

University of Strathclyde
Department of Education

**GROUP WORK IN ENGLISH AS A
FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL)
CLASSES IN SAUDI ARABIA**

By

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Statement

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Abstract

Communicative teaching methods have the potential to be beneficial in teaching and learning foreign languages. An aim of group work (GW), which is a common approach in language classes, is to help learners to communicate and interact with other learners in language classrooms. The early researchers have criticised the system of teaching methods applied in Saudi schools, which does not produce students who are highly proficient in English, and some of them suggested that GW could be a possible strategy to address the problems. This study investigates the Saudi learners' perceptions of group work with regard to three issues: benefits of GW, difficulties of GW, and the factors that affect learning in GW (teacher roles, group dynamics and group tasks). The purpose of this study is to explore the possible effects of GW in order to know more about learners' attitudes towards GW and inform language teachers on students' views on using GW.

A mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative methods) was used to collect the required data for the study. Questionnaires were collected from 188 students in five private language institutions, located in three cities in Saudi Arabia: Riyadh, Jeddah and Makkah. From this sample, 20 students were interviewed in more detail in follow-up telephone interviews. The questionnaire examined learners' general perceptions and the telephone interviews explored further the questionnaire findings.

The findings revealed that many language learners see the advantages of GW as mostly related to (1) cognitive aspects, i.e. benefits that help learners in the learning process and (2) emotional aspects, i.e. benefits that enhance the motivation for learners. Some learners identified difficulties mostly related to learners' behaviours in GW. Many learners saw the teacher's role as being mainly to listen to groups and monitor learning. They identified a positive role for teachers when learners are doing GW. Positive behaviours of learners were identified as more common in GW than negative behaviours. Most learners thought that learners' ability and their level of competency in English language should be taken into account when deciding on GW

composition. Finally, many learners considered group tasks as important in helping them to benefit fully from working together.

Abbreviations

TMOE	The Ministry of Education
GW	Group Work
ALM	Audio-Lingual Method
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ELT	English language teaching
L2	Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TBLT	Task-based Language Teaching.
BERA	British Education Research Association
SERA	Scottish Educational Research Association

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

This chapter will provide the background to the current study. The first part will give an overview of the education system in public and private schools in Saudi Arabia. The second part will offer an overview of English as a subject and of the current issues in teaching English to Saudi students. Some recent studies in the field of English Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia will then be reviewed. Finally, the purpose and significance of the study will be explained.

1.2. English language teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, English became more and more important as a language in the 1930s, with the discovery of oil. At that time, American companies controlled oil production. This economic reality impacted on the importance of English as a means of communication. Generally, the rapid progress of industry and commerce led to the recognition of English as an important language in Saudi Arabia. In addition, Saudi people needed English to communicate with non-Arabic speakers who came from all over the world on pilgrimage to visit Makkah.

At present, English is seen as essential by most young people, and speaking English is generally viewed as key to achieving academic, economic and social success. Saudi Arabia is one of the most rapidly developing countries and is keen to gain access to the international science and technology community which uses the English language as a medium of communication (Al-Motairi, 2005).

In addition, Al-Motairi (2005) states that English plays an important role in developing the Saudi economy, which has seen a rapid increase in the last two decades. The progress of the economy in Saudi Arabia has achieved international

interest. In the last decade, Saudi Arabia has become a big market for both South Asia and Europe. This means that currently Saudi Arabia has diplomatic relationships with English native speaking countries and non-native speaking countries (Al-Motairi, 2005), reemphasising the importance of English as a language of business and international relations.

The same author also stated that previous changes in Saudi Arabia, both economical and social, generated a need for connecting the Saudi society with the international community. This need of communication has drawn attention to the need for teaching English in Saudi Arabia. As a result, in 1927, the government of Saudi Arabia introduced English as a compulsory subject in intermediate and secondary schools (Al-Motairi, 2005).

Al Hajailan (2003) also claims that English is an important subject in Saudi's educational system since The Ministry of Education (TMOE) has supported the teaching of English through several initiatives. The Saudi Education Ministry is concerned that English in schools follows the international developments in terms of teaching methods used. Al Hajalain identifies several reasons for English to be taught in Saudi schools. Firstly, English is considered the first international language used in the East and in the West. Secondly, English is the language for most printed materials in the world and for international research. Thirdly, English is the language for international trade and economy. Finally, English is the official language of the United Nations and used by most countries. One other reason given is linked to the use of English as an international language by Muslim people who want to interact with other Muslims around the world.

Saudi people need to learn English to be competitive in trade, economics, education and other fields which use English as the main language (Zaid, 1993). This makes English an essential subject in intermediate and secondary Saudi schools. The English department in TMOE specified the goals of teaching English as a foreign language in public schools. According to Al Hajailan (2003), the main goal seems to be the development of students' intellectual, personal and professional abilities.

Saudi students need to acquire the basic skills of the English language to enable them to communicate with other people around the world (Al Hajailan, 2003).

English in Saudi Arabia is considered a foreign language, as it is not the first language or the official language of the country. However, Al-Motairi (2005) claims that English plays a very important role in most Saudi people's lives. The extensive growth in the economy, investment in oil and the increase in personal income have led to employment of a high number of foreign workers from different countries, such as Pakistan, India, the Philippines and Indonesia. This dependency on foreign workers created a need to use English as a means of communication. Many Saudi people use English at home to interact with domestic helpers who come from non-Arabic speaking countries. Also, English is used in several places i.e. shops, supermarkets, restaurants. English is also widely used in professional organisations to interact with people who do speak Arabic.

Recently, the use of the English language has increased due to the fact that many educational institutions, large companies, and the majority of hospitals, use English as a medium of communication. In addition, English is considered as a medium of instruction for many subjects i.e. science, medicine, pharmacy, computing and engineering. A good level of English is nowadays one of the conditions of being accepted as a student on some degrees, such as medicine and engineering (Al-Motairi, 2005).

For all the aforementioned reasons, TMOE (2005: 2) has listed general goals for teaching English in schools in Saudi Arabia. The general Goals are as follows:

- 1- "To explain and defend the tenets of Islam with a vision to promoting international understanding and tolerance;

Standard One: Students will use English to introduce Islam to others.

Standard Two: Students will use English to respond to criticism involving topics and issues central to the Islamic identity.

- 2- interact with an international community of English language users;

- Standard One: Students will realize the importance of English as a means of communication in international contexts.
- Standard Two: Students will develop an awareness of the importance of English as a means of advancement in various international fields.
- 3- To promote mutual cultural understanding;
- Standard One: Students will use English to communicate a respect for their culture to other international English language users.
- Standard Two: Students will use English to understand and appreciate the cultures of other international English language users.
- 4- To enhance cognitive and problem solving skills.
- Standard One: Students will use English to develop personal, intellectual, and professional skills.
- Standard Two: Students will use English to develop knowledge of cultural, economic, and social issues.”

In public schools, there are usually four lessons per week of English for intermediate and secondary level students. Also, there are two lessons of English for the sixth grade of elementary schools, since the students start learning English from this stage. The duration of the lessons is usually 45 minutes and each class is made up of approximately 25 to 35 students (AlFahadi, 2006).

In summary, many Saudi people consider that English is very important in Saudi schools for the reasons above mentioned. It seems that the need for learning English has determined the changes in the English language curriculum in Saudi Arabia. Thus, TMOE has set new policies for the teaching and learning of English to improve students' learning.

1.3. Private education in Saudi Arabia

TMOE (2006) defines private education as the kind of education provided by institutions supported through private funds or through individual students' financial contributions, but which run their teaching and learning activities under the regulations of the national authorities. A non-governmental establishment that carries

out any kind of private education prior to the higher education stage is called a private school.

The types of private schools in Saudi Arabia, supported by TMOE (2006), are as follows:

1. Day schools that include the three different stages (Primary, Intermediate and Secondary).
2. Evening schools.
3. Qur'an teaching schools.
4. Arabic language education schools for non-Arabic speakers.
5. English language schools and institutes.
6. Calligraphy institutes.

Recently, TMOE in Saudi Arabia attempted to improve its policy on guiding the teaching of English in private institutions (AlFahadi, 2006). According to TMOE (2006), in addition to the role of private schools in the area of education, they are expected to:

- “1. Improve the methods of teaching in compliance with the general educational framework.
2. Contribute to beneficial and effective educational research.
3. Provide training courses for teachers to improve their professional development.
4. Expand the role of the traditional school and contribute to the spreading the knowledge.
5. Preserve and abide by public conduct and rules of respectability of the Saudi society.” (TMOE, 2006: 1)

In summary, private schools have been encouraged in Saudi Arabia, but the provision is guided by the supervision of TMOE. Private schools have very similar aims and objectives to public schools. This means that private schools are well regulated and Saudi people often choose evening private schools to study English, while they also attend public schools during the day.

1.4. Statement of the problem of teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia

According to Sheikh (1993), there are two forms of English in Saudi Arabia: informal (i.e. the oral English mainly used for communication with foreign workers) and formal English (which is taught in schools). While the more formal form of English is required by the TMOE in schools, it is difficult to achieve the required aims of TMOE in full. On the one hand, English teachers are aware of their students' needs for conversational English for interaction and the uses of informal English by people outside school. On the other side, they are restricted by the traditional methods of teaching English, as TMOE has prescribed them. Sheikh (1993) says that there are some rules from TMOE which restrict the methods of teaching. She identified four main aspects in this sense:

- 1- Teachers are expected to work within the framework that achieves the specific aims set by TMOE.
- 2- They are required to cover the prescribed school syllabus in the time selected by the Ministry, which consists of four lessons per week for thirty five weeks (Most teachers think that this is too short.).
- 3- Teachers are expected to finish each unit in four lessons and have to prepare students for annual examinations.
- 4- TMOE is not really concerned with creative teaching aids and extra-curricular activities, despite the fact that they recommend their use.

Due to the limitations imposed by TMOE's requirements, English teachers feel they cannot make use of much informal language in class, i.e. the spoken English of day-to-day life, and also that they cannot adopt a student-centred approach (as opposed to a teacher-centred approach), as the curriculum is too packed. They are obliged to follow TMOE's requirements, which make it difficult for them to promote opportunities for students to use conversational English or work in small groups. As a result, students are unable to use the English taught in schools in their daily interactions, since the schools concentrate on teaching sentence structure and

grammar rather than conversational skills. Neither do they see the importance of using grammatically correct sentences when they speak outside the school. They see that informal English is more valuable to them, as they can use it in everyday life as well as in studying later on.

Currently, the gap between the formal: school English and the informal: communicative English is widening even more. Consequently, English taught in schools is considered by many students as a boring subject, in which they mainly have to memorize grammatical rules and vocabulary in order to pass the examination at the end of the year. Moreover, the aims of enabling students to achieve a good level of competence and to interact with English native speakers are not achieved in schools.

Further in this sense, Zaid (1993) claims that, in public schools, Saudi students study English with emphasis on teaching the content of language instead of use of English in communication situations. This is because reading and writing may be seen as more important than oral communication. Many researchers (e.g. AlMaiman, 2005; Al-Motairi, 2005; Zaid, 1993) claim that there is agreement between parents, teachers and pupils that the teaching and learning of English in schools is unsatisfactory, leading to a weak performance of students in English.

Zaid (1993) mentioned that there is a mismatch between some of the goals and objectives of teaching English in Saudi public schools and the methods used and promoted by the Ministry. The common method of teaching English in Saudi public schools is the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM), in which rigid drills of grammatical rules and repetition of words and phrases are emphasised. Zaid (1993) stated that many teachers use ALM when they teach English, as it serves the objectives set for teaching English in schools. He claims that despite the popularity of ALM in Saudi schools, it is an unsuccessful method in providing students with communicative competence, since it only allows students to repeat what they hear, but they may not produce new forms of English language. This may be one of the reasons why many

Saudi students feel they cannot communicate and express themselves in English, even though they have studied English for several years.

However, Zaid (1993) claims that Saudi teachers sometimes follow some other methods such as the direct method, cognitive code learning and grammar translation. Direct method focuses on teaching vocabulary and exchanges of questions and answers between the teacher and students to check understanding. Cognitive code learning promotes the selecting of conscious grammatical forms as essential in learning process. Richards and Rodgers (2001) explain the grammar translation method as “the way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar roles, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and text into and out of the target language” (2001:5). These teaching methods seem to focus more on the content rather than the usage of language, so they are less likely to help students to communicate fluently in English. Also, as mentioned above, the promotion of these methods through the curriculum proves again that Saudi teachers are not encouraged to teach communicative competences or encourage students to speak English in class.

Zaid (1993) claims that the training of English teachers in Saudi Arabia does not prepare them for real-life situations when they can use English confidently and for teaching English in a communicative way in classrooms. He states that teachers still lack the ability to speak English fluently even after graduation from teachers’ college. Further, Sheikh (1993) also said that the majority of teachers are not trained to improve existing teaching materials. In her study, only 7.14% of the teacher sample used additional materials in the teaching process because of their unavailability in schools.

In addition, Al-Motairi (2005) stated that, in public schools, teaching English has long been a controversial issue. The reason for this heated debate is that the proficiency in English of school-leavers has consistently been far below the required level. He explained that English language teachers, educators and parents have

always expressed their deep concern and dissatisfaction with Saudi students' abilities to use English in their social lives. Despite the fact that students study English for at least six years at school, for an average of four hours a week, most of them graduate from secondary school unable to express themselves in English.

Sheikh (1993) conducted a study on the use of Communicative language teaching in Saudi Arabia, and concluded from a total of Students surveyed that although TMOE has recommended offering two sessions of oral work per week, 45% of the students stated that oral skills were not considered important skills and 67.5% emphasised that the grammar is the most important., 46.87% of students stated that there was no opportunity for student-student interaction in their classes, and 50% of teachers said that they only used student-student interaction in classes 'sometimes'. However, many students still proved to be interested in learning English, which was the favourite subject for 24.06% of the students, and many other students stated that English is a very interesting subject, but the materials and the teaching methods made it a boring subject based on memorisation. These findings suggest that the Saudi educational system may need communicative syllabuses and communicative pedagogies.

This section has identified the main current difficulties in promoting effective English language teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia. According to Sheikh (1993), the solution is to find a way to maximize the time in class given to students to participate actively in communicative activities. Class time and the large class sizes were the main barriers that prevented teachers from using communicative methods.

1.5. Research on teaching and learning English for Saudi students

Al-haidari (2006) examined the extent to which the use of cooperative learning affects reading performance in the Islamic Saudi Academy in Washington. He used a quasi-experimental design, and his study included 57 students from grade four and five in the academy. He developed and administered pre- and post-measures for reading performance. Additionally, he administrated pre- and post-measures of students' attitudes towards cooperative learning and students' motivation towards

reading. ANOVA showed significant differences between the experimental and comparison groups on the post-measure of vocabulary and fluency, while there was no significant difference between the experimental and comparison groups on post measures of reading comprehension and students' motivation toward reading. In other words, the findings revealed that the use of cooperative learning had positive effect on vocabulary and fluency for students in experimental group because they get more practice and more feedback than students in comparison groups.

AlMaiman (2005) investigated the level of motivation to learn English as a foreign language in the year before and after students began learning English in a formal classroom setting in Saudi Arabia. The study included 301 male students from the seventh-grade in public schools. The method used in this study was pre- and post-questionnaire. The findings of MANOVA indicated that there were significant differences between the Saudi students' motivation levels before they learned English and after one academic year of English learning. The level of motivation decreased in all five components of the model (integrative motivation, parental encouragement, instrumental motivation, attitude towards the learning situation, and motivation) after students had been exposed to English language instruction. This may be because the teachers, their teaching methods, the type of textbooks or parents' attitudes did not motivate students to learn English.

In another study, AlEssa (2003) observed interns of thirty-five men in The Burayadah Secondary Commercial School in Saudi Arabia when using cooperative training to see how frequently they use the English language in all its forms and how this helped students practise English in the workplace. The methods used in this study were observation and interview for some participants. The findings revealed that although the participants' views on the purposes of the cooperative training were different, they all agreed that it was a useful preparation for their future career by building their self-esteem and helping them apply what they learned.

Other researchers (Al-Fahadi, 2006; Al-Nafisah, 2001; Al-Yousef, 2007; Zafer, 2002) explored issues related to teaching English in Saudi Arabia. These issues

related to the teaching methods, textbooks, teachers and the relationship between these factors and the students' achievement. Moreover, other researchers (for example AlMotairi, 2005; Sheikh, 1993) investigated the curriculum of EFL in Saudi Arabia and found that there is need for (a) an increase in the number of EFL sessions, (b) better training programmes for EFL teachers, (c) increased opportunities for teachers to participate in policy making decisions in teaching English language, and (d) revised and improved textbooks.

Finally, Zaid (1993) provided evidence in his study that textbooks, teaching methods and teachers' preparation are all factors that affect learning. He stated that more research into the teaching methods of English in Saudi Arabia is required in order to examine and evaluate the efficacy of these methods. He also criticised the type of teaching methods used in Saudi schools, as they do not produce students who are fluent in English. Moreover, he stated that many parents are unhappy with the English lessons their children receive. This might explain the reasons behind sending children to private schools, as English lessons start earlier, in primary school.

1.6. Rationale for the current study

In Saudi Arabia, current research in EFL is very limited. Most of the research focuses on materials and teacher preparation rather than methods of teaching. The review of evidence in the sections above clearly shows that teachers do not generally use communicative methods in public schools, which may affect students' learning of English since they can "receive" the new knowledge, but they cannot produce it.

In the private sector, as mentioned in most of EFL institution websites, communicative methods are used to help students practise English in the language classroom. Many of these institutions state that students' ability to use English in social life is one of their aims.

Based on these reasons, the proposed study will focus on provisions in private institutions. Most of these language institutions, as seen through their aims and objectives on their websites, claim that they use communicative methods in order to

increase chances for students to participate and speak in class. Also, they aim to have smaller class sizes, with no more than 15 students in the class. Lessons may last up to two hours in some institutions, and they use up-to-date materials. In contrast to what is happening in public schools, most private institutions claim to use student-centred methods rather than teacher-centred ones (Sheikh, 1993).

Sheikh (1993) suggests that group work (GW) could be one possible solution to maximize the class time and allow learners to participate in EFL classroom. She suggests that learners can apply their understanding of the language when learning in groups. She also proposes GW as a solution for the large EFL class. In addition, GW can prove appropriate for oral skills development, but it could also be used for reading, writing and grammar skills.

The purpose of the study presented in this thesis is to explore the explicit benefits and difficulties that students identify in relation to GW. Further, the researcher will aim to investigate the significant factors which impact either positively or negatively on learning English in groups.

It is thought that by identifying the benefits of GW as perceived by EFL learners, the study will provide EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia with ideas on how to use group work, as well as allowing them to think of ideas to reduce the negative effects of some of the barriers of GW, as seen by students. Finally, the findings could also be useful for students, to know how learning in groups may affect their learning of English.

1.7. Significance of the study

This study is significant for the following reasons:

- 1- This type of research has not been conducted widely in Saudi Arabia, as reflected in the difficulty to find recent studies that investigate the use of GW in Saudi EFL classrooms. Given the particular conditions of EFL in Saudi Arabia as prescribed by the Ministry of Education, the importance of studying these issues is apparent.

- 2- The current study will explore the explicit benefits of using GW in EFL classroom, but also the possible difficulties which may affect learning in GW.
- 3- One of the aims of the current study is to explore (from the students' point of view) the factors that affect GW.
- 4- This study aims to have pedagogical significance. Informed by the findings of this study, EFL learners and EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia may identify the positive effects of using groups where these exist, and explore ways to overcome the possible negative effects of using groups in EFL classes.

1.8. Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter has discussed the education system in Saudi Arabia in relation to teaching English as a Foreign Language, as well as the current issues faced by teachers and students in the EFL context. English teachers in Saudi schools are faced with key dilemmas when making decisions about their teaching, and TMOE is in the process of reconsidering the relevant EFL teaching policies. Many Saudi researchers have conducted studies relating to the teaching of the English language in Saudi Arabia. However, most of these studies focus on teaching materials and textbooks, and few investigate the teaching methods used in Saudi schools. The next chapter will discuss relevant theories and previous studies that have investigated current EFL teaching and learning methods, with a particular focus on the role of GW.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Overview

This chapter provides a theoretical and conceptual background to the study. The first part discusses the definitions of group work and cooperative learning. The second part explains theories that relate to communication and interaction in the language classroom. The third part debates the role of GW in language learning. Then the factors that affect the use of GW in the EFL class are examined, based on a review of recent studies in the field.

2.2. Defining group work and cooperative learning

According to Johnson and Johnson (2006), there are different views as to what a 'group' actually means. It seems that there are as many as seven distinct definitions of 'group', and in this part, the main definitions will be discussed. The first definition of a group is: 'a number of individuals who join together to achieve a goal' (2006: 5). There are goals that cannot be achieved well by individuals alone, and for this reason people come together in groups. The second one is of a group as 'a collection of individuals who are interdependent in some way' (2006: 5). This definition implies that group members have to, or do, consider themselves as one unit and that things that affect one member of the group will affect the whole group. Another possible definition relates to the interactive dimension in group, in which a group is 'a number of individuals who are interacting with one another' (2006: 6). This means that there is no group without interaction. In addition, in relation to the mutual influence of its members, a group can be defined as 'a collection of individuals who influence each other' (2006:7). The last definition is related to motivation; groups are 'a collection of individuals who are trying to satisfy some personal need through their joint association' (2006:7).

All of the definitions mentioned above share the idea that a group means a number of individuals. However, each definition implies different aims for these groups of individuals. In the present study, the researcher will consider the first definition from Johnson and Johnson (2006), of a group as ‘a number of individuals who join together to achieve a goal’. Students form a group in an EFL class to achieve the specific goal of learning English. This definition implies that students should cooperate with each other to reach their goal. Often, teachers distribute students into groups to improve key skills such as writing, speaking, reading and listening. Groups may help students to complete various tasks together. They can share knowledge and help each other to complete tasks. Cooperation between group members is essential to achieve a goal.

According to Johnson *et al.* (1998, p.1:5), ‘cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning’. Slavin (1983) has defined the cooperative learning process as an alternative collection of new systems of instruction to replace the more traditional approaches to learning. It is an approach that enables students to work and learn together. Woolfolk (2001) points out that the expressions “group learning” and “cooperative learning” are frequently used as if they have the same meaning. He defined group work as a number of students working together; however, this does not necessarily imply cooperation.

Furthermore, Richards and Rodgers (2001) emphasise that cooperative learning is an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners. Olsen and Kagan (1992) define cooperative learning as a ‘group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially-structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others’ (1992:8). Also, cooperative learning seeks to develop classrooms that foster cooperation rather than competition in learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

To sum up, GW in EFL refers to an approach of organizing students so that they are more likely to cooperate with each other to reach specific learning goals. It is possible to have GW without cooperation, but it is impossible to have cooperative learning without group and/or pair work. In the present study, the researcher will focus on GW that involves cooperation between group members. The focus of the study will be on GW and how it may help learners to acquire new language. Theories of second language acquisition will be reviewed in the following section.

