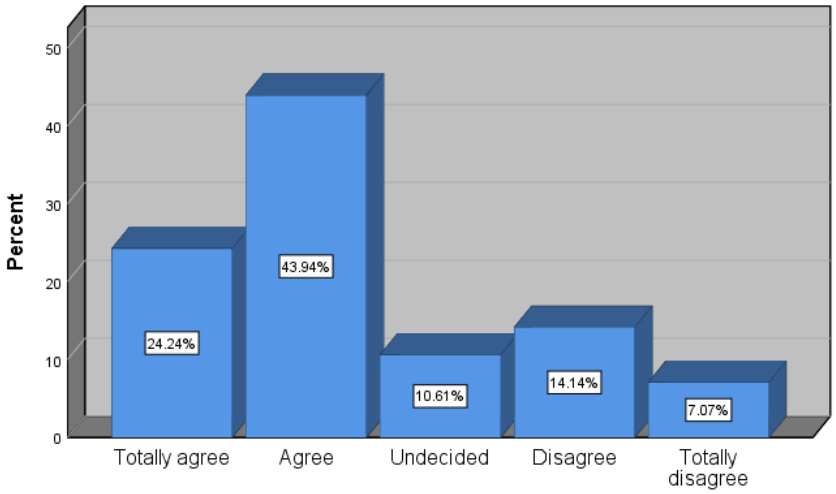

Figure 4.3: Study what interests me and do not follow a strict timetable

the Algerian EFL learners have a strong inclination towards selecting the content and pace of their learning. Control over content is proven in the literature to be a very important characteristic of the autonomous learner; hence, guiding the learners to acquire this attribute and granting them the chance to decide what to study in an

informal environment as well as pushing them to assume the responsibility upon these choices are of high importance in developing their autonomy.

To ensure the consistency of the results obtained from our respondents and avoid any kind of misunderstanding that might arise when reading them, the questionnaire follows an approach that systematically uses statements of diverse terminology to obtain data on the same variable. The fifth statement is an example of this approach; it seeks to explore the learners' "*What to study*" aspect by using a set of terminology that is somehow opposite to the second statement that serves the same purpose. The statistics show consistency among the results regarding this issue; it appears that the learners prefer the freedom of choice (65.1%) (Disagree: 44.9%, Totally disagree: 20.2%) over being given exact tasks and assignments, which is another sign of the learners' readiness to be part of their learning and develop their autonomy. On the other hand, a small percentage of 20.7% of the learners seem to believe in the traditional lecturing approach where they assume the role of passive recipients of the information in the classroom (Totally agree: 7.1%, Agree: 11.6%), which we believe is due to their lack of exposure to different learning styles and strategies. The remaining 14.1% of the respondents were undecided regarding this matter.

Table 4.4: Prefer to be given assignments rather than choose

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	18	7.8	9.1	9.1
	Agree	23	10.0	11.6	20.7
	Undecided	28	12.2	14.1	34.8
	Disagree	89	38.7	44.9	79.8
	Totally disagree	40	17.4	20.2	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

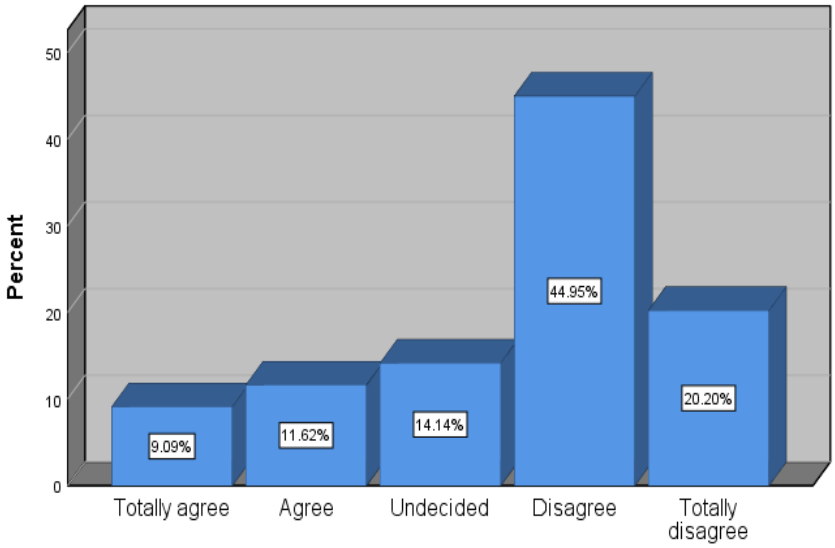

Figure 4.4: Prefer to be given assignments rather than choose

In the same vein, the sixth statement investigates the learners' attitudes towards expanding their own knowledge and conducting their own search over a given topic. The results were promising; it appears that about 75.8% of the respondents (Totally agree: 24.7%, Agree: 51%) actually indulge themselves in personalized researches that serve their individual needs; we assume that this attitude is due to today's digitalized world that facilitated the access to the information. Although no insinuation was made about the nature of these researches, whether they are academically relevant or not, our concern should be focused on the research action itself that signifies the learners' adequacy to develop LA. Thus, it is desirable to invest in this parameter in our learners and guide them to achieve a more autonomous state. On another note, only a minority of 10.1% of the respondent (Disagree: 5.6%, Totally disagree: 4.5%) seem to be passive when it comes to making relevant research, which is arguably due to their acclimation to the teacher-centered approach that made them teacher reliant learners. As for the remaining 14.1% of the respondents, they dwell undecided.

Table 4.5: Prefer to think over an issue and make relevant search

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	49	21.3	24.7	24.7
	Agree	101	43.9	51.0	75.8
	Undecided	28	12.2	14.1	89.9
	Disagree	11	4.8	5.6	95.5
	Totally disagree	9	3.9	4.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

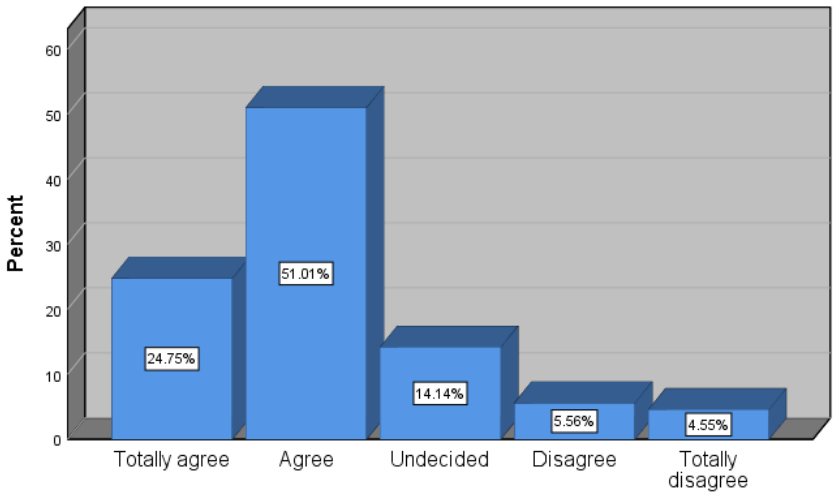

Figure 4.5: Prefer to think over an issue and make relevant search

"*Guidance*" in relation to the learners' learning styles and habits is another aspect to be explored in this part of the questionnaire. The results show the learners' fixation on the teachers' input when it comes to their learning; apparently, a percentage of 85.4% of the learners (Totally agree: 35.4%, agree: 50%) believe that it's the teacher's responsibility to provide them with a clear outline and plan of the learning tasks and assignment they are given. Indeed, this might seem a sign of the learners' reliance on their teachers; however, the presence of expert help in learning is vital for adult learners (Holec, 1981), for "a*wareness of the course requirements, objectives and plan plays an*

important role in helping learners develop interest in what they study and provides them with the guidance that they will use in designing, implementing and controlling their own learning" (Blidi, 2017, p. 36).

Table 4.6: Prefer to be given a clear outline and a plan in advance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	70	30.4	35.4	35.4
	Agree	99	43.0	50.0	85.4
	Undecided	17	7.4	8.6	93.9
	Disagree	7	3.0	3.5	97.5
	Totally disagree	5	2.2	2.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

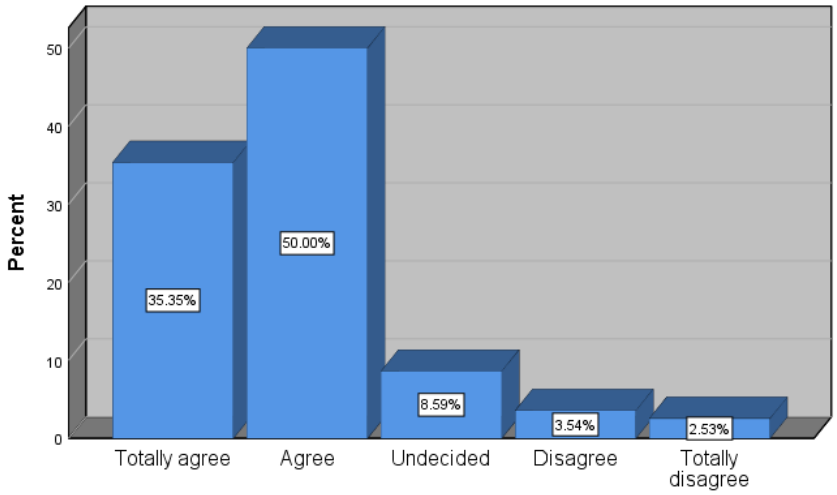

Figure 4.6: Prefer to be given a clear outline and a plan in advance

The eighth sentence clarifies this misconception as the results indicate that the learners are in disagreement with the idea of being told what to do. The results obtained from this statement, "*I prefer to be told what to do*", represent evidence of the learners' overall preferences for freedom and control over their learning (Totally disagree:

33.3%, Disagree: 37.9%) as it explains that clearing the guiding lines is the input that the learners seek from their teachers and not being spoon-fed.

Table 4.7: Prefer to be told what to do

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	13	5.7	6.6	6.6
	Agree	22	9.6	11.1	17.7
	Undecided	22	9.6	11.1	28.8
	Disagree	75	32.6	37.9	66.7
	Totally disagree	66	28.7	33.3	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

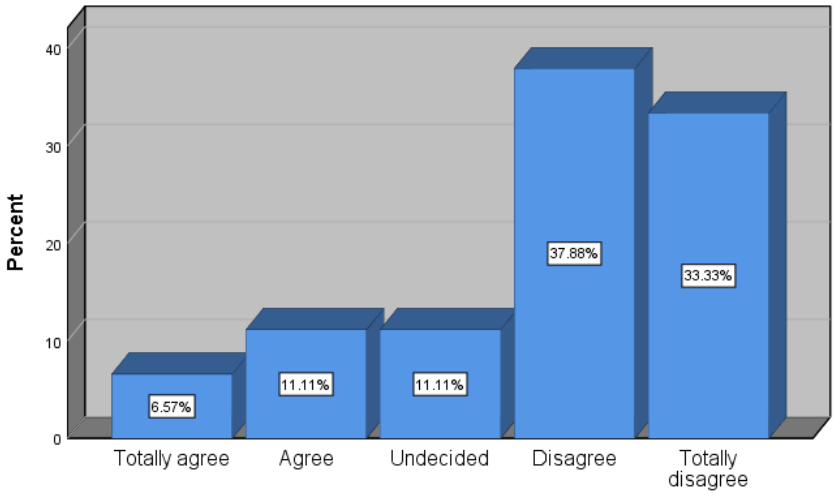

Figure 4.7: Prefer to be told what to do

The ninth statement, "*I usually wait for the teacher to give an overview*", provides us with an additional explanation concerning the learners' aspect of "*Guidance*" in relation to their learning. As observable in **Table 4.8** below, it is found that 56.1% of the respondents (Totally agree: 19.2%, Agree: 36.9%) wait for the teacher to give them an overview about their advancement and achievement. Here, the learners believe in the importance of the feedback provided to them by their teachers for their development

in the future even in the case where the teacher is not present, which is the essence of autonomy. Additionally, a percentage of 25.8% of our respondents (Totally disagree: 8.6%, Disagree: 17.2%) do not seem to wait for their teachers and instructors to provide them with an overview regarding their tasks and assignments which leads us to believe that these learners are more secure and confident about their learning skills and competences and that they have reached a higher level of autonomy in comparison to their peers. Again, it is found that about 18.2% of our respondents seem to be confused about this aspect of their learning styles and habits.

Table 4.8: Usually wait for the teacher to give an overview

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	38	16.5	19.2	19.2
	Agree	73	31.7	36.9	56.1
	Undecided	36	15.7	18.2	74.2
	Disagree	34	14.8	17.2	91.4
	Totally disagree	17	7.4	8.6	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

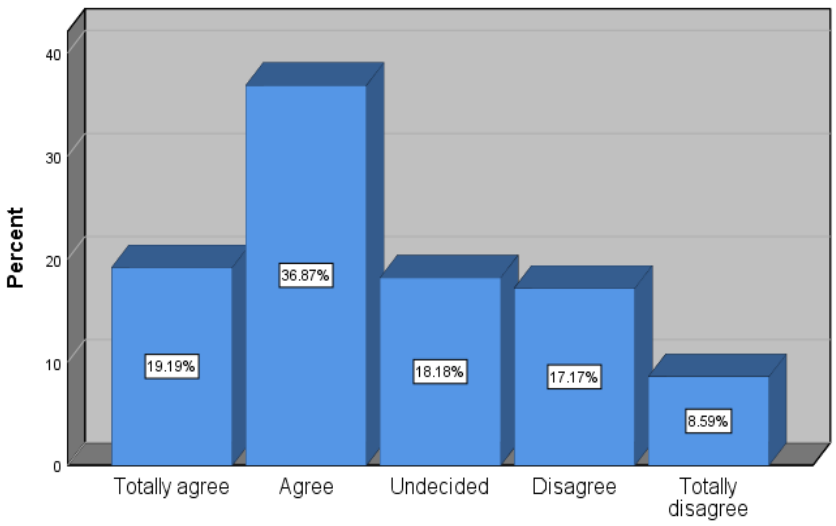

Figure 4.8: Usually wait for the teacher to give an overview

In the same context, the eleventh statement, "*I prefer to have a clear guidance on how to handle any activity undertaken*", supports our view about the learners' perception of the nature of the teachers' input. As perceived from **Table 4.9** below, there is an overall agreement among the first-year students of the English Department at Mostefa Benboulaid Batna 2 University upon the expected role to be assumed by their teachers and instructors where 85.4% of our respondents (Totally agree: 36.4%, Agree: 49%) believe that providing guidance is the teachers' responsibility; thus, administering the learners with clear instructions and guidelines so that they will be able to consummate their tasks and assignments effectively is the teachers' liability. What seems to be an inclination towards teacher-centeredness and teacher dependence is in fact the teacher's presumed role in the autonomous classroom that was referred to in the literature by many researchers such as Aoki (1999), Little (2006) and Huang (2007), for LA does not aim to exclude the teacher from the learning process, but rather to change his role from the sole provider of information in the classroom to the learners' guider.

Table 4.9: Prefer to have clear guidance on how to handle any activity undertaken

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	72	31.3	36.4	36.4
	Agree	97	42.2	49.0	85.4
	Undecided	21	9.1	10.6	96.0
	Disagree	5	2.2	2.5	98.5
	Totally disagree	3	1.3	1.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

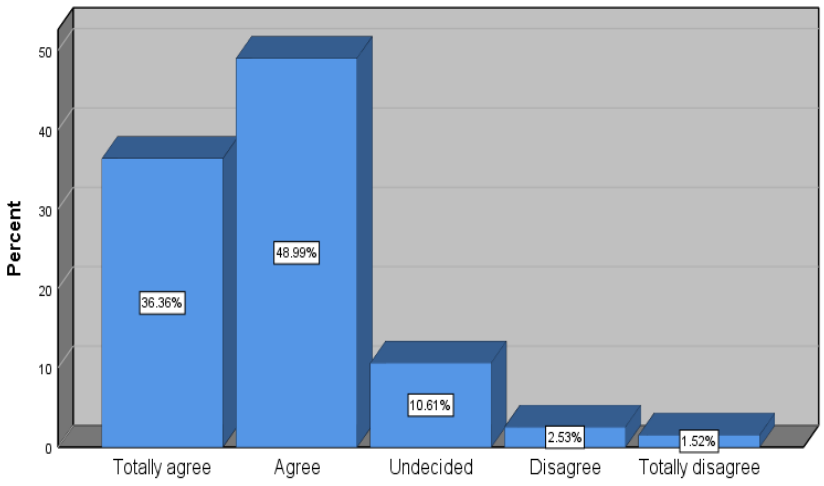

Figure 4.9: Prefer to have a clear guidance on how to handle any activity undertaken

The next element to be discussed is the students' "*Self-reliance*" learning aspect. The results obtained from the seventh statement explore this learning aspect in specific. The direct correlation proven in the literature between "*self-reliance*", or independence, and LA leads us to believe that enhancing the Algerian EFL learners' autonomous skills depends largely on their attitudes towards developing their own independence. It is unlikely to manage to guide the learners towards higher stages of LA if they do not show the desire to do so, for the learners' intrinsic motivation is the fuel that actuates them to act in pursuit of LA. In accordance with the aforementioned prerequisite of LA, 85.9% of our respondents (Totally agree: 55.1%, Agree: 30.8%) seem to be on good terms with the concept of developing their own independence, which points out to their aspiration to be active learners and assume responsibility and control over their learning. The results obtained from statements number six and eight shown above in **Table 4.5** and **Table 4.7** respectively substantiate these results as they show the learners' inclination towards making individual researches on relevant topics, ergo developing their independence, and showing their disinterest in dictated learning.

Table 4.10: Prefer to develop own independence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	109	47.4	55.1	55.1
	Agree	61	26.5	30.8	85.9
	Undecided	14	6.1	7.1	92.9
	Disagree	12	5.2	6.1	99.0
	Totally disagree	2	.9	1.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

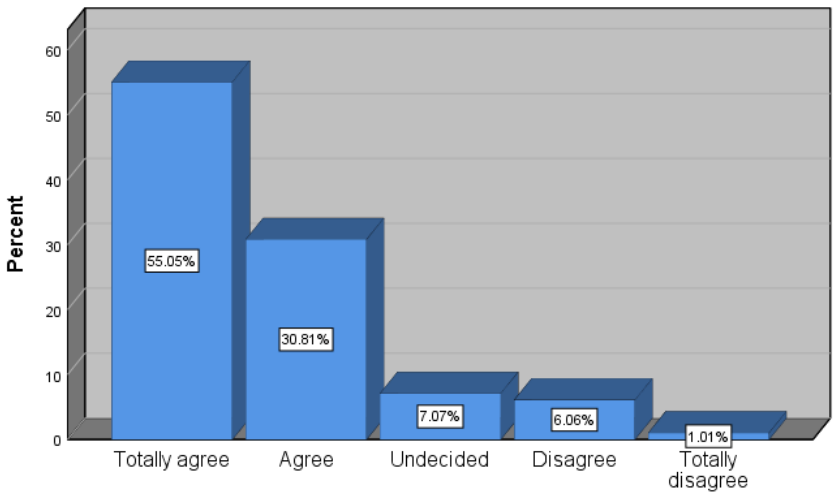

Figure 4.10: Prefer to develop own independence

The exploration of the "*Relaxation*" aspect in learning refers to investigating the learners' attitudes towards the informal learning settings that provide them with a stress and anxiety free learning atmosphere. The results obtained from the tenth statement of the questionnaire that investigate this concept show that 88.9% of our learners (Totally agree: 60.6%, Agree: 28.3%) were in favor of having breaks between activities versus 8.1% of whom were in derogatory of this concept (Disagree: 5.1%, Totally disagree: 3%). The general consensus among the respondents over this concept indicates that the Algerian EFL learners have inclinations and tendencies towards informal learning.

Unlike formal learning characterized by rigidity and tension, the informal learning setting provides the learners with learning opportunities that alter the way they perceive education and learning itself. According to Blidi (2017), these learning opportunities are perceived to be "*opportunities for relaxation and break from formal learning*" (p. 44). In addition to that, we arguably believe that informal learning is a nurturing atmosphere for LA; it reduces the learners' anxiety and shyness that exist in formal classrooms, increases their sense of freedom and control over their learning and rises their participation rate in comparison to formal learning. Moreover, the results obtained

Table 4.11: Like to have breaks between activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	120	52.2	60.6	60.6
	Agree	56	24.3	28.3	88.9
	Undecided	6	2.6	3.0	91.9
	Disagree	10	4.3	5.1	97.0
	Totally disagree	6	2.6	3.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

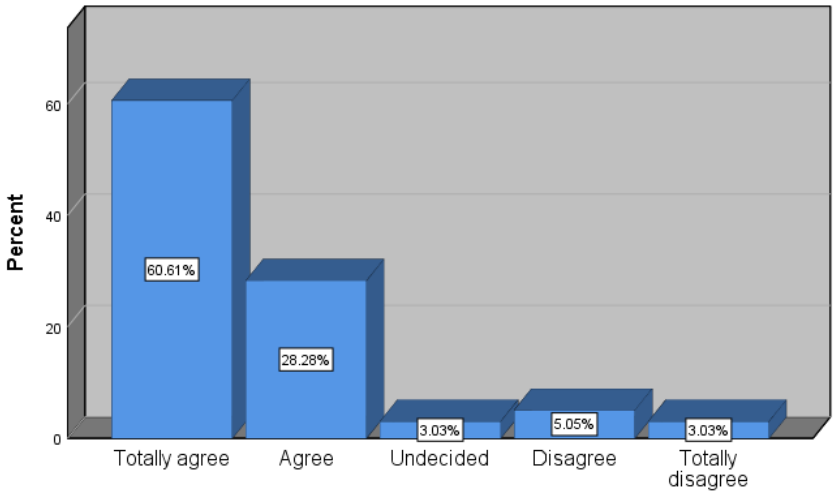

Figure 4.11: Like to have breaks between activities

from statements fifteen and nineteen shown in **Table 4.15** and **Table 4.16** below back our claim as they show the learners' enjoyment and involvement in the informal learning situations that CL puts the learners in.

The final learning aspect to be explored in this section of the questionnaire is "*Interaction with Peers*", and since it is strongly related to CL, it was thoroughly explored from different angles. The results obtained from statement number twelve for instance demonstrate the strong disposition towards CL and working with peers among the Algerian EFL learners as 81.3% of them (Totally agree: 16.2%, Agree: 65.2%) exhibited their predilection for group tasks. Blidi (2017) rationalized these dispositions and tendencies among the EFL learners to be the outcome of their need to "*create an environment that enhances cooperation and collaboration*" (p. 38); he adds that in addition to the sense of protection and commonality that these groups provide the learners with, they enable the learners to hide in them, especially when making mistakes, which leads to increase their level of comfort, hence their learning opportunities.