2.3. Theories and approaches of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

2.3.1. Theories of communication and interaction

Most of us believe that talking is one of the important daily functions in human life. Since we are born to talk, communication is considered to be the main purpose of language. This means that communication is a natural situation in which we learn to use language. It means interaction with others in order to receive knowledge or produce knowledge. Language learners often start to interact in a second language as they did as children when they were learning their first language. Furthermore, according to Krashen (1982), language acquisition is the process of subconscious learning (occurring without conscious perception), in which language learners can acquire a language naturally.

In language teaching, the communicative method was established from a theory of language as communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Group and pair work are good examples of communicative methods, where language learners can interact and communicate easily with other learners. This is a basic function of the communicative method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Communication and interaction among language learners may facilitate language acquisition. In addition, the communicative approach aims to help language learners increase their input (the language data that is available to the language learners) and output (the production of language, such as speaking) in the language. Language learning can be improved when learners repeat the language elements they hear, such as the subject-verb agreement rule (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). By listening to other students' use of the rule, students may achieve accurate utterances in the target language.

Hall and Hewings (2001) suggested that learning a language is a process which develops through interaction between learners, teachers, texts and activities. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the communicative view of the language believed that language is a medium for the expression of meaning. Thus, interaction and communication are essential in learning another language because learners need to transfer and express meaning to learn how they use the language.

Further, the basic goal of communicative language teaching is the achievement of communicative competence. Krashen (1982) proposed the input approach to language acquisition that rejects the role of explicit instruction in teaching. He believes that learners can acquire the language naturally. He believed that learners can acquire the vocabulary and the grammar if they get input and they can improve their speaking ability if they have enough quantity of comprehensible input (full understanding of English language). Therefore, Krashen believes that grammar instruction is not as important in language teaching.

According to Krashen (1982), acquisition needs interaction and communication in the target language. This will help language learners concentrate on how they can understand and transmit an idea to other learners rather than concentrating on the form of words. Effective methods of language teaching are those that support the comprehensible input in a relaxed environment (Krashen, 1982). These methods allow students to produce the target language when they feel they are ready to do so. Therefore, the improvement in language results from the communicative and comprehensible input, not from correcting the production (Krashen, 1982). The essential hypothesis of Krashen's Second Language Acquisition theory is *Acquisition-Learning*. According to Krashen, there are two approaches to second language performance: the acquired approach and the learned approach. The acquired approach or 'acquisition' is similar to the process that children go through when they acquire their first language. He defined this approach as the subconscious process in the second language (L2). This approach needs natural interaction and communication in the target language in which the learners concentrate on the

communicative aspect, not on their utterances or grammatical correctness. The learned approach or 'learning' consists of a conscious process about the language, such as learning of grammar rules. Krashen claims that the acquisition approach is more effective than the learning approach.

However, the recent branches of Communicative language teaching have criticised Krashen's theory, since his natural approach points to the individual thinking and behaviour of learners and ignores the social learning environment (Nunan, 1988). Consequently, Nunan (1989) supports new methods that facilitate interaction in the classroom, such as tasks. Long and Crookes (1992) suggested task-based language teaching (TBLT). They believe that tasks offer learners samples of the target language and provide chances for learners to produce the language and negotiate meaning. In addition, Nunan (1989) supports tasks that learners can apply to real life and which stimulate internal learning processes.

Both communication and interaction have similar functions in learning the language. Students' communication leads to their interactions with each other and vice versa. Long (1996) has proposed the 'interactional hypothesis' that supports *negotiation* (i.e. discussion aimed at reaching an agreement) for meaning in interaction, which he claims is essential to develop the language, since it increases learners' comprehension of input and gives them the chance to introduce and elicit negative feedback from other recipients. The negative feedback draws the learner's attention to differentiate between correct and incorrect utterances and lets them focus on forms, thus enabling effective learning. Therefore, Swain (1995) stated that creating chances for language learners to use and produce the language may facilitate the language acquisition. Through using the language, language learners can observe the target language forms and reflect on their language usage. Also, they can know more about L2 knowledge and produce more accurate utterances when they observe the target language forms (Swain, 1995). The interaction hypothesis promotes the 'focus on form' approach (i.e. how students produce the utterances and linguistic forms in language), which is essential in communication as well as being useful in dealing with students' errors (Doughty & Williams, 1998).

In addition, Allwright (1984) sees interaction as the fundamental fact of classroom pedagogy, because everything that happens in the classroom happens through a process of live person-to-person interaction. There are two types of Interaction strategies: *Modified-Interaction Strategies* and *Social-Interaction Strategies*. Modified-Interaction Strategies relate to people who need help in using specific language to achieve communicative goals. These strategies are very important for interaction in Second Language or Foreign Language situation. Social-Interaction strategies help the participants to be good communicators in different social settings (Bejarano, 1997). These prepare language learners for communication outside the classroom.

Some of the second language acquisition theorists emphasise that language learning takes place through using language communicatively, more than practising the skills of language. Long (1983) said that through conversational interaction, people can acquire the language. Meanwhile, he also believes that the modified interaction is the device for language acquisition. Many researchers argue for the positive effect of meaningful interaction in learning. They emphasise that ‘learners have to talk in order to learn’ (Skehan, 1989, p. 48).

Despite the diversity of Communicative language teaching approaches, a consensus is established that language cannot be learned only through syntax approach such as grammar, nor can it be learned solely through language use, such as speaking. Consequently, syntax and usage of language should be learned together in order to achieve effective learning. Knowledge of syntax may increase the input knowledge, while usage of a language may improve the output. Input and output knowledge are essential aspects in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and these will be discussed next.

2.3.3. Theories underlying Cooperative Learning

According to Kagan (1996) 'language acquisition is determined by a complex interaction of a number of critical input, output, and context variables' and cooperative learning 'has a dramatic positive impact on almost all the variables critical to language acquisition' (1996:1). Ghaith & Yaghi (1998) investigated the effect of cooperative learning on the acquisition of EFL rules and mechanics. Results indicated that there was no overall significant interaction between participants' aptitude and their subsequent linguistic achievement. However, low achievers in the experimental classes made more relative gains than their high-achieving counterparts in the same classes.

Further, Ghaith (2003) has investigated the effects of the cooperative learning model in EFL teaching of Lebanese students on improving reading achievement and academic self-esteem and on decreasing students' feelings of school alienation. The results indicated no statistically significant differences between the control and experimental groups on the dependent variables of academic self-esteem and feelings of school alienation. However, the results revealed a statistically significant difference in favour of the experimental group on the variable of EFL 'reading achievement'. Since only fifty-six high school learners of EFL participated in the study, this is a relatively small sample to generalize the actual effect of cooperative learning on reading achievement.

Huang (2006) explored the effects of cooperative learning on students' English achievement and their perceptions toward classroom life in China. The results revealed that cooperative learning was significantly effective in enhancing students' achievement in English. Also, cooperative learning was significantly effective in enhancing students' perceptions of classroom life in terms of teacher social support, academic self-esteem and competitive learning. Further, it indicated that most of the students' perceptions of the effects of cooperative learning in terms of language development, affective development and social development were positive, although there was a small percentage of students who thought that cooperative learning affected negatively their language development.

Storch (2001) investigated in his study three pairs of adult English Second language (ESL) students on a writing task. The main data was transcripts of the pairs' discussions, as well as some observational notes of the researcher and the written text the pairs produced. The findings indicated that students working in pairs may not necessarily work in a collaborative manner, but when they do collaborate, this may have an effect on task performance.

To summarise, in this section theories of cooperative learning have laid the basic idea of cooperative learning approach. Several studies have confirmed the successful use of cooperative learning in the EFL classroom. The next section will discuss some aspects of cooperative learning that are important in learning another language.

2.4. Cooperative aspects in language learning

Sherif and Sherif (1956) suggested that people feel more positively about each other when they work together, help each other and interact constructively when performing tasks. According to Manning and Lucking (1993), 'Cooperative learning validates Sherif and Sherif's beliefs because method, intended outcomes, and reward structures associated with working cooperatively toward a common goal tend to improve intergroup relationships' (1993: 12). Sherif and Sherif's view promotes interaction with others during the learning process in order to encourage cooperative learning.

Cooperative learning has been introduced as a viable substitute method to traditional ability grouping, and competition among students. Learners recognise that cooperative learning helps increase the chances for interaction in social life and encourages people to achieve a common goal. Furthermore, research shows that cooperative learning can contribute to excellent relationships between groups in multicultural classrooms. It encourages learners' self-esteem and their academic achievement (Manning & Lucking, 1993).

Furthermore, it can be argued that cooperative language learning can support the functional (i.e. the use of language through communication) and structural (i.e. knowing the lexical items of language) models, as well as the interactional model of language, since cooperative language learning actions can be used to concentrate on practising the language and using the language form (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Olsen and Kagan (1992) claim that cooperative learning has three main advantages: (1) it provides a range of alternatives to the interaction structure among students; (2) it provides requirements for language development within the same organizational framework; and (3) it increases the chances for individuals to get instruction from others. McDonnell (1992) maintained that the cooperative classroom is more suitable and effective for second language learners, because it provides opportunities to communicate, collaborate, negotiate, problem-solve, and think critically.

Johnson *et al.* (1990) assert that ‘what we know about effective instruction indicates that cooperative learning should be used when we want students to learn more, like school better, like each other better, like themselves better, and learn more effective social skills’ (1992:5). Oxford (1997) suggested that many studies point out that compared to competitive or individualistic learning experiences, cooperative learning is more efficient in promoting intrinsic motivation and task achievement, creating advanced order thinking skills, enhancing attitudes toward the subject, improving peer work, heightening self-esteem, increasing time on tasks, and creating caring and unselfish relationships.

Moreover, cooperative learning has a positive effect on language acquisition (Kagan, 1996). Students can provide other learners with knowledge and help each other learn, since they have different abilities and levels of knowledge. Some students may be more knowledgeable than others. These students can help others when they work together. On one hand, the high ability students benefit from teaching other students and may become more confident. On the other hand, the low ability students may become more relaxed in learning and enthusiastic to learn from their group instead of exposing themselves to the whole class (Petresky, 2004). Cooperative learning

encourages less proficient students to participate with others. Since they need to improve their skills, it becomes beneficial for them to cooperate with other students.

To conclude, GW is an approach that encourages cooperative learning in which students work together to support each other's learning. Within these groups, students can discuss with their colleagues the content that they are learning, help each other understand, and motivate each other. In contrast, individualistic learning, in which students work by themselves to achieve learning goals, may not be as effective (Johnson & Johnson, 2006).

2.5. Group work and language learning

An important aim of group work is to encourage fluency in language. In the language class, group work is a strategy that gives opportunities to students to discuss issues or do joint activities with other students in a less threatening environment (Harmer, 1991). Students may achieve better when they work with peers. This is because the brain functions and develops most effectively when meeting challenges in a relaxed, safe environment where recognition, praise and reward outweigh criticism and when it is enabled to process comprehension inputs at many different levels of consciousness (Harmer, 1991).

Small group work (from two to five students) supplies the language classroom with comprehensible, appropriate and to some extent accurate input, as well as supporting the communication and the interaction in the classroom (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1998). It gives language learners enough time to speak and interact in the target language. It encourages learner autonomy and self-directed learning (Brown, 2001). In addition, learners may feel more relaxed and confident during their interaction with their groups. They may achieve better in small group discussions than in whole-class discussions (Brown, 2001).

Groups may allow students to be more independent because they are given the chance to teach others and also to learn from others. In contrast, in teacher-fronted situations, students may be more dependent because the teacher is doing most of the

talking. Group work also increases the opportunities for student practice. This means that in a class of forty students, pair work will allow twenty students to talk at once instead of one student talking at a time (Harmer, 1991). Further, group work maximises the benefits for students in the classroom. It can be used to improve oral activities for language learners, complete tasks that need discussion among learners, share reading and listening activities, and write cooperatively with other learners. It also has the great advantage of allowing different groups of students to do different tasks and activities depending on their ability (Harmer, 1991).

In the language classroom, group work helps to improve two aspects: students can be more responsible in their learning, and they can also communicate more in the target language. These two aspects are essential requirements to achieve successful interaction (Seliger, 1983). Bygate (1988) indicates that GW helps language learners to form utterances by using the target language, as well as allowing them to prepare a discussion collaboratively. This suggests that GW may be very effective in increasing language learners' capabilities of actively using the new Language. Long and Porter (1985) provided evidence of quantitative and qualitative characteristics of language learning in group activities. Their results indicate that small group work maximises class time, as well as providing a lot of different types of communicative acts for learners.

McDonough (2004) explored instructors' and learners' perceptions of the use of pair and small group activities in a Thai EFL context, and examined whether the learning opportunities theoretically attributed to pair and small group activities occurred in an intact classroom. He also investigated whether learners who actively participated during the pair and small group activities showed improved production of the target forms. The results indicated that learners who had more participation during the pair and small group activities demonstrated improved production of the target forms, even though they did not perceive the activities as useful for their learning.

In EFL classrooms, grouping is an effective method of teaching for several reasons. It maximises the time that students can speak the target language. In addition, it

minimises the time that students spend listening to other students and interacting with the teacher; it avoids the anxiety that hinders some language learners from speaking and interacting with the teacher in front of the whole class; and it gives the teacher more opportunities to discuss with students the structure of the task (Foster, 1998).

To sum up, several researchers (Brown, 2001; Foster, 1998; Ghaith & Yaghi, 1998; Harmer, 1991) claim that GW is efficient in language classrooms as it gives learners the opportunity to practise English with their group members. In a language class, teachers can use effective groups to enhance students' learning. The dynamics of GW can be used most effectively to promote learning if teachers look at the factors that may affect group members. These factors might have a positive or a negative effect on students' learning. For example, small groups may lead to efficient learning, whereas larger groups may cause barriers in learning for some learners. In the following section, group dynamics and the factors that might affect it will be discussed in more detail.

2.6. Group dynamics

Group dynamics relates to the scientific analysis of group behaviour. It concerns both group life and group characteristics. According to Dörnyei & Malderez (1997), there are two important facts about a group that lead to group dynamics formation. Firstly, students behave in a different way in a group than they would behave outside the group. This means that the group has 'a life of its own'. Secondly, it is possible to study the characteristics of groups in general, even if different groups share some common features.

Clement *et al.* (1994) claimed that group dynamics has been a core area of social psychology for several years. It concerns the scientific analysis of the dynamics of small group behaviour, which focuses on issues such as group formation and development, group structure and group processes. Dörnyei (1997) stated that there are three aspects of group dynamics which have educational applicability: 1) Some types of group (e.g. classes, seminars and discussion groups) occur in organised

learning. 2) Group processes and group characteristics influence the quality and the amount of group learning, as well as contributing significantly to achievement and failure in classroom learning. 3) The information about group dynamics - whether theoretical or practical - may help teachers to provide an effective learning environment. Teachers should be aware of the principle of group dynamics in order to create a cohesive group, a relaxed environment and improve classroom management (Dörnyei, 1997).

Storch (2002) investigated the nature of pair interaction in an adult ESL classroom. His study explored the dynamics of pair work and how the behaviour of students affects positively and negatively their productivity when working together. He examined the nature of interaction between 10 pairs of adult ESL students over a range of language tasks. The findings suggested that certain patterns of pair interaction are more conducive than others to language learning. The analysis of pair interaction has shown that not all students work collaboratively when assigned to work on language tasks in pairs. The analysis of the data identified four distinct patterns of pair interaction: collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice. The study found the collaborative pattern to be the predominant pattern of pair interaction. In addition, the study found that learners working in pairs can scaffold each other's performance. However, such scaffolding is more likely to occur when pairs interact in a certain pattern: either collaboratively or in an expert/novice pattern. The study found that there were more instances showing evidence of a transfer of knowledge in the data of the collaborative pair and the expert/novice pair than in the data of the dominant/dominant and dominant/passive dyads. In comparison, the data of the dominant/dominant pair had the greatest number of instances showing no transfer of knowledge, and the data of the dominant/passive pair had the greatest number of instances suggesting missed opportunities. This means that, cooperative work between learners leads to successful result in group learning.

In summary, group dynamics refers to the group members working together as well as to the group process and characteristics of the group members, which may impact

on the ways they interact with others and their EFL learning. There are several key aspects of group dynamics, such as group structure, group composition, interaction patterns, group formation, group size, group cohesiveness and the seating arrangement of groups. These aspects contribute significantly to the understanding of group dynamics and students' interaction. The next sections will explore some of these aspects in more detail.

2.6.1. Group composition

Group composition is a very important factor which affects GW in the EFL classroom. Richards (2006) stated that there are four main options in forming a group. The first one is to allow students a chance to choose their own group members to be more comfortable when working together. The second one is to form a group on the basis of some common features between students, such as a group of students encountering the same difficulties with their writing. The third one is to create groups randomly. This option seems fair for students, as well as being quick and easy to organise. The fourth one is for the teacher to form groups according to some shared characteristics in students, such as students' date of birth. For example, the teacher may classify students born between 1983 and 1985 in to one group, and students born between 1987 and 1989 in another group. Some teachers follow this method to promote interaction in the group and to break down barriers between students. However, Brookes and Grundy (1998) disagree with the first three methods of forming groups and agree with the fourth method, which is that the group be formed based on minor characteristics shared between students.

Proficiency or mixed-ability grouping is one of the more controversial issues in cooperative learning (Allan, 1991; Slavin, 1991). Some researchers (e.g. Oakes, 1992; Richards, 2006) believe that when groups include low and high achievers, the low achievers feel intimidated. On the other hand, Johnson *et al.* (1990) disagree and believe that the high achievers can help themselves by helping the low achievers. The high achievers can deepen their understanding through the explanations they give to other group members. Also, they can prepare themselves to be professional teachers or for any field that involves different forms of teaching others.

Similarly, the low achievers can benefit as well from mixed ability groupings (Richards, 2006). In mixed ability groups, low achievers receive help not only from their teachers, but also from their peers. They can be more motivated to try again if they fail, because the outcomes of their efforts affect not only themselves, but all the group members. In addition, motivation may increase in cooperative learning because groups promote the individual responsibility that encourages students to cooperate with other members to do their part of the task. However, the distinction between students may increase in mixed ability groups because the high achievers may be more likely to help the low achievers. This may affect group effectiveness and productivity. In order to solve this problem, Kagan and Kagan (1998) suggested that group tasks that include a varied level of intelligences are the most likely to increase the opportunities for mutual support.

On the other hand, homogenous ability grouping is effective, but may not be as beneficial for students' learning. Baines *et al.* (2003) claimed that several researchers have done studies which are focused on whether students should be in ability groupings or mixed ability groupings. The ability grouping is still a controversial concept among researchers in language learning.

To summarise, choosing the appropriate membership of groups can lead to efficient GW and learning. The teacher can choose the best option to form groups depending on the kind of task that students are asked to do. They can choose between mixed ability and same ability groups depending on the type of task. Some skills, such as writing, may need students with different abilities to work together, so that low achievers may get help in writing from high achievers. However, in some skills such as speaking, it may be better to group students of the same ability, as this a chance to all group members to participate in discussions. The high achievers may talk more than low achievers in mixed ability groups, which means that ability grouping may affect group cohesion and relationships.

2.6.2. Group cohesion

According to Forsyth (1990), group cohesion can be defined as ‘the strength of the relationship linking the members to one another and to the group itself’ (1990:10). Group cohesion can be related to the development of the group members’ relationships and the quality and quantity of group interactions (Shaw, 1981; Greene, 1989). Evans and Dion (1991) completed a meta-analysis of several studies that focussed on the relationship between group cohesion and group productivity. They deduced a positive relationship between cohesiveness and productivity in a group, indicating that cohesive groups are likely to be more productive than non-cohesive groups. This may be because members in a cohesive group are willing to participate more, to work on group development and to improve the goal-orientation of the group. Also, Clement *et al.* (1994) found that group cohesion helps to increase L2 learners’ motivation and interaction in the classroom.

Senior (1997) conducted a study to explore the perceptions of experienced English language teachers on the nature of “good” English language classes. The findings show that teachers judge the quality of their classes according to how well the students co-operated with each other to form single, unified, classroom groups. They clearly perceived that any class with a positive whole-group atmosphere was “good”, whereas any class which lacked a spirit of group cohesion was “unsatisfactory”, even if it was composed of high-achieving students.

Students in a cohesive group have a strong connection with each other as they talk more and share their ideas together (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). In contrast, students in a non-cohesive group have a weak connection because there is no interaction between members of the group. In addition, Senior (1997) recognises the effect of a cohesive group on teaching, as teachers feel more excited by a cohesive group because of the positive interconnection and effective participation of the group members.

To sum up, in a cohesive group, students can work better with other group members. This is due to the stronger relationship between students in cohesive groups than in

non-cohesive groups. Thus, the efficiency of group work may increase in a cohesive group. Finally, the size of groups tends to have a major effect on group cohesion and this aspect of group work will be explored next.

2.6.3. Group size

Social psychologists have looked at the effect of GW on output and general performance, but there is little work focussing on the ideal group size in the language classroom (Long, 1983). There have been research studies of group size for effective learning in educational situations in general (Kutnick, 1994). The group size should be appropriate to students' age, experience, ability and the purpose of the task (Blatchford *et al.*, 2003). However, Blatchford *et al.* (2003) state that there are limitations in the research that seeks to deduce the benefit of one group size over another.

Indeed, students have more chances to participate in small groups (Richards, 2006). Kutnick *et al.* (2002) stated that the interaction is more likely to involve all members in a small group than in a large group. Students in a large group may diffuse the responsibility between them, which hinders their participation in discussions. Long (1983) found that the amount of students' practice will increase as the group size decreases. Other researchers (Kagan, 1994; Kowal & Swain, 1994) suggested that pair-work is an ideal way to promote participation in GW. Some teachers prefer to start with pair work (only two students) until the students can manage the interaction and become comfortable enough to work with others (Kleiner-Brandwein, 1995).

On the other hand, Richards (2006) claimed that there are some advantages in using larger groups. In a complex task, a large group is said to be better because students have different opinions based on their diverse experiences. In addition, large groups could make it easier for teachers to distribute students in groups, and they could better supervise all groups as there would be fewer groups.

To sum up, the ideal size of a group depends on the aims of learning (Woolfolk, 2001). For example, if the purpose of the group is to revise a task or to practise

exercises or activities, 4 to 6 members seems the ideal size. However, if the purpose of the group is to encourage students to engage with other members in conversation, then 2 to 4 is a more suitable number for an effective group (Woolfolk, 2001:343). Another important factor that affects GW is the type of task given and this will be discussed next.