Table 4.12: Prefer group tasks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	32	13.9	16.2	16.2
	Agree	129	56.1	65.2	81.3
	Undecided	15	6.5	7.6	88.9
	Disagree	13	5.7	6.6	95.5
	Totally disagree	9	3.9	4.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

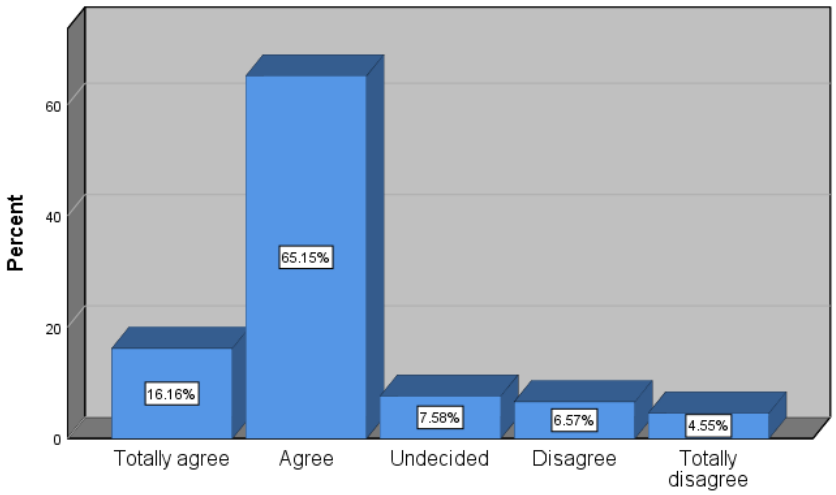

Figure 4.12: Prefer group tasks

For a supplementary insight into the learners' inclination for group work and CL, statement number thirteen aims to validate the results obtained from the previous statement by investigating their attitudes towards working alone. The results support the data obtained from the previous statement as they show that only 29.8% of the learners were in favor of working alone (Totally agree: 17.7%, Agree: 12.1%) versus 62.1% of them whom were against the concept of working alone (Totally disagree: 32.8%, Disagree: 29.3%). The slight difference in statistics that was found between the

Table 4.13: Prefer to work alone

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	35	15.2	17.7	17.7
	Agree	24	10.4	12.1	29.8
	Undecided	16	7.0	8.1	37.9
	Disagree	65	28.3	32.8	70.7
	Totally disagree	58	25.2	29.3	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

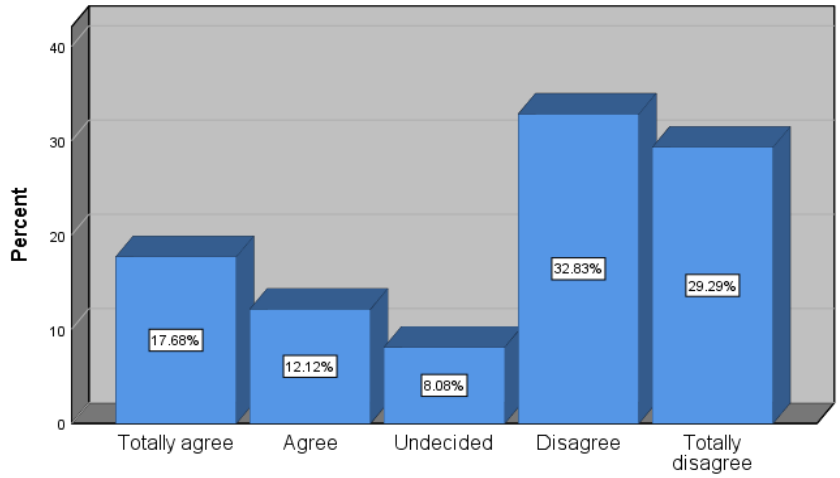

Figure 4.13: Prefer to work alone

two charts is believed to be due to the existence of learners whom are believed to prefer both types of learning, learning alone and learning in groups. The learners' ability to distinguish between developing independence as an attribute of LA and working alone as an attribute of individualism and detachment from society is another piece of information that was deduced by comparing the results obtained from this statement with the results obtained from the statement number seven shown in **Table 4.10** above.

On the other hand, the responses obtained from statement number fourteen which explores whether the learners prefer to listen to others' ideas rather than developing their own ideas show the confusion and uncertainty that the learners feel as 43.4% of them were in favor of listening to others' ideas (Totally agree: 20.2%, Agree: 23.2%), 39.4% of them were in favor of developing own ideas, while 17.2% of them answered as "*Undecided*". We believe that the learners' preference to develop their own ideas when working in groups is not evidence for their inclination towards an individualistic learning style, but rather perceived as their readiness for CL as each group member imparts an input, then they work together to achieve the same goal, which reduces the chances of group domination practices and reflects on the characteristics of proactive

autonomous learners. Contrastingly, the learners' preference to listen to others' ideas signifies their dependence and reliance on their groupmates and peers; however, in light of data gathered from the previous statements of this section of the questionnaire that proved their propensity for developing autonomy and working in groups with peers and classmates, it is irrational to assume their dependence. Thus, we suggest that the learners' preference to listen to others' ideas is under the influence of two factors. First,

Table 4.14: Prefer to listen to others' ideas rather than develop own ideas

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	40	17.4	20.2	20.2
	Agree	46	20.0	23.2	43.4
	Undecided	34	14.8	17.2	60.6
	Disagree	42	18.3	21.2	81.8
	Totally disagree	36	15.7	18.2	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

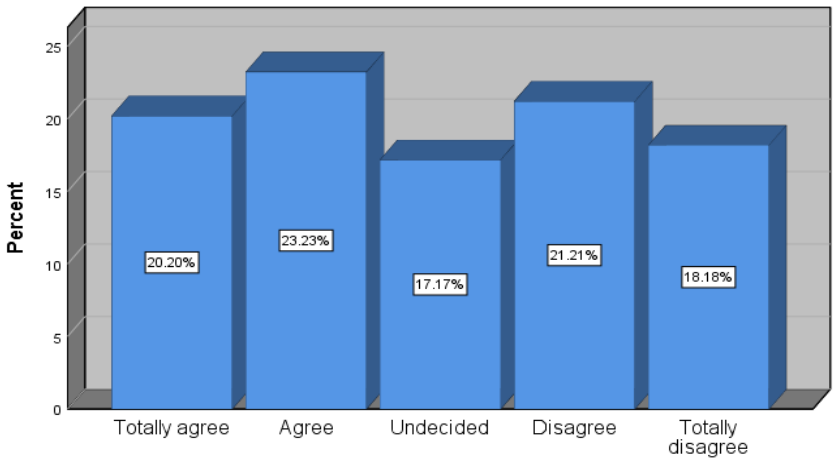

Figure 4.14: Prefer to listen to others' ideas rather than develop own ideas

their susceptibility to others' input and inclination towards working in groups, which is a behavior to be supported and regulated. Second, their lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and fear to make mistakes, which are issues to be addressed and fixed, for we

arguably believe that it is the outcome of their lack of training, experience, and exposure to such kind of learning approach, CL.

The results obtained from statement number fifteen which investigates the learners' relaxation level when it comes to working with peers and classmates in an informal atmosphere as shown in **Table 4.15** below backs our assumption. The results show that 73.7% of the learners actually enjoy being involved in learning opportunities that involve working with peers and classmates. Furthermore, the learners' sense of gratification when indulging in group work is a sign of their willingness to be part of such a learning approach, which proves their fitness to develop LA, for willingness is a key feature in LA (Gathercole, 1990; Little, 1991).

Table 4.15: Enjoy working with peers and classmates

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	61	26.5	30.8	30.8
	Agree	85	37.0	42.9	73.7
	Undecided	22	9.6	11.1	84.8
	Disagree	15	6.5	7.6	92.4
	Totally disagree	15	6.5	7.6	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

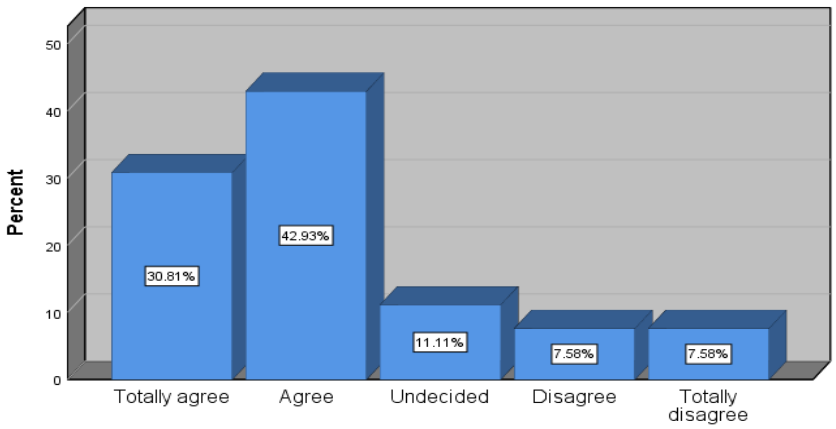

Figure 4.15: Enjoy working with peers and classmates

In addition to confirming the results obtained from the previous statement, the nineteenth statement explores the learners' appreciation for the opportunities of assignments discussions with peers and classmates provided by the CL approach. The results show that 71.2% of the learners find pleasure in such kind of activities (Totally agree: 28.3%, Agree: 42.9%). Such a course of action will offshoot valuable gains for the learners. For instance, these interactions with peers and classmates will enable the learners to accumulate knowledge and experience. Being involved in a discussion means being part of it; thus, assignments' discussions push the learners to assume an active role in their groups; hence, they push them to assume an active role in their learning. Discussing assignments with peers and classmates also entails the relative absence of the teacher or the instructor, which entails in itself that the learners have taken the leadership and accepted the responsibility over these assignments. The perks of discussing assignments with peers and classmates seem to align with the characteristics of autonomous learners, which drives for a further investigation concerning the impact of CL on LA.

Table 4.16: Like to discuss assignments with peers and classmates

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	56	24.3	28.3	28.3
	Agree	85	37.0	42.9	71.2
	Undecided	31	13.5	15.7	86.9
	Disagree	14	6.1	7.1	93.9
	Totally disagree	12	5.2	6.1	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

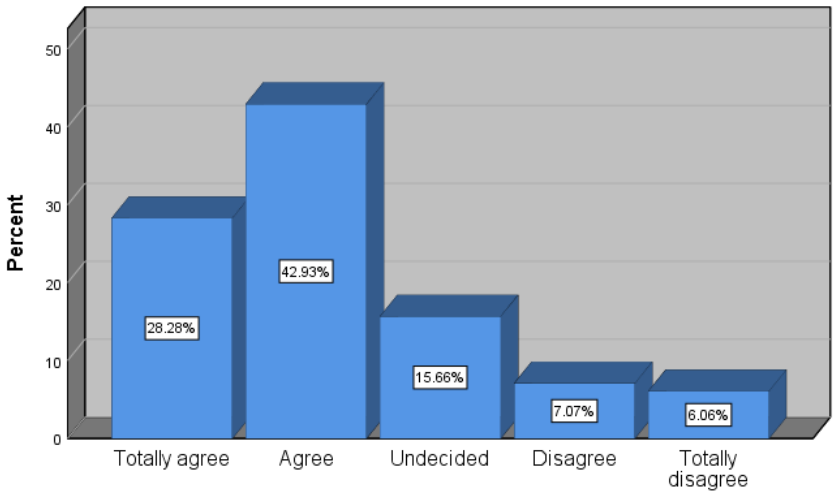

Figure 4.16: Like to discuss assignments with peers and classmates

Exploring the amount of output that the learners receive when they are indulged in CL activities is another criterion that defines the appropriateness of such a learning approach for their LA development. When they were asked if they "*learn more through group tasks and activities*" in statement number sixteen, 77.3% of the respondents agreed (Totally agree: 33.3%, Agree: 43.9%). The data indicates that the majority of the first-year students of the English Department at Mostefa Benboulaid Batna 2 University believe in the efficiency of CL in terms of outcome. The fact that the learners claim to acquire more knowledge when they are in group tasks and activities stress the need for such learning instrument to be integrated into their curriculum. Having such data also means that the learners are able to process and understand the information they receive from each other as peers and classmates better than the information they receive from their teachers and instructors. Additionally, the data signify that CL might stimulate the learners to work harder for the input they put collectively into these activities because it is the root source of the outcome they receive from them. As we further explore the students' learning styles and habits, evidence grow stronger on the positive impact of CL on LA.

Table 4.17: Learn more through group tasks and activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	66	28.7	33.3	33.3
	Agree	87	37.8	43.9	77.3
	Undecided	15	6.5	7.6	84.8
	Disagree	17	7.4	8.6	93.4
	Totally disagree	13	5.7	6.6	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

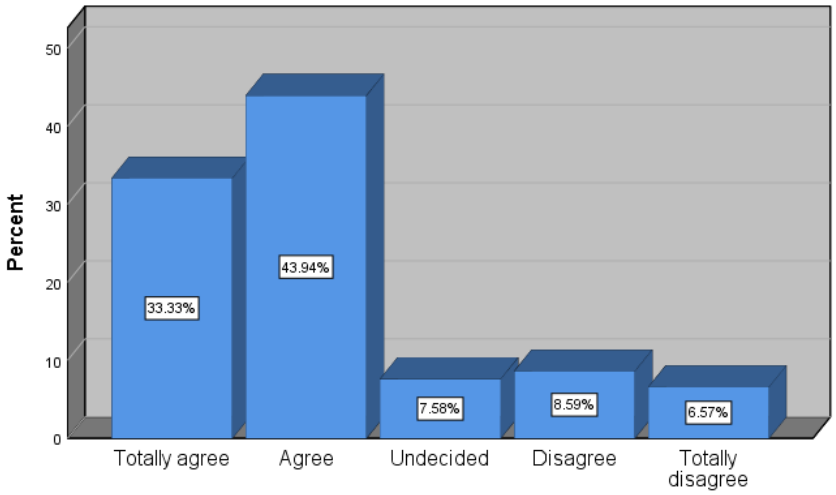

Figure 4.17: Learn more through group tasks and activities

The results obtained from the seventeenth statement demonstrated in **Table 4.18** below support the above claim as they show that 72.7% of the learners believe that "*in groups, ideas are easily generated"* (Totally agree: 35.9%, Agree: 36.9%) against a minority of 14.2% whom believe otherwise (Disagree: 8.6%, Totally disagree: 5.6%). The learners' point of view highlights the influence of such learning circumstances on their ability to generate ideas. It appears that the learners' collective effort of suggesting, sharing, and exchanging ideas and experiences in addition to their comments and feedback on the proposed for discussion ideas could eventuate the actualization of innovative and creative ideas that best suit the task or assignment at

hand. Furthermore, describing the process of generating ideas as easy imply that these CL opportunities have the capacity to diminish the difficulty level of the given assignments and activities, which affects their intrinsic motivation for learning by lessening their frustration feeling towards learning and heightening their self-confidence level. Hence, CL could be seen as a vital stage for LA as the results from this statement concerning its practices reflect both the social and psychological aspects of LA.

Table 4.18: In groups, ideas are easily generated

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	71	30.9	35.9	35.9
	Agree	73	31.7	36.9	72.7
	Undecided	26	11.3	13.1	85.9
	Disagree	17	7.4	8.6	94.4
	Totally disagree	11	4.8	5.6	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

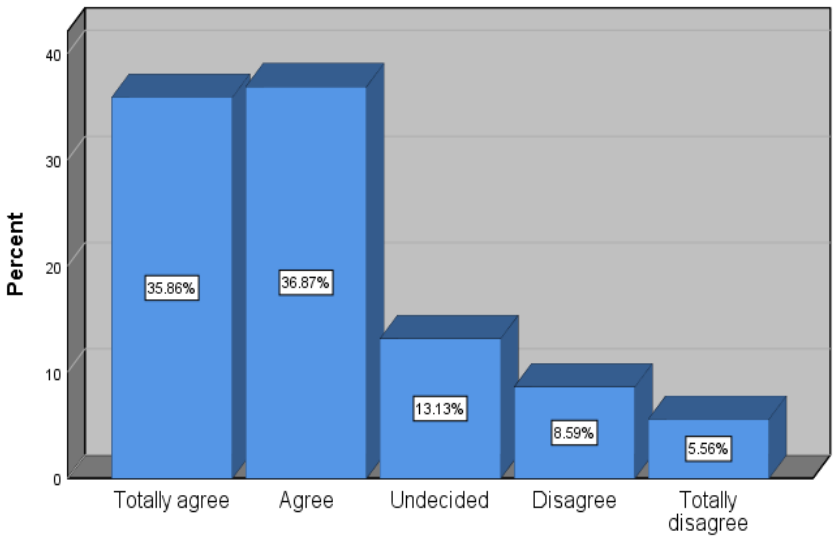

Figure 4.18: In groups ideas are easily generated

We conclude the exploration of the students' learning styles and habits in general and the aspect of "*Interaction with Peers*" in particular by analyzing the data obtained from the eighteenth statement. As shown in **Table 4.19** below, the claim of the eighteenth statement, "*I think that teamwork is a waste of time*", was rejected by 70.2% of the respondents (Disagree: 52.5%, Totally disagree: 17.7%), which further supports the above findings related to the latter learning aspect being investigated. The learners' overall rejection of the statement echoes their social nature and points out their need for learning opportunities that involve group work and interactions with peers. These needs call for the obligation of implementing an adequate learning approach that reflects their nature.

Table 4.19: Think that teamwork is a waste of time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	15	6.5	7.6	7.6
	Agree	23	10.0	11.6	19.2
	Undecided	21	9.1	10.6	29.8
	Disagree	104	45.2	52.5	82.3
	Totally disagree	35	15.2	17.7	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

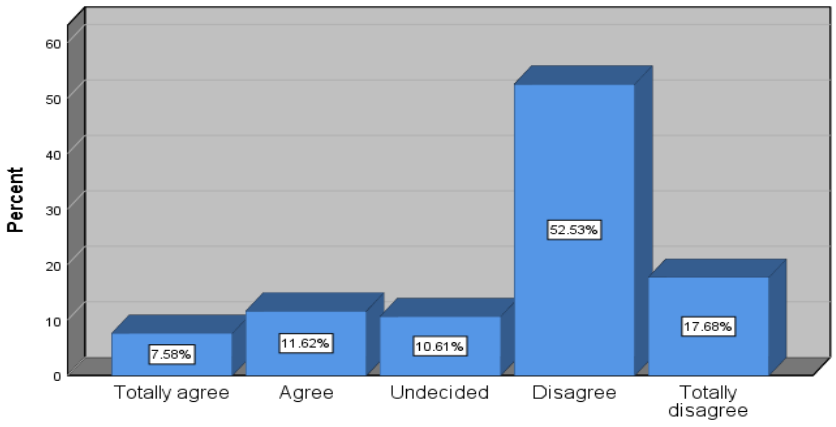

Figure 4.19: Think that teamwork is a waste of time

Although the crude level of LA observed in the first-year students of the English Department at Mostefa Benboulaid Batna 2 University, the exploration of their learning styles and habits enabled us to have a better understanding of the matter. It appears that the learners are aware of the concept of LA, as they were able to distinguish between two different abstractions, independence, and individualism. The results also indicate that the students' learning behavior is on par with the fundamentals of LA as they demonstrated a high sense of discipline when it comes to time management and meeting deadlines, a willingness to be in control of their learning through being involved in the decision-making process that takes place when selecting the content, tools, and setting of their lessons, and a readiness for independence that was delineated by their tendencies to make relevant researches beyond the classroom setting. These comportments in addition to the learners' preference for the informal learning atmospheres that support relaxation and decrease the learners' stress and anxiety levels mark the requirements needed for the learners to develop their autonomous conduct.

On the other hand, the results revealed the learners' dependence on their teachers and instructors, which might be interpreted as a sign of the learners' inattentiveness to autonomy. The claim is arguably questioned as the matter is subjugated to the teacher's input in the classroom, lecturer, or guider. Finally, the learners' positive attitudes towards interacting with peers and working in groups present another justification for the learners' readiness to develop autonomy, for an autonomous learner is "*an active participant in the social processes of classroom learning*" (Dam, 1995, p. 102). The exploration of the students' learning styles and habits using Blidi's (2017) proposed aspects proves the Algerian EFL learners' readiness to develop LA.

4.2. The EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards Collaborative Learning

Investigating the learners' attitudes towards CL as a learning approach seems to be the next rational step after exploring the students' learning styles and proving their readiness to develop LA. The second section of the questionnaire tackles this issue where it delves into the learners' actual experiences with the CL learning approach in their formal classes; It explores the frequency with which their teachers indulge them in such learning opportunities and assesses their success to equip the learners with the required set of skills that allow them to work in groups. Moreover, it examines the learners' evaluation of CL with regard to their learning development in general and their proficiency in the English language in specific.

Systematizing the CL approach and presenting it to the learners in an organized manner to enable them to grasp its concept and procure the required skills to properly work within the conditions it stipulates is an indispensable step towards the complete integration of such learning approach in the learners' curriculum. Unfortunately, the data gathered from the first element of **Part A** of the second section of the questionnaire that examines the existence of any kind of courses, lessons, or workshops that aims to provide the learners with these skills show that only 41.4% of the learners were fortunate to be part of these classes. On the other hand, 58.6% of our learners did not have the chance to understand the nature of CL, nor did they gain any insight on the adequate course of action to be followed when in group assignments and activities. The results themselves stress the need to address two fundamental issues and deal with them. First, the absence of a unified curriculum that bestows the same learning opportunities upon the whole class of learners whom share the same level, which might result in differentiated learners in terms of skills due to the inequality in terms of the learning opportunities they were exposed to. Second, the absence of such classes might result in

the disassociation of the learners from their learning entourage, which might impede their learning development.

Table 4.20: The learners' exposure to formal training vis-a-vis collaborative learning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	82	35.7	41.4	41.4
	No	116	50.4	58.6	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

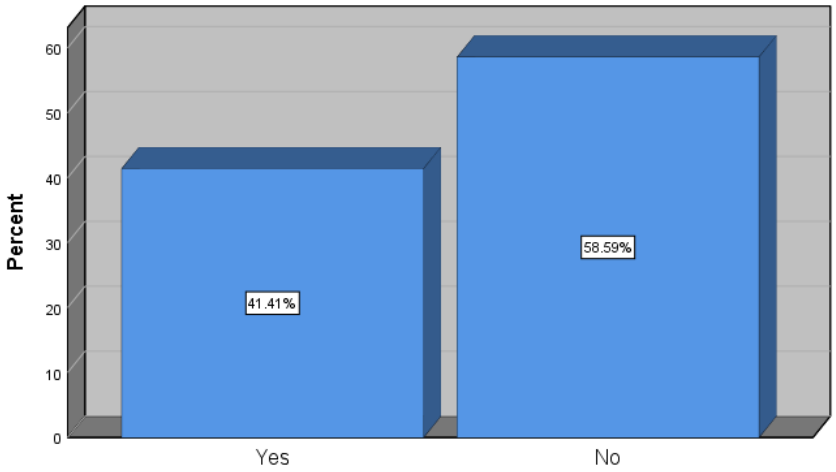

Figure 4.20: The learners' exposer to formal training vis-a-vie collaborative learning

The next element of this section targets the learners whom have been tutored the skills that enable them to appropriately work in groups or collaborate with peers. It seeks to survey the learners' attitudes towards the effectiveness of those lessons in equipping them with the intended set of skills. The results call for providing the learners with these kinds of lessons as only a minority of 11% of the learners did not perceive the lessons as constructive and assessed them as "b*arely efficient and sufficient*" (7.3%), or "i*nefficient and insufficient*" (3.7%). On the other hand, 64.6% of the learners seem

to have a positive impression of the impact of these lessons in directing their behavior when working collaboratively in groups or with peers as 22% of the learners were fully satisfied with the lessons and rated them as "h*ighly efficient and sufficient*". The other 42.7% rated the lessons as "p*artly efficient and sufficient*", which suggests, besides the learners' content on the outcome of these lessons, a partial deficiency in their incorporation that needs to be addressed.

The results in general represent a documentation of the importance of providing the learners with the aforementioned workshops and lessons in order to enhance their performance when being part of group tasks and assignments that involve working in groups or with peers. Furthermore, Blidi (2017) associates tutoring the collaborative competencies with the development of LA when he says that the "t*eacher's success in acquainting the learners to the learning environment facilitates their success in gaining increasing control over their own learning and become autonomous*" (p. 85). Respecting the remaining 24.4%, it appertains to the learners whom answered as "*Undecided*", which neither confirms, nor denies their endorsement of the lessons, but simply shows their uncertainty about the lessons' effect on their CL skills.

Table 4.21: The learners' assessment of the succession of their formal training vis-a-vis providing them with the required skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Highly efficient and sufficient	18	7.8	22.0	22.0
	Partly efficient and sufficient	35	15.2	42.7	64.6
	Undecided	20	8.7	24.4	89.0
	Barely efficient and sufficient	6	2.6	7.3	96.3
	Inefficient and insufficient	3	1.3	3.7	100.0
	Total	82	35.7	100.0	
Missing	System	148	64.3		
Total		230	100.0		

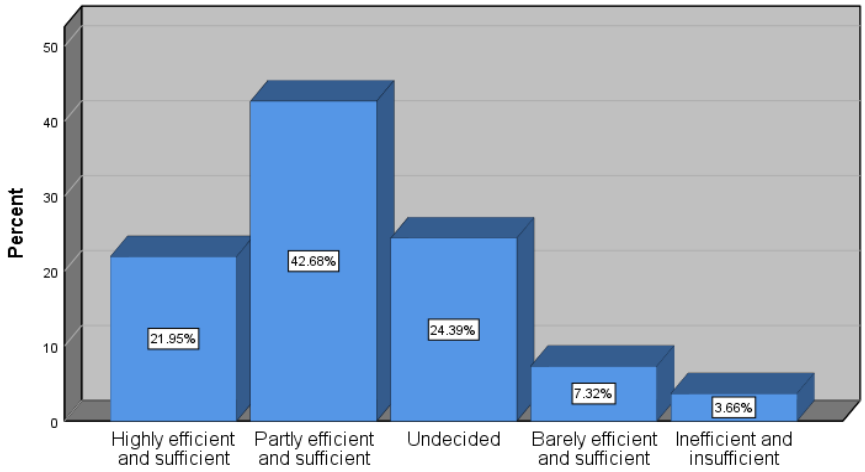

Figure 4.21: The learners' assessment of the succession of their formal training vis-a-vie providing them with the required skills

In the same context, the findings from the third question of this section that inspect the learners' actual experiences with CL in their formal learning inside or beyond the classroom setting show that only 47.5% of the learners were asked by their teachers to carry out their tasks and assignments in a collaborative manner that involves working with their classmates in pairs or in small groups. The resemblance of the current findings to the statistics shown in **Table 4.20** above; on one hand, pinpoints having more than 50% of sidelined learners in terms of CL opportunities, which denotes the passive role these learners are assuming in their learning, which might cause the deterioration of their existing LA level as they lose involvement, control, responsibility, and motivation for their learning. On the other hand, it leads us to conclude that the majority of the learners whom were asked to work in groups were given instructions and guidance on how to conduct themselves in these learning situations, which informs us that the teachers in charge of indulging the learners in these activities are fully aware of the necessities and the merits of CL as a learning approach which, in its turn, will serve the future full and formal implementation of the CL approach in the learners' curriculum.

Table 4.22: Examining the existence of any assignments in which the teachers encourage the learners to work in groups or with their peers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	94	40.9	47.5	47.5
	No	104	45.2	52.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

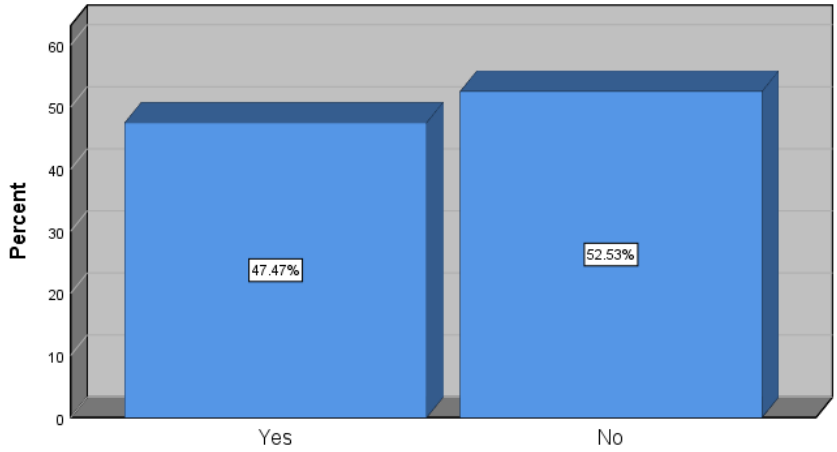

Figure 4.22: Examining the existence of any assignments in which the teachers encourage the learners to work in groups or with their peers

However, the learners' response regarding the frequency of their CL practices shows a restricted use of these practices as only 13.8% of the learners claim to be indulging themselves in learning groups "*always*" and in every lesson, while 29.8% of the learners seem to "*occasionally*" engage themselves in these practices, 33% seem to take part in these activities *"only when requested*" by their teachers to do so and 20.2% of them seem to use it "*rarely*". The terms "*occasionally*" and "*rarely*" both signify the learners' insufficient engagement in group assignments and activities; hence, an urge to increase these frequencies, while engaging in them *"only when requested*" by their teachers signifies the learners' need to be compelled to learn in these conditions. And since the authority to integrate the CL practices belongs to the teacher in the classroom,

the results might also be interpreted as a lack of administering such learning opportunities from the part of the teachers in the classroom, which is an indicative of the teachers' misestimation of the fair amount of exposure to the CL activities that the learners actually need. Additionally, the results further reiterate the implication of the

Table 4.23: The frequency of the learners' engagements in group assignments and activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always in every lesson	13	5.7	13.8	13.8
	Occasionally	28	12.2	29.8	43.6
	Only when requested	31	13.5	33.0	76.6
	Rarely	19	8.3	20.2	96.8
	Never	3	1.3	3.2	100.0
	Total	94	40.9	100.0	
Missing	System	136	59.1		
Total		230	100.0		

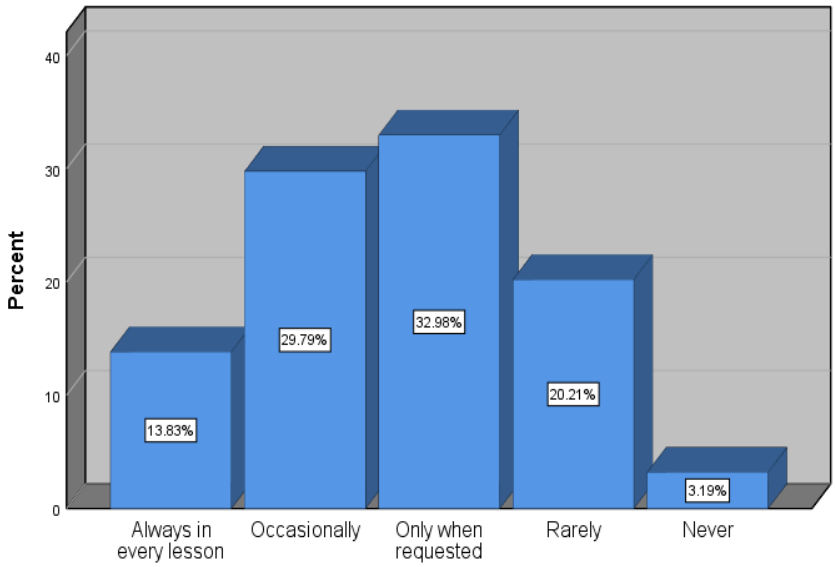

Figure 4.23: The frequency of the learners' engagements in group assignments and activities

teachers' actions on the learners' attainment of the CL skills and the development of their autonomy in the process as it is up to the teachers to adopt this learning approach

and provide the learners with the proper guidance and training; moreover, it grants them the opportunity to monitor their learners' progress.

The exploration of the learners' valuation of the frequency in which they were asked to work in groups or with their peers adds further insight into the learners' perception of the appropriate frequency of CL to be implemented in their learning. Having only 14.9% of the learners rating these frequencies as "*largely enough*" suggests that the designated frequency is yet to reach its potential peak effect on the learners. On the other hand, having similar percentages of 13.8% and 12.8% of learners describing these frequencies as "*barely enough*" and "*not enough*" respectively neglects the total absence of the CL opportunities in their learning. Nevertheless, having a major percentage of 45.7% of the learners settling on "*just enough*" as an overall assessment of the frequency in which they were asked to work in groups or with their peers sets the bar to their current exposure frequency of CL, which means that this frequency is barely covering the basics of the CL potentiality, which opens more room for improvement, in this case increasing the CL opportunities recurrences in the learners' classes.

Table 4.24: The learners' ratings of the frequency in which they were asked to work in groups or with their peers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Largely enough	14	6.1	14.9	14.9
	Just enough	43	18.7	45.7	60.6
	Undecided	12	5.2	12.8	73.4
	Barely enough	13	5.7	13.8	87.2
	Not enough	12	5.2	12.8	100.0
	Total	94	40.9	100.0	
Missing	System	136	59.1		
Total		230	100.0		

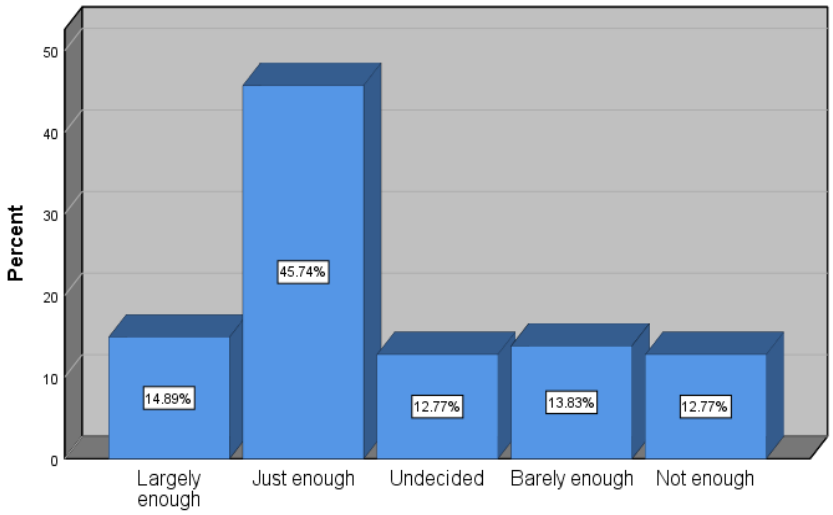

Figure 4.24: The learners rating of the frequency in which they were asked to work in groups or with their peers

The keen analysis of the data gathered from the fourth and fifth questions of this section of the questionnaire drives us to conclude that the appropriate frequency of the CL opportunities exposure in which the learners are expected to gain the utmost benefits from it is supposed to be in the "regularly" level, which is somewhere above the "occasionally" and closer to the "always in every lesson" as the former appears to be insufficient while the latter seems to be excessive and redundant.

The first part, **Part A**, of the second section of the questionnaire permitted the investigation of the learners' actual experiences with CL. The findings revealed that the first-year students of the English Department at Mostefa Benboulaid Batna 2 University do not have access to the same learning activities as more than 50% of them were not fortunate enough to participate in the CL opportunities, nor did they receive any kind of formal training that prepares them to work collaboratively in groups or with their peers. On the other hand, the data gathered from the privileged half show their satisfaction and contentment to receive the training lessons and be part of these learning opportunities. In addition to that, the results highlight the teachers' role in providing the

learners with these opportunities and provided us with an insight into the utmost beneficial iteration of its recurrences in the learners' classes.

Correspondingly, **Part B** of this section explores the effects of the CL opportunities on their learning. Improving the learners' English language skills apparently seems to be the indubitable outcome of their participation in these opportunities as the results show that the majority of 89.1% of the learners have such convictions (Totally agree: 51.8%, Agree: 37.3%). It appears that the interaction opportunities that the learners find in these learning situations help the simultaneous amelioration of both their listening and speaking skills. The improvement of their reading skill is owed to their careful perusal of the resources required to effectuate their tasks and assignments such as handouts, articles books, etc. On the same note, the learners' writing proficiency is improved because of their constant process of drafting and editing their work, which entails exchanging vocabulary, writing styles, and storming ideas in order to compose a clean, coherent, and cohesive piece of writing that deserves to be formally submitted.

Table 4.25: Working in groups helps students improve their English language skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	57	24.8	51.8	51.8
	Agree	41	17.8	37.3	89.1
	Undecided	8	3.5	7.3	96.4
	Disagree	2	.9	1.8	98.2
	Totally disagree	2	.9	1.8	100.0
	Total	110	47.8	100.0	
Missing	System	120	52.2		
Total		230	100.0		

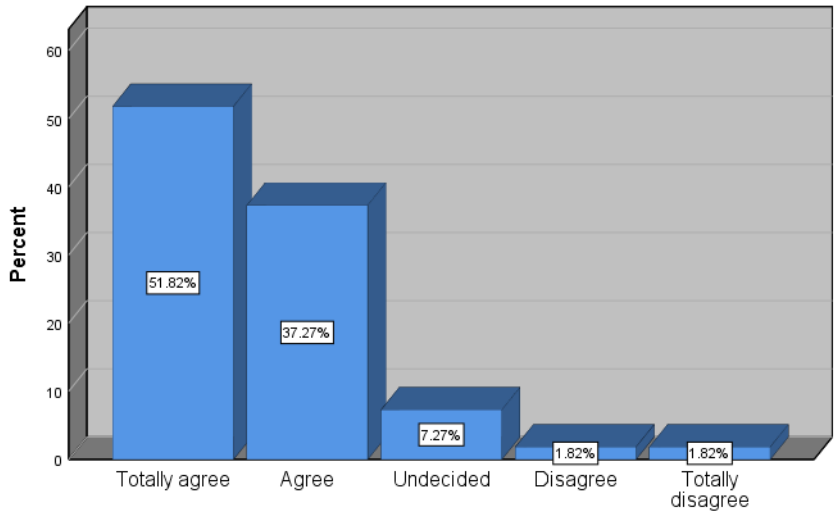

Figure 4.25: Working in groups helps students improve their English language skills

What is more, the results shown in **Table 4.26** below show that 75.9% of the learners perceive CL as an informal non-threatening learning environment that provides them with breaks from their formal classes. Moreover, the term "*like*" signifies the learners' election of CL over their formal classes, which reflects on their attitudes towards the aspect of "*Relaxation*" in relation to their learning styles as demonstrated in **Table 4.11** above and suggests the implementation of CL as a treatment that offers

Table 4.26: Students like to work in groups for the break opportunities it offers from formal classes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	30	13.0	27.8	27.8
	Agree	52	22.6	48.1	75.9
	Undecided	17	7.4	15.7	91.7
	Disagree	7	3.0	6.5	98.1
	Totally disagree	2	.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	108	47.0	100.0	
Missing	System	122	53.0		
Total		230	100.0		

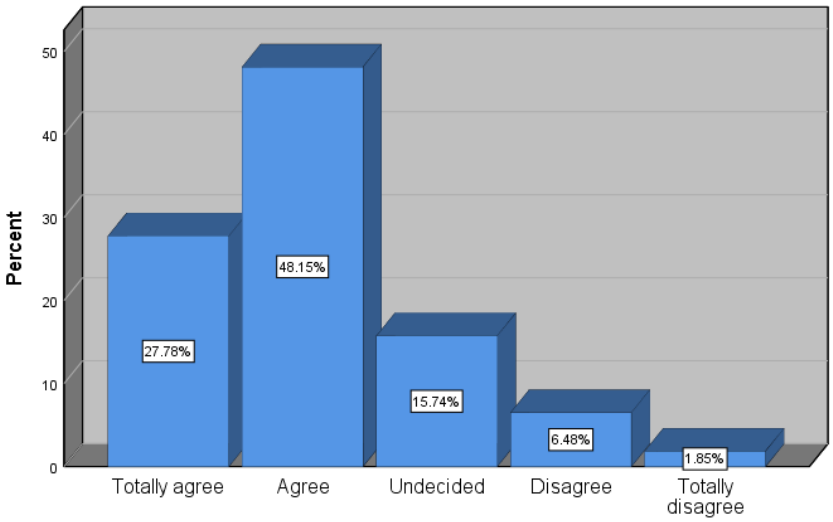

Figure 4.26: Students like to work in groups for the break opportunities it offers from formal classes

the learners these break opportunities, establishes a learning atmosphere that grants them control and guarantees their enjoyment. All of these open a window to develop the learners' autonomous skills, in the long run, considering that providing the learners with psychological support is conditional for LA development (Aoki, 1999.; Holec, 1985.; Huang, 2007.; Voller, 1997).

The third statement explores the learners' perceptions of the CL's influence on their mastery of the English language. Although the statement seems redundant and similar to the first one that targets the four skills of the English language, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, it is designed to gather information on a broader spectrum that involves the micro and macro components of the target language such as vocabulary, semantics, culture, etc. The findings indicate that CL has a positive influence on the learners' proficiency level in English as it promoted the English language level of 69.1% of the learners (Totally agree:31.8%, Agree: 37.3%). However, these influences do not appear to be on the same level with their influences on the learners' four skills where the data indicates that the latter is significantly higher in rate

(89.1%). Our rationale suggests that the four skills of the English language are basic skills that lay at the bottom of the learning pyramid, which makes them more susceptible to be developed and makes the CL influence upon them more straightforward, while the other components of the English language are found in higher levels of the learning pyramid, which makes their acquisition requires additional efforts and a higher level of awareness, which decreases the CL impact upon them. Nevertheless, this should not mean to leave things the way they are, but rather calls for adjusting the CL assignments, tasks, and activities so that they include these components in their learning objectives.

Table 4.27: Students like working in groups because it enables them to improve their English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	35	15.2	31.8	31.8
	Agree	41	17.8	37.3	69.1
	Undecided	22	9.6	20.0	89.1
	Disagree	7	3.0	6.4	95.5
	Totally disagree	5	2.2	4.5	100.0
	Total	110	47.8	100.0	
Missing	System	120	52.2		
Total		230	100.0		

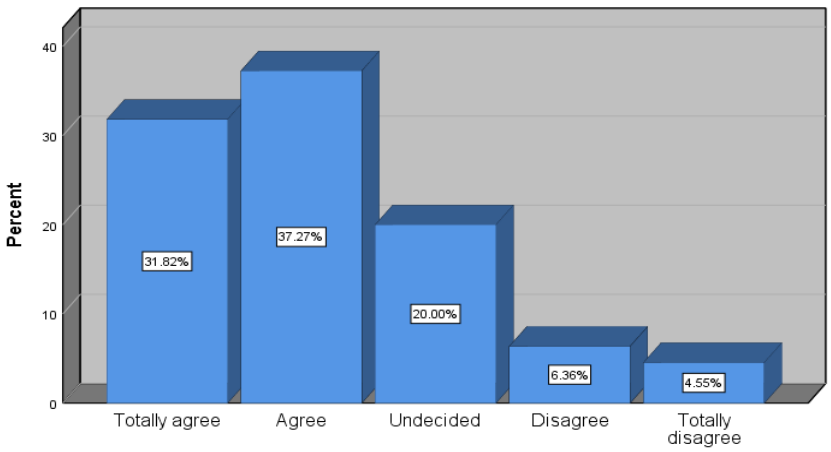

Figure 4.27: Students like working in groups because it enables them to improve their English

In addition to the above, being part of the CL program is relatively perceived to have a positive and constructive impact on the learners' time management skill. In fact, the results show that 62.7% of the learners admitted that the CL approach helped them to use their time in a better way and a more efficient manner (Totally agree: 22.7%, Agree: 40%). Again, the results mirror another aspect of Blidi's (2017) six aspects of the students' learning styles and habits, "*Time*", which assesses the learners' readiness to develop LA. Thus, the findings impart additional corroboration for the pertinence of collaboration for the students' learning development and accentuate the implementation of CL as an impetus drive that fuels the gradual development of LA. On the other hand,

Table 4.28: Students like to work in groups because it helps them better use time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	25	10.9	22.7	22.7
	Agree	44	19.1	40.0	62.7
	Undecided	13	5.7	11.8	74.5
	Disagree	21	9.1	19.1	93.6
	Totally disagree	7	3.0	6.4	100.0
	Total	110	47.8	100.0	
Missing	System	120	52.2		
Total		230	100.0		

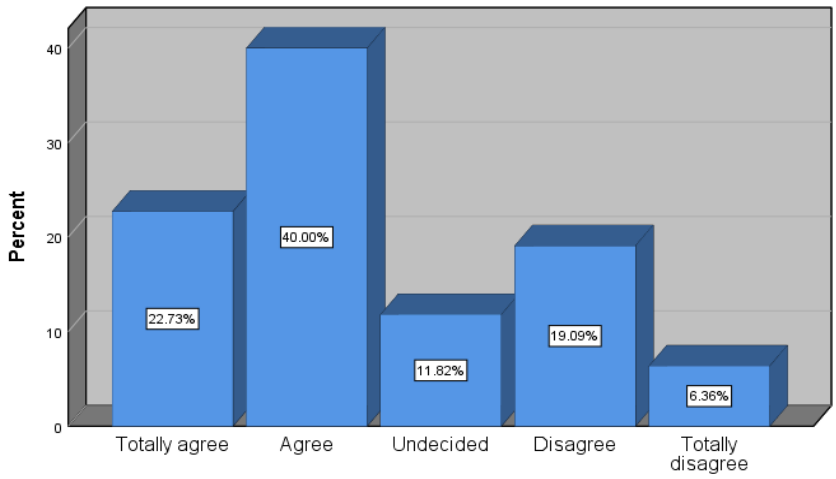

Figure 4.28: Students like to work in groups because it helps them better use time

a considerable proportion of 25.5% of the learners thinks that these CL opportunities did not improve their time management skill (Disagree: 19.1%, Totally disagree: 6.4%), which can be interpreted as the result of a mal implementation of the CL approach since it involves "*the whole context of teaching*" (Roselli, 2016, p. 256) where time management is a part of which. Addressing the problem is important to achieve the CL's highest impact levels on the learners and integral for obtaining accurate data concerning its effects on their autonomy.

Developing responsibility and control over learning appears to be another implication of the integration of CL in the curriculum as 77.1% of the learners feel that they became more responsible after taking part in the CL activities (Totally agree: 30.5%, Agree: 46.7%). In fact, Jacobs & Tan's (2015) third principle that guides the appropriate implementation of CL is individual accountability, which aims to raise the learners' sense of responsibility towards the groups they are part of in order to avoid their overdependence on their groupmates. Therefore, building on the learners' responsibility and accountability is crucial to assure every group member's contribution to the task assigned to the team and imperative for the group dynamics. Accordingly,

Table 4.29: Students like working in groups because it makes them develop responsibility and control

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	32	13.9	30.5	30.5
	Agree	49	21.3	46.7	77.1
	Undecided	10	4.3	9.5	86.7
	Disagree	11	4.8	10.5	97.1
	Totally disagree	3	1.3	2.9	100.0
	Total	105	45.7	100.0	
Missing	System	125	54.3		
Total		230	100.0		

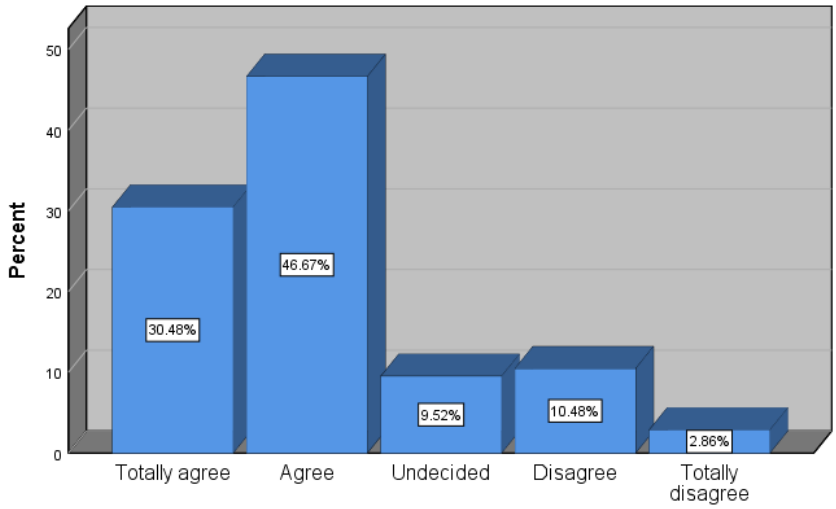

Figure 4.29: Students like the working in groups because it makes them develop responsibility and control

CL seems to have the ability to promote the learners' sense of responsibility as well as the ability to endorse their sense of ownership over their learning (Yasmin & Naseem, 2019, p. 71496), which reflects on the principles of LA.