2.7. Tasks and group work in language learning

Ellis (2003) stated that task has been defined in different ways at different periods of time. Richards *et al.* (1986) defined a pedagogical task as ‘an activity or action which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language (i.e. as a response)’ (1986: 289). Richards *et al.* identified that tasks did not always involve the production of language. In addition, Lee (2000) suggests two possible definitions. Firstly, he defines a task as a classroom activity or exercise that has a learning objective and which can be achieved only during interaction among students, and also has a mechanism to let students interact in a structured and organised way. Also, a task is an activity that focuses on the exchange of meaning. Secondly, a task gives an aim to the language learners to produce the target language.

Ellis (2003) defined the pedagogical task as ‘a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed’ (2003:16). Further, Nunan (2004) defined the pedagogical task as:

a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. (2004:4)

Ellis (2003) claims that tasks are a vital aspect of communicative language teaching. They are used to construct a communicative environment in language teaching. According to him, some methodologists have integrated tasks into more traditional approaches in language teaching, while others have considered tasks as a basic part of teaching.

Furthermore, it is widely argued that communicative language tasks, which provide learners with an opportunity not only to produce the target language but also to assist in conversational amendment such as checking and clarifying problems with utterances, help language learners to improve their L2 (Foster, 1998). Jacobs & Navas (2000) have deduced that task-based language teaching encourages language acquisition by providing students with chances to increase their input, supplying contexts to allow learners to produce accurate output and creating a real-life environment in the classroom. Input and output (i.e. input is the basic source of knowledge from which language develops and output refers to the production of language) are considered as the basic contributions to second language acquisition (Foster, 1998).

Task-based language teaching is essentially reflecting the communicative aspect in learning the language. It refers to a type of language teaching which considers the task as the basic unit in constructing and implementing foreign language instructions. In the last twenty years, many researchers have addressed the use of tasks in language teaching focusing on tasks that include the interaction aspect (Breen, 1987; Prabhu, 1987; Nunan, 1989). This kind of task is ideal for GW to promote interaction among learners in order to achieve a specific learning goal.

Groups need a good reason to encourage positive social relationships and collaboration. Students need clarification and purpose for being together in one group because some of them may have a negative view of why they were grouped together. Therefore, Doveston and Keenaghan (2006: 8) identified that ‘the democratically agreed group task provides a common purpose and motivation for the students to be involved with each other’.

There is an argument that a social pedagogy of GW needs to consider some key factors, such as teacher, student and classroom context, but it will also need to consider the nature of the group task. Some research indicates that the relationship

between the task and the quality of group interaction has a significant impact on learning (Blatchford *et al.*, 2003).

Ellis (2003), who provides a review of several studies, identified that in the language classroom, GW resulted in more negotiation of meaning than teacher-fronted lessons only when the task was adequate. Although some of the studies reviewed have used a required information task (i.e. a task that asked for a specific activity to be worked on in GW), but they also found that there was notably more modified interaction in groups than in a teacher-fronted lesson. They conclude that the essential factor to determine the amount of the negotiation work in groups was the kind of task rather than participatory organisation.

The type of group task is considered an essential component of any analysis of effective GW (Baines *et al.*, 2003). Richards *et al.* (1986) proved that in order to create a communicative atmosphere in language teaching, teachers would have to use different kinds of tasks, since they provide a purpose for practising the language. There is a belief that learning may be ineffective if tasks are not appropriate to the specific type of grouping arrangement (Galton & Williamson, 1992). The best suited task for GW is an activity that includes the implementation of the skills to new areas after the students have acquired already the basic skills, but they need to improve conceptual understanding (Howe *et al.*, 2000).

In summary, choosing the appropriate task for GW is more likely to result in efficient learning for groups. Indeed, teachers play an important role in choosing the appropriate task for groups. They should recognise the abilities of group members and identify suitable work for each member. Also, they have to select tasks that encourage cooperation in group work.

2.8. The teacher's role in group work

Gillies (2004) and Richards (2006) state that the teacher plays a critical role in supporting and facilitating interaction among students and engaging them in

cooperative learning. However, the teacher's role during cooperative learning and small group activities has been less studied (Richards, 2006).

Harmer (1997) has identified some of the roles that the teacher who uses grouping can adopt. These are: controller, evaluator, organiser, prompter, tutor, investigator and participant. According to Edge (1993: 70), 'the teacher is not asked to give up control in order to use pair work and group work, the teacher is asked to exercise control in order to use pair work and group work'. The teacher's role includes observing how the students do the task, checking their understanding and helping them use the target language in an accurate way. However, Edge (1993) suggests that it might be better for the teacher to allow students some independent time at the beginning of group work and check on groups after they finish the task given, to see how things are going, to give suggestions, and to answer students' questions. However, the teacher should also give group members a chance to work by themselves cooperatively in order to solve problems (Richards, 2006).

This helps the teacher know more about the abilities of each group member and how the students think (Edge, 1993). Also, it is an opportunity for teachers to help those students who have difficulties and need support. The teacher needs to predict the possible needs of the students and organise them into groups that will meet their learning needs. In addition, the teacher needs to work on the classroom structure in order to facilitate learning in group work (Blatchford *et al.*, 2003).

Hassard (1990) talks about the changes in a teacher's role in a student-centred learning approach, like cooperative learning:

[It] requires a conscious shift of perspective on the part of the teacher, away from authoritarian and towards coordination of cooperative actions and the facilitation of instruction. Teachers who have incorporated this philosophy into their classrooms orchestrate the students' activities and are masters in securing and creating well-designed, team-oriented tasks.(1990: ix)

Johnson *et al.* (1994) claim that the teacher's role in cooperative learning will shift from 'sage on the stage' into 'the guide on the side'. Thanh (2008) explained further this view and identified that the teacher's role changes in a cooperative learning class to a technique assistant rather than a knowledge transmitter. The main roles of a teacher in a cooperative learning class are as follows:

- 1- Organise the curriculum cooperatively and construct lessons which meet the students' requirements to work in a cooperative way in the classroom (Johnson & Johnson, 2004).
- 2- Train students to be familiar with the cooperative skills necessary for successful interaction (Tang, 1996).
- 3- Observe the groups to supervise the cooperative process (Johnson & Johnson, 1990).
- 4- Listen to students when they explain their views to their peers and find out how well they understand the topic and the instructions given (Thomas, 2005).
- 5- Assess students' contributions to the group; provide feedback to groups and individual students; and make sure each member feels responsible for their group's outcomes (Johnson *et al.*, 1994).

These are some of the main roles that a teacher can do when implementing cooperative work in the classroom. In cooperative learning, the teacher should present the main points of the lesson and then allow students to work in their groups on tasks that help them learn. The teacher can intervene when students need clarification of instructions or to praise students for good work (Lotan, 2004).

A study conducted by Hertz-Lazarowitz and Shachar (1990) on teacher's verbal behaviour in GW proved that there are differences between the teacher input in a cooperative learning situation as opposed to whole class instruction. In cooperative learning, teachers may increase the positive instructional behaviours, such as encouraging students' work and helping students in discussion. Also, their language may change to simple linguistic forms that are understandable to their students. They

also tend to reduce the negative instructional behaviours such as disciplining students and rushing the students' work. The authors concluded that teachers who implement cooperative learning act more as facilitators than teachers who teach whole-class groups.

Similarly, Gillies (2004) looked at how teachers change the way they interact with their students when they implement cooperative learning in their classroom and are trained in specific communication skills. The findings revealed that when teachers are trained in specific communication skills which are designed to promote thinking and scaffold learning during cooperative learning, they engage in more mediated-learning interactions, ask more questions, and make fewer disciplinary comments than teachers who have been trained to establish cooperative learning only.

To conclude, to promote successful learning, the teacher in a language class should act more like a facilitator and develop activities in GW that encourage students to practise the language in a meaningful context. The teacher can create a positive and supportive learning environment within the class to make students feel safe and secure to practise the language well. Teachers are also responsible for promoting and developing in students a positive attitude to the learning environment, as well as being responsible for the essential role of motivating students to enhance their language use. However, there are no guarantees that the group will be successful if the teacher adopts this approach. Students also have an essential role to play in group work and this aspect will be discussed next.

2.9. Students' roles in group work

The students' role during GW can be divided into two main types: natural role and assigned role (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). The natural role relates to the students' characteristics or behaviour in groups, whereas the assigned role relates to the role which the teacher assigns to each student.

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) claim that after the teacher assigns students to groups, the different characteristics and behaviours of students start to emerge. For example,

in some groups there will be students who want to lead, and others who want to follow. Some students take more than one role and change it from time to time, while others take one role unconsciously and stick to it most of the time.

Student leaders emerge mostly in all groups and they tend to control and supervise GW. There are two types of student leaders: task specialists and socio-emotional specialists (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). The task specialist leader will often try to move the group to accomplish the work and motivate them to reach their goals. Usually, they must engage in unpleasant duties such as giving orders, criticising and changing the work process. All these duties may be necessary for groups to complete the task. This may be the reason why socio-emotional specialists appear in groups. They work as the peacekeepers for groups and try to maintain the group harmony.

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) suggest that assigning a role for each member of the group may be more effective to achieve successful GW. Cohen (1994) also claims that the group are efficient if every member has something specific to do, i.e. asking for and giving information, giving examples, synthesising and summarising and taking notes and recording information. She found that if members are satisfied with their role productivity may increase.

By specifying roles for each member, the natural process of group work may speed up. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) suggested that specifying roles for each member may improve the learning, as well as promote the development of different abilities. In addition, specifying a role may decrease the anxiety of group members as they know what they should do.

In summary, every student in a group should have a specific role, as this may encourage all group members to cooperate with each other, as well as decrease the potential tensions and difficulties between members. Allocating a role for each of the group members may motivate students to achieve the group goals. Motivation in learning is a very important factor to successful learning and the following section will discuss this in detail.

2.10. Motivation and group work

Motivation is one of the most important aspects in GW and in learning in general. Learners need to be motivated to work cooperatively with other members. Motivation refers to the effort of students to learn the language, the desire of students who want to learn and the effect of emotional reaction to learn the language (Garrett & Shortall, 2002).

According to Brophy (1988), motivation to learn is defined as students' eagerness to find academic methods and activities meaningful and worthwhile and to enable them to gain the benefits from these methods. Motivation to achieve a common goal may be affected by our relationship with people who work with us. Self-efficacy is one of the essential factors that affect students' motivation. Bandura (1997: 3) defined self-efficacy as 'the belief in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment'. This definition implies that there is a strong relationship between self-efficacy and motivation in learning. If the self-efficacy of the language students increases, students are likely to have a higher motivation to learn and vice versa.

Woolfolk (2007) points out that the socio cultural view of motivation focuses on involvement and the participation in communities. People often keep their identities and relations within the community. Therefore, they are able to interact and participate in most of the community's activities. Thus, students may be motivated to learn and participate with other students if they feel that they are part of the classroom community. Students can learn from other students in similar ways to their learning outside class.

In group work, members sometimes have equal responsibilities to accomplish the group goals. Thus, motivation tends to increase in cohesive class groups (Dörnyei, 2001). Furthermore, students may benefit from the strong and positive relationship between group members (Dörnyei, 2001). However, Swezey *et al.* (1994) suggested that most motivation theories try to clarify the processes of motivation through

individual work, although the action in GW might illustrate the features of motivation which are obvious in GW more than individual work. Ushioda (1996) concludes that the psychological conditions for fundamental motivation can be established within collaborative learning. These researchers conclude that there is a positive relationship between some characteristics of L2 motivation and cooperative goal structure. Deutsch (1962) points out that encouragement from one's group may result in successful achievement.

According to motivational theories, students will be motivated to help their group when the group members are cooperative (Slavin, 1983). The cohesiveness of the group mediates the learning. Furthermore, students may be motivated to help their fellow students because they have to care about each other to achieve successful learning as part of group cohesion (Prichard, 2006). In addition, cooperative learning creates a particular system of motivation to activate the learning. It is probably the most effective method that promotes students' motivation and enhances the learner achievement (Dörnyei, 1997).

Evans and Dion's review (1991) of studies looked at the relationship between group cohesion and group performance. They found a major positive relationship between these two aspects. Cohesive groups tend to be more productive than non-cohesive groups. That may be because of the fact that in a cohesive group, students want to be more active in group activities and tasks. Also, they want to improve the group outcomes. Furthermore, Clement *et al.* (1994) have concluded that group cohesion contributes significantly to motivating language learners.

Motivation influences achievement directly. It plays an important role in L2 learning (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Groups may be considered the fundamental source of motivation to learn the L2. Groups can help as a source of support and maintenance (Douglas, 1983). Although language learning is not easy and it takes a long time, groups may help students to expand their abilities to learn (Dörnyei & Malderez, 1997).

To conclude, it seems that there is a relationship between motivation and success in learning in groups, since the productivity of GW will increase if the group members are motivated to work together. Therefore, in order to achieve the goals of group work, the factors that affect GW should be given serious consideration. While there are several positive factors that may increase the motivation of group members to learn together successfully, other negative factors may decrease the motivation and hinder learning.

2.11. Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the most important aspects of GW from a theoretical and conceptual perspective. Several studies were reviewed critically, to provide evidence of the key issues in GW in language teaching and learning. Communication, interaction and cooperative learning are some of the important issues in GW. All of these issues may affect learning in groups. In addition, group composition, group cohesion, group size, and group task are some of the essential aspects that have been discussed in this section. The review has discussed how these aspects can impact positively and negatively on GW. Finally, the teacher's role, student's role and motivation in GW were examined. These three aspects may play an important role in achieving effective GW. The teacher may work as organiser, facilitator, or helper to group members. Students can reach their learning goals if they work cooperatively with other members in their groups. Also, the success of GW will be related to members' motivation in working with group.

2.12. The direction of the present study

The review of the current studies related to GW in the field of EFL indicates that:

- Most of the current research focussing on the examination of GW in EFL setting used experimental methods to test the efficacy of GW on learners' achievements, motivation to learn, cooperative learning, learners' behaviour, as well as the factors that affect GW: group dynamics, group size, group composition, and teacher's role in GW and students' role in GW.

- Few studies have been conducted to investigate the learners' perceptions, attitudes and impressions of GW in EFL classes, so this issue needs to be investigated more since it could enhance the learning process in GW.
- There is a need for exploratory studies which provide clear knowledge of learners' perceptions of GW in EFL classroom.

These conclusions indicate that this current study is in line with recent needs in the field of EFL research. Previous researchers (Sheikh, 1993; Zaid, 1993) recommended the need for communicative methods in Saudi Arabian EFL classes. This study focuses on exploring learners' perceptions of GW, seeking to present the perceived benefits of GW and explore the existing difficulties related to it. Also, it seeks to discover learners' perceptions of the effect of significant factors during the cooperative process in GW. Since no previous research discussed learners' perceptions of GW in Saudi EFL classes, it was thought that knowing more about learners' attitudes to GW may highlight the significant aspects affecting learners' during grouping. Martinez *et al.*, (2002) suggested that exploring language learners' perceptions may help to improve their attitude to GW. The research questions of this study (See Section 3.2.) have been set based on the need to investigate this current issue in the field of EFL teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia, and, on the review of related literature. The next chapter will discuss the methods of data collection, the design of methods, and why the specific methods were used for the research presented in this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter first identifies the research questions of the present study. It then gives an overview of the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms in educational research, in order to identify the most suitable approaches to collect and analyse data for the proposed research topic and reviews the advantages and limitations of using these methods, including the combination of two distinct research paradigms. The chapter also describes the research instruments used and discusses the ethical considerations within the research. In the second half, the chapter profiles the participants in the study, the nature of the institutions from which the participants were recruited and the processes of data collection and analysis.

3.2. Research questions

The research questions have been identified in the beginning of this chapter to illustrate the focus of the present study. This study aims to explore the learners' perceptions of the benefits of GW to success in learning. Also, this study aims to investigate learners' attitudes towards GW, by discovering the barriers that GW may pose in learning, from the learners' point of view. The last purpose of the current study is to explore how the related factors of GW affect the learning process (for more details of the study's purpose, see section 1.6.). Three questions have been set to achieve the purposes of the study:

1. (A) What are the explicit benefits that Saudi EFL learners identify in relation to group work?
(B) If there are any benefits, what are the perceived impacts of these benefits on students' learning?

2. (A) What are the difficulties of group work that Saudi EFL learners identify in the learning context?
(B) If there are any barriers, how are these perceived by Saudi EFL learners?
3. (A) What are the factors that students identify as significant in learning in groups?
(B) How are these factors perceived by Saudi EFL learners?

Two methods have been used to investigate each question. A questionnaire was used to explore the first part of each question (A), while interviews with students were conducted to explore the second part (B) of each question. The justification for choosing these methods will be given later on in the chapter.

3.3. The research paradigm

3.3.1. Quantitative and qualitative research

Educational research utilises qualitative or quantitative approaches, or a combination of both. Quantitative research is useful in measuring the amount, intensity and frequency of the target variables. On the other hand, qualitative research can explore a deeper understanding of events and phenomena from the participants' or the researchers' point of view. While qualitative research focuses more on descriptions and clarifications about events and individuals in more detail without using numerical data, quantitative research is concerned mainly with numerical data (Bamberger, 2000). Often, researchers combine the two paradigms in order to explore complex phenomena.

Denzin & Lincoln (2000) defined qualitative research as follows:

It is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. They turn the world into a series of representations. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to their lives. (2000:3)

Denzin & Lincoln (2000) argue that such interpretive research is subjective and participative in its essence. They also claim that qualitative research implies a set of empirical materials: case study, individual experience, interview, life story, introspective, interactional, observational, historical and visual text that explain in detail people's lives and the experiences they face.

On the other hand, Jupp (2006:250) defined quantitative research as 'research involving the collection of data in numerical form for quantitative analysis, the numerical data can be duration, scores, counts of incidents, rating or scales'. Jupp (2006) also believes that it is possible to collect quantitative data in either controlled or naturalistic environments. He also stated that quantitative research tends to be associated with the realist epistemology i.e. 'a field of philosophy concerned with the possibility, nature, sources and limits of human knowledge' (Jupp, 2006:92). This means that in quantitative research real things (e.g. opinions, behaviours) can be measured and have meaningful numerical values. However, Silverman (2000) claimed that qualitative researchers believe that a dependence solely on quantitative methods may cause ignorance of the social and cultural construction of the variables which quantitative research seeks to correlate.

Muijs (2004:2) states that quantitative research is useful when the aim of the research is to answer several kinds of questions: (1) To collect quantitative answers, e.g. How many students choose to study in Higher Education? (2) To check the accuracy of numerical change, e.g. Are the number of students in education department rising or falling? (3) To know the state of something or describing phenomena, e.g. What factors predict the recruitment of science teachers? (4) To test a hypothesis, e.g. Whether there is a relationship between a pupil's level of achievement and their self-esteem and social background. However, qualitative research is more beneficial when the researcher wants to draw explanations from the analysis of the data and describe the scene and time position of participants. Thus, qualitative research makes use of a variety of methods which are interactive and humanistic to present in-depth descriptions of a particular location and scene.

Many writers (e.g. Bamberger, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2004; Muijs, 2004; Silverman, 2000) have discussed the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research fails when the aim of the study is to explore the problem in depth, but it is useful for providing information on a large number of units, while qualitative research is helpful when we want to explore concepts in more depth, and for investigating the perspective of the participants involved in the study. Quantitative research “objectively” reports reality, while qualitative research is manipulated by the researcher’s political and personal values. Given these points, qualitative research is often seen as lacking the rigours of quantitative research. However, there is a limitation in quantitative research because researchers define the variable(s) to be studied, while in qualitative research unexpected variables are allowed to emerge. The flexibility in qualitative research encourages the researcher to be innovative, as it is mostly concerned with words rather than quantification (Bryman, 2004). Conversely, the quantitative approach gives structure to the research, but without flexibility. Further, some methods from quantitative research are more useful when looking at cause and effect, while qualitative methods are more appropriate when looking at the meaning of a particular concept. Finally, quantitative research aims to reach a larger number of participants. In contrast, qualitative research often includes a small group of participants.

In summary, qualitative methods provide descriptions of people’s characteristics and events they participate in, as well as determining their opinions and views, all without measurements; on the other hand, quantitative methods concentrate on measurements of concept or events (Thomas, 2003). Despite some clear distinctions between the two approaches, quantitative and qualitative research methods are often more efficient when they are used jointly in research. Furthermore, the reliability and the validity could be increased when combining the two approaches a study. The next section will discuss the concepts of ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ in relation to both approaches.

3.3.2. Reliability and validity in quantitative and qualitative research

Reliability and validity are key features of any good research. Reliability means ‘the extent to which a measuring instrument, for example a test to measure intelligence, gives consistent results’ (Jupp, 2006:262). Despite the importance of reliability in measurement, the researcher should measure the validity of the data as well (Jupp, 2006). Validity refers to ‘the extent to which an indicator or variable adequately measures the theoretical concept it purports to measure’ (Jupp, 2006:314). Validity is one of the basic requirements of measurement. In the current study, since the researcher used a mixed methods approach, she ensured the reliability and validity for both instruments: the questionnaire and the interview.

McMillan (2008) claimed that reliability increases with heterogeneous groups rather than with homogenous groups. To ensure reliability in the present study, the sample of the study was a heterogeneous group in which there featured differences in age, sex, education qualifications, and English levels. Cohen *et al.* (2007) suggested that ensuring that the participants realise the importance and the benefits of the questionnaire is necessary in order to increase its reliability. In this study, the researcher explained the importance and the benefit of the questionnaire on the students’ information sheet.

Cohen *et al.* (2007) stated that questionnaire reliability could be increased by requesting follow up interviews, either face to face or by telephone. Since a mixed methods approach was used in the present study, the researcher asked at the end of the questionnaire for volunteer students to write their personal details (See Appendix 1 for the questionnaire) to conduct follow up telephone interviews.

Joppe (2000:1) claims that the level of validity in quantitative research determines whether the research accurately measures the intended phenomena or how truthful the research results are. Muijs (2004: 65) supports Joppe (2000) when he suggests that the ‘validity asks the question: are we measuring what we want to measure?’ In educational research, most concepts cannot be measured directly. Thus, Muijs (2004) claims that it is impossible to connect directly into people’s heads and know what

they are thinking, feeling or experiencing. This means that attitudes, for example, are latent variables which cannot be directly measured. Therefore, there is a need to develop instruments which measure these concepts. For example, in questionnaires, questions can be designed to look at manifest variables (variables we can actually measure), whilst also measuring a latent variable at the same time.

In the first phase, the researcher ensured the content validity of the questionnaire by piloting the instrument (see Section 3.7. for more details on the pilot study). After piloting the questionnaire, some ambiguous expressions were changed to ensure the questions would be understood. Also, regarding the item validity ‘which is concerned with whether the test items are relevant to the measurement of the intended content area’ (Gay *et al.* 2009: 155), the researcher ensured that all questionnaire questions related to and covered the intended subject.