To depict the teachers' imprint upon the learners when engaging in CL activities, the data extracted from **Table 4.30** and **Table 4.31** below postulate a preconception about their input in the CL opportunities. As shown in **Table 4.30**, when asked if they prefer to be told what to do when working in groups, the learners displayed signs of confusion as only 51% of them felt to be in need of such feedback (Totally agree: 16.3%, Agree: 34.6%) versus 30.8% of whom were against the idea of being overindulged with these instructions (Disagree: 17.3%, Totally disagree: 13.5%) and 18.3% of whom were undecided about their preferences. Having such numbers suggests the absence of a consensus among the learners towards the teacher's full control over these activities where he orchestrates every step of the learners' solving process of the task at hand and raises concerns about the learners' level of independence as the results indicate that more than half of the learners were in favor of receiving detailed input from the part of their teachers when given group assignments.

Table 4.30: During group work activities students prefer to be told what to do

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	17	7.4	16.3	16.3
	Agree	36	15.7	34.6	51.0
	Undecided	19	8.3	18.3	69.2
	Disagree	18	7.8	17.3	86.5
	Totally disagree	14	6.1	13.5	100.0
	Total	104	45.2	100.0	
Missing	System	126	54.8		
Total		230	100.0		

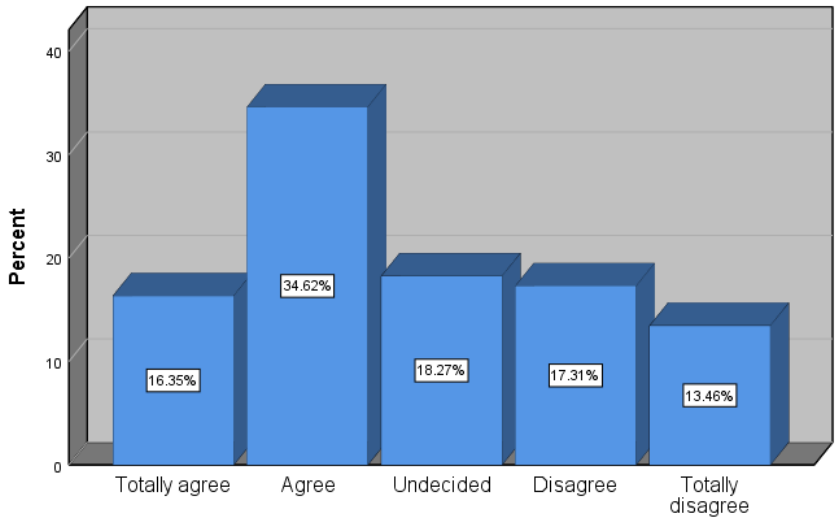

Figure 4.30: During group work activities students prefer to be told what to do

However, the analysis of the data obtained from **Table 4.31** that particularize the nature of the teachers' input in the CL assignment and activities disperse these concerns. The results show a substantial extension in the concurrence rate among the learners as 72.4% of them seem to prefer to be told how to work to improve their English (Totally agree: 24.8%, Agree: 47.6%), which corresponds to a significant decrease in their discord percentage towards their teacher' input as only 17.1% of the learners seem to be generally opposed to any kind of input from the part of their teachers (Disagree: 13.3%, Totally disagree: 3.8%). These statistics suggest that specifying the nature of

the teacher's input in the CL opportunities is a decisive factor in their attitudes towards them. The readings of the two tables; on one hand, indicate that the learners need the teachers' input in the CL opportunities; on the other hand, they show that they expect these inputs to be in the form of "*support, guidance and monitoring when required*" (Blidi, 2017, p. 83). Blidi (2017) adds that the teachers' role in providing the learners

Table 4.31: During group work tasks students prefer to be told how to work to improve their English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	26	11.3	24.8	24.8
	Agree	50	21.7	47.6	72.4
	Undecided	11	4.8	10.5	82.9
	Disagree	14	6.1	13.3	96.2
	Totally disagree	4	1.7	3.8	100.0
	Total	105	45.7	100.0	
Missing	System	125	54.3		
Total		230	100.0		

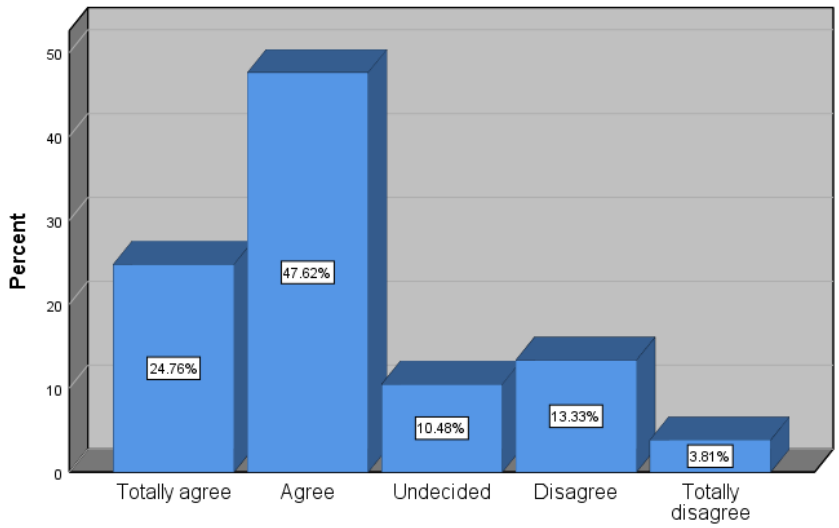

Figure 4.31: During group work tasks students prefer to be told how to work to improve their English

with the relevant cognitive and meta-cognitive knowledge about learning and learning strategies is a key factor for the learners' successful participation in the CL

opportunities. The merits of these inputs vary from granting the learners an extended utilization of their learning skills such as gaining control over the process of their learning to raising their awareness about the accounts and objectives of the CL tasks and assignments as well as boosting their engagement and involvement level in the learning process (Blidi, 2017), which will develop into what Flavell (1979) referred to as "*the learners' awareness of process knowledge and strategic knowledge*". On the other hand, the absence of the teachers' input in these learning situations will leave the learners without a navigating system that directs their learning and enables them to review their progress (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). The findings provide evidence of the vitality of the teachers' role in the CL opportunities and call for addressing the issue with the utmost priority. Moreover, the findings connect the nature of the teachers' input in the CL activities with their presumed role in the autonomous classrooms, for support and guidance are common concepts in both CL and LA.

The analysis of **Part B** of the second section of the questionnaire permitted us to apprehend the learners' standpoint towards CL. The findings delineate the learners' positive perceptions regarding the impact of CL on their learning in general and their proficiency in the English language in particular. They praise CL as a learning approach and acclaim its position in developing their English language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with their meta-cognitive knowledge about the English language. The learners, also, accredited the improvement of certain aspects of their learning to their participation in the CL opportunities such as their time management skills as well as responsibility and control over their learning. Additionally, they consider the CL opportunities a way out from their formal classes and a juncture for the informal classes that they feel inclined to as they accommodate them with a sense of alleviation and relaxation. Not to mention their emphasis on the teachers' guidance and

support as prerequisites for the successful implementation of the CL approach. All of these seem to reflect on Blidi's (2017) determining learning aspects of the autonomous learners and advocate for the compatibility of the CL approach to enhance LA. On the other hand, the findings question the absence of a formal integration of the above learning approach in the learners' curriculum and call for investigating the reasons behind the learners' reluctance towards engaging in such learning opportunities.

4.3. Collaborative Learning in the Algerian EFL Context: Challenges and Opportunities

To answer the above inquiries, the first part, **Part A**, of section three of the questionnaire delves into the factors behind driving the Algerian EFL learners away from engaging in CL activities and seeks to propose a diverse set of potential solutions that might drive the learners back to the CL approach. On the Other hand, the second part, **Part B**, of this section investigates the already existing learning practices in the Algerian EFL classrooms that support the full and formal integration of the CL approach in the EFL learners' curriculum and attempts to anchor these practices in the learners' regular classes.

The first question for instance presented the learners with six probable hindrances that hamper their advancement when engaging in CL and asked them to classify these hindrances according to their level of impact if they think that these factors have the slightest effect upon their attitudes towards CL. Additionally, the learners were provided with a seventh option marked as "*Other*" that grants the learners the opportunity to mention their own reasons for not engaging in CL activities in case they do not believe in the connection between the proposed hindrances and their refrain from engaging in the CL activities. Unfortunately, our respondents did not follow the instructions entailed to answer this element of the questionnaire, classifying according

to the level of impact, but rather have sufficed themselves with ticking the option(s) that they see relevant in hindering their engagement in the CL approach. In response to the learners' answers, we have adjusted our analysis procedures to count the recurrences of their responses and classify their level of impact according to their recurrence percentage. The results are summarized in **Table 4.32** below.

The results indicate that the absence of the teachers' input and guidance in the CL activities is the learners' first reason for drifting away from engaging in them as the statement "n*o one available to support and guide*" marked the highest level of recurrence in the learners' responses among the provided options with a percentage of 24%. The results; on one hand, highlight the value of the teachers' inputs in the CL approach and conditioned their overall presence throughout the different stages of the CL tasks and assignments as a requirement for the learners' participation in these CL activities; on the other hand, they point out the general inappropriate implementation of the CL approach in the EFL classroom from the parts of the teachers in terms of monitoring the learners and keeping records of their advancement. A behavior that is believed to be the corollary of either their ignorance of their responsibilities when adopting the CL approach or their dereliction in fulfilling them, both of which make "*learners view teachers as abandoning their guidance and orientation role, leaving them desperate, unguided and bound to lose interest*" (Blidi, 2017, p. 29); hence, impedes the formal implementation of the CL approach in the Algerian EFL classroom, which calls for a need to address the root causes of the problem and work on solving them. "*Lacking the skills required to work in groups and use resources*" appears to be the learners' second reason for abstention from participating in the CL opportunities (21.6%). Arguably, prior knowledge is a prerequisite for any kind of performance in any domain. Similarly, it is illogical to expect our learners to efficiently take part in the

CL opportunities, being actively engaged, and show eminent positive results if they are not familiar with the concept of the CL approach, its requirements, techniques, and objectives. Therefore, for any successful implementation of the CL approach in the classroom, it is vital to familiarize the learners with the what, why, and how to conduct it; here comes the role of the above-mentioned courses, lessons, and workshops that acquaint the learners with the nature and essence of the CL approach. Accordingly, with a percentage of 17.9%, the learners' third reason for not opting for the CL approach is for it being "*not requested by the teacher*". The results suggest that the Algerian EFL learners are inclined towards mandatory learning. Considering that the Algerian EFL educational system in general still relies on traditional teaching methods, it is an expected result to generate learners with traditional introspective behavior that steers them towards a state of teacher dependency and entraps them within the stereotypes of traditional learning such as: using generic teaching materials and traditional learning methods, learning beyond the classroom setting is futile, the teacher is the sole authority and source of information in the classroom. All of which constrain the learners' actions

Table 4.32: Reasons for not engaging in CL activities among the Algerian EFL learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No free time	51	15.5	15.5	15.5
	Not part of assessments	27	8.2	8.2	23.7
	No preference for working on their own	40	12.2	12.2	35.9
	No one available to support and guide	79	24.0	24.0	59.9
	Not requested by the teacher	59	17.9	17.9	77.8
	Lacking the skills required to work in groups and use resources	71	21.6	21.6	99.4
	Other	2	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	329	100.0	100.0	

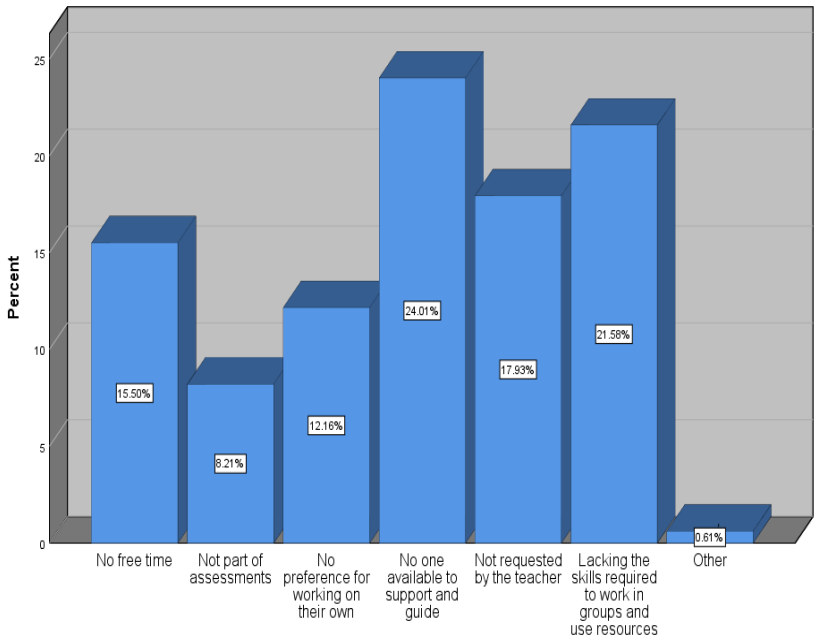

Figure 4.32: Reasons for not engaging in CL activities among the Algerian EFL learners

to be the result of the teachers' practices that decide their learning approaches, individual or collaborative. On the other hand, these practices carried out by the EFL teachers do not seem to advocate CL as a learning approach nor do they reflect on any orientation towards collective learning. Nevertheless, we do not diminish the learners' accountability for such outcomes, for they, as adult learners, are expected to share the responsibility of their learning with their teachers and act according to their learning styles, learning needs, and learning objectives. The learners' fourth reason for not taking part in CL with a response percent of 15.5% is "*no free time*". The statement supports two possibilities. First, the learners' weekly timetable is overcharged with learning hours, which makes it hard for them to follow up on any kind of additional learning such as CL tasks, activities, and assignments, especially beyond the classroom setting where most parts of these activities take place. Second, no time was allocated in the learners' weekly timetable that enables them to formally engage themselves in the CL approach, that includes allocating time for the learners to use libraries, attend

workshops, prepare projects…etc. However, the first possibility was rejected after checking out the learners' of the English Department at Mostefa Benboulaid Batna 2 University timetable and finding out in their weekly timetable enough free time that enables them to carry out additional learning assignments such as the ones included in the CL approach. This leaves us with the second possibility, which in its turn raises our attention towards two fundamental issues that impede the formal integration of the CL approach in the Algerian EFL context. First, the absence of the required facilities in which the learners are supposed to invest their time to practice on the CL approach such as the adequate venues that provide the suitable learning materials and learning atmospheres for the learners when they are learning in a collaborative manner. Second, the Algerian EFL learners' psychology that entails their tendency to use imperfect learning opportunities as an excuse to not learn at all instead of adapting themselves to the provided learning situations and making the utmost use of them to accumulate the utmost possible amount of knowledge and experience. The learners' fifth reason for not participating in the CL opportunities is having "n*o preference for working on their own*", which targets the learners' intrinsic motivation for learning in general and learning through CL in specific. As only 12.2% of the learners view it as a hindering factor against their willingness to be part of the CL opportunities, we conclude that the fifth reason loses its relevance in fending off the learners away from this learning approach. Additionally, via comparing the current findings with the ones obtained from the learners' learning styles and habits section above, it is found that, in terms of preferences, the learners actually do have a preference for independent learning, ergo an intrinsic motivation for learning. Moreover, the findings further stress the adequacy of CL for the amelioration of LA, for both of which share motivation as a prerequisite for their successful application. With a recurrence percentage of only 8.2%, being "*not*

part of assessments" ranks as sixth among the reasons behind driving the learners away from the CL opportunities. Although the above findings suggest that the Algerian EFL learners are inclined towards mandatory learning, including the learners' CL achievements in their overall assessment does not seem of high importance. The data suggest that the teachers' request bears sufficient weight for their participation in the CL activities and that there is no need to use assessment as leverage over the learners in order to corner them into taking part in these learning activities. As for the seventh and last option, "*other*", proposed for the learners, we have found only two answers with a recurrence percent of 0.6% that revolve around the same point, group dominance behaviors that one or more group members perform, which reflects on one of the negative outcomes that the absence of the teachers' support and guidance during the course of the CL implementation might result in.

Based on the data shown in **Table 4.32** above alongside the accompanied data analysis and interpretation, the challenges that stand in the way between the Algerian EFL learners and their participation in the CL opportunities can be abridged in the top three hindrances: "n*o one available to support and guide*", "*Lacking the skills required to work in groups and use resources*", and "*not requested by the teacher*" with the possibility to include the absence of adequate CL facilities, which although impedes the successful integration of the CL techniques in the learners' curriculum, it can be overcome simply by adapting the learners to work on what is available.

A keen inspection of these hindrances leads to the conclusion that these challenges are mostly teacher-related. In other words, whether the learners do not find guidance and support during the CL assignments, lack the required skills that empower their input in these learning situations, or are habituated to act only under the teachers' directions, it is found that the teachers' presumed position as the classroom instructor

in the CL situations enables them to at least minimize the difficulties' impact upon the learners' stance towards CL.

In response to the above challenges, the second question of the first part, **Part A**, of section three of the questionnaire investigates the proper practices to be implemented when adopting the CL approach that may aid the Algerian EFL learners to overcome the above challenges as well as altering their attitudes towards the CL approach. The second question proposes a set of six practices and implores for the learners' perceptions of them regarding their imprint upon their willingness to participate in the CL opportunities. The findings illustrated in **Table 4.33** below show that the first and foremost demanded practice with a recurrence percent of 26.3% is assuring the presence of the teachers' support and guidance when implementing the CL approach in the EFL classroom. The results mirror the Algerian EFL learners' first challenge when they attempt to properly engage in CL activities. They also highlight the teachers' input utility in determining the learners' progression pace in these activities. Additionally, the teachers' support and guidance in the CL context will help the learners to resolve the issues that rise among the group members especially the ones related to the group management as they represent the authoritarian figure in the classroom. Moreover, the teachers' practices during the CL assignments can ensure their success in terms of process and outcome, and inhibit the negative practices that one or more individuals practice in their groups such as the learners' lack of responsibility to carry out their designated share of the work, or their overdependence on their groupmates, especially if they follow Jacobs & Tan's (2015) guidelines regarding the implementation of the CL in the EFL classroom. The learners' second called-for practice that will encourage them to work in groups and engage in the CL activities is maximizing their peer and classmates' interaction opportunities with a recurrence percentage of 21.7%. Such

practice bears diverse advantages for the appropriate integration of the CL approach. For instance, it accustoms the learners to their peers and classmates, which creates for them a sense of identity and belonging to this group. Also, it reduces the learners' defensive or aggressive behaviors towards each other. Additionally, such interactions will open the door for the learners to exchange their knowledge, wisdom, and experiences with their peers and classmates, which will allow them to build, adjust and enhance their learning styles according to their needs and preferences, which is one step towards their autonomy. Furthermore, it creates a safe learning atmosphere for the learners and lessens their shyness, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes, for the learners as individuals can hide in their groups and their actions will be perceived as the group's actions, which will gradually transform the learners from the reactive learners of the traditional classroom to the proactive learners of the modern classroom whom take control over their learning, which is another step towards LA. As for the learners' third and fourth demanded adjustments in the application of the CL approach in the Algerian EFL context, they were "*having enough training at the beginning of each term*" and "*teachers offering workshops and training tasks*" with a recurrence percent of 17.6% and 17.3% respectively. The data suggest that the learners accentuate the importance of acquiring the adequate set of skills that will permit them to efficiently participate in the CL opportunities, which is, as brought up above, a prerequisite for any successful learning attempt. Although the two statements appear to be at some level iterating and redundant, they have a slight but significant difference, which makes both of them essential for the successful integration of the CL approach. The first statement, for instance, represents the introductory training that takes place at the beginning of the CL implementation dedicated to accustoming the learners to the nature of the CL approach, the arguments for using it, its objectives, and the expected outcomes at the end of its

implementation. The second statement; on the other hand, represent the ongoing training that takes place during the course of the CL implementation and takes the form of a tutorial, which introduces the learners to the procedures to be followed for the current assignment since the CL approach consists of a large set of methods and techniques among which the teachers are supposed to choose according to the learning context. On the other hand, the learners do not seem to prioritize the two remaining practices, being "required by the teacher" and "incorporated in formal learning", as means to overcome their challenges when engaging in CL activities with recurrence percentages of only 9.3% and 7.7% respectively. The statistics seem to contradict the data obtained from **Table 4.32** above that introduces the absence of such practices as their third challenge when attempting to engage in CL opportunities. However, the findings can be rationalized considering the learning atmosphere that surrounds the application of the CL approach in the Algerian EFL context. That is to say, the learners' hesitation to opt for these practices as potential solutions for the above challenges is due to their exposure to a faulty version of the CL approach that was a result of the practitioners' imperfect implementation of the CL approach in the classroom, which by no means reflect the learners' attitudes towards the CL approach as the findings obtained from the first and second section of the questionnaire clarify. Therefore, it can be deduced that the learners are not opposed to the concept that the latter two practices represent, but are rather opposed to the actual proceeding related to its application in the field that they were directly or indirectly exposed to, or even heard of, which made them create a negative stance towards them. These imperfect practices are to be modified to meet the frame of its theoretical part so that it will be properly exploited for the benefits of the formal implementation of the CL approach in the learners' curriculum.

Table 4.33: Practical solutions for the CL challenges in the Algerian EFL context

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Spend time with their class peers	70	21.3	21.7	21.7
	Required by the teacher	30	9.1	9.3	31.0
	Support and guidance by the teacher	85	25.8	26.3	57.3
	Teacher offering workshops and training tasks	56	17.0	17.3	74.6
	Incorporated in formal learning	25	7.6	7.7	82.4
	Having enough training at the beginning of each term	57	17.3	17.6	100.0
	Total	323	98.2	100.0	
Missing	System	6	1.8		
Total		329	100.0		

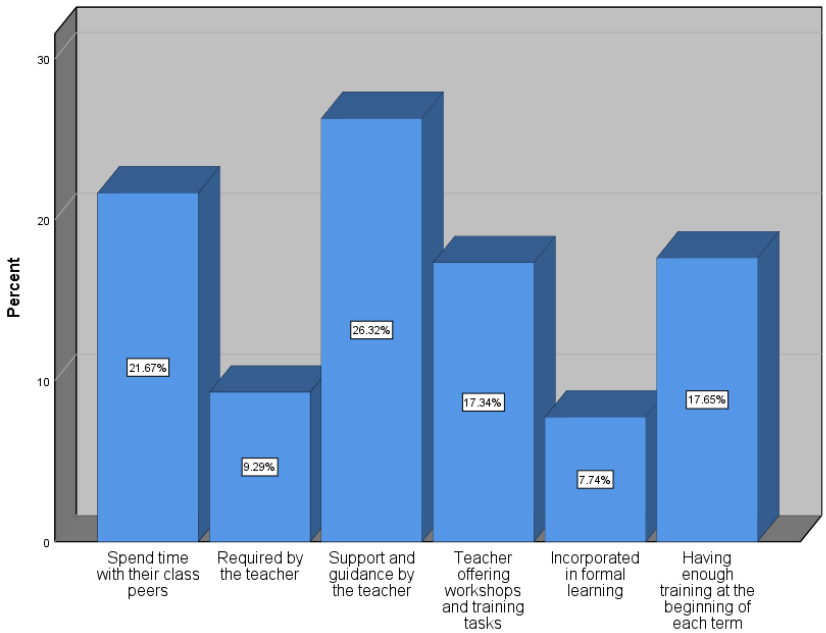

Figure 4.33: Practical solutions for the CL challenges in the Algerian EFL context

Mainly, the above table summarizes the called-for practices purposed to surmount the hurdles the Algerian EFL learners encounter during the process of their engagement in the CL approach. It presents the teachers' support and guidance during the course of

the CL implementation, maximizing the learners' interaction opportunities with their peers and classmates, and providing them with enough training at the beginning of each term, in addition to offering them with tutorials in the form of workshops and training tasks as the tools that will alleviate the pressure of the above-mentioned challenges on the learners' appraisal of the CL approach.

In the same context, the second part, **Part B**, of section three of the questionnaire explores the features of the CL approach that might entice the learners to opt for such a learning approach in relation to their autonomy development. For example, being novel and attractive is the CL approach's first feature being investigated in this part of the questionnaire. The data shown below enunciate the learners' consensus upon the novelty and attractiveness of the CL approach as 79.3% of the respondent (Totally agree; 36.4%, Agree: 42.9%) appear to observe such characteristics in the CL activities versus 8.6% of opposed respondents (Disagree: 7.1%, Totally disagree: 1.5%) and 12.1% of undecided ones. The rationale for such consensus among the learners relates to the creative teaching techniques embedded in the implementation of the CL approach that make learning more interesting, exciting, and effective through developing its lear-

Table 4.34: Characteristics of the CL approach (novel and attractive)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	72	31.3	36.4	36.4
	Agree	85	37.0	42.9	79.3
	Undecided	24	10.4	12.1	91.4
	Disagree	14	6.1	7.1	98.5
	Totally disagree	3	1.3	1.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

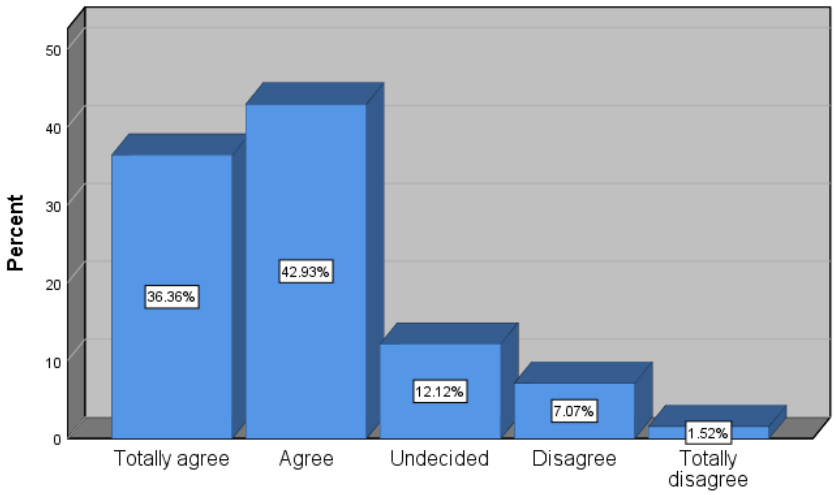

Figure 4.34: Characteristics of the CL approach (novel and attractive)

ning materials and approaches (NACCCE, 1999). Having these attributes, the CL approach will not only be able to attract the learners to adopt it, but also will have an extended impact on developing their autonomy as it will motivate them to learn.

Anxiety has become a major impediment to the learners' proficiency, especially in the EFL classrooms where the learners think that learning the English language is a challenging task. It can result in various learning implications for the learners such as the learners' decreased attention, lack of involvement, and lack of enthusiasm for learning; therefore, the creation of a non-threatening learning environment became a must. As a response to these concerns, relaxation represents the second feature to be explored in the CL approach. The Findings seem promising as 74.7% of the EFL learners seem to believe in the stress-free learning environment that the CL opportunities provide (Totally agree: 30.3%, Agree: 44.4%). The essence of the CL approach lies in its social nature which provides the learners with opportunities to guide, support, encourage and praise each other. Such learning conditions may increase the learners' comfort in the CL situations and reduce their anxiety level, which will enable them to share their input in the classroom (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings were in line with Young (1999) whom found that peer interactions and group work can lead to a low-anxiety learning environment. Not to mention that the CL approach offers the learners an informal learning atmosphere in which the learners are relieved from the binding rules of the formal classrooms and puts them in a learning situation where they, as a group, determine the content, materials, and pace of their learning, which creates a learning context that builds on a higher relaxation level.

Table 4.35: Characteristics of the CL approach (relaxing)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	60	26.1	30.3	30.3
	Agree	88	38.3	44.4	74.7
	Undecided	17	7.4	8.6	83.3
	Disagree	23	10.0	11.6	94.9
	Totally disagree	10	4.3	5.1	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

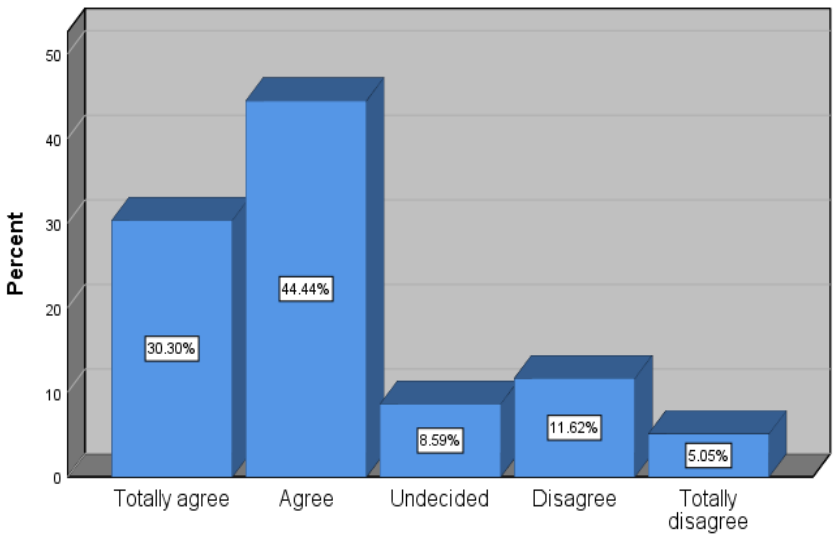

Figure 4.35: Characteristics of the CL approach (relaxing)

The third investigated feature references the development of the learners' self-confidence, or self-esteem to their participation in the CL activities. Coopersmith (1967) defined this concept as "*a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself*" (pp. 4-5). Basically, self-confidence is a global system related to the individuals' value system in which their capabilities as learners are determined by their self-confidence level (Blidi, 2017). In reference to LA, self-confidence is perceived as a prerequisite for achieving it as Blidi (2017) asserts: "*It has to be understood that the development of learner autonomy is not attainable in the absence of learners' self-esteem*" (p.74). Accordingly, CL opportunities seem to nurture such attributes in the learners as the findings show that 86.9% of the learners believe in the positive impact of CL on developing their self-confidence (Totally agree: 36.9%, Agree: 50%). Regarding this matter, Blidi (2017) adds: "*Peer Scaffolding as the CLA advocates, reflect the group-oriented perception they have of learner autonomy. It develops in them self-confidence and autonomy-related self-constructs, self-esteem and self-sufficiency, which helps them develop autonomy*" (p.12).

Table4.36: Characteristics of the CL approach (develops self-confidence)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	73	31.7	36.9	36.9
	Agree	99	43.0	50.0	86.9
	Undecided	13	5.7	6.6	93.4
	Disagree	8	3.5	4.0	97.5
	Totally disagree	5	2.2	2.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

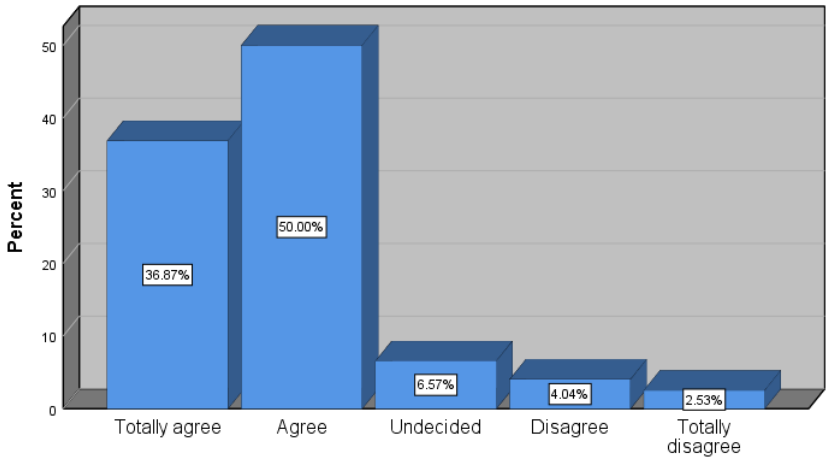

Figure 4.36: Characteristics of the CL approach (develops self-confidence)

Statistics related to the fourth feature of the CL approach, accessibility, show that 75.3% of the learners consider CL accessible as a learning approach (Totally agree: 26.3%, Agree: 49%). Generally, the only fixed requirement for the CL approach to take place is the existence of one or more classmates that enables the formation of a learning group. On the other hand, the remaining requirements of the CL approach are marked as flexible. For example, the setting of the CL approach can take place in or beyond the classroom frame. The same concept applies to the appropriate timeframe, materials, resources, content, duration, and nature of guidance desired for the fulfillment of the CL assignments, tasks, and activities at hand. All of these mostly depend on the learning context in which the learners find themselves. Being accessible makes CL a convenient learning approach and demonstrates the learners' degree of satisfaction with its environment and structure (Blidi, 2017). This implies that the CL approach accessibility renders it a desired learning approach to be implemented in the EFL learners' curriculum. Additionally, such a feature goes in line with the concept of LA that aims for achieving the general accessibility of learning and its components for the learners.

Table 4.37: Characteristics of the CL approach (accessible)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	52	22.6	26.3	26.3
	Agree	97	42.2	49.0	75.3
	Undecided	34	14.8	17.2	92.4
	Disagree	12	5.2	6.1	98.5
	Totally disagree	3	1.3	1.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

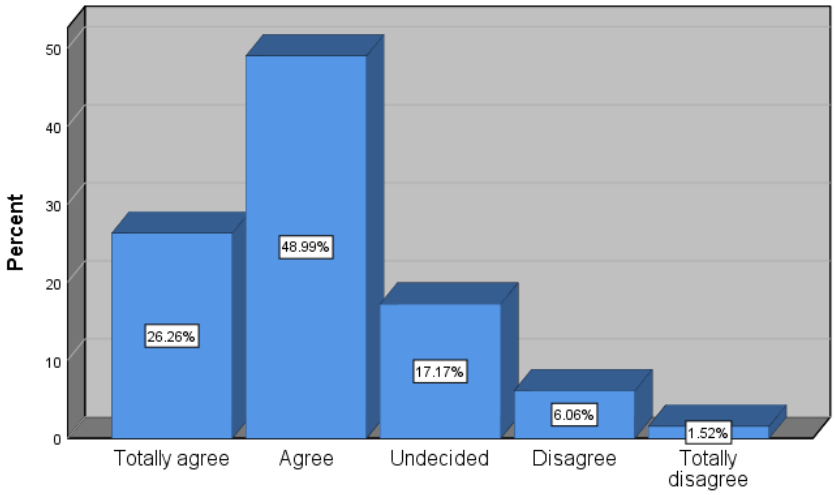

Figure 4.37: Characteristics of the CL approach (accessible)

The CL approach's fifth feature being investigated is its ability to reinforce the learners' readiness to study independently. The data show that 74.2% of the learners had a positive response concerning the CL approach's faculty to promote this feature in the learners (Totally agree: 32.8%, Agree: 41.4%). Such merit is a reflection of the CL approach's motto of including the learners in the learning process. It entails placing the learners in the center of the learning operation by shifting the teaching method from the traditional teacher-centered method to the modern learner-centered one. Through this process, the learners gain a certain degree of control over their learning and receive a corresponding amount of responsibility. During the course of the learners' repetitive

experience with the CL approach's opportunities, they will gradually alter their perception of the concept of learning and its requirements under the umbrella of the learner-centered approach; and they will eventually adjust their attitudes towards learning to match a more independent approach.

Table 4.38: Characteristics of the CL approach (reinforces readiness to study independently)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	65	28.3	32.8	32.8
	Agree	82	35.7	41.4	74.2
	Undecided	23	10.0	11.6	85.9
	Disagree	16	7.0	8.1	93.9
	Totally disagree	12	5.2	6.1	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

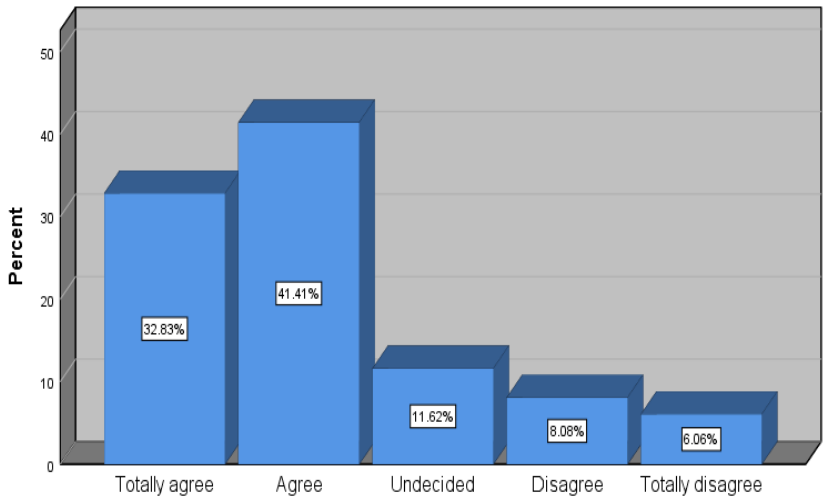

Figure 4.38: Characteristics of the CL approach (reinforces readiness to study independently)

Following on with the CL approach features, "*offers an opportunity to communicate in English*" comes as the next in list feature to be explored. As per Macaro's (1997) definition of CL, the learners collaborate to achieve a shared learning objective. In order for this process to take place in this social context, communication

must take place. Therefore, and within the EFL classroom context, the medium used for the communication taking place in the ongoing CL activities will mostly be the English language. The data shown in **Table 4.39** below provide concrete evidence regarding this matter as the majority of 90.4% of the learners feature CL as a learning approach that presents the learners with genuine opportunities to communicate in English.

Table 4.39: Characteristics of the CL approach (offers an opportunity to communicate in English)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	121	52.6	61.1	61.1
	Agree	58	25.2	29.3	90.4
	Undecided	9	3.9	4.5	94.9
	Disagree	6	2.6	3.0	98.0
	Totally disagree	4	1.7	2.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

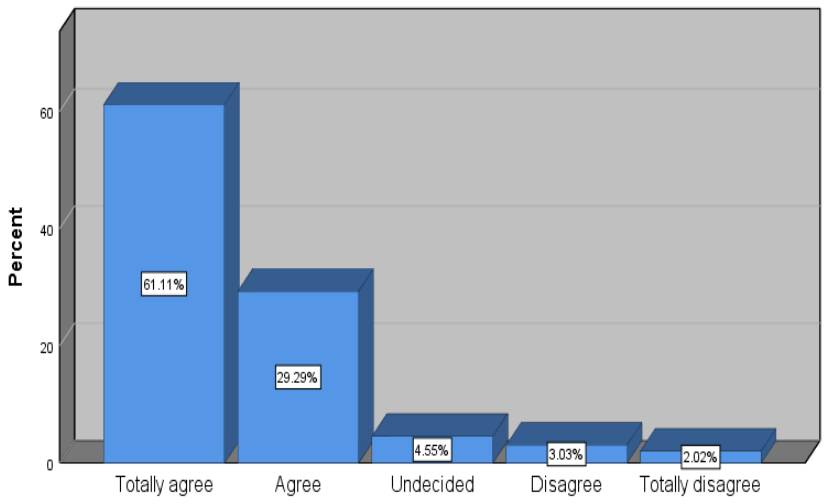

Figure 4.39: Characteristics of the CL approach (offers an opportunity to communicate in English)

"*Collaborative learning strategies develop in learners the freedom of choice related to the process and the product of learning, implying the emergence of a shared*

control over classroom knowledge and authority by teachers and learners" (Blidi, 2017, p. 13). Similarly, in the Algerian EFL context, as shown in **Table 4.40** below, the findings accord with Blidi's statement where they confirm that the learners benefit from the same opportunities as the answers of 80.3% of the respondents assert (Totally agree: 39.9%, Agree: 40.4%). This feature is demonstrated from the early stages of the application of the CL approach. For example, in the beginning, the learners are given the opportunity to choose their group mates. Then, as they proceed, they are given the opportunity to choose their assignment among a provided list of options as well as the opportunity to choose their share of the chosen assignment. Next, they are given the opportunity to select the order in which they present their work and so on. In brief, the course of the CL approach application is filled with opportunities to make choices for the learners. With respect to its imprint on LA, Blidi (2017) explains that "*the ownership and responsibility for one's learning call for the development of decision and choice making skills. These skills recall Lee's (1997) concepts of responsibility for the learning objectives, self-monitoring, self-assessing and taking an active role in learning*" (p. 3).

Table 4.40: Characteristics of the CL approach (offers an opportunity to make choice)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	79	34.3	39.9	39.9
	Agree	80	34.8	40.4	80.3
	Undecided	20	8.7	10.1	90.4
	Disagree	8	3.5	4.0	94.4
	Totally disagree	11	4.8	5.6	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

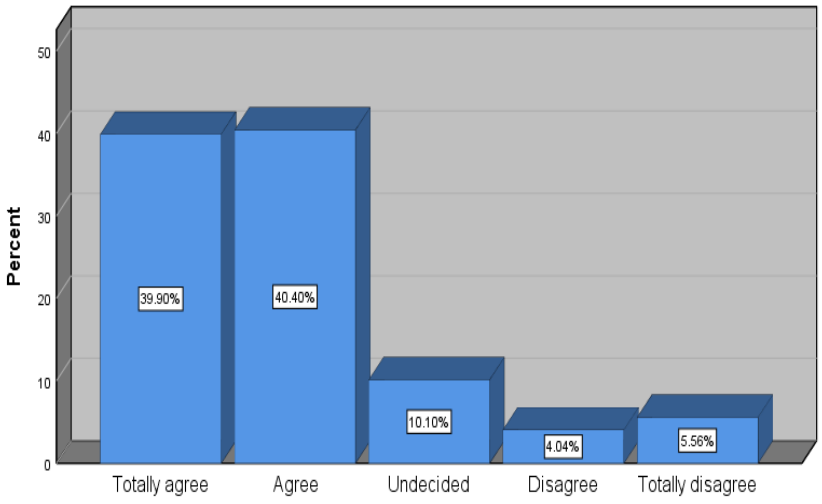

Figure 4.40: Characteristics of the CL approach (offers an opportunity to make choice)

The traditional EFL classroom is characterized by strictness and rigidity. It takes the form of lectures in which the learners are expected to pay full attention to the lecturer without causing any kind of interruption including moving, turning around, or communicating with their peers and classmates during the whole period of the lecture. Although these conditions represent the requirements of a smooth and successful lecture, such practices might have a reverse effect on the learners when such rigidity casts a considerable amount of stress on the learners that result in the learners' loss of interest in learning. Additionally, such learning condition creates teacher-dependent learners whom fully rely on their teachers to learn. Evidence suggests that the CL approach possesses the ability to reduce the learners' reliance on these controlled class practices. The statistics show that 73.7% praise such feature in the CL approach (Totally agree: 21.7%, Agree: 52%). During the CL implementation, many behaviors that were prohibited in the controlled classes become natural, such as the learners' movements and interactions with each other. Moreover, the teachers' presence is reduced and their role is adapted from the classroom lecturers to the instructors. Blidi (2017) comments

on the learners' successful achievement of the above feature as the way that "*enables the students to develop the ability to decide on their own learning outcomes*" (p. 56), which will help them to gain control over their learning and gradually develop their autonomy.

Table 4.41: Characteristics of the CL approach (reduces reliance on controlled class practices)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	43	18.7	21.7	21.7
	Agree	103	44.8	52.0	73.7
	Undecided	36	15.7	18.2	91.9
	Disagree	12	5.2	6.1	98.0
	Totally disagree	4	1.7	2.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

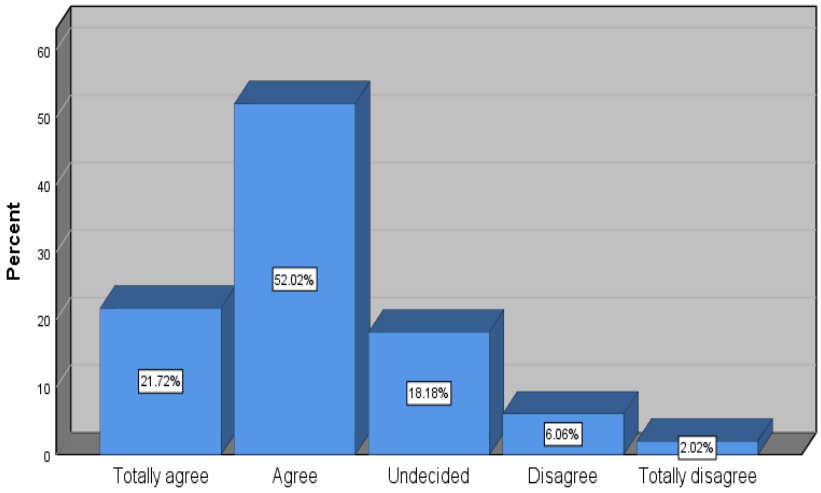

Figure 4.41: Characteristics of the CL approach (reduces reliance on controlled class practices)

The last but not least feature of the CL approach being investigated in this part of the questionnaire is its capacity to develop the learners' autonomous learning strategies and skills. A critical feature on which depends the adequacy of the CL approach to enhance the learners' autonomy. The findings show that a total of 86.9% of the

respondents believe that a genuine investment in the CL approach will inevitably result in aiding them to develop their autonomous learning strategies and skills (Totally agree: 32.8%, Agree: 54%). The combination of the above-mentioned features of the CL approach that promote various aspect of LA supports the data shown in **Table 4.42**

Table 4.42: Characteristics of the CL approach (helps develop autonomous learning strategies and skills)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	65	28.3	32.8	32.8
	Agree	107	46.5	54.0	86.9
	Undecided	12	5.2	6.1	92.9
	Disagree	7	3.0	3.5	96.5
	Totally disagree	7	3.0	3.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

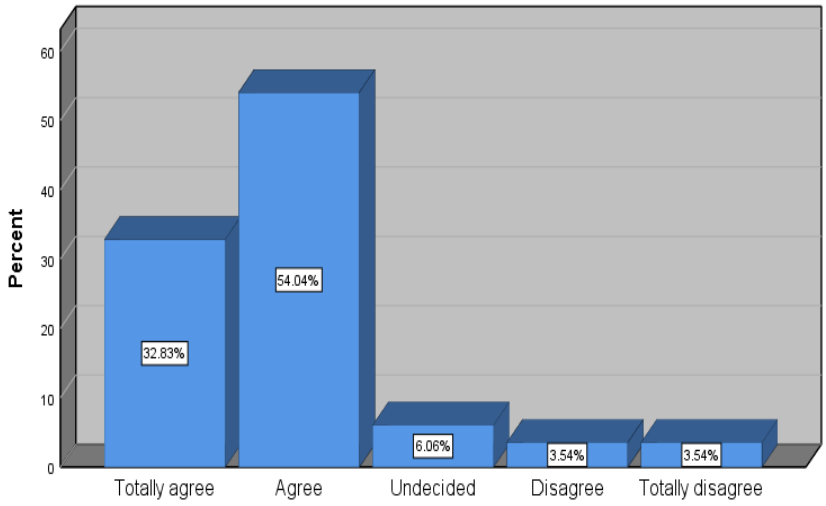

Figure 4.42: Characteristics of the CL approach (helps develop autonomous learning strategies and skills)

and suggest that the CL approach engulfs the learners with a diverse set of learning opportunities that invest in the learners' process through which they accumulate knowledge rather than in the accumulated knowledge itself, without diminishing the significance of the latter, for modern education is not about providing the learners with

information, but rather equipping them with the skills that facilitate their access, perception, and interpretation of the target information.