On the other hand, according to Gibbs (2007), qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for accuracy in findings by employing specific procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different research settings and different projects. In the current study, the researcher asked for some native speakers to check the clarity of the interview questions (for both the Arabic and English versions) and Arabic translation. Silverman (1993) suggested that interview reliability can be improved by piloting the interview questions. In this study, the researcher piloted the interview to ensure the validity and clarity of the interview questions for language learners. The participants in the pilot study for the interview approved all the interview questions as being clear and easy to understand.

In the analysis stage, to ensure interview validity, the researcher used audio recording equipment (Gay *et al.*, 2009) during the telephone interview to accurately recall all details that participants mentioned. The researcher used members to check the interview transcripts to ensure accuracy in the recording of the information (Gay *et al.*, 2009) and transfer the exact meaning through the English translation.

Cohen *et al.* (2007) argue that one way to ensure the validity of the interview is to associate interview data with another method that has been approved in terms of validity. Since the aim of the interview in the present study was to elaborate on the questionnaire findings, the researcher linked the interview data (see Appendix 6 for the interview schedule) to the questionnaire outcome because the data from the two instruments complemented each other. Cohen *et al.* (2007) suggested that if the data of both methods is in agreement, it can be said that the interview validity is associated with confirmed validity of the other used method.

To summarize, Patton (2002) claims that validity and reliability are two issues which any researcher should be concerned with when designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the study. The meanings of “reliability” and “validity” are different in quantitative and qualitative research. In each approach, the researcher followed different procedures to test validity and reliability, adapted for their studies. In integrated approaches (which combine qualitative and quantitative methods), researchers may use different procedures to test reliability and the validity within both paradigms. The next section will discuss the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3.3.3. Integrating quantitative and qualitative methods in educational research

Combining quantitative and qualitative data is an effective approach to strengthen the methods of data collection (Bryman, 2004). This combination can be used at different stages of the research and it is often referred to as ‘mixed methods research’. However, despite considerable progress in promoting the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, many researchers find it difficult to make full use of both sets of data collection methods (Bamberger, 2000).

Bryman (2004) states that there are many ways in which qualitative research can facilitate quantitative research. For example, qualitative research may often be a very effective basis of generating hypotheses for quantitative methods. Similarly, quantitative research can prepare the base of qualitative research in which the researchers can identify people to interview. This approach was used in the present

study, in which a quantitative method was used first, then participants for a telephone interview were identified.

Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) stated four purposes for mixed methods research. The first and second are to develop sequential studies, in which quantitative data builds on qualitative data or qualitative data builds on quantitative data. The third purpose is to develop a concurrent study in which both quantitative and qualitative data are collected at the same time and brought together in the data analysis. The fourth purpose refers to a transformative study, which is based on a concurrent study. Creswell (2003) explained this purpose as ‘the researcher uses a theoretical lens as an overarching perspective within a design that contains both quantitative and qualitative data’ (2003:16).

Creswell (2009) suggests a more detailed classification for the sequential purposes. He classifies the sequential purposes into three strategies: sequential explanatory strategy, sequential exploratory strategy, and sequential transformative strategy. The first is a very common strategy for mixed methods design. It is characterised by the collection of data using quantitative methods first, with the qualitative approach following up. The qualitative design builds on the initial result of the quantitative measures. The two forms of data are separate, but connected. The purpose of using this strategy is to explain and interpret quantitative results by adding more detailed qualitative data. Creswell (2009) asserted that this strategy is straightforward since the steps of implementation of the two designs are very clear and easy to describe and report. However, the main weakness is that data collection is time-consuming, since the quantitative and qualitative phases occur separately.

In the sequential exploratory strategy, qualitative data is generated first and then the quantitative phase comes after the analysis of the qualitative data and is built on the results. The purpose of this strategy is to support the qualitative data, as it may explore a new phenomenon. This strategy has the same advantage and disadvantage of the first (straightforwardness, so ease in interpretation and reporting; however, it is time consuming).

The third strategy is called the sequential transformative strategy, and includes two phases of data collection, one following the other (either quantitative or qualitative may come first). The second phase builds on the first. The mixing of the two designs is as in the first and the second strategy, but this strategy has a clear theoretical perspective to manage the study. The purpose of this strategy is to support the theoretical perspective. It also shares the same advantages and disadvantages with the previous strategies.

The present study followed the first strategy described here, the sequential explanatory strategy, using the quantitative approach first, then applying qualitative methods. The first (quantitative) phase addressed the explicit benefits and disadvantages of group work, as well as investigating the important factors that affect positively and negatively students' learning in groups. Information from this first stage was then explored further in the second (qualitative) phase.

Based on the research questions, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods was the most suitable approach for exploring the desired phenomena for the proposed study. The questionnaire used in the first stage covered all aspects of the research questions, and the interviews conducted in the second stage helped investigate some important aspects in more detail and ask participants for clarifications. These decisions will be detailed further in the following sections of this chapter.

To summarise, this section has discussed the combination of the two approaches, quantitative and qualitative, in educational research. Some of the purposes of a mixed method approach and the possible outcomes have been addressed. The next section will discuss the research instruments used in the present study and the rationale for using these.

3.4. The research instruments

3.4.1. The questionnaire

Dörnyei (2002) has defined questionnaires as

any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers.(2002:6)

This means that in questionnaires respondents read the questions, interpret what is expected and then write down the answers (Kumar, 2005).

Jupp (2006) further states that questionnaires are an excellent instrument for collecting large amounts of quantitative data. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) claim that questionnaires can be difficult to design and analyse. They demonstrated that questions in questionnaires, if not designed carefully, can be misleading or ambiguous. They may need to be tailored for use with particular groups, and they may take days or weeks of work to analyse them. However, Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) believe that a well planned and well executed questionnaire can produce rich data in a format ready for analysis and interpretation. They suggest that an effective questionnaire is one that enables the researcher to get useful and accurate information or data from the respondents. This is a complex process which involves the researcher presenting clear and unambiguous questions, so that the respondent may interpret them and articulate his or her response. The researcher should also record, code and analyse the answers fairly, in order to get an accurate view of the respondents' views through their answers.

Kumar (2005) identifies three broad types of questionnaire: the mail questionnaire, the group administrated questionnaire, and the questionnaire conducted in a public place. In the mail questionnaire, the researchers need to have access to the subjects' addresses to deliver the forms by mail. Although it can be an efficient way of collecting a large amount of data, mail questionnaires are sometimes considered impersonal and can suffer from low response rates (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). It is good idea to send a prepaid, self-addressed envelope with each questionnaire, as this may increase the response rate (Kumar, 2005).

The group administered questionnaire is a useful instrument for collecting data from a specific sample of respondents who can spontaneously be brought together for the same purpose, for example, students attending a lecture (Kumar, 2005). Response rates for group administered questionnaires can be higher than rates for mail questionnaires, as less people refuse to participate, since they feel personally involved with the questionnaire that the researcher hands them directly. Explaining the purpose and importance of the study to the respondents, and clarifying any points for respondents, including their right to refuse participation, can also motivate them to take part in the research (Kumar, 2005).

The third option refers to the administration of a questionnaire in a public place. The researcher goes through questionnaires in the targeted place with participants from the population that he/she is looking for, for example, in a health centre, shopping centre or school. The main disadvantage of using this method of gathering data through questionnaires is that it is time-consuming (Kumar, 2005).

The questions are the foundation of the questionnaire. The approach that the researchers follow in designing the questions should provide them with the required information. Different types of questions are appropriate for several purposes and different kinds of data can be used and analysed differently. The researcher should be familiar with different types of questions, as each one is appropriate to elicit a specific kind of data.

Most researchers agree on two types of questions used in a questionnaire: closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. In closed-ended questions, respondents are asked to choose one answer from a set of options provided. Closed-ended questions include dichotomous questions ('yes' or 'no' questions), multiple-choice questions, and ranking questions. Although this type of question helps the researcher obtain the required information, the data gathered lacks detail and depth. Gillham (2007) and Kumar (2003) both claim that lack of detail is a main disadvantage of closed-ended questions. Therefore, Jupp (2006) suggests in this sense that the

researcher may need to use further methods, to gain a full understanding of the issue being investigated. However, Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) believe that while questionnaires can be very detailed or cover many themes or issues, they can also be very simple and focus on one important area, if the research requires only specific information.

In open-ended questions, the respondents are asked to record their answers in more detail, depending on their attitudes, opinions or experiences of the object. With this kind of question, the main advantage is that the respondents can express themselves freely, giving their thoughts and ideas in more detail. However, since the answers to open-ended questions are not pre-determined, the analysis is made more difficult because every response must be recorded and analysed to reveal the meaning (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003).

This section has discussed the questionnaire in general, mainly in relation to the types of questionnaire and the design of its content. Since the questionnaire is considered a method of data collection which leads to specific information, it could be a very good tool in mixed methods research (Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003). The following section will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the questionnaire as a research instrument.

3.4.2. Advantages and disadvantages of the questionnaire

Most authors (Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003; Kumar, 2003; Gillham, 2007) agree that the questionnaire has both strengths and weaknesses as a research instrument. The questionnaire is a useful tool for measuring data and attitudes. It is also an inexpensive and economical method, since it saves on research time, especially when using a mail and group administered questionnaires, which are self administered and can be sent to be completed. Furthermore, it is a quick use tool, as it can be distributed to a large number of participants at the same time.

The analysis of close-ended questions is somewhat easy to set up and manage. Gillham (2007) believes that questionnaires offer greater anonymity to respondents

as there is no face-to-face communication between the researcher and the respondents, which may help where there are some sensitive questions asked, and may increase the accuracy of the answers to these questions. Furthermore, in the questionnaire the researchers can stay away from the situation of the interview bias. Gillham (2007) mentioned that there is much evidence that different interviewers get different answers. This means that differences in race, sex, social class, age and education level affect the answers of people in the interview.

However, Tashakkori & Teddle (2003) stated that the questionnaire as a method of data collection presents certain disadvantages. It might result in missing data. The response rate can be quite low, especially for mail questionnaires, or can return no responses for some items, such as open-ended questions. Gillham (2007) says that people talk more easily than they write. Also, Kumar (2005) suggests that the questionnaire has a self selecting bias, as respondents who return the questionnaire may have different attitudes and motivation from people who do not respond at all. He claims that questionnaires lack the opportunity for clarification. For example, if respondents do not understand certain questions, they cannot ask for clarification of meaning, so different respondents may have a different understanding of the questions, which may in turn affect the accuracy of the information provided. Finally, the response to a question may be manipulated by the response to other questions, i.e. the respondents can read all the questions before answering any, which may affect their answers on the whole.

Furthermore, Gillham (2007) sees as a main disadvantage of the questionnaire the fact that it seeks information only by asking specific questions. Thus, the researcher may get limited answers and only in relation to the questions asked. He also believes that the wording of the questions may affect the answers. Finally, data analysis takes a long time, especially for open-ended questions.

According to Bryman (2001:129), there are specific ways to increase the benefits of the questionnaire as a research tool and overcome its disadvantages. The first point is to use few open-ended questions, which may not be easy to answer. Secondly, the

design of the questionnaire should make it easy for respondents to follow the questions and not omit any questions. Tashakkori & Teddle (2003) claim that validity is quite high for well-structured and well-tested questionnaires. Finally, it is better to keep the questionnaire short to avoid respondent fatigue and respondents stopping mid-questionnaire (Bryman, 2001).

This section has discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the questionnaire, and identified some of the ways in which the researcher can increase its strengths and decrease its weaknesses. In the present study, the questionnaire was developed following the principles discussed above (see Section 3.4.1). Also, a telephone interview was used with some participants to follow up the data collected through the questionnaire, in order to get a deeper understanding of the questionnaire data.

3.4.3. The interview as a research method

According to Jupp (2006: 157), the interview is ‘a method of data collection, information or opinion gathering that specifically involves asking a series of questions’. He added that the interview represents the social and personal interaction which happens in meetings between people. Similarly, Thomas (2003) states that the interview is a method of data collection in which researchers ask participants questions, which they answer orally.

Jupp, (2006) and Robson (2002) claim that interviews are often used in mixed methods designs. However, Robson (2002) believes that researchers can use interviews as a primary method. This is due to the fact that the interview can elicit more in-depth knowledge from participants. There are three main types of interviews: face-to-face interviews with individuals; face-to-face group interchanges; and telephone interviews. The most common kind of interview is face-to-face or one-to-one (Jupp, 2006), with the researcher posing questions to one respondent at a time. Recently, there has been an increase in the use of telephone interviews (Thomas, 2003). Also, with the expansion of technology, interviews can now be in written form, if conducted by email, via the internet.

Wilkinson & Birmingham (2003) state that the researcher can use the interview method as a way of obtaining detailed information. Often, interviews are also used when the researcher sees that other research methods seem inappropriate, i.e. if the targeted sample was illiterate, interviewing would be the most appropriate method to collect data. Furthermore, Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) think that compared with other methods, the interview is a more intensive method in which the researcher can obtain a large amount of data, while other methods may generate more superficial information.

Several researchers (Jupp, 2006; Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003; Robson, 2002) claim that interviews can be differentiated by their levels of structure and the degree of clarity and openness. Open/ unstructured interviews give interviewees the chance to express themselves freely and clarify their views and also, it allows them to speak more informally and explain things in more detail. The questions are not predetermined, but the researcher will establish the interest areas, and every question will often lead to another question. However, it is difficult to manage the time and guide the discussion if it deviates from the main interest areas. Further, analysis of the unstructured interview could be very difficult and complex.

Semi-open interviews have definite main questions which are determined before the interview. They allow for more explanations, but within the limitations imposed by the questions. The last type of interview, i.e. the structured interview, which includes predetermined questions and answers, has respondents choose answers without giving an explanation. It seems that the structured interview is no more than a questionnaire which is completed face-to-face (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). In this kind of interview, the researcher can predict the expected time it will take to finish the interview. Also, the analysis could be much easier compared with other types of interview.

The definition, types and possible structure of interviews were discussed in this section. Interviewing is an excellent qualitative instrument of data collection which can provide rich data. It could also generate quantitative data, if it is more structured

(including many closed-ended questions, similar to a questionnaire). The researcher should be careful when choosing the appropriate type of interview, depending on the purposes of the research. The advantages and disadvantages of telephone interviewing are discussed next.

3.4.4. Advantages and disadvantages of interviewing by telephone

Gillham (2005) claims that the telephone interview tries to adopt some of the characteristics of the face to face interview, since they are similar in their responsiveness and the detailed information they can gather, but different in the time required and related costs. Jupp (2006) suggests that telephone interviews can be conducted to speed up the data collection process, since other kinds of interview take a longer time to set up and conduct.

Panneerselvam (2004) states that telephone interviewing is a useful technique of data collection for many reasons: it takes a shorter time to conduct compared with other interviewing methods; there is a high possibility of reaching the respondents, in contrast to a personal interview; it can be more moderate in cost. In the current study, trying to reach participants in another country was also a significant factor.

Gillham (2005) suggests other advantages of telephone interviewing. As the interviewer talks “live” to the interviewee, he/she can be spontaneous. The interviewer can clarify any misunderstandings; also, the interviewer can use prompts and probes. Because of the fact that people like to talk more than write, it seems that they are willing to respond to telephone interviews more often than with other kinds of distance interviewing, such as interviews by email, since telephone interviews do not require the interviewee to write, i.e. they may say more in ten minutes than they are able to write in one hour. Also because of the spread of mobile phones, interviewees can be reached almost anywhere in the world.

Further, Gillham (2000) states that the interviewer can interview by telephone several respondents in a day, which may take many days to complete if done face-to-face. However, one difficulty that interviewers have is relying entirely on their voice

and that of the participants, which will make the interviewer aware of the importance of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal cues which are present in a face to face conversation, such as eye contact or facial expressions, are absent in a phone interview.

Gillham (2005) also says that one of the difficulties with phone-based interviewing is that the respondents and the interviewer might engage better face-to-face. Because of the lack of visual aids on the phone, the interview may be emotionless. He adds that it is very hard to keep going, since the interviewer and the interviewee rely only on vocal communication; it is difficult to be focused in a long conversation. Therefore, Gillham (2000) suggests that the maximum time for a telephone interview should be twenty to thirty minutes. Also, on the phone, the interviewer cannot obtain much information about the respondents' characteristics or their environment (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996).

Finally, Gillham (2005) says that the interviewer should use telephone interviews only with people who give prior agreement, as well as ask them for permission to record the conversation. The interviewee should be consulted when is the best time to phone them, and it should be made clear to them how long the interview may last. It is better if the interviewer arranges an appointment time that may be convenient for the interviewee. Also, it may be helpful for the interviewer to send a copy of the questions in advance, instead of having to read out every question. However, if the material is sent a long time before the interview, the interview may lack spontaneity, so it is best to send the schedule by email or fax shortly before the interview takes place, to be sure that the interviewee does not prepare their answers in too much detail.

3.4.5. Justification for using questionnaires and interviews in the current study

Gillham (2005) suggests that combining interview with questionnaire data helps the researcher explore the answers to the questions in the questionnaire and then obtain more in-depth information in the interviews. According to Creswell (2009), all methods have limitations, so by combining two methods, one method may help

overcome the limitations imposed by the other. He adds that the inherited bias in one method could remove the bias of the other method and the qualitative results could support the statistical results of the quantitative methods used.

Newman *et al.* (2003) stated that researchers should be clear about the purpose of their study, which will guide them to choose the appropriate method for data collection. They claim that it is not sufficient for researchers to consider only the research questions to decide which method they should use, except if the research questions reflect the research purpose.

Creswell (2009:18) identifies some criteria for choosing a research design which is suitable for the study. He suggests that a quantitative approach is best if the problem of the study requires discovering the factors that may affect the 'outcome'. On the other hand, qualitative research is best if the research problem looks to understand specific phenomena, especially if there is little research that has discussed the issue. Furthermore, a qualitative approach may be useful if the researcher does not know what the important variables to investigate are or when the topic of the study is relatively new.

In the proposed study, the aims of the research (as detailed in Section 1.6.) are to explore the advantages and disadvantages of GW; discover the factors that may affect GW and understand how these factors affect the students' learning in GW. Therefore, a quantitative or qualitative approach cannot provide sufficient data for the purpose of the research, if adopting only one of them. Creswell (2009) suggests that a mixed methods approach is useful when either a quantitative or qualitative approach cannot stand by itself to investigate the research problem- or when the topic of the research is almost new, as it is the case of the present study. No similar research was conducted in Saudi Arabia.

In the present study, the researcher used a mixed methods approach, consisting mainly of a questionnaire with a large sample of students and a follow-up interview with a more limited number of participants. Through the questionnaire, the

researcher explored many advantages and disadvantages of GW via open-ended questions, but this data did not have much detail or explanations. Through the telephone interviews that followed the questionnaire, the researcher had the chance to ask some of the respondents to clarify the brief points they made in the questionnaire in relation to the perceived advantages and disadvantages of GW.

The researcher used a mixed method approach for several reasons. Firstly, to overcome some of the disadvantages of the questionnaire and the interview, and strengthen the research findings. It was thought that, since questionnaire results may lack in detail, a follow-up interview could provide more in-depth meaning. Creswell (2009) states that a mixed methods design is useful when the strengths of both methods give a better understanding of the problem. Further, questionnaires generate varied data from a large number of individuals, whereas interviews cannot include such a large sample. Secondly, a mixed methods design was implemented to obtain comprehensive data, which helps to investigate the research problem, by obtaining detailed information on students' experiences. The real strength of mixed methods is obtaining different levels of data (Morse, 2003). Thirdly, it was thought that the interview may help to interpret and explain the questionnaire findings by supplementing the qualitative data obtained in the questionnaire, and to that end, the researcher conducted the interview after analysing a small sample of the questionnaires. Therefore the interview provided more information on areas that the questionnaire could not cover, such as participants' experiences of GW, and explanations for preferring certain types of tasks in GW.

To sum up, the main purpose of combining the use of questionnaires and interviews in the proposed research was to strengthen each of the research instruments. Also, it was thought that the validity and the reliability of data would be enhanced. The research generated a larger sample set of data through the questionnaire and more in-depth data on individual experiences through interviews. The researcher followed specific criteria in designing the questionnaire and the interview, and the next part will discuss these steps in detail.

3.5. The research design

3.5.1. Designing the questionnaire

In the present study, the questionnaire items were developed based on the purpose of the research and research questions (as outlined in Section 3.2.). The researcher included a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions in the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). The purpose of the quantitative items was to identify students' perceptions on the benefits and difficulties related to GW. Also, quantitative questions were used to identify the factors related to GW that students thought affected their learning, e.g. group task, teacher role, group dynamics.

On the other hand, qualitative questions were used in the questionnaire to add information on participants' opinions and attitudes on some issues covering in the questionnaire. Participants were able to write as much as they wanted to when answering the qualitative questions. These questions were often 'why' questions and came after multiple choice questions, to expand on students' reason(s) for choosing their answers to the closed questions (see for example questions number 12, 14, 17). Even though the questionnaire included some exploratory, open-ended questions, it was thought that it would not generate in-depth data on students' experiences of GW. Thus, it was thought that using the interview method to follow-up on the questionnaire could generate more in-depth data.

The questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Arabic (see Appendix 7 for the Arabic version) by the researcher (and revised by five language Arabic students). The questionnaire was seven pages long (see Appendix 1) and was divided into four sections to include questions on the respondents' background, general questions on experiences of learning English, questions about group work in general, and specific questions about group work. Some demographic questions were asked at the beginning, to generate information to classify the respondents, such as age, education level and employment status. These were followed by questions about subjective experiences of group work, aimed at exploring participants' opinions and attitudes on GW. The content of the questions used is detailed next.

Background information questions

The first part of the questionnaire included background questions, on participants' gender, date of birth, education level (intermediate, secondary, undergraduate, postgraduate), current level of English (beginner, intermediate, advanced), current employment status.

Questions on English language learning

This part of the questionnaire collected general information on students' English language learning. It started with a range of reasons for studying English, then questions were asked on the length of time of studying English in general, and in the language institution. Finally, questions were asked on the frequency and the places where the participant practices the use of English.

Questions on the perceived benefits and difficulties of GW

In the third part, an open-ended question was asked for collecting students' views on the benefits and difficulties of GW. Also, students were asked to rate a list of benefits and difficulties of GW on a ranking scale i.e. from 1 'Not true at all' to 5 'Very true'.

Questions on the attitudes on group dynamics

This part includes questions related to group dynamics: preferences for a specific group size and group composition, the relationships between students in GW, perceived role of individuals in group, learners' common positive and negative behaviours in GW, and the role of assessment in GW.

Questions on group tasks

Five questions were asked to collect information on students' perceptions of group tasks. These questions elicited information on: the preferred place and mode of completing a group task, perceived importance of group task and the perceived benefits of group task.

Questions on perceived role of the teacher in GW

Four different roles of the teacher were listed under the teacher's role in GW: helping groups, listening to groups and monitoring learning, participate as equal with the other group members and teacher does not interfere at all in GW. Participants were asked to choose one or more roles that they saw the teacher as playing during GW.

At the end of the questionnaire, the researcher asked for volunteers to participate in a telephone interview to follow-up the questionnaire. Interested participants were invited to write down their names and phone numbers. The questionnaire and the telephone interview were meant to complement each other. The questionnaire was mostly concerned with students' general views on GW, while the interview was focused on students' direct experiences and in-depth thoughts on GW.

The design of the questionnaire has been discussed in this section, including the type of questions and the question sequence. The decisions made in designing the questionnaire were also justified. In the following section the design of the telephone interview will be discussed.

3.5.2. Designing the interviews

The telephone interview was designed to elicit more in-depth information on students' views and experiences of GW in EFL classes, to complement the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview had thirteen questions which covered the most important aspects of the research problem (see Appendix 6 for the Interview Schedule).

The content of the interviews was informed by the results of a small scale analysis of a subsample of 20 questionnaires. The researcher recorded the answers for the 20 questionnaires, and grouped the answers to each question on a separate sheet. Then, the researcher read through the answers more than one time, to find out which areas she wanted to focus on in the interview. As mentioned before, there were many reasons for combining the questionnaire data with the interview data. For the purpose of the study, the researcher found that some of the questionnaire themes needed more

explanation because the closed-ended questions did not elicit enough data to explain the needed phenomena. It was thought that it would be interesting to focus on the themes that needed more detail in order to answer the research questions and to explain the targeted phenomena. Further, as the questionnaire included some open questions e.g. the questions on benefits and difficulties of GW, the answers in most of the 20 selected questionnaires were brief under these questions, and some of the participants did not answer this question at all. As a result, the researcher thought it would be useful to ask participants in the phone interviews to give their opinions to this open question orally.

This analysis helped the researcher identify the areas on which to focus in the interviews. The interview schedule was designed based on this analysis of some of the questionnaires, with the aim to answer the second part of the research questions. The first question ‘Tell me about your experience of working in a group in English classes’ was asked to elicit general experiences related to GW. This question was used as an opener, to give the interviewee the chance to talk freely on any related issue to GW. The second question asked information on the perceived role of GW in learning English. This question was important to discover the learners’ perceptions on GW in learning English (positive or negative). The third question asked learners to compare learning in group with individual learning. The purpose of this question was to collect some of GW characteristics which are not available to learners when learning individually. It also hoped to identify further interesting information on GW by prompting for a comparison.

An additional question was asked to clarify the benefits stated by learners in the questionnaire, as well as to allow them to add more information. Then a question was asked to discover which factors lead to good GW in learners’ view. Similarly, another question was asked to clarify the perceived difficulties and learners’ experiences of these. The researcher then encouraged the learners to talk about the kind of task that learners like to do in group, and a justification for the answer given was required. This question elicited new information, as it was not covered in the questionnaire.

Other questions were asked to explore the perceived role of the relationships established between group members and the role of the positive group relationships on learning. Also, learners were asked to discuss the teacher's role in GW. The final questions asked for information on learning English outside the classroom, including practices of learning English through the media (internet, television, and newspaper). The purpose of these questions was to know more about the participants' motivation to learn English and their out-of-class practices, since this may affect how they approach the lesson and GW in class.

To sum up, the design of the research instruments is an essential part in any research. The appropriate design helps researchers achieve the aims of the study. In this section, the decisions made in the design of the questionnaire and the telephone interview was discussed. As part of the research design, considerations of the ethical issues involved are very important and should guide the whole research design, including the development of the research instruments. The ethical issues relevant to this study will be discussed next.

3.6. Ethical issues in the research

It is very important to consider the ethical issues when conducting research. The research study presented in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the Ethical Guidelines of the British Education Research Association (BERA) and Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA). These specify clear ethical rules that all educational researchers should follow in research.

The issue of informed consent is key to ensure that participants have understood the purposes of the research and agreed to take part in the research without any pressure. In the current study, by using a letter and an informed consent form (see Appendix 5), the researcher introduced the participants to the project and explained the implications of their involvement. The participants received information on: the purposes of the research, the importance of their participation, the anticipated time required for participation, anonymity and confidentiality, the right to withdraw at any

time, and how the data would be used (Kumar, 2005). As Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (1996) have stated, the idea of informed consent is taken from the cultural values of respect for people's freedom of choice and legal respect. People should feel free to decide whether they want to participate in research or not.

The short summary of the project gave participants information on the research topic (see Appendix 5), what the research was about and who would be involved in the project. The purpose of this summary was to ensure that the participants understood what the research was about and what was required from them. The summary was meant to help the respondents to decide whether to participate in the research or not. For those participants who agreed to take part in the research, the summary was also useful to help them understand the questions by providing contextual information. Explaining the purposes of the research was an essential part of the informed consent procedure. The research is likely to generate more relevant data if the participants clearly understand the purpose of the study.

The consent form also explained the importance of students' participation; it was hoped that mentioning this may encourage students to take part in the study. The consent form identified the approximate time that the questionnaire was going to take, based on the time that students in the pilot study took (the pilot is described later in this chapter). The researcher also reassured the participants that the data would be treated with full confidentiality. This meant that the researcher would not identify respondents (ensuring their anonymity), share data with anyone else and would keep the data safe until the process of analysis is finished, and then destroy the raw data, following the ethical guidelines. The name of the participants was not requested in the questionnaire, which meant that no individual names could be related to any particular data. For the participants who provided their personal details in the questionnaire for the purposes of the telephone interview, their personal details were only used to contact them to arrange the interviewing. Further, the actual names of the institutions will not be mentioned in any publication resulting from the current study; the researcher has devised a coding scheme for this purpose, referring to each institution by a different letter (A, B and so on). Finally, the researcher

explained that the data would be used for a Masters dissertation and for future academic publications, but with anonymity of the participants and institutions.

The ethical rules discussed above were respected during the research to ensure the respondents' rights to confidentiality, anonymity and the right to withdraw. The next section will discuss the importance of the pilot study in the research and how the data was piloted in the present study.

3.7. The pilot study for the questionnaire and interview

A pilot study was conducted in order to establish the appropriate design, procedures and materials for the main study. Van Teijlingen & Hundley (2001) state that one of the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it might give an early notification about where the main research project might be weak, where research aims may not be applied, or whether chosen instruments are inappropriate to obtain the needed data or too complicated to apply. They claim also that pilot studies may help identify the possible problems in following the research procedure.

In the proposed study, the questionnaire was initially written in English. Then the questionnaire was submitted to the Ethics committee at the University of Strathclyde for approval. The researcher then translated the questionnaire into Arabic and asked five Saudi students, who were studying English in language institutions in Glasgow, to complete it as a pilot, as well as checking the translation from English to Arabic. Furthermore, the researcher asked another individual with an advanced level of competence in English to crosscheck the English and Arabic copies of the questionnaire to see if the meaning transferred.

The purpose of the pilot study was to amend ambiguous questions and to check if there were any confusing words or expressions that might affect the participants' understanding of the questions. The participants in the pilot had similar characteristics with the final sample. All five students were studying English language in EFL centres. They were a mix of male and female students and their ages were over 15. They were studying in EFL centres that use GW in the classroom.

The participants in the pilot study were asked to answer the questionnaire items and to write comments under any of the questions which they felt was ambiguous or needed clarification. Also, they were asked to write comments on the questionnaire in general, with reference to its design. Four students wrote comments on some of the questions, which were then used to slightly amend the questions. After the pilot study, there were some minor amendments to the questionnaire, i.e. the researcher changed some words that were difficult to understand, as participants in the pilot suggested more informal words. They also suggested that it would be better if the participant could choose more than one answer in some of the multiple choice questions, and their comments were taken into account by the researcher.

The researcher also asked the participants in the pilot to record the time taken to complete the questionnaire. The average time that all participants took to complete the questionnaire was approximately 25 to 30 minutes. However, as the participants in the pilot study were required to also provide feedback on the questions, it was assumed that they may have taken longer to read the questions and write their answers. Thus, the researcher assumed the approximate time to complete the questionnaire was less than 25 minutes.

The researcher also piloted the telephone interview with three students. The aim of piloting the telephone interview was to test the clarity of the interview questions and respondents' reactions to the questions. Three students from three different institutions were recruited for this purpose; these were students who completed the questionnaire as part of the main study. The researcher interviewed the students and, when the interview finished, she asked them to comment on the questions. All three respondents gave their assurance that questions were clear and that the interview was enjoyable and did not take a long time (interviews lasted between 15 and 22 minutes).

The piloting of the questionnaire and of the telephone interview has been discussed in this section. Piloting the instruments is a very important stage in any research. It helps the researcher to reduce the ambiguity in the research instruments. Also, the

researcher could anticipate through the pilot study what the results might look like in the final study and amend the plans for data analysis.

3.8. Recruitment and procedure

The language learners who participated in this study were recruited from five EFL institutions. The profile of these institutions and the recruitment sample for the questionnaire and the interview will be discussed. Also, the procedure of distributing the questionnaire and conducting the telephone interview will be explained here.

3.8.1. The profile of the language institutions

In Saudi Arabia, there are several institutions which teach English, including several private institutions. Existing studies suggest that the nature of the classroom interaction in public schools is more teacher-centred than student-centred because of reduced class sizes and a more communicative approach to teaching EFL (e.g. Sheikh, 1993; Zaid, 1993). This made me decide to focus on conducting the study in private institutions, where GW is more likely to occur. I thought it would be useful to find out how GW is perceived by learners in private schools and if there are factors that might affect learning in groups specific to Saudi Arabia.

There were four main reasons for choosing private institutions for the study. Firstly, most students choose to attend private institutions in order to learn English or improve their English and fund their own studies. It was thought that by having students who fund their own studies, a certain level of interest in studying English could be assumed. Thus, the researcher expected to find a more interested audience for the research in private language centres than public schools and colleges. Secondly, public schools and colleges usually have approximately 25 to 35 students in the class (AlFahadi, 2006). These large classes may make GW difficult to implement in public schools. Thirdly, in public schools, Saudi students study English with an emphasis on the content of the language, instead of using English for communication (Zaid, 1993; Sheikh, 1993). Finally, as mentioned on some of the private institution websites, students are placed in classes based on their levels of English rather than age, 'which is not the case in state schools' (The Ministry of

Education, 2006), and this could make it more appropriate to use GW in EFL classroom as learners can be motivated to work with other students at similar levels of competence. Also, communicative methods are more likely to be implemented in private institutions.

The specific criteria set for choosing the institutions in which to conduct the research were as follows:

7. The institution had to make use of GW in their English language teaching (ELT) classes.
8. The head of the institution had to agree for the school to take part in the study.
9. Institutions to be from different regions of Saudi Arabia, since the researcher wanted to collect data from different areas in order to ensure a geographical spread of the participants.

The researcher contacted ten language institutions, mainly identified through internet searches. Four of them were in the capital city of Riyadh, three institutions were in Jeddah and the other three were in Makah. These three cities are different in size, environment, culture, people and geography. The researcher believes it is possible that the culture and the development of the education system and local education policies in each city may reflect on people's behaviours and attitudes. For example, the capital city has more developed education centres than small cities. These centres are more likely to follow the recent developments in teaching EFL. Riyadh is the capital city of the country, one of the developed cities in Saudi Arabia. It is located in the middle part of the country. Jeddah was also thought to be one of the developed cities in Saudi Arabia since it is considered as one of the main cities for trade and business purposes, but possibly with a different culture from Riyadh, as it is located in the West part of Saudi Arabia, so there might be differences in cultures between cities and in how language institutions promote EFL. Finally, Makah is a small city so it is possible that it has different culture from Riyadh and Jeddah.

After the first contact was established on the phone, six of the ten institutions contacted agreed to participate in the research and four refused to take part. Three of them refused because their internal policy was against allowing external research to take place in the school. The fourth one did not give a reason. A profile of the participating schools is given next.

Institution A, based in Riyadh, is the biggest of the six institutions as it is part of an Academy which provides different courses. EFL is one of these courses, while English is used in all other courses that the Academy offers, such as computing, business and English. Also, the head of the academy said that English classes were offered to all students, and they are a requirement to start studying any other course in the Academy. The aim of this institution is to provide students with skills required in the job market. According to the website and course prospects, the school uses innovative methods of teaching i.e. learning in computer labs, communicative methods for English.etc.

Institution B was also based in Riyadh. Based on the objectives mentioned on its website, it aims to teach students English in the same way with learning the first language. The organisation also claims to give students more opportunities to practice English in class, through maximising the time for learners to practice encourage students' learning and make the classroom a pleasant environment to learn.

Institutions C and D were two different branches of the same company but in two different cities; the former in Jeddah and the latter in Makkah. Their characteristics were similar, as mentioned on their websites, both aiming to allow learners to practice vocabulary, grammar and speaking in situations similar to real life encounters. Also, both focus on communicative approaches which allow learners to interact with others as in a natural environment. The teachers were all native-speakers of English, and they were trained to encourage and motivate learners to achieve their goals.

Institution E was in Makkah. Based on what was mentioned on the institution website, this institution provides a range of courses such as computing, arts, sewing and English. These courses are offered to female-only groups and their EFL classes aim to help learners use English confidently in the outside environment. Finally, institution F, according to its website, aims to focus on communicative approaches through using pair and GW that helps learners practice English language in the classroom, and also make learning simple, fast and enjoyable for language learners. The school classifies learners by their level from 1 to 10, which aims to help learners have a clearer progress from Elementary and Intermediate levels to more advanced stages.

3.8.2. The procedure of distributing the questionnaire

The researcher contacted the institutions by phone to discuss an appropriate time for visiting. The head teachers of the six institutions which agreed to take part in the study asked the researcher to provide a summary of the study (see Appendix 2) to have a clearer understanding of the study and to inform their decision. It took an average of around two to three weeks in January 2008 to gain consent.

The researcher then visited the agreed institutions over the months of March and April. A consent form for the institution was signed by the head teachers (see Appendix 3). The questionnaires were distributed after the head teacher of the institution gave the permission to the researcher. Only the first institution allowed the researcher to distribute the questionnaire directly to the students and to meet the students and discuss the study before handing out the questionnaires. The others asked the researcher to leave copies of the questionnaire and offered to distribute them to the students at a convenient time.

After receiving the agreement from Institution A, the researcher contacted the head teachers of institution A (for both branches male and female) by telephone and then sent them a summary of the project. The researcher then visited the female section twice. In the first visit, the researcher met the head teacher of the institution and discussed with her the project. The second visit was to distribute the questionnaires.

During this visit, the researcher went around classes, introduced herself and presented briefly a short summary of the project. The researcher spoke about the importance of the students' participation, and she also assured them of their right to refuse to participate. The researcher then distributed for students the instructions sheet (see Appendix 4) and the consent letters which included a short explanation of the study and its purposes, a statement on the importance of the students' participation, and information on the confidentiality and anonymity of data (see Appendix 5). Students were asked to sign the consent form if they were happy to participate. The highest response was achieved from this institution, where, only one student refused to sign the consent and complete the questionnaire. The questionnaires were only distributed to students who signed the consent. The researcher distributed a total of 80 questionnaires and had a return of 73. In the female section, the researcher waited for students to complete the questionnaire and collected them, while in the male section the questionnaires were posted back to the researcher.

The other five institutions did not allow the researcher to distribute the questionnaires directly. This is because the duration of a class period was not considered enough to give a brief presentation and wait for students to complete the questionnaires. They suggested that the teachers would distribute the questionnaires to students at all levels. Thus, the researcher handed in 80 questionnaires for each of the institutions: B, F, C, and 40 questionnaires for each institutions E and D, to be distributed by teachers. This was based on the number of students in each institution. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed in all five institutions, of which 198 were returned, giving a return rate of almost 50%. The data collected from each institution is summarised in Table 1 below.

In institution B, the researcher contacted both male and female students, but only the male section agreed to participate on the condition that no participants would be required to volunteer for interviews. They asked the researcher to delete the last statement from the questionnaires which asked participants to provide their personal details if they were willing to take part in a phone interview. Given this restriction,

there are no participants from this institution represented in the phone interviews. At this institution, 80 questionnaires were sent and 29 of them were returned.

Institution C is located in Jeddah and institution D is located in Makkah. The researcher handed in 80 questionnaires for both the male and female sections in institution C and 57 questionnaires were returned. The number of questionnaires received from institution D was 18 out of 40. The head teacher of the institution apologized for the low return and explained that the students were busy with their exams during the time.

The researcher visited institution E three times. The first visit was to provide the head teacher of the institution with a summary of the study and discuss the project and its purposes. The researcher handed in the questionnaires in the second visit. There was a third visit to collect the completed questionnaires. Only 11 questionnaires were returned from this school.

Institution F was in Riyadh, and was a male-only school. The institution specialises in teaching English courses for all levels. A total of 80 questionnaires were sent and only 10 were returned. As mentioned before, this institution is using communicative methods and GW. However, this institution has been excluded from the study because the researcher was informed by some students that this institution does not apply the methods of teaching mentioned on its website. This means that there is a contradiction between the declared aims of this institution and the methods used. To check this, the researcher interviewed two students from different classes and they confirmed that GW was not used. Based on this, the data provided in the questionnaire and interview data collected in Institution F was excluded from the study. In total, 10 questionnaires were excluded, so the final total sample for the analysis was 188. Table 1 summarises the numbers of questionnaire and interview participants.

Table 1. *Summary of the volunteer participants for the questionnaire and interview*

Institution	Questionnaires distributed	Questionnaires returned	Volunteers for interviews	Interviews completed
A	80	73	32	7
B	80	29	0	0
C	80	57	26	6
D	40	18	11	5
E	40	11	9	2
F	80	10	excluded	excluded
Totals	400	198	78	20

3.8.3. Recruitment and procedure for the telephone interviews

In total, eighty seven students volunteered to be interviewed. The participants in the telephone interviews were selected on the basis of their answers to the questionnaires, as highlighted in the list of criteria below. The group selected included a mix of male and female students, spread across the four institutions. The criteria for selecting students to participate in the telephone interview were:

- Students to be from different institutions, i.e. a selection from the four institutions.
- Students to be willing to participate in the telephone interview.
- Students wrote some interesting or ambiguous answers in the questionnaire, and the researcher wanted to ask for clarification. The selection was randomly between those participants applied to this criterion, and they were elicited without biasing to some interesting or difficult answers.
- Students who could be contacted by phone.

The telephone interviews lasted between 15 and 25 minutes. The researcher started the interview by introducing herself and asking if the time was suitable to talk. The researcher then explained the purposes of the interview, asking for permission to record the interview, and re-emphasising the anonymity and confidentiality of the

respondents' data, and the right to withdraw from the interview at any time they wanted. Also, the researcher explained to the respondents that they could express themselves freely in their answers, examples and comments, without restriction, and could take as much time as they needed.

3.9. The sample

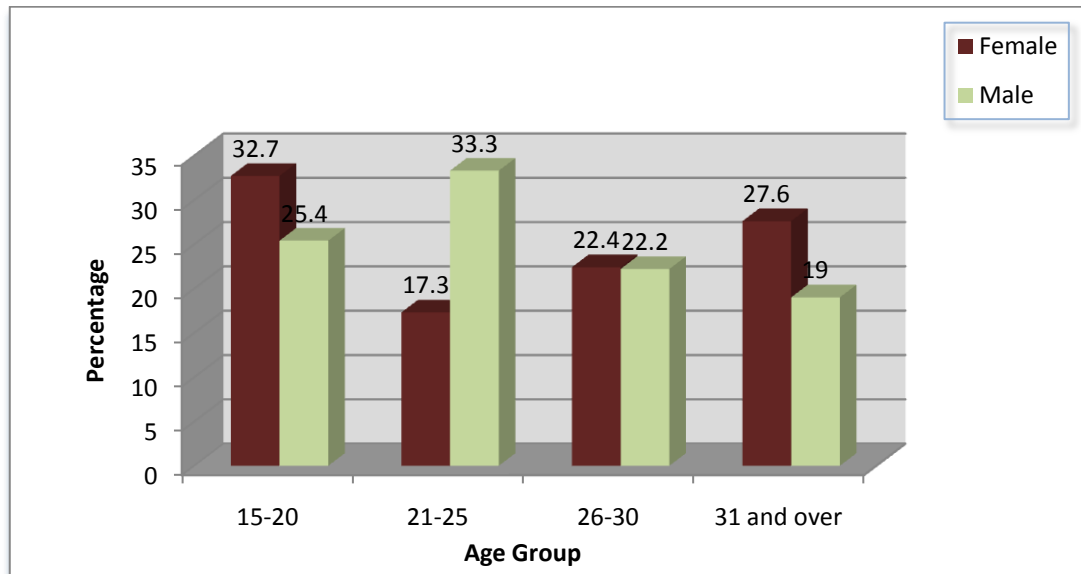
3.9.1. Age distribution

The age of the 188 participants ranged between 15 and 54 years old, with a mean of 25.67 years old (SD =7.1) (Median 42, range 39). Fourteen participants were over 36, and differences in answers in the questionnaire between the older learners and younger were investigated. Since there were no statistically significant differences between them, the fourteen participants were included in the sample. Half of the participants 53.4% were aged up to 25 and the rest 46.6% were over 26 years.

Figure 1 presents the differences in the sample in terms age and gender. From all volunteers, 107 participants, who represent more than half of sample (56.9%), were male. The majority of these were between the ages of 21 to 25, while 25.4% of them were between 15 to 20 years old and 22.2% were between 26 to 30 years old. The lowest percentage of the male participants (19%) was age 31 and over. Of the 188 participants, 81 (43.1%) were female. The majority of them (32.7%) were between 15 to 20 years of age. The lowest percentage of the female participants was between ages 21 to 25. The rest of them (22.4%) were between 26 to 30 years old, while 26.6% were over 31 years of age.

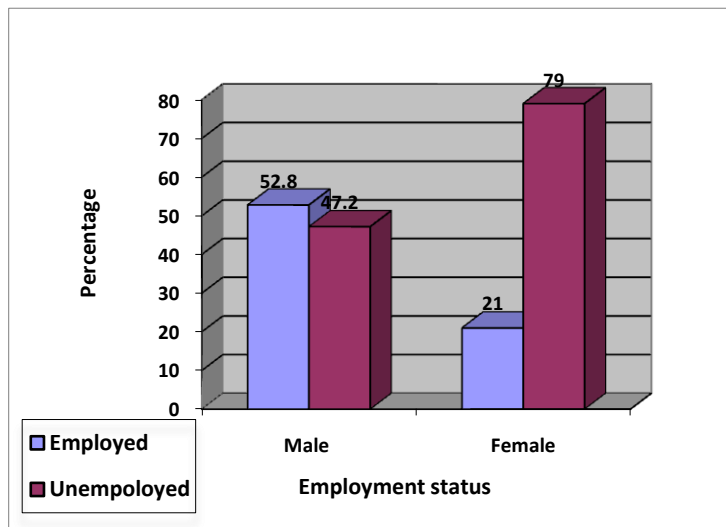
A Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant differences between male and female learners in age factors ($\chi^2=105$, $df=1$, $p= .65$).