The exploration of the CL approach features revealed properties that possess the power to allure the Algerian EFL learners towards the CL approach. The findings confirm that the learners lean towards the novel learning opportunities that capture their diligence for learning. Furthermore, the learners praise the approach's relaxed learning atmosphere and accessibility. Developing their degree of responsibility over learning appears to be another attribute of the CL approach, for it presents the learners with opportunities that enable them to gain control over their learning and make relevant choices. Psychologically, it seems to build on the learners' self-esteem, self-confidence, and readiness to learn independently. Finally, the learners seem to possess a strong attitude towards the CL's capability to develop the learners' autonomous learning skills and strategies. All of the above reflect on the CL approach's capacity to develop the learners' autonomy, which provides us with an initial insight into the impact of the CL approach on LA.

4.4. The EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards Promoting Learner Autonomy Via Collaborative Learning

The fourth section of the questionnaire further investigates the ways through which the CL approach develops and enhances the EFL learners' autonomy in the Algerian context.

The first statement, for instance, explores the CL approach's capacity to "*facilitate learning independently*". Kolb's (1984) experimental learning cycle rationalizes this concept. The theory consists of four stages of application: *the concrete experience* that involves the learners' awareness of the learning mechanism as well as the learners' prior knowledge about the learning context, *the reflective observation* that

involves their reflections on these prior experiences, *the abstract conceptualization* that involves the learners' adjustments of their prior knowledge and their novel perceptions of the plan of action to be followed provided that the learning situation reoccurs, and *the active experimentation* that involves the learners' actual and ongoing application of their improved understanding of learning management on similar learning situations (Warburton & all, 2016). All of these constitute a learning mechanism that facilitates future independent learning and resonates with the CL approach stages of application that accustoms the learners to the approach, actively engage them in CL tasks and assignments to enrich their experiences and gradually relinquish control of the classroom for the learners in order to expose them to a maximum amount of real-life learning situations. In the same vein, Yasmin & Naseem (2019), in their study, add three ways through which the CL approach can facilitate independent learning. First, and contrary to teacher-directed learning, learning in groups offers the learners opportunities to exchange their experiences with each other, confirms their understanding of certain issues with their peers, solves problems without the intervention of the teacher through collective work, and helps them become "*independent users of the language*". Second, CL endows the learners with the faculty to support and evaluate each other and work on eliminating their confusions and weaknesses regarding language learning. Third, CL allows the learners to become resources for each other, it multiplies their knowledge depending on the group members, and via sharing and exchanging ideas with each other they broaden their understanding of the subject matter, which introduces them to various ideas, perspectives, and critics based on which the learners are expected to choose the best course of action for their learning. In accordance with the above, the findings reveal that the Algerian EFL learners believe in the CL approach capacity to facilitate

independent learning with a consensus percentage of 83.3% of the learners (Totally agree: 17.7%, Agree: 65.7%); such capacity reflects on one of the aspects of LA, the learners' ability to learn independently, and once again emphasizes on the CL approach adequacy to promote and enhance the learners' autonomy.

Table 4.43: CL facilitates learning independently

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	35	15.2	17.7	17.7
	Agree	130	56.5	65.7	83.3
	Undecided	17	7.4	8.6	91.9
	Disagree	9	3.9	4.5	96.5
	Totally disagree	7	3.0	3.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

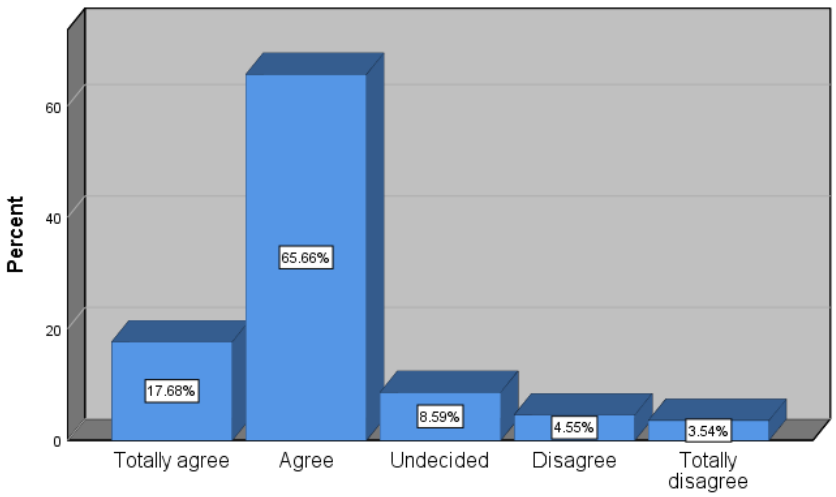

Figure 4.43: CL facilitates learning independently

The second statement of this section of the questionnaire targets the CL approach's ability to "*enhance discipline*" in the learners. The findings actually show that 70.2% of the Algerian EFL learners link the enhancement of this feature with their participation in the CL activities (Totally agree: 29.8%, Agree: 40.4%). Jacobs and Tan's (2015) third principle of the CL approach application, personal accountability,

supports the learners' view. The learners believe that through this principle they will generate a sense of commitment towards their learning, which will eventually develop into a sense of accountability for their own and their peers' learning, group members, and classmates; and a sense of responsibility that covers all the areas related to their learning process including "*learning content (materials), stages (syllabus), methods and techniques (learning styles and strategies), process and environment (pace, time, and place), objectives and evaluation procedures*" (Blidi, 2017, p. 2). In respect of its relation to LA, many scholars associated taking responsibility for learning with the successful development of LA such as Holec (1981), Benson (1997), Macaro (1997), Little (2006), Vázquez (2016), and Blidi (2017). Furthermore, enhancing the learners' discipline towards their learning boosts the development of the other aspects of LA such as the learners' time management skills, independence, and attitudes towards learning. Summarily, the data revealed that the CL approach enhances the learners' discipline for learning, which in its turn enhances and develops the learners' autonomy.

Table 4.44: CL enhances discipline

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	59	25.7	29.8	29.8
	Agree	80	34.8	40.4	70.2
	Undecided	41	17.8	20.7	90.9
	Disagree	12	5.2	6.1	97.0
	Totally disagree	6	2.6	3.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

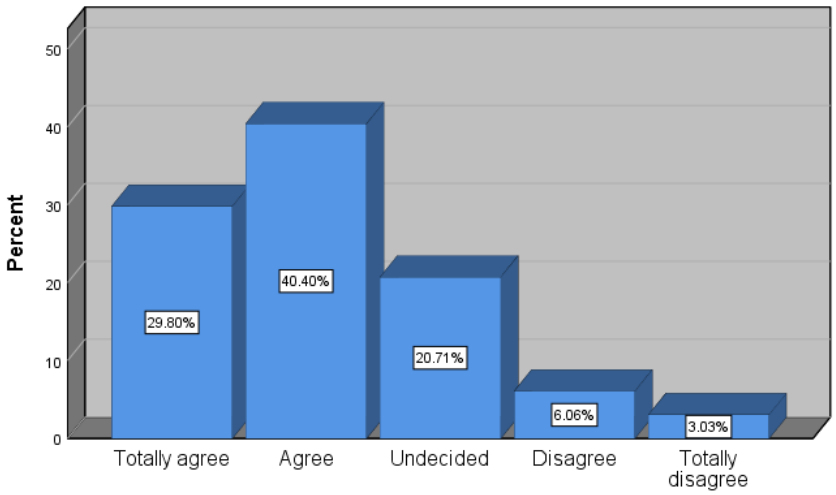

Figure 4.44: CL enhances discipline

The third statement is concerned with investigating the role of the CL approach in providing the learners with valuable feedback apropos to their learning. Hattie and Timperley (2007) defined feedback as a "*consequence of performance*" (p. 81); basically, feedback is a set of instructions provided to the learners during, or at the end of a task designed to improve their understanding and performance level of a given task. Similarly, during the CL assignments, tasks, and activities, the learners tend to seek constructive feedback from their peers and teachers so that they acquire a clear image of the goals they are expected to achieve and the process that they are expected to follow in order to reach these goals. Moreover, the feedback that the learners receive during these activities refines their learning skills by providing them with a solid grounding through which they can evaluate, assess, and adjust their prior knowledge, learning skills and learning strategies, for constructive feedback praises the learners' correct learning conducts so that they reinforce them and comments on their learning misconducts so that they fix them. Based on the above, the feedback that the CL approach provides the learners with represents the ground floor on which the learners build on and develop their autonomy. In the Algerian EFL context, the statistics seem

to be in line with the above as they show that a majority of 82.3% of the learners (Totally agree: 34.8%, Agree: 47.5%) conceive the CL approach as a pragmatic learning approach that provides the learners with useful feedback concerning what, where, when and how they learn, which shapes their affinity for autonomy.

Table 4.45: CL provides useful feedback

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	69	30.0	34.8	34.8
	Agree	94	40.9	47.5	82.3
	Undecided	18	7.8	9.1	91.4
	Disagree	12	5.2	6.1	97.5
	Totally disagree	5	2.2	2.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

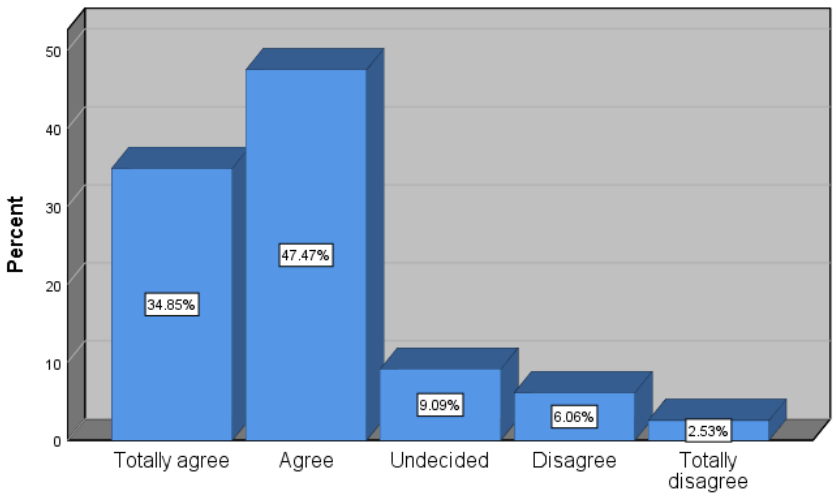

Figure 4.45: CL provides useful feedback

In the fourth statement, when asked if the CL approach "*offers opportunities to interact with peers and teachers*", the learners responded in a more definite manner as 90.9% of them (Totally agree: 38.9%, Agree: 52%) do perceive the CL as a learning approach of social nature that entails engaging in interactions with peers and teachers. Interdependence and responsible reliance on the teachers appear as inevitable outcomes

of the interaction opportunities that the CL approach offers (Blidi, 2017) where the learners immerse themselves in a series of actions that involve the participation of their peers and teachers for the achievement of their learning goals; these actions might take the form of a written, or verbal communication, a debate, an inquiry, peer scaffolding…etc. All of these fall under the umbrella of two factors of Lee's (1991) factors for developing LA, "*peer support*" and "*teacher support*". In "*peer support*" he argued that "*learner autonomy is not only individual but also social*" where "i*nteraction, negotiation, collaboration, etc., are important factors in promoting learner autonomy*" (p. 83); whereas in "*teacher support*" he thinks that "*it is crucial for the teacher to establish a good relationship with students, supporting and guiding them in their learning, e.g. by helping them formulate their goals more clearly, and providing feedback, encouragement, and reinforcement*" (ibid). Both of which explain how the above-mentioned interaction opportunities might help the learners with developing their autonomy. In the same vein, Blidi (2017) adds that "*interdependence is a stage towards independence and does not contradict with autonomy*" (p. 77) where he perceives the learners' interdependence as a characteristic of paramount importance for the gradual development of their autonomy.

Table 4.46: CL offers opportunities to interact with peers and teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	77	33.5	38.9	38.9
	Agree	103	44.8	52.0	90.9
	Undecided	10	4.3	5.1	96.0
	Disagree	5	2.2	2.5	98.5
	Totally disagree	3	1.3	1.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

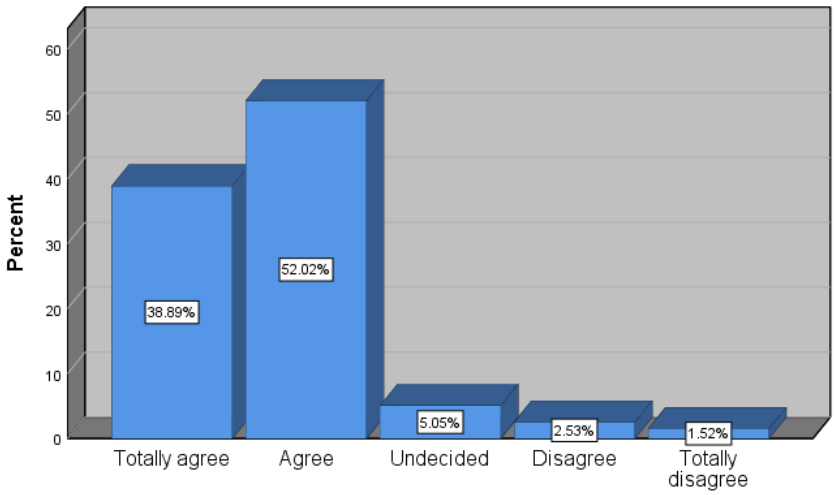

Figure 4.46: CL offers opportunities to interact with peers and teachers

In accordance with the above statement, the fifth statement, "*offer opportunities to exchange information with peers*", explores the learners' attitudes towards the outcome that they receive as a result of their interactions and exchanges with each other. The findings point out that the majority of the learners (90.4%) perceive CL as a learning approach that facilitates the process of information exchange among them (Totally agree:48.5%, Agree: 41.9%), which signifies the existence of a higher level of interaction taking place among the learners that exceed the mere communication forms of interactions and suggest that the learners learn better from each other compared to their learning from their teachers and instructors, considering that the learners share the same educational level. Additionally, the fifth statement provides us with a deeper insight into the nature of these interaction opportunities and puts emphasis on the importance of the output that the learners receive in the process, exchanging knowledge, wisdom, experiences, and learning skills. Therefore, portraying CL as an opportunity to exchange information highlights the amount of knowledge and wisdom that the learners assimilate during their participation in the CL opportunities, which is a key

factor for boosting the learners' personal and individual growth and a prerequisite for enhancing their autonomy in the long run.

Table 4.47: CL offers opportunities to exchange information with peers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	96	41.7	48.5	48.5
	Agree	83	36.1	41.9	90.4
	Undecided	11	4.8	5.6	96.0
	Disagree	4	1.7	2.0	98.0
	Totally disagree	4	1.7	2.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

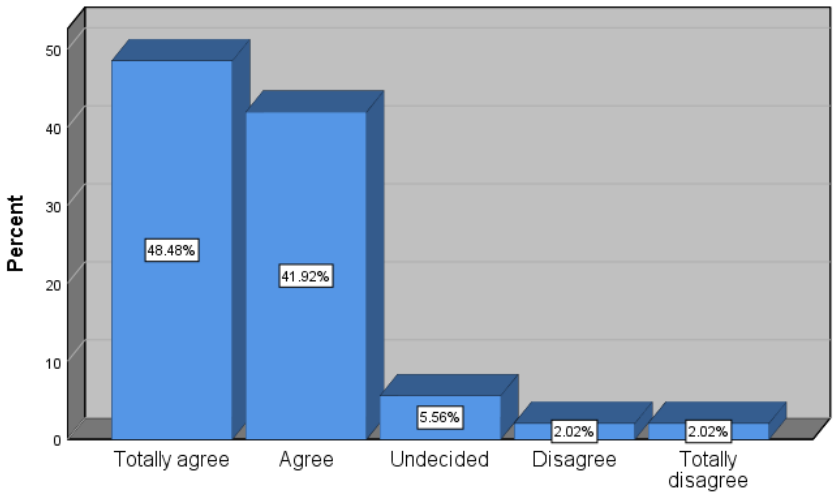

Figure 4.47: CL offers opportunities to exchange information with peers

The findings extracted from the sixth statement, as shown below, indicate that the learners attribute CL as a learning approach that "*helps develop learning strategies"* among them with a consensus percentage of 89.9% of the respondents (Totally agree: 30.8%, Agree: 59.1%). Characterizing CL as such stems from the learners' perception of the essence of CL as a learning approach, and learning strategies as learning tools. As mentioned above, CL basically entails two or more individuals working together in order to achieve common goals, while learning strategies correspond to the sets of

operations and steps that the learners implement for the purpose of facilitating the obtainment, storage, and usage of information (Rubin, 1975). Thereupon, and during the course of their participation in the CL activities, the learners found themselves experimenting with a diverse set of learning strategies, especially the metacognitive and social learning strategies since they show a high degree of compatibility with the CL approach, in order to meet their learning preferences, which confirms that the CL approach indeed "*helps develop learning strategies*". In regard to the relationship between learning strategies and LA, many researchers believe in the interrelation between the two notions. Aliponga et all (2015), for instance, accredited the development of the learners' degree of autonomy to the conscious and responsible application of the language learning strategies, whereas Chamot et all (2010) linked the possession of a learning strategies repertoire with the improvement of learning and autonomy. Therefore, it is concluded that the CL approach faculty to develop the learners' learning strategies indirectly and critically develops the learners' level of autonomy.

Table 4.48: CL helps develop learning strategies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	61	26.5	30.8	30.8
	Agree	117	50.9	59.1	89.9
	Undecided	15	6.5	7.6	97.5
	Disagree	2	.9	1.0	98.5
	Totally disagree	3	1.3	1.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

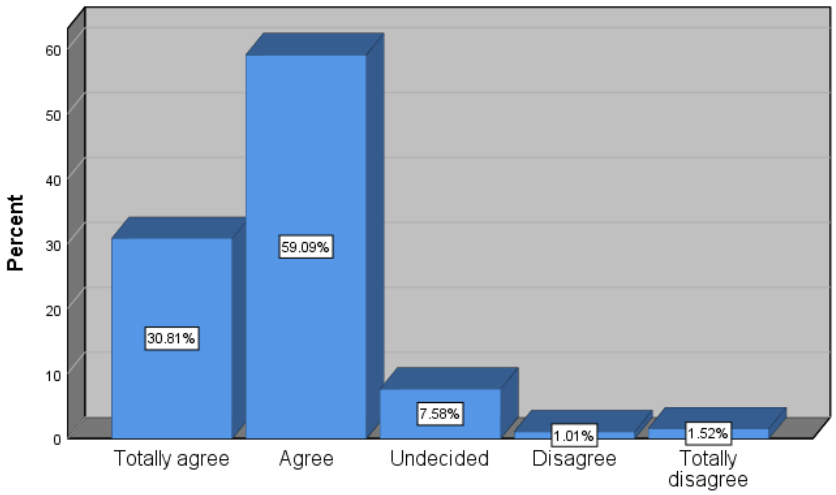

Figure 4.48: CL helps develop learning strategies

The seventh statement concludes the first question of the fourth section of the questionnaire by investigating the CL approach capacity to *"enhance students' readiness and willingness to develop autonomy"*. Responses gathered from this statement show that the majority of 82.3% of the learners (Totally agree: 20.7%, Agree: 61.6%) positively perceive the influence of the CL learning approach upon their readiness and willingness to develop autonomy. CL is a practical learning approach that entails actively engaging the learners in their learning process and gradually building on their experience; furthermore, Nolen and Ward (2008) conceptualization of motivation as both a psychological characteristic subjected to social influence, and a socially constructed characteristic grants the CL approach an enormous advantage to develop and enhance such characteristic in the learners. Concerning the association of motivation with LA, as illustrated in CHAPTER ONE, many prominent researchers in the field of LA incorporated readiness, willingness, and motivation in their definitions of the concept, among them we mention Dam et al (1990), Littlewood (1996), and Sinclair (2000); additionally, Dornyei (1998) asserts that motivation "*provides the primary impetus to initiate learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and*

often tedious learning process" (p. 117). The above reiterates and confirms the Algerian EFL learners' attitudes towards of the effect of the CL approach on enhancing their readiness and willingness to develop autonomy.

Table 4.49: CL enhances students' readiness and willingness to develop autonomy

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	41	17.8	20.7	20.7
	Agree	122	53.0	61.6	82.3
	Undecided	27	11.7	13.6	96.0
	Disagree	4	1.7	2.0	98.0
	Totally disagree	4	1.7	2.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

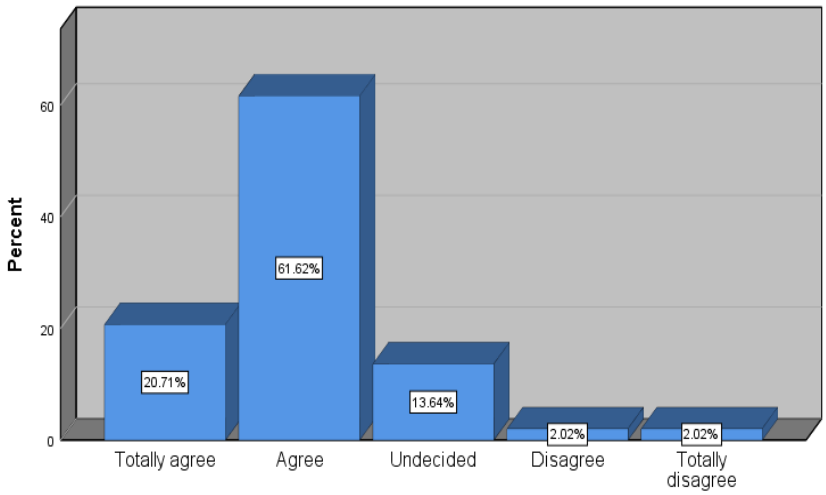

Figure 4.49: CL enhances students' readiness and willingness to develop autonomy

In the same vein, the second question of this section explores the means through which the CL tasks and activities develop the learners' readiness and willingness for LA in the Algerian EFL context.

The first explored activity is the learners' contact with their peers. The data show that 91.4% of the respondents acknowledge the utility of their interactions with their

peers in developing their readiness and willingness for LA (Totally agree: 44.9%, Agree:46.5%). The findings find further support from the precedently gathered data from the different sections of the questionnaire that demonstrated the Algerian EFL learners' positive disposition for the CL activities, their high levels of relaxation and gratification when participating in these learning opportunities as well as the fair amount of the interaction opportunities entailed in the CL activities that allows them to exchange their knowledge and experiences with their peers. All of which serve as an incentive that fuels the learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA.