Figure 1. *The sample by gender and age group*



3.9.2. Employment status

Figure 2. *Participants' employment status by their gender*

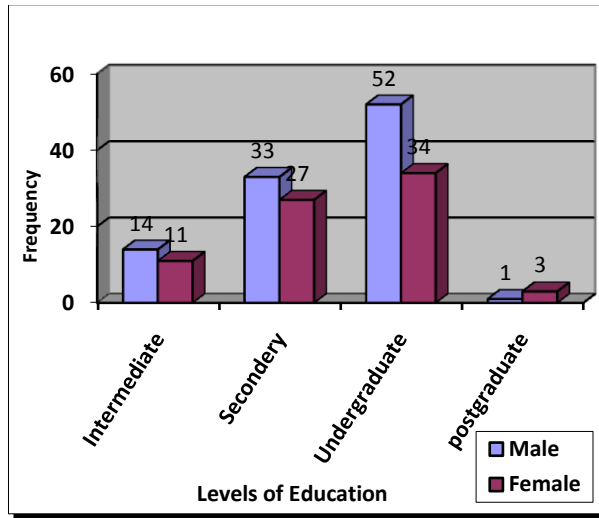


In the sample, 39% of the participants were employed, of which 52.8% were male and 21% were female. The rest of the participants (61%) were unemployed, of which 47.2% were male and 79% were female.

A Chi-square test showed a significant difference of the male and female participants in employment factor. A much higher percentage (52.8%) of the employed participants was male. The $\chi^2 = 19.56$ (df=1) and the $p=.010$.

3.9.3. Educational qualifications

Figure 3. *Participants' level of education by gender*

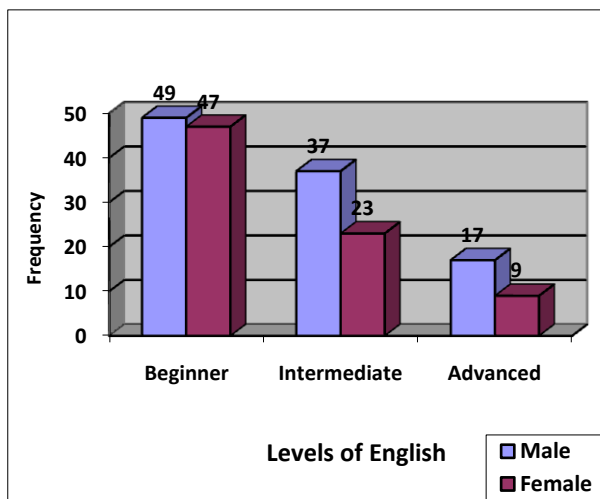


The majority of the participants (46.2%) were undergraduate (this is a total of 52 male and 34 female), 13.4% of the participants were studying at an intermediate level (14 male and 11 female), and 32.3% were in secondary level (33 male and 27 female). A few learners 2.2% were studying at a postgraduate level (1 male and 3

female). 5.9% of students reported 'other' category

3.9.4. Level of competence in English

Figure 4. *Learners' level of English by gender*

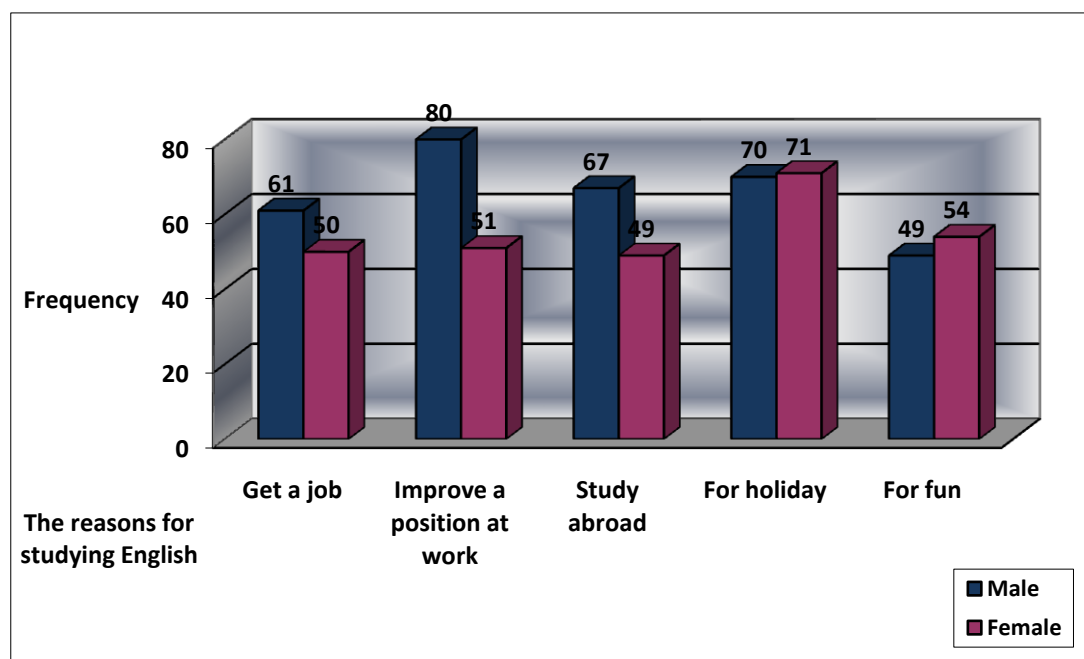


Half of the participants (51.6 %) were at a beginner level (49 male and 47 female), 32.3% of the sample were at an intermediate level (37 male 23 female), while 14% of the participants were at an advanced level (17 male and 9 female). 2.1% of the participants reported 'other' category.

3.9.5. Reasons for studying English

The reasons for studying English could impact on other important factors when doing GW, such as motivation and willingness to be cooperative in learning. Participants were asked to select as many of the five options given as applicable to their reasons for studying English. In the sample, the majority of learners (77% of them, including 70 male and 71 female) said that using English on holiday is one of the main reasons for studying English. Also, a similarly high percentage of learners (71.6%, including 80 male and 51 female) reported that they were studying English to improve their position at work. More than half of the participants (63.4%; 67 male and 49 female) reported that the thought of studying abroad is one of the reasons for studying English, while 62.8% reported that ‘getting a job’ is one of their reasons for studying English and more than half (56.3% , 49 male and 54 female) reported that they study English for fun.

Figure 5. *Students' reasons for studying English*



This section has presented the profile of the sample participating in the current study. The first part presented the distribution of the male and female participants in relation to their age. Then, the employment status of the participants was outlined. The third part presented the participants' education qualifications and their levels of English. The last part outlined the reasons for studying English, as identified by the participants.

3. 10. Approaches to data analysis used in this study

3.10.1. Analysing the quantitative data

Quantitative data for the present study, which included students' responses to the close-ended questions on the questionnaire, was entered into a data file and analysed statistically using the computer software programme SPSS v.17. Statistical analysis carried out on the data included descriptive statistics for all questions. Descriptive statistic was applied to all variables in order to help the researcher to choose the appropriate test for each variable, since it gives important information of the variables: mean, median, standard deviation, and the distribution of the sample. Parametric test was applied for the variable that distributed normally and non-parametric test was applied for the variable that does not distributed normally. For Example, Correlation Pearson's r coefficient was used for the variables that met the assumption for a parametric test (normal distribution) and Spearman rho for the variables that does not met the assumption (skewed distribution) for a parametric test i.e. some of advantages of GW and learners' behaviours, students' role and the importance of their role in GW. Further, non-parametric tests (A Kruscal-Wallis test, Chi-square and A Mann-Whitney Test) were performed to find the group differences between some variables, e.g. students' role and advantages of GW, students' levels of English and teacher's role in GW.

3.10.2. Analysing the qualitative data

Robson (2002) identifies two aims for the interpretation of qualitative data: first, to explain the intended meaning, and second to reduce the original data in the text. The second aim can be done by paraphrasing, summarising or categorising. Robson (2002) claimed that these two aims could apply either successively or alternatively.

Further, he asserted that the interpretation of data cannot be considered independently or separately from the collected sample.

In the present study, after the researcher finished interviewing the entire targeted sample (twenty students), interviews were translated and transcribed. Since the interviews were in Arabic, they needed to be transcribed in translation into English. The researcher transcribed each interview, and then revised the transcripts when listening again to the recording. Three Arabic native speakers who speak English at an Advanced level checked the translation and some words were changed to clarify the meaning. After checking the translation and the accuracy of meaning in each transcript, the researcher printed all the interviewed transcripts in order to ease the coding.

The researcher looked for a strategy to apply to the analysis since there is the belief that following a particular framework to data analysis makes the interpretation and analysis of text clearer and the findings more valid. The aim of the interview was not to generate a theory from the transcripts, but to clarify the questionnaire findings. Thus, the researcher used a thematic coding approach and applied the stages of grounded theory to gain the required information. According to Jones *et al.* (2005: 5) ‘Grounded Theory is an interpretive qualitative research method, originally conceived by Glaser and Strauss (1967)’. They meant by grounded theory that theory is generated from the data rather than the other way around. In grounded theory, the collected and analysed data and deduced theory will be adjacent to each other.

The process of coding in grounded theory follows three stages: the first one is the open-coding, ‘representing the operation by which data are broken down, conceptualised, and put back together in new ways, It is the central process by which theories are built from data’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 3). In the study presented here, the researcher coded the interview transcripts sentence by sentence. It was thought that a complete sentence could give the researcher the complete intended meaning for the interpretation. When the researcher read the transcripts for the first time, some concepts started to emerge, which were related to the interview focused

themes, e.g. advantages of GW. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that ‘Concepts are the basic building blocks of theory’ (1990: 74). As soon as the coding progressed, many other concepts emerged from the transcripts. The researcher set new colour codes for the new emergent concepts. The researcher highlighted the coded sentences in all subsample transcripts, and she used different colours to differentiate each concept. Each colour refers to a different concept, e.g. disadvantages of GW highlighted in green. This helped the researcher to identify and categorise different groups of concepts. Table 2 below gives an example of the first stage of the analysis.

Table 2. *An example of the first process of qualitative analysis*

Colour	Concept	Example of Sentences
Yellow	Perceived advantages of group work	<i>GW affects positively my life, at work and at home.</i> <i>I also learn how to deal with different types of students.</i> <i>In group work, you will get new knowledge.</i> <i>You can learn the right structure of a sentence.</i>
Green	Perceived disadvantages of group work	<i>I find that not all group members cooperate with each other.</i> <i>Some students like to be leaders in the group and they take over.</i>
Turquoise	Group ability (factor)	<i>Group ability has an important role</i> <i>You will benefit from other members of the group if their level of ability is similar to your ability.</i> <i>I prefer mixed ability groups</i>
Pink	Group task (factor)	<i>I think a conversation task is good when working in group.</i> <i>I do not like to do the tasks in a group.</i>
Red	Teacher role (factor)	<i>The teacher should supervise the group.</i> <i>The teacher should leave the groups to finish their work.</i>
Grey	Using English out of class	<i>I practise English in my work.</i> <i>I watch English programmes on TV.</i> <i>I also practise in places like shops and restaurants.</i>

These were the concepts that enabled the researcher to categorise data broadly in the first stage. The researcher coded all the interview text without any exclusion to see if

some interesting findings emerge. According to Jones *et al.* (2005), the process of open coding gives the researcher a chance to look for concepts which may be ultimately of interest, since the researcher investigates the data without any limitations of specific issues, and all data are coded without any exclusion.

The second process is axial coding, which is defined by Strauss and Corbin as follows:

Axial coding is the process of relating subcategory to a category. It is a complex process of inductive and deductive thinking involving several steps. These are accomplished, as with open coding, by making comparisons and asking questions. However, in axial coding the use of these procedures is more focused, and general toward discovering and relating categories in term of the paradigm model. (1990:114).

At this stage, the researcher set three questions to help in categorising more concepts and to generate more subcategories for the existing concepts. The questions were set are as follows:

- 1- What is the purpose of it?
- 2- What is the concept that is related to?
- 3- Does it signal a negative or a positive attitude?

The researcher read the transcripts several times and asked these questions of each sentence and tried to find answers to the coded items. Most sentences could be classified under basic categories. The researcher compared the similarity between categories and felt assured that all concepts of sub-categories fit under a suitable core category. In fact, in this process some sentences fitted into more than one category. This applied to some ambiguous statements, which could be distributed to more than one category. In this case, the researcher coded them into all categories that they fitted in and she used different colours to classify them again in the third stage of analysis. For example, 'In group work, there is often a competitive atmosphere when students try to do their best to stand out in the group' (Jeyan, female, 15, Institution C). The researcher categorised this quote under 'group dynamics', but also under 'group motivation', as it was not clear if the respondent talked about the dynamics of the group, in which the respondent explains how group members work together, or

she described how group members are motivated when they work in groups. The following table will exemplify how the second phase of the analysis was done.

Table 3. An example of the second process of analysis (Developing Themes and a Code)

Category	Sentence	Subcategory
Perceived benefits of group work	<i>You can learn the right structure of a sentence.</i>	Cognitive benefits
	<i>Group work encourages students to cooperate with each other.</i>	Emotional benefits
Perceived disadvantages of group work	<i>This will waste lots of time when you work in a group.</i>	Barrier to learning
	<i>I think the biggest difficulty is some people's shyness</i>	Emotional difficulties
Group ability (Factor)	<i>Mixed ability grouping has an important role.</i>	Mixed ability group
	<i>I prefer all students to be of equal ability.</i>	Same ability group
Task (Factor)	<i>I find it very useful to do tasks with others.</i>	Group task
	<i>I do not like the individual tasks in group work.</i>	Individual task
	<i>In conversation, students exchange ideas.</i>	Type of task
Teacher's role (factor)	<i>It is good that the teacher supervises your work.</i>	Supervisor
	<i>The teacher leaves the group to work by themselves.</i>	Bystander
	<i>The teacher should encourage group members to work and motivate them.</i>	Motivator

The third process is selective coding, which Robson (2002) considered as a continuing process for axial coding, but at a more advanced level of construction. The purpose of this step is to expand the progress of categorising the concepts. Jones *et al.* (2005) stated that selective coding is a filter process in which the researcher can determine each sub category and its relevance to the core category. They claim that

only the most relevant passages of the interview transcripts are used and coded at this stage. The researcher drew a table (see Table 4) to clarify examples of the process to describe how the analysis was performed in this process.

Table 4. *Explanation of codes in third process (selective coding)*

Core Category	Category	Sentence – example from data	Subcategory
Benefits of group work	Cognitive benefits	<i>Other group members will help me get the sentence structure right.</i>	Getting help from other group members
Benefits of group work	Emotional benefits	<i>Students' can encourage each other if they work in a group.</i>	Motivation to learn in GW
Disadvantages of group work	Barriers of learning	<i>This will waste lots of time when you work in a group.</i>	Missing out on learning opportunities
Disadvantages of group work	Emotional difficulties	<i>Some students keep the information to themselves.</i>	The selfish behaviour of individuals in GW

Afterwards, the researcher compared the categories and focused on the content of each category, trying to classify the subcategories into levels regarding to their importance, e.g. the first core category (perceived benefits of group work) includes three sub-categories. The researcher ordered these categories based on the density of each subcategory. The densest categories become known as core categories (Glaser, 2001). The researcher considered this process as a reduction stage, because when she finished coding and categorising, some of data had been taken out because they could not be grouped under any of the concepts which the research focussed on. It was thought that there was no need to interpret concepts unrelated to the research problem, since the aim of the interview was for explaining in-depth the research problem. Thus, the researcher focussed on the areas that needed development.

3.10.3. Identifying the categories and the new emergent themes

In the third stage of data analysis, the researcher started to specify the new emergent themes from each category. The researcher restructured the subcategories to match each of the core categories. Tables 5 and 6 below summarise the identified themes.

Table 5. *The perceived benefits and disadvantages of group work*

Category	Subcategory
The cognitive benefits of group work	Getting help in learning from other group members through asking others for clarification. Easy to focus and recall the knowledge when you listen to others in a group. Easy to practise English with group members during class time.
The barriers of learning in group work	Missing out on learning opportunities.
The emotional benefits of group work	Motivation to learn in group work. Learning in a positive environment.
The emotional difficulties in group work	Anxiety when involved in group work.

Table 6. *Factors that affect group work, as identified by learners*

Category	Subcategory
Teacher's role in group work	Supervisor. Helper. Bystander.
Group dynamics (students' behaviours and role in GW)	Dominating the group. Unwillingness to cooperate in groups.
Group dynamics (Group composition)	Preference for the same ability grouping. Preference for mixed ability grouping.
Group task	Sharing ideas with others to complete

	the task. Group task helps learning. Preference for type of task in group. Preference for individual task.
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3.11. Summary

The first part of this chapter has identified the aim and the research questions of the present study. Then the key research paradigms and the research instruments used in the study were described in relation to the purpose of the research and the research questions. Also, the researcher explained how she piloted the research methods before conducting the main collection and the ethical issues concerning this study. The context, the participating institutions, and the research sample were presented in the second half of this chapter. Finally, the researcher has discussed, with examples, how the process of data analysis was carried out. The following two chapters will present the findings from the study.

CHAPTER 4

PERCEIVED BENEFITS AND DIFFICULTIES IN GROUP WORK

4.1. Overview

In this chapter, the quantitative findings from the questionnaire on the perceived benefits of GW will be presented first, including descriptive statistics. The relationships between the benefits of GW to do with student perceived motivation and confidence as well as between the perceived benefits of GW and frequency of practising English and perceived improvement in English will be explored. Next, the qualitative findings from both the questionnaire and the interviews in relation to the perceived benefits of GW will be discussed. The perceived cognitive benefits of GW are presented first. These include: GW appears to allow learners to get help in their learning and ask other members for clarification; GW seems to help learners to concentrate and recall the required knowledge; and, GW introduces opportunities for learners to practise English in the classroom. Then, the perceived emotional benefits of GW are explained. These include: GW appears to increase student motivation in learning, and to create a positive learning environment. In the second part of this chapter, descriptive statistics for the perceived difficulties in GW are presented. Then, the qualitative findings in relation to the perceived difficulties from both the questionnaire and the interviews are presented. The perceived learning and emotional difficulties of GW are explored. The perceived negative impact of GW on learning is that GW could result in missing out on learning opportunities, while the perceived emotional difficulties relate mainly to the anxiety felt when involved in GW.

4.2. Quantitative findings of the perceived benefits of GW

As mentioned in the 'Methodology chapter' (see Chapter 3), participants were asked to rate some possible benefits of GW as identified by the researcher from the literature from 'very true' (1) to 'not true at all' (5). Language learners gave

relatively high scores for the eleven benefits of GW. The means and the standard deviations for the eleven benefits are presented in Table 7.

4.2.1. Descriptive data for the benefits of GW

Table 7. Means and standard deviations for the benefits of group work

Advantages of Group Work	N	Mean (SD)
GW encourages students to participate in the group activity.	172	1.97 (1.297)
GW helps students to be more responsible for their learning.	167	2.39 (1.275)
Students feel more confident when interacting in group.	169	2.02 (1.227)
GW provides more opportunities for students to speak English.	168	1.87 (1.216)
GW allows students to help other group members.	166	2.12 (1.200)
GW allows different students to do different activities.	165	2.34 (1.267)
GW allows students to learn from other group members.	169	1.93 (1.188)
GW allows students to exchange knowledge.	162	2.27 (1.332)
GW helps students to become more confident.	172	1.62 (.846)
GW helps students to improve their English.	173	1.39 (.767)
GW motivates students to participate.	174	1.49 (.817)

*1= very true, 5= not true at all.

4.2.2. The relationship between the perceived benefits and self-declared frequency of practising English

The relationships between learners' perceived confidence when interacting; perceived motivation to participate, learners' perception that GW gave learners opportunities to speak English, and, the self- declared frequency of practising English were explored. The reasoning behind this examination is to discover whether or not the learners who perceived themselves as having: more confidence during group interaction, more motivation to participate in GW, and, more opportunities to speak English in GW, were those who also reported a higher frequency of practising English.

Table 8 presents the correlation coefficients (Spearman's rho) between three items from the questionnaire: 'GW makes me feel more confident to interact with others'

(Median=2, Range=4), ‘GW encourages students to participate’ (Median=1, Range=4), ‘GW provides more opportunities to speak English’ (Median=1, Range=4) and self-declared frequency of practising English (Median=1, Range=4). It was interesting to find a small positive relationship between the self-declared frequency of practising English and students’ perceived confidence when interacting in GW. Thus, learners who perceived themselves as having more confidence during GW interaction also perceived themselves as practising English at a higher frequency. Also, there were small positive correlations between the self-declared frequency of practising English and students’ perceptions - that GW provides more opportunities to speak in English. Thus, learners’ who perceived that GW gave students more opportunities to speak English, reported a higher frequency of practising English.

Table 8. Correlation (Spearman's rho, 2-tailed) between perceived confidence to interact in GW, learners feeling encouraged to participate in group work, opportunities to speak English in group work and self-declared frequency of practicing English outside the classroom.

		Students feel more confident when interacting in GW	GW encourages students to participate more	GW provide more opportunities to speak English
Frequency of Practicing English	<i>rho</i>	.244**	.112	.154*
	<i>P</i>	(.001)	(.13)	(.05)
	<i>N</i>	167	170	165

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

However, there was no significant correlation between the reported frequency of practising English and students’ perceptions of GW as encouraging learners to participate.

4.2.3. The relationship between the perceived motivation to participate and perceived self-confidence in group interaction

The relationship between perceived motivation to participate (Median=1, Range=4) and perceived self confidence when interacting in GW (Median=2, Range=4) was also explored. The issue under investigation was whether or not participants who reported more motivation to learn English were also those who reported more confidence in taking part in GW interaction.

Table 9 presents the correlation coefficients (Spearman’s rho) between perceived confidence when interacting in GW and the self-perceived motivation of learners to participate in GW. A Spearman’s rho was used because the data in the two variables were not normally distributed. As seen in the table, the results indicated that there was a small positive relationship between GW seen as motivating students to participate and students feeling more confident when interacting in GW. In other words, learners who reported higher scores for motivation to participate in GW also reported higher scores for confidence in group interaction.

Table 9. Correlation (Spearman's rho, 2-tailed) between perceived motivation to participate in GW and perceived self-confidence in interacting in GW

		Students feel more confident when interacting with other group members	
Spearman's rho	Group work motivates students to participate	Correlation Coefficient	.228**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
		N	166

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2.4. The relationship between perceived motivation to participate in GW and perceived self-confidence in interacting in GW with perceived improvement in English language.

The relationship between the perceived motivation to participate in GW (Median=1, Range=4) and the perceived self-confidence in group interaction (Median=2, Range=4) and the perceived improvement in English language (Median=1, Range=4) was explored. The issue under investigation was whether or not participants who

reported higher scores in perceived motivation to participate and perceived confidence in group interaction also reported higher scores in GW helping to improve English.

Table 10 below presents the correlation coefficients (Spearman's rho) between perceived motivation to participate in GW, perceived self-confidence in group interaction and learners reporting improvement in English. As presented, the result indicated that there was a moderate relationship between perceived motivation to participate in GW, perceived self-confidence when interacting in GW, and the learners' perceived improvement in English language.

Table 10. *Correlation (Spearman's rho, 2-tailed) between perceived motivation to participate in GW and perceived self-confidence when interacting in GW with perceived improvement in English language.*

	Group work motivates students to participate in the group activities	Students feel more confident when interacting with other group members
Group work help students to improve their English	Rho .456**	.303**
	P (.000)	(.000)
	N 172	166

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To summarise, the findings revealed that those language learners who reported more confidence in group interactions also reported a higher frequency of practising English. Also, language learners who reported that they had more opportunities to speak English during GW reported a higher frequency of practising English. Furthermore, the frequency at which English was practised was not related to students' perceptions of GW as encouraging learners to participate more. Learners who reported an increase in motivation to participate in GW appeared to display more confidence during group interaction. Finally, learners who reported higher motivation and confidence to participate in GW perceived a greater improvement in their English.

4.3. Qualitative findings of the perceived benefits of GW

4.3.1. Overview

From the questionnaire and the interview findings, the perceived benefits of GW were divided into two major categories. These include: the perceived cognitive benefits in learning in GW and the perceived emotional benefits of GW. The benefits of GW in the first category related to the aspects that facilitate learning, while in the second category they related to the learners' emotional feelings during GW. The perceived benefits from the questionnaire are presented first, and then findings from the interviewed learners' input for the perceived benefits are outlined.

4.3.2. Perceived cognitive benefits of GW

4.3.2.1. Introduction

Language learners suggested that the most significant benefits of GW were those related to cognitive functions, since they thought these facilitated their learning of English. The reported benefits in learning presented here emerged from the qualitative questions in the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews conducted with 20 of the learners. These benefits are grouped under three categories. First, GW appears to give learners opportunities to get help in their learning and ask others for clarifications. Secondly, GW helps learners to be more focused and to recall specific knowledge. Finally, GW appears to provide opportunities for learners to practise English with other learners.

4.3.2.2. Getting help in learning and asking other members for clarification

From the questionnaire data, fifteen students suggested that getting help from others is one of the most significant benefits of GW. Similarly, eleven students mentioned that it was useful for them when other group members helped them if they made a mistake in English. Learners seem to appreciate peer input as an opportunity to improve their own language use. Furthermore, eight students suggested that GW facilitates their understanding. Also, four students mentioned that GW gives them a chance to ask other learners for clarification.

The majority of the twenty interviewed learners explained that they were happy to work in a group because by doing so they were able get help from their peers. Many of them explained that it was not easy to ask the teacher to clarify ambiguities or questions they had. Thus, it appeared that, perhaps due to a rather formal relationship between language learners and their teachers, language learners seemed to prefer to ask other group members to clarify specific issues for them. Further, learners explained that they understood an explanation better when their group members answered their questions.

To illustrate, Waffia and Zezo explained that asking other members to clarify difficult learning issues was very beneficial because it helped them improve their English. Waffia said that she often needed parts of the lesson to be repeated to her in order to understand better and it was usually difficult for her to ask the teacher to repeat things. Zezo suggested that if he had difficulties in understanding something, it would be easier for him to find a colleague who could help him rather than asking the teacher:

My English has improved. For example, if I do not understand something in the lesson, I will not ask the teacher to explain it to me, I will ask my friend to help me and I can ask my friend to repeat this or that ... but I cannot ask the teacher to repeat something (Waffia, female, 27, Institution E).

If you want to ask some questions, or if you need somebody to help you understand something that was difficult for you, you can ask one of your friends in the group to help you (...) for me it is difficult to ask the teacher if I need help ... It is easier for me to ask my friends in the group if I don't understand something, and of course they will help me (Zezo, male, 30, Institution A).

Another student, Izza, suggested that while working in a group, there are some students who volunteer to help others in order to ensure that all group members understand things. Similarly, Lola believed that group members help each other by learning new words from each other. Also, she claimed that students can help each other when they make mistakes with their sentence structure:

If I want to make a sentence but I need new words which I do not know, other students in my group will help me and tell me the words. Or, if the structure of the sentence is not right, the other group members will help

to get the structure right. To be honest, my group has helped me a lot. (Lola, female, 19, Institution D).

For Lola, receiving help from other students was very beneficial and had helped her learn. Other learners saw facing difficulties in learning as normal, and said that GW often helped them to overcome these difficulties, since they could find people to help with what was difficult for them. Azhar and Waffia explained, respectively:

I remember that I faced difficulties when I wanted to search for some information online, and one of my peers in the group helped me and sometimes she did it [the searches] for me. (Azhar, female, 21, Institution A).

Group work is beneficial because we can help each other. If anyone in the group knows something, the others will benefit from this knowledge; that's why the groups should not be too big. My English was weak, and I found some students who helped me. (Waffia, female, 27, Institution E).

In addition, some students explained that students usually need other people in order to help them learn. Mohannad asserted that he would not hesitate to ask any one of his group to clarify things for him. Additionally, he would then ask his group members to repeat what they said if he did not understand until he had things clear in his mind. He explained:

If I don't understand something, I always ask my group members to explain it to me, and also, if anyone has an idea which I can't understand, I ask them to clarify it until I feel that I understand. (Mohannad, male, 29, Institution C).

Clearly students felt that, in a group, people have different experiences and knowledge to share with others. Students may acquire different knowledge from different people and everyone has something to contribute. Razan explained that getting help from others in the group may result in greater learning progress:

My English has improved in both writing and reading. For example, if I cannot read something, my friend will help me and I will help her if she needs it. If I learn by myself, I sometimes can't do the task ... For example, one time I couldn't read some words, I didn't know how to pronounce them and my friend in the group helped me to read them. (Razan, female, 15, Institution C).

Razan suggested that GW provides an opportunity for assistance between group members, since students who ask for help from other group members would then help others who needed their assistance. Razan said that she would help others and answer questions from her group members:

I prefer group work because if I need an explanation or a clarification, the other group members will help me and if they need an explanation, I wouldn't hesitate to explain things for them. I prefer group work than learning by myself ... Group work is useful for me because if I don't know a word in English, I can ask my friends and I may also know the meaning of some words that they need (Razan, female, 15, Institution C).

It is clear that swapping information and knowledge between students could increase the cooperative learning opportunities in GW. Teaching and helping other students can, in turn, improve the learners' own understanding of the language.

To summarise, the findings revealed that students are more comfortable and confident when dealing with their peers in GW, since it is easier for some of them to request help from people who are similar to them in level and in learning goals. Group members can learn from other members, and there is also a chance for learners to improve their English by teaching and helping others in group. GW may also help students to be more focussed in learning and remember what they learnt, and this aspect will be explained in more detail next.

4.3.2.3. Helping students concentrate and recall the required knowledge

From the questionnaire data, eleven students suggested that one of the significant benefits of GW is 'more concentration in learning', since they stay more focused when working with other students. It is possible that concentration could result in a better understanding when learning a second language. Thus, a clear understanding of the English language could help learners to improve their language skills. In interviews, some learners explained that working in a group helped them remember the information that they needed.

It appeared that because of the restricted number of participants in GW, where the discussion involves only the group members, it was easier for some learners to

remember what their peers had said, what they had discussed, and what questions they were asking. In relation to this, Aleem and Izza said:

In my opinion, when I talk about something in my group, it helps me to remember it when I need to. (Aleem, Male, 24, Institution A).

For example, you forget a point in a lesson; when you revise the lesson in group, you are more likely to remember it. (Izza, female, 26, Institution E).

Other learners also explained that GW helped them to retain and recall the information that, otherwise, may be easily forgotten. Furthermore, Mazen believed that language learners may be more focused on other peers' explanations in GW rather than when listening to the teacher's explanations, since the teacher has to teach the whole class, rather than focus on supporting individuals. He explained:

I think group work is better than individual learning ... You know that if the teacher explains to the whole class, some students may not pay attention to the teacher's explanation, but if we study within a group, the situation is different; the students will focus on what others say since they are closer to each other (Mazen, male, 19, Institution D).

Mazen believed that the close relationship between learners helped them stay focused in the group. In his view, the positive relationship between group members can lead to more concentration in GW.

A further point made was that it was more difficult for learners to stay focused on the teacher all the time in class, as this was a one-way interaction, but in group learning, they had constant opportunities to actively contribute and learn from their peers.

Abed was one of those students and he explained:

I think students may concentrate more in group work than when doing individual work because students will discuss topics between themselves and pay attention to other students when they talk. When working individually, students can't concentrate on the teacher all the time because they will get bored and that may affect their learning (Abed, male, 26, Institution A).

Abed compared students' concentration in GW and when doing individual work under the teacher's guidance. He believed that students may stay more focused in

GW, since they can speak up and listen to other learners. At the same time, he believed that in teacher-centred classes, learners could become bored, and this was probably because there were no opportunities for learners to actively contribute.

To sum up, most of the interviewed learners suggested that GW was beneficial for them since it helped them to concentrate in learning. It appeared that concentration when learning in GW has helped learners with two important aspects: understanding new knowledge and recalling the required information. Another significant benefit of GW identified by language learners was that GW gave them opportunities to practise English and this will be explained in detail next.

4.3.2.4. Opportunities for learners to practise English with other group members

In the questionnaire, forty-one students suggested that ‘practising English with other learners’ was one of the significant benefits of GW. Also, twenty-five students suggested that GW discussions were beneficial for improving their speaking skills. Similarly, twelve students suggested that GW was useful for learning since there was a chance for every group member to participate. It appeared that many students shared the view that GW gave them a chance to speak and practise English. Similarly, the majority of the interviewed learners explained that there were more opportunities to practise English in GW since they could engage in a conversation with other group members.

Language learners explained that the opportunities to practise English seemed to increase in smaller groups of only two or three learners. They claimed that practising English could lead to improvements in English and allow learners to communicate with foreign people. Also, they explained that having opportunities to practise English may reduce the usage of the mother language in EFL classroom.

Another important point is that learners felt more at ease to practise and speak English with other students rather than with the teacher. Lola and Hisham explained

that the difficulties of speaking with the teacher would disappear in GW. They explained:

In groups, we can discuss things together and not speak with the teacher. I feel nervous when I speak to the teacher because of course she knows more than me, but when I speak to other students, all these barriers disappear. (Lola, female, 19, Institution D).

The barrier which exists between you and the teacher [is] not there in group. As far as participation is concerned, it is easier for me to speak with other students than to speak with the teacher. (Hisham, male, 27, Institution C).

Lola felt confident to speak with other learners since her level of English was closer to them than the teacher's. Hisham claimed that speaking with other learners could help reduce the power barriers that normally exist in a teacher-learner interaction. It appears that communication with the teacher is more stressful than engaging with peers in GW.

Another interesting point is that some learners thought that speaking in a group has helped them speak English more confidently outside class, too. The GW in a language class offers a supportive environment for learners to prepare themselves to speak in a larger social environment. Extracts from Jeyan, Aziz and Hisham clarify this point further:

Of course group work helped me a lot ... For example, I could not speak English outside the classroom before, but I practise speaking with my friends in the group in class, which will help me and encourage me to speak, so if I go outside the classroom I can speak confidently. (Jeyan, female, 15, Institution C).

Group work makes learning English easier. For example, if you travel abroad you can apply what you learnt within your group; you know how to speak ... I think group work is better because it gives you a chance to speak with others. (Aziz, Male, 16, Institution D).

Group work was very useful for me to speak [English], not only in the school, it helped me to speak with people outside the school ... I like to use English in class all the time, when I want to work with others or even if I want to ask my peers something. (Hisham, male, 22, Institution C).

These learners implied that practising speaking with their groups members helped them improve their communicative skills that became useful in their social life. It appears that motivation and confidence in speaking English may improve when it starts from a smaller environment and it is then applied to a wider social environment.

Another important point is that the majority of interviewed learners suggested that practising English in GW increases the communication and interaction in the language classroom. Many explained that the second language would not be efficiently learnt if there were no opportunities for interaction in the classroom context. Learners may understand the teacher's input, but they cannot practise or apply what they have learned if they only work individually. Thus, GW increases the interaction and communication opportunities in the language classroom. Two extracts from students' accounts exemplify this point:

In language learning, there should be communication between students to develop their language, but there is no communication and interaction when learning by yourself, so how can students improve their English language if they only work independently? I would not benefit much from a teacher-centred classroom. (Jana, female, 27, Institution D).

When you learn by yourself, you can understand but you cannot practise what you have learned, while when you work within groups, you will practise and use the language more. (Mohannad, male, 29, Institution C).

Jana explained that GW helps learning the target language since learners have chances to interact with other learners. Mohannad shared the same perception as Jana, and both agreed that language learners need opportunities to practise English, which cannot be done through individual tasks.

To summarise, the findings revealed that most of the learners believed that GW helps create a relaxed environment in which learners feel comfortable to practise English and prepare themselves to apply their knowledge in the wider social situations. Learners felt that motivation to practise English is often increased in GW, when learners speak with other learners rather than with the teacher. The next section will discuss further the perceived emotional benefits of GW for language learners.

4.3.3. The perceived emotional benefits of GW for language learners

This section will present the emotional benefits perceived by the EFL learners in this study. Learners suggested two important benefits of GW which are related to their feelings on learning English. These include: motivation to learn English and the importance of a positive learning environment.

In the questionnaire, eleven students suggested that GW encourages them to work with others. Seven students said that GW makes them more confident to participate in interaction. Six students stated that GW is 'more fun' since it gave them time to complete several activities, while others mentioned that speaking confidently made them enjoy learning English. Similarly, from the interviews, many learners explained that motivation to learn is one of the important benefits of GW. Some learners clarified that participating in interesting and enjoyable activities while in groups is a very important factor in creating a positive learning atmosphere.

Some learners explained that the competition between group members where all of them work hard to stand out had a positive effect on motivating students to exchange ideas and knowledge. Thus, positive competition in GW may result in motivating students to support each other. In relation to this, Jeyan said:

In good groups, there is a competitive atmosphere, where all students try to do their best to stand out. (Jeyan, female, 15, Institution C).

Another interesting point made by learners is that GW could create a positive environment which helps learners improve their language skills. One student, Lola, mentioned that learning in GW makes the learning atmosphere more interesting than learning alone. She said that GW gave her a chance to exchange knowledge and share experiences with others, which made her actively involved and enthusiastic to learn:

To be honest, nobody can learn in a boring atmosphere like in a school or learn by themselves, especially when learning a second language. At the college, it was more fun, and the best thing in GW is the opportunity to exchange experiences ... When a student studies alone, they will get bored, but when they are studying with other students, the atmosphere will be better for learning. (Lola, female, 19, Institution D).

Further, some learners suggested that assessment in GW was very important to motivate students. Meshary illustrated that the use of assessment used for group tasks often stimulates students to participate, as they are striving to achieve a good result for their work. Meshary explained:

If the teacher puts us into groups, and then asks us to work on a task and when we finish we have to hand it to the teacher to assess it, most students are motivated to do the task well and do it together because assessment is involved. (Meshary, male, 20, institution A).

Additionally, some learners explained that working with others in a group makes them enthusiastic to learn from their peers as well as teach those who need help. They explained that GW gives the students more motivation to learn than individual learning, especially in the case of low ability students, since they may need more support from other learners. Also, for some students, the motivation generated by being in a group could increase the opportunities for cooperative learning between group members. On this, Hisham, Meshary and Meyada explained, respectively:

Students can encourage each other if they work in a group, but if they are learning by themselves, they may feel overwhelmed or hesitate to participate or speak with the teacher. I think group work is better than learning by yourself. (Hisham, male, 22, Institution C).

When the teacher explains a theoretical thing such as a new grammar rule, it is probably best to explain it to the whole class, but in doing practical tasks, it is better to be with a group. For example, if we have practical work and the teacher asks students to do this work individually, there are some low ability students in the class who cannot do this. They may need other students to work with them, encourage and teach them, so it is not ideal to do practical tasks individually. (Meshary, male, 20, Institution A).

My group was very cooperative and this was helpful for me. All the group members were enthusiastic about learning and if anyone didn't understand something, the other members tried to help and explain. (Meyada, female 24, Institution D).

To summarise, the findings indicate that the majority of students believed that GW helped them to be motivated in learning and to feel more confident when interacting with each other. Language learners suggested also that being motivated could help them progress in learning English since group members seemed to work

cooperatively to support each other. This section has presented the perceived emotional benefits of GW. However, some learners suggested that GW is not always a positive activity, and sometimes impacts negatively on language learners and this aspect will be explained in the following section.

4.4. The perceived difficulties of GW for language learners

Many learners asserted that GW could pose some barriers, which could result in loss of motivation and undermine the cooperative learning aspect of the interaction. Also, these difficulties may result in a negative attitude towards GW in the EFL classroom. To discuss these aspects in relation to the data elicited, the questionnaire data will be presented first, which will be followed by some illustrations from the interview extracts.

4.4.1. Quantitative findings of the perceived difficulties in GW

As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, participants were asked to rate some possible difficulties of GW as identified by the author from the literature on a scale from 'very true' (1) to 'not true at all' (5). From the means of these difficulties, it appeared that language learners gave relatively low scores for the five difficulties of GW. This means that learners did not agree that the stated difficulties apply to them when learning in GW.

4.4.1.1. The descriptive statistics for the perceived difficulties of GW

Table 11. Means and standard deviations for the perceived disadvantages of group work

Disadvantages of Group work	N	Mean (SD)
Some students are likely to take over the group.	171	3.28 (1.214)
Some students do not contribute much to the group.	168	2.85 (1.168)
GW is a waste of time: I prefer listening to the teacher.	169	2.76 (1.325)
Some students do not give other members the chance to participate.	163	3.24 (1.236)
Some group members may adopt other members' mistakes.	161	2.88 (1.350)

*1= very true , 5= not true at all.

4.4.1.2. Relationship between students' perceived opportunities to speak English in GW and their agreement with the statement that 'GW is a waste of time'

The relationship between the students' perceived opportunities to speak English in GW and their preference for individual work as they saw GW as a 'waste of time' was explored. The issue under examination was to find out whether learners who reported a preference for individual work since they saw GW as 'a waste of time' were also those who reported low scores for finding more opportunities to practise English.

Table 12 presents a correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) between GW seen as providing more opportunities for students to speak in English (Median=1, Range=4) and agreement with the statement 'GW is a waste of time: I prefer listening to the teacher' (Median=3, Range=4). Spearman's rho has been used since the two variables were skewed. As shown, there was a small positive relationship between the two items (rho=.204, p=.008).

Table 12. *Correlation between GW seen as providing more opportunities for students to speak in English and agreement with the statement 'GW is a waste of time: I prefer to listen to the teacher'*

			GW provides more opportunities for students to speak in English	GW is a waste of time : I prefer listening to the teacher
Spearman's rho	Group work provides more opportunities for students to speak in English	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.204**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.008
		N	168	167

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This result could indicate that despite the majority of learners perceiving that GW gives them opportunities to speak in English, many of them also see GW as a waste of time.

4.4.2. Qualitative findings of perceived difficulties of GW

4.4.2.1. Perceived learning difficulties in GW

In the questionnaire, some learners identified some difficulties in GW. Four students stated that GW was ‘a waste of time’. Three students suggested that ‘some students ask too many questions’. Similarly, four students believed that ‘speaking about unrelated topics in GW’ could irritate many students. Additionally, nine students considered that ‘noise’ and ‘speaking in Arabic’ could ‘affect concentration’ and generate ‘interruptions’ in GW. It appears that, in students’ view, these aspects could affect negatively their English language learning.

In interviews, some learners explained that learning in groups was sometimes seen by them as ‘a waste of time’. This was especially the case in mixed ability groups, when students at different levels of ability are asked to work together. Some learners mentioned that in these groups, certain students tend to ask their peers for help too many times. They thought this may irritate other group members, since too many questions may interrupt their concentration. These are two examples from students’ interviews:

When you learn by yourself, there is no time wasting like in group work, where one of the group members may ask many questions or they need more explanation because their level of English is not so good, all this will waste lots of time when you work in a group. (Mohannad, male, 29, Institution C).

The difficulty of group work is that there are some students who understand better than others, so some people will need more explanation and clarification. (Waffia, female, 27, Institution E).

Mohannad and Waffia explained that different abilities in group work may result in time wasting, since some students need more time to understand things properly. Mohannad believed that this disadvantage does not exist when you learn individually. However, some students believed that in individual learning tasks, some people may not feel confident to ask the teacher questions.

Further, some learners found it very difficult to convey their ideas and knowledge to others when working in groups. Language learners differ in their knowledge,

experience, abilities, and characteristics even when they are placed at the same level of language competence. These differences may cause barriers for some learners in working cooperatively in groups. Jeyan and Hisham explained:

The most difficult thing is when I have an idea and I cannot convey this idea to others. (Jeyan, female, 15, Institution C).

If I work with lower ability students, it is usually difficult for me to discuss something with them or have a conversation, because they would not understand me. (Hisham, male, 22, Institution C)

Another important point is that some students would sometimes ask others for clarification in Arabic if they had difficulties in understanding the explanation in English. It seems that while it is easier for some learners to clarify their understanding in their native language, this may annoy more advanced learners, as they see this as taking time from their learning progress in English. Waseem believed that usage of the native language should not be allowed while you are learning a second language. He explained:

When some students in the group do not understand some vocabulary, they translate it into Arabic or they ask other students the meaning in Arabic, and I think this is wrong when you want to learn English. (Waseem, male, 25, Institution A).

To sum up, the findings revealed that despite the fact that many learners agreed that GW provides more opportunities to speak English, however, many of them agreed also that GW can be a waste of the class time. The qualitative data in the questionnaire and in the interviews explained this result, in which many students suggested that missing out on learning opportunities was the significant disadvantage of GW. Missing out on opportunities could be the result of individual students asking too many questions, people speaking in Arabic, individuals making noise, interrupting, and chatting on topics unrelated to the task at hand. Some learners also reported emotional difficulties in GW and this aspect will be explored next.

4.4.2.2. Perceived emotional difficulties in GW

In the questionnaire, seven students suggested that anxiety in GW could result in comprehension difficulties between group members. They said that students cannot speak confidently because they are shy, which could impact negatively on both the

shy person and the other group members as the shy person cannot contribute as much as other members. Similarly, from the interview data, it seems that shyness may prevent few students from asking others to obtain help.

Communication in GW is very important if learning is to take place. Meyada believed that working with a lively group may encourage her to participate and contribute more than when being part of a quieter group. Further, Meshary mentioned that shyness may be a barrier for individuals when they need to ask others for help, which may negatively affect cooperative learning. He explained:

I think a big difficulty is some people's shyness. If the student is shy, they won't ask other group members if he or she needed any help, and this will affect negatively their learning. (Meshary, male, 20, Institution A).