Table 4.50: Contact with peers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	89	38.7	44.9	44.9
	Agree	92	40.0	46.5	91.4
	Undecided	11	4.8	5.6	97.0
	Disagree	4	1.7	2.0	99.0
	Totally disagree	2	.9	1.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

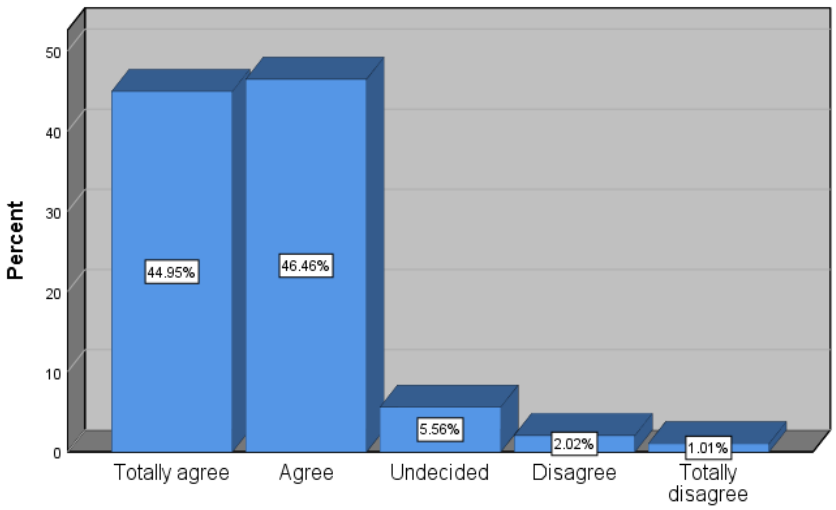

Figure 4.50: Contact with peers

"*Working on own pace*" represents the second explored feature of the CL approach that is likely to influence the Algerian EFL learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA. As shown in **Table 4.51** below, a percentage of 65.2% of the learners positively perceive such feature as a CL property that aids them to enhance their readiness and willingness to develop LA (Totally agree: 12.1%, Agree: 53%) versus 20.2 % of opposed respondents (Disagree: 11.1%, Totally disagree: 9.1%) and 14.6% of undecided respondents. The majoritarian percentage of the advocates, with reference to the data extracted from **Table 4.3** and **Table 4.35** above, leads us to believe that the learners' capacity to work at their own pace during the CL learning opportunities indeed positively influences their readiness and willingness to develop LA. At the same time, and in comparison with the data extracted from **Table 4.50** above, it is found that the second feature does not have the same level of impact upon the learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA that the first explored feature, "contact with peers", have, which leads us to the conclusion that although the possibility of the existence of multiple factors affecting the learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA, they do not possess the same level of impact.

Table 4.51: Working on own pace

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	24	10.4	12.1	12.1
	Agree	105	45.7	53.0	65.2
	Undecided	29	12.6	14.6	79.8
	Disagree	22	9.6	11.1	90.9
	Totally disagree	18	7.8	9.1	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

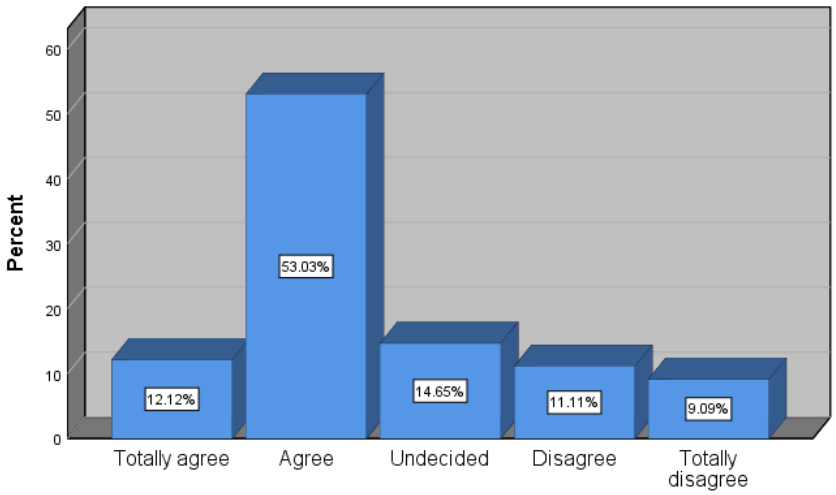

Figure 4.51: Working on own pace

The third explored CL feature is "*training and guidance*". The corresponding data show much resemblance to the second explored feature with 68.7% of advocates (Totally agree: 23.2%, Agree: 45.5%), 17.7% of opponents (Disagree: 9.6%, Totally disagree: 8.1%), and 13.6% of undecided respondents. The findings present "*training and guidance*" as another feature of the CL approach that helps enhance the Algerian EFL learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA, for it provides the learners with a clear path towards their goals and objectives. Additionally, and similarly to the second explored feature, the data suggest that "*training and guidance*" has a limited influence on the learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA as well; however, with reference to the data extracted from the first section of the questionnaire (the students' learning styles and habits), especially the data demonstrated in **Table 4.6** and **Table 4.9** respectively, it is undoubtedly proposed that "*training and guidance*" possess greater influence upon the development of LA in its advanced stages, for "*training and guidance*" is mostly offered during the process of developing the learners' autonomy and not as a prior stage to achieve it.

Table 4.52: Training and guidance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	46	20.0	23.2	23.2
	Agree	90	39.1	45.5	68.7
	Undecided	27	11.7	13.6	82.3
	Disagree	19	8.3	9.6	91.9
	Totally disagree	16	7.0	8.1	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

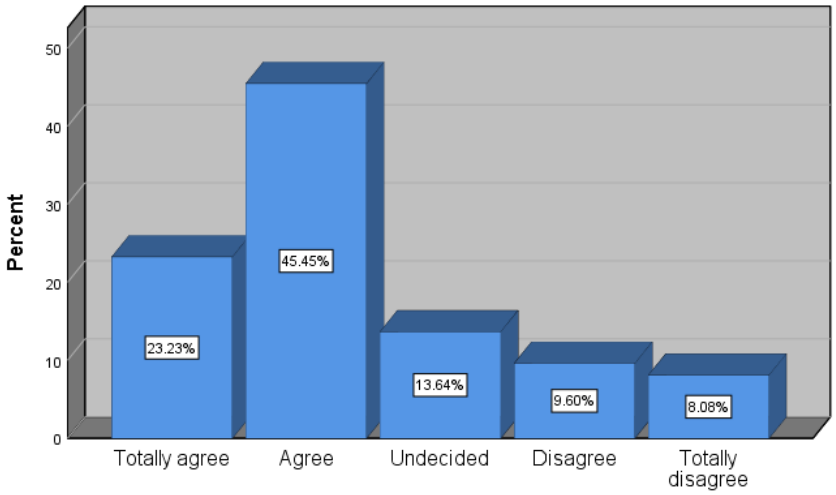

Figure 4.52: Training and guidance

The fourth and last explored feature of the CL approach in relation to its influence upon enhancing the learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA is the "*opportunities to discuss ideas with peers*" that the CL approach offers. The findings show general consensus among the respondents regarding the feature's capacity to promote the learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA as 87.9% of them were in favor of the concept (Totally agree: 56.1%, Agree: 31.8%). Such statistics endorse the valuation of the "*opportunities to discuss ideas with peers*" entailed in the CL approach in enhancing the learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA in the Algerian EFL context. These referred-to opportunities enable the learners to participate,

share opinions, and have a proactive role during the CL activities; thus, in addition to the pre-eminences that the learners gain from their interactions with their peers during the CL activities, the opportunities they are offered to discuss ideas with their peers grant them some degree of control over their learning, which will eventually develop into autonomy in learning.

Table 4.53: Opportunity to discuss ideas with peers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	111	48.3	56.1	56.1
	Agree	63	27.4	31.8	87.9
	Undecided	15	6.5	7.6	95.5
	Disagree	7	3.0	3.5	99.0
	Totally disagree	2	.9	1.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

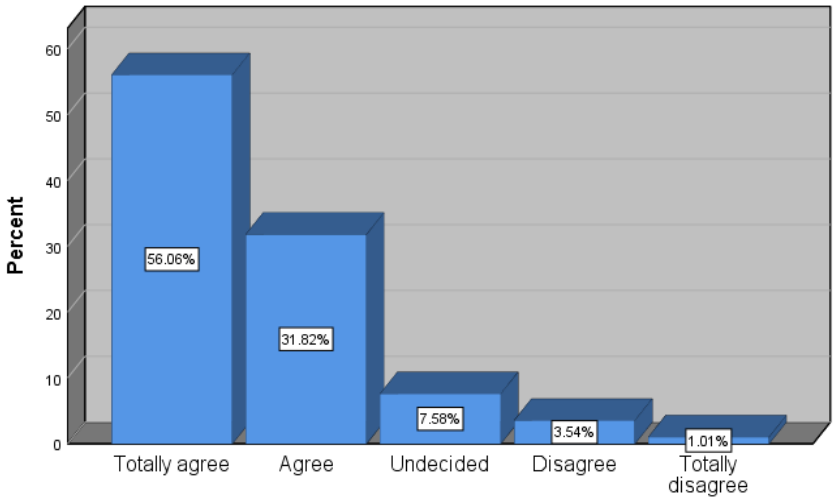

Figure 4.53: Opportunity to discuss ideas with peers

The fourth section of the questionnaire dealt with the Algerian EFL learners' attitudes towards using CL as a learning approach to enhance and develop their level of

autonomy. The section revealed the learners' conceptions regarding this matter via the analysis of the findings extracted from the two questions that consist it. The first question, for instance, explored the learning skills to be assimilated when engaging in the CL opportunities that have a direct or indirect relation with enhancing the learners' autonomy. The findings revealed the CL approach faculty to promote the learners' independent learning, discipline, feedback, social interaction, experience, learning strategies, and motivation for learning as the learning skills that develop LA in the Algerian EFL context. In the same vein, the second question explored the means through which the learners' motivation for LA is developed when they are engaged in the CL tasks, assignments, and activities. The findings revealed four characteristics of the CL approach that cultivate the learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA. The first two characteristics are the learners' contact with peers (communication) and the learners' intellectual exchange with peers (experience); both of which have a high level of impact on the learners' motivation for LA, which highlights the importance of interdependence in the learners' journey towards autonomy. The remaining two characteristics are the learners' ability to work at their own pace and the training and guidance opportunities offered during the implementation of the CL approach. Despite the fact that these latter characteristics have a relatively lower impact on the learners' readiness and willingness to develop LA, the overall analysis of the questionnaire suggests that they possess a greater impact on the learners' autonomy at its advanced levels. In summary, the CL approach and its entailed skills and characteristics are proven to be of high valuation for the enhancement and development of the learners' autonomy in the Algerian EFL context.

4.5. The Teachers' Role During the CL Opportunities

The fifth and last section of the questionnaire concludes this chapter by exploring the Algerian EFL learners' perceptions of the nature of the teacher's role during the implementation of the CL approach in the classroom.

The first statement, for instance, suggests that the teachers should consider themselves as collaborators or partners during the CL activities. In other words, instead of assuming a leading role in the classroom where they control the flow of knowledge and information, from teacher to learners, the teachers of the collaborative classrooms are expected to relinquish their dominance in the classroom and allow their learners to share their ideas, knowledge, personal experiences and strategies, and build their lessons, tasks, and activities upon the learners' input that they bring to the learning context. This valuation of the learners' input in the classroom generates a higher sense of self-esteem and confidence for the learners and motivates them to further participate and engage in their learning process. It also brings the learners one step closer to their teachers as they perceive their teachers as collaborators and partners in learning, which reduces and eases their stress and anxiety in the classroom. However, at the same time, the collaborator teachers are required to have vital knowledge about the content of the lesson that enables them to make an objective judgment upon the accuracy of the learners' input to avoid any kind of misinformation provided to the learners. In congruence with the above, the findings show that the majority of 83.8% of the learners were in conformance with the content of the first statement of this section of the questionnaire (Totally agree: 44.9%, Agree: 38.9%), which is an indicator of the Algerian EFL learners' perceptions and expectations regarding the teachers' position during the implementation and integration of the CL approach in the classroom as collaborators, and partners.

Table 4.54: Teachers consider themselves in group activities as collaborators (partners)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	89	38.7	44.9	44.9
	Agree	77	33.5	38.9	83.8
	Undecided	11	4.8	5.6	89.4
	Disagree	13	5.7	6.6	96.0
	Totally disagree	8	3.5	4.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

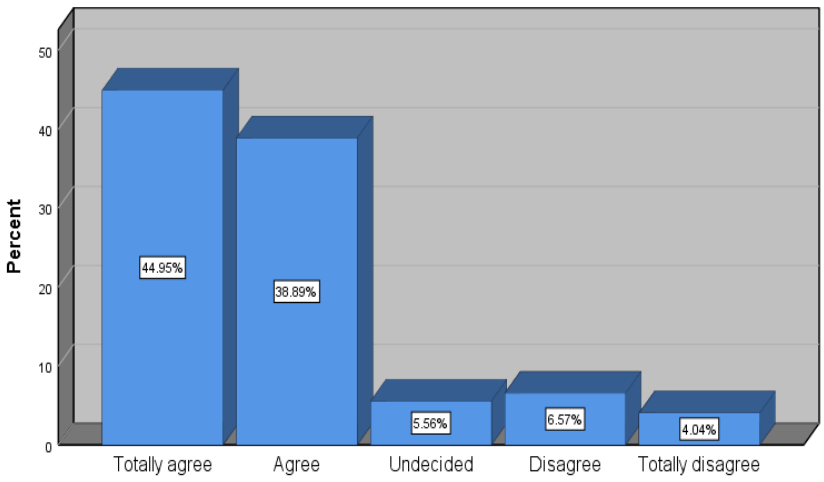

Figure 4.54: Teachers consider themselves in group activities as collaborators (partners)

Orienting the learners to the learning materials and resources is another role of the collaborator teachers outlined by the second statement of this section of the questionnaire. Similar to the first statement, the findings show that 81.3% of the learners in the Algerian EFL context positively perceive and expect their teachers to carry out this role during the implementation of the CL approach in the classroom (Totally agree: 27.8%, Agree: 53.5%). This role fills the gap generated as a result of the shift from the traditional teacher-centered classroom where the teacher is considered to be the source of information to the modern learner-centered classroom, collaborative classroom in

this case, where the learners are expected to, in addition to the teachers' input, build upon their prior knowledge and experiences in order to form the content to be learned. Additionally, this role facilitates the learners' access to relevant and authentic resources related to the subject matter under treatment considering that the learners might be unfamiliar with the content of the subject matter or unaware of the appropriate searching channels through which they must go to obtain authentic and reliable learning resources and materials.

Table 4.55: The teacher's role in group activities is orienting students to a set of materials and resources

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	55	23.9	27.8	27.8
	Agree	106	46.1	53.5	81.3
	Undecided	22	9.6	11.1	92.4
	Disagree	10	4.3	5.1	97.5
	Totally disagree	5	2.2	2.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

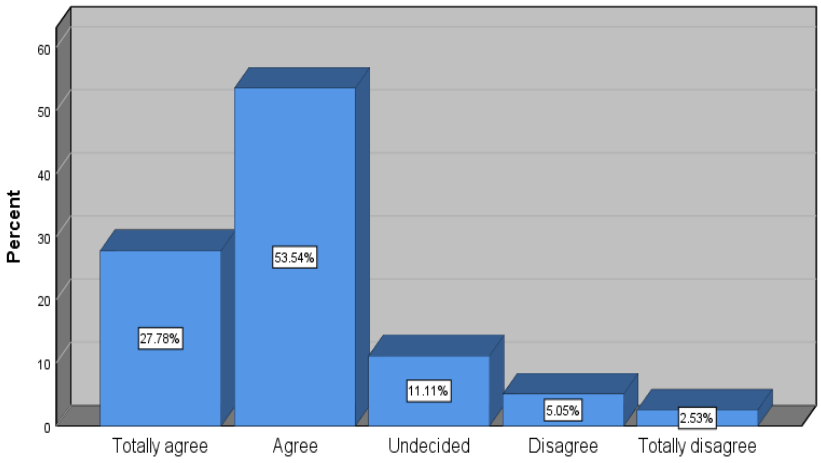

Figure 4.55: Teacher's role in group activities is orienting students to a set of materials and resources

The third statement highlights another critical role to be held by the teachers when implementing the CL approach, raising the learners' awareness about their learning progress. Adding such an item to the teachers' package of responsibilities in the collaborative classroom holds enormous benefits for the learners. Not only this will present the learners with a better understanding of their lessons by raising their awareness about their learning content, but rather will expand the learners' perspectives and push them to go deeper in their learning to grasp the rationale behind the teachers' selection for the learning content to be taught, their option for the tools and materials to be included, their picking for the techniques and strategies to be implemented and the nature of the learning goals and objectives to be achieved. All of these will provide the learners with the skills that will allow them to be in awareness of their learning and enable them to monitor their progress in learning. In the Algerian EFL context, the gathered statistics show that 81.3% of the learners demonstrated their strong beliefs that it is their teachers' responsibility to raise their learning awareness and "*conscious perception and take-up of a learning opportunity*" (Crabbe, 2007, p. 119) (Totally agree: 47%, Agree: 34.3%), which is a strong evidence for the learners' aspiration to become "*actively engaged in identifying and managing the learning opportunities*" (ibid), which in its turn will gradually make them "*better equipped, and therefore more likely, to manage learning opportunities outside the classroom*" (ibid). This portrays the imprint and input of the collaborative teachers during the implementation of the CL approach in the classroom in the Algerian EFL context as indispensable for the development of the learners' awareness about their learning in general and learning progress in specific, for they hold the constructive role of equipping the learners with the learning mechanisms of self-monitoring and self-assessment that enable them to fully and efficiently interact with their learning at both micro and macro levels.

Table 4.56: Teachers in group activities raise learners' awareness about their learning progress

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	93	40.4	47.0	47.0
	Agree	68	29.6	34.3	81.3
	Undecided	19	8.3	9.6	90.9
	Disagree	13	5.7	6.6	97.5
	Totally disagree	5	2.2	2.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

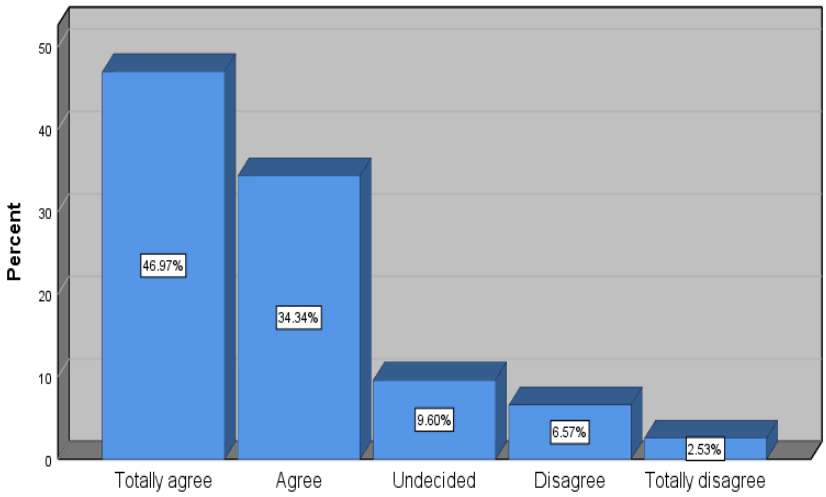

Figure 4.56: Teachers in group activities raise learners' awareness about their learning progress

The fourth suggested role for the collaborative teachers in this section of the questionnaire is helping learners to figure out answers by themselves. Having to figure out answers entails the learners' participation in problem-solving activities that require them to use their cognitive abilities. The idea here is that the teachers basically refrain from providing the learners with the answers and solutions to these activities in a direct manner and provide the learners with the learning hints, tricks, and techniques that aid them to figure out these answers and solutions provided that they implement their cognitive skills in the process, which will develop their cognitive capacity. The findings

show that 86.4% of the learners are expecting such opportunities from their teachers (Totally agree: 40.4%, Agree: 46%), which denotes the Algerian EFL learners' perceptions of the value of their cognitive skills for their learning and demonstrates their expectations from their teachers in terms of providing them with the learning opportunities that target their cognitive capacity.

Table 4.57: Teachers in group activities help learners to figure out answers by themselves

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	80	34.8	40.4	40.4
	Agree	91	39.6	46.0	86.4
	Undecided	8	3.5	4.0	90.4
	Disagree	12	5.2	6.1	96.5
	Totally disagree	7	3.0	3.5	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

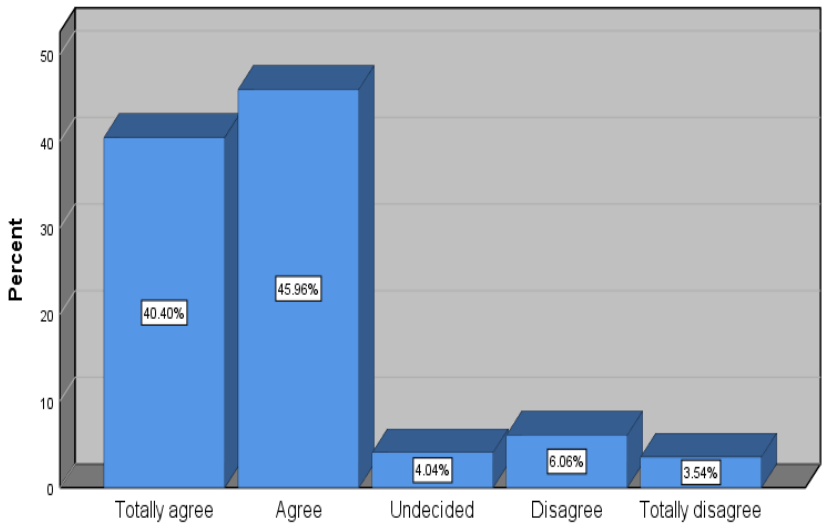

Figure 4.57: Teachers in in group activities help learners to figure out answers by themselves

The fifth and final statement of this section of the questionnaire concludes by inspecting the Algerian EFL learners' insights regarding the CL approach teachers' role

to provide the learners with one-to-one feedback and support. The findings were conclusive as they show that the majority of 89.4% of the learners perceive such a teaching aspect as highly requested (Totally agree: 33.8%, Agree: 55.6%). In fact, the nature of the collaborative classroom makes this role expedient and easily realized. The small groups entailed in the CL approach; on one hand, enable the teacher to have a direct interaction with each group in the classroom; on the other hand, they allow him to have a direct interaction with each member of these groups. This property of the collaborative classroom holds diverse advantages for the learners. For instance, this type of interaction between the teachers and the learners ensures the full participation of every learner in the collaborative classroom. It also guarantees the learners access to useful support regarding their learning provided directly from the part of the teacher in the form of one-to-one feedback. Moreover, this role enables the teachers to perform a query of needs analysis on every individual in the collaborative classroom, which will allow them to meet the learners' individual needs in learning.

Table 4.58: Group activities provide teachers with the opportunity to offer learners one-to-one feedback and support

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Totally agree	67	29.1	33.8	33.8
	Agree	110	47.8	55.6	89.4
	Undecided	11	4.8	5.6	94.9
	Disagree	4	1.7	2.0	97.0
	Totally disagree	6	2.6	3.0	100.0
	Total	198	86.1	100.0	
Missing	System	32	13.9		
Total		230	100.0		

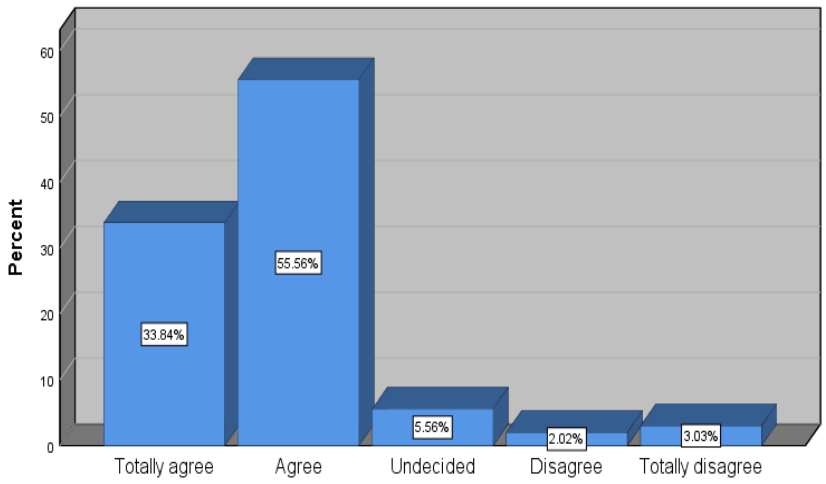

Figure 4.58: Group activities provide teachers with the opportunity to offer learners one-to-one feedback and support

The exploration of the Algerian EFL learners' perceptions of the teacher's role during the implementation of the CL approach provided us with insight into their expectations from their teachers when implementing this learning approach. The data revealed five roles to be upheld by the teachers during the process of the formal implementation of the CL approach in the Algerian EFL classroom.

The first suggested role to be assumed determines the nature of the relationship that is supposed to exist between the teacher and the learners as one of collaboration and partnership. This kind of relationship opens the space for more learning opportunities to take place as it allows the learners to share their learning responsibilities with their teachers and grants them a degree of control over their learning; thus, nurtures two major learning characteristics of the autonomous learner, responsibility, and control.

The second suggested role is orienting the learners to the right set of learning materials and resources. Through this role, the teachers will be enabled to smoothly switch their teaching approach from the traditional teacher-centered approach to the

modern learner-centered approach, which will mark the teachers' first step of their paradigm shift towards LA.

The third suggested role takes the form of raising the learners' awareness about their learning progress. As discussed above, this role will enable the teachers to achieve better learning results with their learners, for they will be providing them with a deeper level of teaching and guidance that cover diverse aspects of their learning and change their perceptions of its requirements. This will lead the learners to acquire a set of learning skills that will help them to assess and evaluate their learning progress and become more autonomous in the long run.

The fourth suggested role to be upheld deals with developing the learners' cognitive skills by guiding them and helping them to figure out answers and solutions by themselves. Targeting the learners' cognitive capacity falls in line with the psychological version of LA that demands developing the learners' cognitive skills through raising their awareness about their learning process in order to allow them to take more responsibility for their learning (Benson, 1997).

Finally, the fifth suggested role is providing the learners with one-to-one feedback and support. By doing so, the teachers will succeed to reach every individual in the collaborative classroom and provide them with feedback that meets their personal needs and objectives, which goes in line with Legenhausen's (2008) proposition that addresses the issue of diversity in learners and their learning needs and helps the learners reach a higher level of LA.

Conclusion

The fourth chapter of this research dealt with the analyses and interpretations of the data collected from our questionnaire.. The analysis of first section, for instance, investigated the learners' learning styles and habits. The findings demonstrated the

learners' awareness about and inclinations for the principles of LA. The second section explored the learners' actual experiences with the CL approach. The results; on one hand, showed inequality in terms of exposure to the same learning opportunities; on the other hand, the statistics exhibited the privileged learners' acknowledgment of the CL approach value in developing their learning skills. The third section proceeded with investigating the factors behind driving the learners away from the CL approach. According to the collected data, these challenges were presented in the form of the absence of support and guidance, the lack of the required collaborative learning skills and the learners' total dependency on their teacher. As for the called-for practices to surmount these challenges, they were primarily summarized in providing the learners with support and guidance and maximizing their interactions with their peers, in addition to providing them with training on the CL techniques. The fourth section dealt with exploring the learners' attitudes towards using the CL approach to enhance their autonomous skills. The findings signified the CL approach's capacity to promote the learners' independent learning, discipline, feedback, social interaction, experience, learning strategies, and motivation for learning. The fifth section explored the learners' perceptions of the nature of the teachers' position during the adaptation of the CL approach. The findings summarized the learners' expectations from the collaborative teachers in orientating the learners to the appropriate resources and learning materials, raising the learners' awareness about their learning, helping the learners to develop their cognitive learning skills and providing them with one-to-one feedback. In overall, the findings proved the CL approach's vitality for education in the Algerian EFL context and strongly support its adequacy to be used for developing and enhancing the Algerian EFL learners' autonomy.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Introduction

The current research investigates the Algerian EFL learners' collaborative competence as a means to enhance their learning autonomy level. This chapter builds on the main findings of the present research, with emphasis on answering the research queries raised at the beginning of conducting this research:

1. Does adopting Collaborative Learning as a teaching approach for the first-year students of English at Batna 2 University enhance their learning autonomy?
2. What are the attitudes of the first-year students of English at Batna 2 University towards the concept of learning autonomy?

The chapter starts by summarizing the interpreted results obtained from chapter four, highlighting the main themes embedded in the instrument implemented in this research for data collection. A section of recommendations is added to this chapter in order to outline the most favorable suggestions and guidance that aid the achievement of the research's aims. The limitations that bonded the realization of this research are also included in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a conclusion that recapitulates the fundamental notions discussed in the present work.

5.1. Major Findings

5.1.1. The EFL Learners' Learning Habits and Attitudes Towards Learn Autonomy

One of the major findings of the present study is to determine the Algerian EFL learners' learning habits, learning styles, and learning attitudes towards the concept of LA. In order to draw a clear picture of these notions, the first section of the administered instrument was designed to provide answers to these queries. The following points summarize the most important findings:

- The learners; on one hand, exhibit flexibility in learning when it comes to time management, they study when they want. On the other hand, they display a strong sense of responsibility and control over the aspect of time management, which is manifested in their compliance with deadlines.
- When it comes to the learning content, the learners show a positive attitude towards assuming control over their learning content. Moreover, the learners appear to indulge in personalized research whenever they encounter learning content that interests them.
- The teacher's input in the classroom is highly valuable from the part of the learners. However, it is worth mentioning that the teacher's guidance and feedback are the most valuable inputs and not the teacher's interference in every aspect of the learners' learning process by spoon-feeding them.
- The learners show a positive attitude towards independence and exhibit a strong sense of self-reliance.
- A consensus among the learner concerning their preference for the learning environment type was noticed. The learners seem to prefer informal learning over formal learning, for the former provides them with a stress-free and anxiety-free learning atmosphere.
- A preference for learning in groups over learning alone was observed in learners. This; on one hand, indicates that the learners have a positive disposition towards CL and that they consider the merits of group learning far outweigh the merits of learning alone. On the other hand, the learners seem to distinguish between working alone and independence, and that the two notions are not necessarily related, i.e. it is possible to develop the latter without using the former. For instance, it is possible to develop independence via CL.

The exploration of the Algerian EFL learners' learning habits, learning styles, and learning attitudes towards LA revealed that the learners have a high affinity for LA and a positive attitude towards developing it. The learners seem to have some degree of authority over time management; they prefer to have control over the content of learning; guidance and feedback seem to be the most valuable inputs provided by teachers; a tendency for independence and a positive disposition toward group learning is exhibited; a preference for informal learning over formal learning is shown. All of which present aspects of autonomous learners. Nevertheless, the learners are not in fact autonomous. The findings only suggest that the learners show signs of affinity and readiness to develop autonomy and positive attitudes towards LA. Attributes that should be exploited to develop and enhance the learners' actual level of autonomy.

5.1.2. CL as a Means to Enhance the EFL learners' Level of Learning Autonomy

Determining whether or not implementing CL as a teaching approach to enhance the Algerian EFL learners' level of learning autonomy represents another major finding of the present research. In order to answer such a complex inquiry, four out of the five sections included in the adopted questionnaire were dedicated to inspecting the matter. The major findings are summarized as follows:

- Less than 50% of the EFL learners were fortunate to be exposed to formal training vis a vis CL, or at least to be a part of CL courses, assignments, tasks, and activities, which suggests the absence of a unified curriculum that bestows the same learning opportunities upon learners, which is a sign of inequality in terms of learning opportunities.
- The learners who had prior experiences with the CL approach expressed a positive stance towards the CL training courses and the CL activities, which is evidence of the Algerian EFL learners' inclination towards the CL approach.

- The majority of the learners whom have had prior experience with the CL approach seem to either participate occasionally in this learning approach or participate in it when they are asked by the teacher. The learners seem to be content with this frequency, at the same time they do not appear in opposition to increasing the frequency of CL implementation to achieve better learning outcomes.
- CL is believed to have a positive impact on the learners' mastery of the English language, as it ameliorates the four skills of the English language, listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and it increases the learners' proficiency in the micro and macro components of the English language such as vocabulary, semantics, culture, etc.
- CL provides the learners with an informal non-threatening learning environment. A learning environment that alleviates stress and anxiety, boosts relaxation, and aligns with the learners' learning habits and learning styles.
- Developing responsibility and control over learning, and enhancing time management skills represent additional traits that the learners acquire when engaging in CL activities.
- The perception of the CL approach as a novel and attractive approach that is easily accessible, guarantees relaxation, boosts self-confidence, reinforces readiness for independent learning, offers more opportunities to interact in English, grants learning choices, and helps develop autonomous learning skills and strategies is what attracts the learners to adopt this learning approach.
- The absence of guidance and support during the CL assignments, the lack of the required skills that enable the learners to perform efficiently in these learning situations, and the learners' frequent dependence on the teacher

represent the major obstacles that drive the learners away from adopting the CL approach.

- Providing the learners with guidance and support, training them to efficiently work collaboratively at the beginning of and during the CL assignment and activities, and granting them more time to spend interacting with their peers and classmates represent the called-for practices that will aid the learners to surmount the hurdles that they might encounter when adopting the CL approach.
- In the exploration of the CL approach's impression on LA, it was revealed that the CL approach facilitates independent learning, enhances discipline, provides relevant feedback, offers interaction opportunities with peers and teachers, builds learning experiences, develops learning strategies, and improves the learners' readiness and willingness to enhance LA.
- In the collaborative classroom, the teacher is perceived as a learning partner who provides the learners with the learning materials, orients them to the learning resources, raises their awareness about their learning progress, guides them to figure out answers by themselves, and offers them with learning opportunities that bestow chances of one-to-one feedback and support.

Predominantly, the Algerian EFL learners positively perceive the CL approach and have positive attitudes towards its implementation in their courses. Moreover, they have acknowledged its capacity to develop their level of learning autonomy in terms of boosting the learners' responsibility and control over their learning, facilitating their independent learning, enhancing their discipline, developing their learning strategies, enhancing their readiness and willingness to develop LA, etc. Additionally, the learners praised certain aspects of the CL approach such as its accessibility, its capacity to

promote independent learning, being novel and attractive, and the interaction opportunities it offers. On the other hand, certain challenges that impede the CL approach implementation were recorded including the absence of guidance and support, the absence of the required skills to carry out the CL assignments and activities, and the learners' reliance on their teachers. Among the called-for practices to overcome these challenges, it was suggested to provide the learners with guidance and support, efficient CL training, and sufficient peer-to-peer learning opportunities. Finally, the teacher in the collaborative classrooms is perceived as a partner in the learning process who is expected to orient the learners towards the correspondent resources, provide them with the appropriate learning materials, raise their awareness about their learning, guide them to solve learning problems and achieve answers and solutions by themselves, and offering them with feedback and support at the individual level.

5.2. Recommendations

In light of the present research's major findings, we recommend the following:

- Raise the Algerian EFL learners' awareness about their learning styles and learning habits, and invest in them to enhance their LA level.
- Provide the Algerian EFL learners with sufficient learning opportunities in which they assume responsibility and control over their learning.
- Switch from the traditional teacher-centered learning method featured by teachers being the sole authority in the classroom to the modern learner-centered learning method featured by shared responsibility and control over learning.
- Invite syllabus designers to design a CL approach model that accords with the Algerian EFL learners' learning objectives and formally incorporate it into their curriculum.

- Equip the English language departments of the Algerian universities with the required facilities and venues that will allow the full and formal implementation of the CL approach.
- Raise the Algerian EFL learners' awareness about the merits of the CL approach regarding the development of their learning autonomy level.
- Ensure equity and justice among the Algerian EFL learners in terms of the availability of the same learning opportunities.
- Establish a suitable frequency with which the Algerian EFL learners are expected to be exposed to the CL approach.
- Emphasize on the CL approach's learning techniques and learning strategies when teaching the English language and its components.
- Provide the Algerian EFL learners with adequate training that will enable them to properly function when participating in the CL assignment and activities.
- Teachers are invited to hold the responsibility for the CL approach's implementation from the planning phase to the management phase, to the monitoring phase, and to the assessment phase.
- Teachers are invited to assume the roles of learning partners, learning resources and learning materials providers, guiders, supporters, etc.
- Foster the positive traits of the CL approach that encourages the learners to adopt it and promote them, at the same time suppress the negative traits of the CL approach and provide solutions that overcome the challenges that drive the learners away from adopting it.

5.3. Limitations

In order to reach the optimum realization of a given research result, it is advised to apply the research's recommendations in light of its constraints and limitations. The limitations of the present research can be introduced as follows:

- The data gathering instrument was quantitative in nature, which makes the gathered data prone to the participants' subjective answers where, for instance, they can resort to input fake data merely to please their teachers. Yet, the participants of the present research work are adults aware of the ethics of research work; thus, they are expected to be honest and responsible when filling in their answers. Additionally, the complexity of the designed questionnaire ensures the consistency of the participants' answers.
- All the focus on the present research work was given to the learners' attitudes towards both concepts LA and CL; however, no attention was given to the teachers' attitudes towards these two concepts even though they are valuable partners in the learning process.
- LA development is a life-long process, yet the present research is limited in terms of time, for it was conducted during only one academic semester, and in terms of population, for it targeted the first-year students of the English language department, where the EFL students of all levels are out to be included.

Conclusion

The present research work investigates the Algerian EFL learners' collaborative learning competencies as means to promote their learning autonomy level. It starts by presenting LA as the learners' awareness and actions towards their learning process that enables them to learn without requiring external help. Then, proceeds with introducing the CL approach as a paradigm shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered teaching approach where the learners work together to achieve common learning goals under their teachers' supervision. Although LA and CL were ostensibly contradicted, Geary (1998) pointed out the possibility of moving "*from dependence toward independence via interdependence*" (p. 1); and since these two notions have exhibited many similarities, especially in practice, the hypothesis of engaging first-year students of English at Batna 2 university in collaborative learning activities may enhance the students' learner autonomy has emerged. The analysis and interpretations of the data gathered from the administered instruments revealed the Algerian EFL learners' acknowledgment of the CL approach faculty to develop LA, as well as their positive stances towards using it as a means to promote their level of learning autonomy. Furthermore, the data managed to record the learners' learning styles and learning habits, unveiled their affinity to develop LA, demonstrated their readiness to adopt the CL approach, and filed the CL approach's power to develop language learning and learning autonomy. All of which; on one hand, confirm the present research work's hypothesis and invites syllabus designers to consider formally implementing the CL approach in the Algerian EFL learners' curriculum; on the other hand, call for further in-depth research that provides further insights about the most suitable methods through which the CL approach enhances LA.

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Appendix

Students' Questionnaire

This questionnaire is based on Blidi, S (2017) questionnaire, which was based itself on a number of prominent researches namely: Cotterall, S. (1995), Gardner and Miller (1999), and Reinders, H. (2000).

Section 1: Students' Learning Styles/Habits

Please read the statements carefully then write the number that corresponds to your opinion.

1: Totally agree 2: Agree 3: Undecided 4: Disagree 5: Totally disagree

	Statement: I	Opinion
1	Work whenever time is there and do not follow a strict routine	
2	Study what interests me and do not follow a strict timetable	
3	Always meet deadlines and submit work on time	
4	Prefer to be given a clear outline and a plan in advance	
5	Prefer to be given assignments rather than choose	
6	Prefer to think over an issue and make relevant search	
7	Prefer to develop own independence	
8	Prefer to be told what to do	
9	Usually wait for the teacher to give an overview	
10	Like to have breaks between activities	
11	Prefer to have clear guidance on how to handle any activity undertaken	

12	Prefer group tasks	
13	Prefer to work alone	
14	Prefer to listen to others' ideas rather than develop own ideas	
15	Enjoy working with peers and classmates	
16	Learn more through group tasks and activities	
17	In groups, ideas are easily generated	
18	Think that teamwork is a waste of time	
19	Like to discuss assignments with peers and classmates	

Section 2: Evaluation of Autonomous Learning Orientation Programmes (Collaborative Learning):

Part A

1. Is there any form of workshops or lessons that train students and guide them to properly work in groups or with peers in your classrooms?

Yes _____ No _____

2. If your answer is 'Yes', how do you rate the success of the lessons in providing students with the required skills? Tick the right box.

Highly efficient and sufficient	Partly efficient and sufficient	Undecided	Barely efficient and sufficient	Inefficient and insufficient

3. Are students asked by the teacher to carry out learning activities in groups or with peers?

Yes _____ No _____

4. If your answer is 'Yes', how often? Tick the right box.

Always in every lesson	Occasionally	Only when requested	Rarely	Never

5. How do you rate the frequency with which students are asked to work in groups or in peers? Tick the right box.

Largely enough	Just enough	Undecided	Barely enough	Not enough

Part B If most of your answers to Section 2/Part A are 'No', please skip this part and go straight to Section 3.

Please read the statements carefully then write the number that corresponds to your opinion.

1: Totally agree 2: Agree 3: Undecided 4: Disagree 5: Totally disagree 6: Not applicable

	Statements	Opinion
1	Working in groups helps students improve their English language skills	
2	Students like to work in groups for the break opportunities it offers from formal classes	
3	Students like working in groups because it enables them to improve their English	
4	Students like to work in groups because it helps them better use time	
5	Students like working in groups because it makes them develop responsibility and control	
6	During group work activities students prefer to be told what to do	
7	During group work tasks students prefer to be told how to work to improve their English	

Section 3/Part A: Reasons for not engaging in learning groups among first-year students of Batna 2 University.

1. Why do students refrain from engaging in group learning activities? Put the reasons that you find valid in the order of importance according to you.

	Reasons	Opinion
1	No free time	
2	Not part of assessments	
3	No preference for working on their own	
4	No one available to support and guide	
5	Not requested by the teacher	
6	Lacking the skills required to work in groups and use resources	
7	Other…_____	

2. What would encourage students to work in groups and develop autonomy (learning by themselves)? (Tick the reasons you find valid).

	Reasons	Opinion
1	Spend time with their class peers	
2	Required by the teacher	
3	Support and guidance by the teacher	
4	Teacher offering workshops and training tasks	
5	Incorporated in formal learning	
6	Having enough training at the beginning of each term	

Section 3/Part B: Reasons for engaging in learning groups among first-year students of Batna 2 University.

1. Please read the features carefully then write the number that corresponds to your opinion.

1: Totally agree 2: Agree 3: Undecided 4: Disagree 5: Totally disagree

	Learning through studying in groups is:	Opinion
1	Novel and attractive	
2	Relaxing	
3	Develops self-confidence	
4	Accessible	
5	Reinforces readiness to study independently	
6	Offers an opportunity to communicate in English	
7	Offers an opportunity to make choice	
8	Reduces reliance on controlled class practices	
9	Helps develop autonomous learning strategies and skills	

Section 4/Students' attitudes towards collaborative learning (learning in groups) and learner autonomy.

1. For statements 1–7, write the number that corresponds to your opinion.

1: Totally agree 2: Agree 3: Undecided 4: Disagree 5: Totally disagree 6: Not applicable

	Working in groups opportunities	Opinion
1	Facilitate learning independently	
2	Enhance discipline	
3	Provide useful feedback	
4	Offer opportunities to interact with peers and teachers	
5	Offer opportunities to exchange information with peers	
6	Help develop learning strategies	
7	Enhances students' readiness and willingness to develop autonomy	

2. Learning in groups enhances learners' readiness and willingness to develop learner autonomy through different means.

Write the number that corresponds to your opinion.

1: Totally agree 2: Agree 3: Undecided 4: Disagree 5: Totally disagree 6: Not applicable

	Statements	Opinion
1	Contact with peers	
2	Working on own pace	
3	Training and guidance	
4	Opportunity to discuss ideas with peers	

Section 5/Teachers' Role in Group Learning Activities

Please read the statements carefully then write the number that corresponds to your opinion.

1: Totally agree 2: Agree 3: Undecided 4: Disagree 5: Totally disagree 6: Not applicable

	Statements	Opinion
1	Teachers consider themselves in group activities as collaborators (partners)	
2	The teacher's role in group activities is orienting students to a set of materials and resources	
3	Teachers in group activities raise learners' awareness about their learning progress	
4	Teachers in group activities help learners to figure out answers by themselves	
5	Group activities provide teachers with the opportunity to offer learners one-to-one feedback and support	

الملخص

على مدى العقود القليلة الماضية ، شهد التعليم العالي في الجزائر العديد من الإصلاحات. جلب كل منها توقعات وتحديات جديدة للنظام التعليمي الجزائري. تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (TEFL) في السياق الجزائري ليس استثناءً. لقد تغيرت متطلبات التعلم لتتوافق مع التعليم الحديث بدءًا من التحول النموذجي من أساليب التدريس التي تركز على المعلم إلى طرق التدريس التي تركز على المتعلم ، ومع ذلك لا يزال المتعلمون يكافحون مع أساليب التعلم التقليدية. من أجل التغلب على تحديات التعلم هذه ، تبرز استقلالية المتعلم (LA) كهدف تعليمي مرغوب فيه سيمكن متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) الجزائريين من تحقيق الاستقلال في التعلم والتعامل مع متطلبات التعلم للتعليم الحديث. في اطار عملية إيجاد الطريقة المثلى التي من خلالها يتم تحقيق مستوى أعلى من استقلالية المتعلم ، ظهر التعلم التعاوني (CL). لهذا ، فإن البحث الحالي هو محاولة للتحقيق في كفاءة التعلم التعاوني لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية الجزائريين لتعزيز مستوى استقلالية التعلم لديهم. لتحقيق أهداف البحث ، تم اختيار طريقة وصفية ، حيث تم إجراء استبيان كمي يشتمل بشكل أساسي على مقياس ليكرت المكون من 5 نقاط وزع لطلاب السنة الأولى في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة مصطفى بن بلعيد باتنة 2 خلال العام الدراسي 2018 -2019. بشكل عام ، كشفت النتائج عن فعالية التعلم التعاوني (CL) في تطوير وتعزيز استقلالية التعلم (LA) في سياق تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجزائر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استقلالية المتعلم، التعلم التعاوني، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

Résumé

Au cours des dernières décennies, l'enseignement supérieur en Algérie a connu de nombreuses réformes. Chacun d'eux a apporté de nouvelles attentes et de nouveaux défis pour le système éducatif algérien. L'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue étrangère (TEFL) dans le contexte algérien ne fait pas exception. Les demandes et les exigences d'apprentissage ont changé pour se conformer à l'éducation moderne en commençant par le changement de paradigme des méthodes d'enseignement centrées sur l'enseignant aux méthodes d'enseignement centrées sur l'apprenant, mais les apprenants restent aux prises avec les méthodes d'apprentissage traditionnelles. Afin de surmonter ces défis d'apprentissage, l'autonomie de l'apprenant (LA) apparaît comme l'objectif d'apprentissage souhaité qui permettra aux apprenants EFL algériens d'acquérir une indépendance dans l'apprentissage et de faire face aux exigences d'apprentissage de l'éducation moderne. Dans le processus de recherche de la manière optimale d'atteindre un niveau supérieur d'AL, l'apprentissage collaboratif (CL) est apparu. Pour cela, la présente recherche est une tentative d'enquêter sur la compétence d'apprentissage collaboratif des apprenants EFL algériens pour améliorer leur niveau d'autonomie d'apprentissage. Pour atteindre les objectifs de la recherche, une méthode descriptive a été choisie, où un questionnaire quantitatif principalement composé de l'échelle de Likert en 5 points a été administré aux étudiants de première année du département d'anglais de l'Université Mostefa Benboulaid Batna 2 au cours de l'année universitaire 2018-2019. En général, les résultats ont révélé la faculté de l'approche CL à améliorer, développer et promouvoir l'AL dans le contexte EFL algérien.

Mots-clés : Autonomie de l'Apprenant ; Apprentissage Collaboratif ; Anglais comme Langue Etrangère.