Another important point is that some students complained that people in groups may have a very negative influence on individuals, through behaviours such as ignoring colleagues who need help in the group. In relation to this, Lola said:

I remember that I missed a lesson, and when I was back at school, I was working with a group of three students, and they totally ignored me. Because I did not have any idea about the previous lesson, so I kept silent all the time. This was a negative experience for me of working in a group. (Lola, female, 19, Institution D).

Lola described being ignored in GW as one of the negative behaviours which may prevent students from benefitting fully in GW. She believed that being ignored could prevent some group members from getting the support that would help them learn.

This section has discussed the emotional difficulties that may impact negatively on learners' experiences of GW. The findings referred to the fact that anxious students and any shy learners could be affected negatively by being asked to interact in a group, which may also impact negatively on their group peers. Also, ignoring some members of the group may lead to uncooperative GW.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the significant benefits and difficulties of GW that have been identified by EFL learners. It appears that the majority of language learners believed that the learning benefits of GW were the most significant advantage which facilitates their learning of English. They also suggested some emotional benefits of GW that impact positively on their learning of English. However, learners saw that there were difficulties of GW which may lead to negative attitudes to GW. These difficulties are related to learning and emotional aspects. It seemed that there are some important factors that should be considered in GW since they affect learners' achievement in English. The next chapter will discuss the factors that affect learning in GW, as identified by the students participating in the research.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENTS' VIEWS ON SIGNIFICANT FACTORS AFFECTING GROUP WORK

5.1. Overview

This chapter will present the results of the factors affecting learning in GW, as perceived by the students participating in the study. There were three main significant factors: teacher's role in GW, group dynamics, and group task. Learners' perceptions of the teacher's role are presented in the first part of the chapter. Then, the aspects that related to group dynamics are discussed, mainly students' roles and behaviours, group size, and group composition. In the last part of the chapter the significance of the group tasks is discussed, as seen by the learners.

5.2. The teacher's role in group work

5.2.1. Introduction

Learning in GW may not eliminate the teacher's input, but it may decrease the direct involvement for language teachers, since teachers have more of a chance to allow language learners to learn from others in the classroom. Teachers' role in GW was seen as important by the learners in this study, mainly in terms of directing, organizing and accelerating learning. Despite the fact that many students agreed that the teacher's role is considered an essential factor that could affect learning in GW, there are different perceptions of what teachers should do when using GW. The quantitative findings in relation to the teacher's role in GW will be presented first, and then findings from the qualitative data will follow.

5.2.2. Quantitative findings of the perceptions of the teacher's role in GW

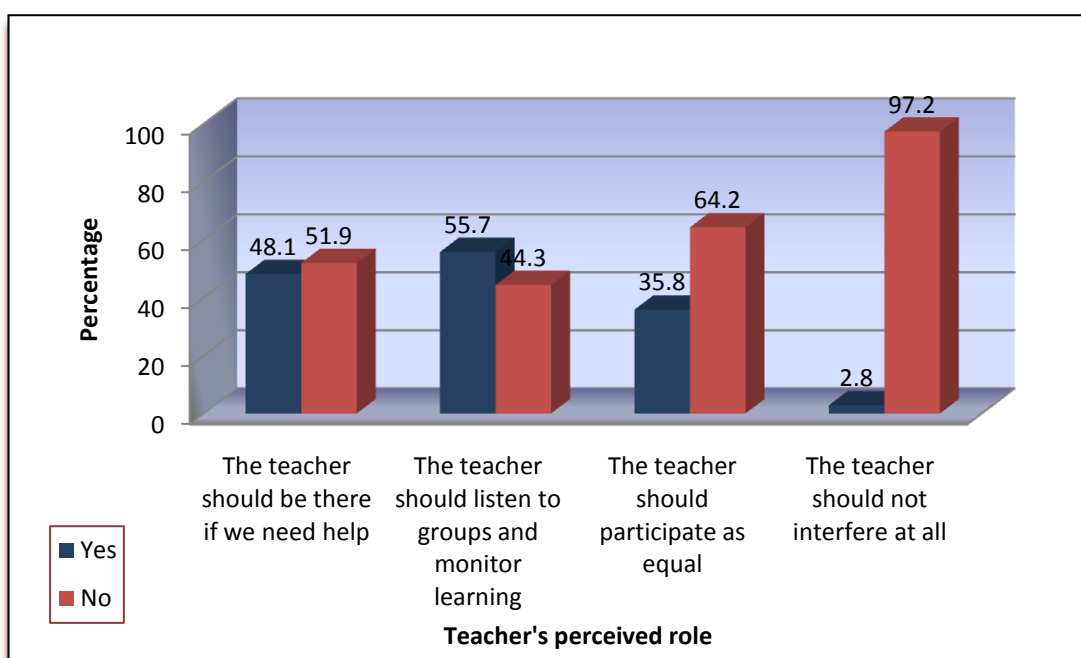
As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, a question was asked in the questionnaire to find out what is the teacher's role while doing GW, in language learners' view. The learners were allowed to choose one or more roles from the four roles outlined in

the questionnaire. By using descriptive statistics, the differences between the students' views of the different roles of teachers and the students' level of competence in English were explored.

5.2.2.1. Descriptive statistics for the teacher's role in GW

As shown in Figure 6, more than half of the participating language learners (55.7%) thought that 'the teacher should listen to group members and monitor learning'. Similarly, nearly half of the language learners (48.1%) reported that the teacher should be in the classroom during GW in case some learners needed help, while 35.8% of learners reported that teachers should participate as equals in groups. Only 2.8% of learners thought that 'the teacher should not interfere at all'. The results of participants' perceptions of the possible roles for teachers in GW are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Students' perceptions of teachers' role in group work



5.2.2.2. Differences between perceived roles of the teacher and learners' different levels of competence

The correlations between the perceived teacher's roles and language learners' level of competence in English were explored. Previous literature (Blatchford *et al.*, 2003) suggested that the perceived teachers' roles in GW differ according to the students'

levels of language knowledge, since the low proficiency learners may need more help and support from their colleagues and their teachers. Thus, the issue under investigation was to see whether or not learners at different levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced) were different in their perceptions of the teacher's role.

Table 13 presents chi-Square tests for the differences between the three groups of students' levels of English (beginner, intermediate and advanced) and the perceived roles of the teacher in GW. As shown, there were no significant differences between the three groups.

Table 13. *Differences between the three groups of students at different levels of English and the perceived roles of the teacher in GW*

	Teacher's role in GW: the teacher should be there if we need help	Teacher's role in GW: the teacher should listen to groups and monitor learning	Teacher's role in GW: the teacher should participate as equal	Teacher's role in GW: the teacher should not interfere at all
Chi-Square	1.463	4.759	.839	2.335
df	2	2	2	2
p	.481	.093	.657	.311

b. Grouping Variable: Level of English (Beginner, intermediate, advanced)

The findings show that many of the language learners preferred the teacher to listen to groups and monitor learning, while a small percentage of learners thought that the teacher should not interfere at all in GW. There were no significant differences between learners at different levels of competence and the preferred teacher role in GW. The next section will draw on data from the interview extracts to elaborate on the learners' perceptions of the teacher's role in GW activities.

5.2.3. Qualitative findings on student perceptions of the teacher's role in GW

The interview findings revealed that the majority of the students interviewed liked the teacher to supervise the class when they worked in groups. Many learners said that they liked the teacher to help the group members, whereas, some learners

suggested that they preferred the teacher to be a bystander (a guide on the side). These roles will be discussed in the following sections in more detail, with extracts from learners' interviews.

5.2.3.1. The teacher as supervisor and assistant in GW

Some students suggested that it was best if the teacher acted as a supervisor in GW, since students should learn from other group members rather than the teacher when in groups. They thought the teacher should only observe students in groups, without participating directly, unless students got a task wrong or asked for help. They also suggested that it is better if the teacher solves a group's problems at the beginning of the group task rather than leaving students to finish the task and make mistakes. These are some extracts from students' views on this issue:

It's better if the teacher supervises group work, because if she notices that something is wrong from the beginning, she can teach students to do it correctly, not wait until the students finish (Azhar, female, 21, Institution A).

The teacher should supervise groups and observe their work, and if they make mistakes, he can help them to find the right answers. (Mazen, male, 19, Institution D).

The teacher should supervise the group and if students need help, they can ask the teacher to help them. He should check the students' work when they finish as well ... I don't like doing group work without the teacher's supervision. The teacher should also organise students into appropriate groups. Group work goes well if the teacher works as a supervisor. (Abed, male, 26, Institution A).

It appears that these three learners shared the same belief which is that the teacher should supervise GW since this allows the teacher to point students in the right direction on a task or activity. Abed claimed that supervision by the teacher during GW was very important for learners to succeed in the group activity.

On a similar tone, other learners preferred the teacher to be a facilitator in GW. According to these students' views, the teacher should contribute to GW and intervene to help students during an activity to enable them to make progress. Izza

suggested that teachers should intervene in groups to correct mistakes that may occur in and to help them get the right answers. Izza said:

The teacher should supervise groups and correct the learners' mistakes, she should teach us how we can do the task, how we can pronounce new words and she should direct us to avoid mistakes in sentence structure when we speak in English, and how to differentiate between the plural and the singular forms in English. (Izza, female, 26, Institution E).

Another interesting point is that two other students, Reeman and Jeyan, believed that the teacher should change her role depending on the type of task. Jeyan suggested that the teacher should help the group in writing tasks, but it would be better if she left the group alone in conversation tasks. In her view, students liked to speak freely, without any restriction, during conversation activities, but they preferred more guidance when writing. Jeyan and Reeman explained respectively:

Sometimes I prefer the teacher to help the group and work with us and other times I prefer the teacher to leave the group to do what they want ... When I want the teacher to help us, it will be for writing or anything else that I need, but in conversation, I prefer the teacher to leave the group to talk and not interfere. (Jeyan, female, 15, Institution C).

Sometimes, I prefer the teacher to supervise the group and watch their work and other times, I'd like her to leave the group to do the task by themselves. It depends on the type of task. (Reeman, female, 21, Institution A).

To sum up, the findings in this section showed that some learners preferred the teacher to supervise the learners when involved in GW, since he/she can guide their learning in the right direction. However, other learners wanted teachers to help group members only in the cases where they needed specific assistance.

A different group of learners thought that the teacher should only be a bystander when learners work in groups. The teacher's role in this case is to observe learners involved in groups without any intervention and only check on learners when they finish an activity. This other role will be discussed next.

5.2.3.2. The teacher as a bystander in GW

Some students perceived that the teacher should allow groups complete freedom, so that students could work in a relaxed environment. They perceived the teacher's role as more passive during group activities. They mentioned that it seems better if the teacher leaves the groups to get on with a task and checks their work only when they finish the activity. On this, Mohannad, Mansor and Zezo explained:

If the teacher does not correct mistakes until we finish a task, this gives me a chance to continue working without interruptions. I think the teacher should leave the groups to continue their work and after half an hour the teacher should check the students' work and correct any mistakes. (Mohannad, male, 29, Institution C).

I think it is better when the teacher leaves the group to work by themselves, and when they finish a task, he can assess or teach them if they did not know something (Mansor, male, 24, Institution C).

I think the teacher should leave the groups to finish their work, and when they finish everything he can check on them and give comments in order to improve their work. (Zezo, male, 30, Institution A).

These learners seemed to prefer the teacher to give them the space to work with other learners uninterrupted. They suggested that the feedback and the assessment for GW should take place when learners complete the group task.

Other learners explained that the teacher supervision during GW may cause anxiety for some learners. Some learners cannot work well in GW under the supervision of the teacher. Meshary and Hisham said:

If the teacher is working with a group during a conversation activity, it may be stressful for students to speak. (Meshary, male, 20, Institution A).

The teacher should not supervise the groups all the time, but should leave them alone until they finish working, then he can teach or help them; this is the most efficient role of the teacher, since we can work away from the teacher's eye (Hisham, male, 22, Institution C).

Meshary said he had found it very difficult to speak in a group if the teacher was listening to the group conversation, while Hisham thought that the teacher should leave the group alone until they finish a task, and only then check on their work.

In summary, it appears that some learners prefer the teacher to give them the opportunity to ask other learners for help rather than rely on help from the teacher all the time. They thought the main role of the teacher during GW is to check the group's work when learners completed the required task. Also, some learners thought that the constant supervision of the teacher could cause anxiety for some learners.

5.2.4. Conclusion

This section has discussed the different perceptions of the language learners in relation to the teacher's role when students are involved in GW activities. The findings from the questionnaire revealed that the highest percentage of learners preferred the teacher to supervise GW and monitor learning, while a lower percentage preferred the teacher to take a more passive role. Similarly, during the interviews, some of the language learners explained that they liked the teacher to supervise the group, while other learners liked the teacher to offer help to groups. Another group of students suggested that the teacher should leave the group to work independently, in order to also help learners to work in a less threatening environment. Finally, despite the fact that learners differed in their perceptions of the teacher's role in GW, the majority of them perceived the teacher's role as an important factor which helps the process of GW go well. Another important factor in GW that was perceived by many learners as key to successful learning is the dynamics of GW, and this will be discussed next.

5.3. Group dynamics

5.3.1. Overview

As mentioned in the literature review (Chapter 2: Section 2.6.), group dynamics refers to a range of factors. Some of these concepts will be discussed in this section in relation to students' views. The key factors to group dynamics, as emerging from the literature, include: the perceived students' role and behaviour in GW; the size of

the groups; and the group composition. These three factors may impact considerably on the dynamics of GW. Quantitatively, descriptive statistics were used to explore all three concepts, but two of the factors were also explored qualitatively (i.e. students' behaviour and group composition).

5.3.2. Students' roles and behaviours in GW

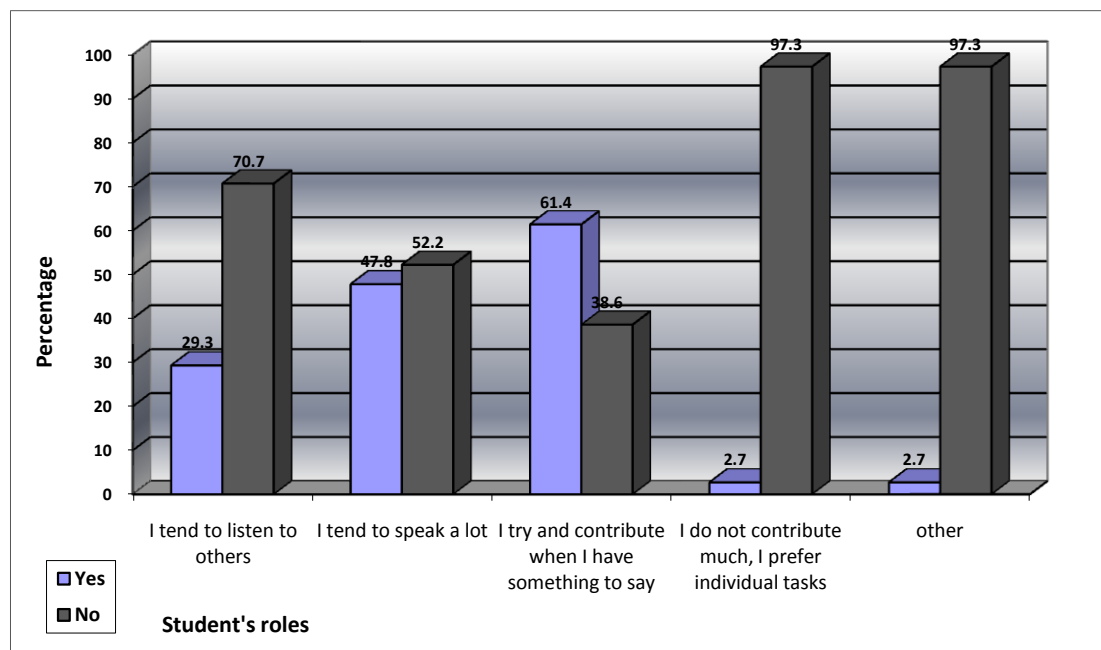
5.3.2.1. Quantitative findings of perceived roles and behaviours of students in GW

As mentioned in Chapter 3, learners were asked in the questionnaire to choose one or more of the roles that applied to them from a list of four different roles, as generated by the author based on the findings from the literature review. Also, under the perceived student's role question, students were asked to rate the importance of the role that applied to them, on a scale from '1' (very important) to '5' (not so important). Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the perceived students' roles in GW. Also, the relationship between the perceived students' role and the importance given to the selected students' role was examined.

5.3.2.1.1 .Descriptive statistics for the perceived roles of students in GW

As shown in Figure 7, the majority of learners (61.4%) reported that their perceived role was to contribute to the group when they needed to. Nearly half of participants (47.8%) reported that they liked to speak a lot during GW tasks, while 29.3% of learners reported that they preferred to listen more to others. However, it appears that a small percentage of learners (2.7%) thought that they did not contribute much in GW, and preferred individual work. A similar percentage of learners (2.7%) reported that they fell into the 'other' category and did not identify with any of the four roles given in the questionnaire.

Figure 7. *Perceived roles of students in group work*



5.3.2.1.2. The relationship between the students' perceived roles in GW and the perceived importance of students' roles in GW

The relationship between the perceived students' role in GW and the level of importance given to them to their role was explored. The issue under the investigation was whether learners who reported positive roles in GW were those learners who reported a high score for the importance of the role.

Table 14 presents the correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) between the students' role in GW and the perceived importance of their roles. As shown, there was no significant relationship between three of the student roles – 'contributing when need to', 'listening to others', and 'not contributing much' - and importance given to their role.

Table 14. Correlation (Pearson's *r*, 2-tailed) between different perceived roles of students and the perceived importance of student's role in group work

	Student's role in the group: I tend to listen to others	Student's role in the group: I tend to speak a lot	Student's role in the group: I try and contribute when I have something to say	Student's role in the group: I don't contribute much, I prefer individual tasks
The importance of the student's role in the group	.024 (.749)	.252** (.001)	-.044 (.556)	-.079 (.294)

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The interesting point is that there was a small positive relationship between the perceived role of speaking a lot in GW and the perceived importance of the student's role in GW. Thus, learners who like to speak a lot in GW see their role as very important in GW.

5.3.2.1.3. Descriptive statistics for the perceived learners' behaviour in GW

Table 15. Means and standard deviations for different behaviors of students

The students' behaviour	The mean number (SD)
Students try to be leaders in the group.	3.30 (1.234)
Students do not give a chance to other members to participate.	3.00 (1.150)
Students do not like other group members' ideas.	2.80 (1.117)
Students keep their knowledge to themselves.	2.74 (1.170)

*1= strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree.

5.3.2.1.4. Relationship between learners' behaviour in GW, perceived motivation to participate in GW and perceived improvement in English.

The relationship between perceived learners' behaviour in GW, perceived motivation and perceived improvement in English was explored. The issue under examination was whether learners who reported high scores for common behaviours were also those who reported high motivation in group participation and perceived improvement in their English language.

Table 16. *Correlation between students' behavior in GW and perceived motivation to participate in GW and reported improvement in English*

	Students' behaviour in the group: students try to be leaders in the group	Students' behaviour in the group: students do not give a chance to other members to participate	Students' behaviour in the group: students do not like other members ideas	Students' behaviour in the group: students keep their knowledge to themselves
Group work helps students to improve their English	.754	-.020	-.043	.112
Motivation to participate in Group Work	-.017	-.006	-.071	-.012
	.024	.802	.586	.148
	.827	.943	.375	.879

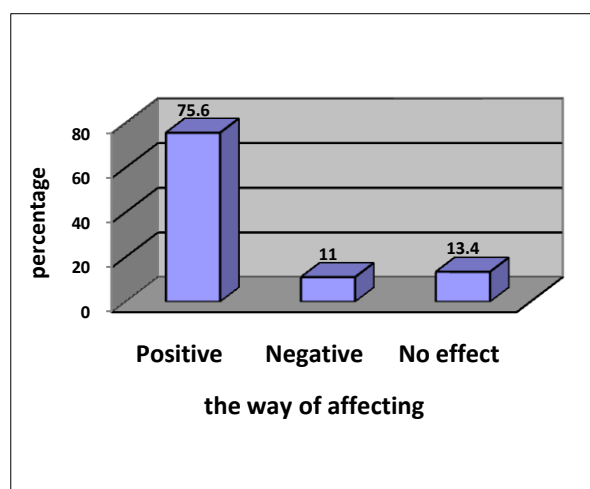
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between perceived learners' behaviours in GW and perceived improvement in English and perceived motivation to participate in GW were considered using correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) since the variables did not meet the assumptions. As shown in Table 16, there were no significant relationships between learners' behaviours in GW and the perception of GW as helping students to improve their English. Also, there were no significant relationships between learners' behaviours and the perceived motivation to participate in GW.

5.3.2.1.5. Descriptive statistics for the effect of GW on language learners' behaviour

As shown in Figure 8, although 75.6% of language learners reported that GW affects group members' behaviours positively, there was a small percentage (11 %) of learners who reported that GW affects group members' behaviours negatively, and 13.4% reported that GW does not affect learners' behaviours. An explanation for the

Figure 8. *Effect of group work on students' behaviors*



negative behaviours of the language learners in GW will be given from the qualitative data in the next section.

5.3.2.2. Qualitative findings of the perceived negative behaviours in GW

Most of the interviewed learners explained that certain behaviours of some students in GW could lead to negative, poor dynamics in GW. These negative behaviours were: dominant individuals taking over the GW and the reluctance of some learners to contribute in GW.

5.3.2.2.1. Dominant individuals taking over the GW

Language learners said that the dominance in GW of one member or more could cause difficulties in learning for the other students in group. It seems that dominant learners in GW do not give others opportunities to share ideas. To illustrate this point, here is a quote from Aleem:

Sometimes there are students in the group who like to be leaders of the group and do everything in an activity. They want to give the answers to all questions and they do not give others a chance to give their opinion or participate in the group work, so in this case, group work isn't useful for me because I cannot engage with other group members or benefit from their input. (Aleem, Male, 24, Institution A).

Aleem explained that the benefits of GW would not be the same when working with dominant learners. Further, other learners said that dominancy in GW is the most significant difficulty which may lead to emerging negative experiences for the learner, as well as leading to negative attitudes towards learning. Meshary and Reeman's input illustrates this:

Also, I remember that I was working in a group and one of the group members was trying to take over all the time and do everything, I do not like this in group work (Meshary, male, 20, Institution A).

There are some students who like to control the group, and I do not like selfishness between group members, when someone tries to take over the group. (Reeman, female, 21, Institution A).

To summarise, the findings revealed that the presence of dominant learners in GW is perceived as one of the most significant difficulties of GW. It appears that individuals controlling the GW irritated many learners and affected negatively their

perceptions of GW activities. Also, this could lead to uncooperative work between group members. A second negative behaviour was some learners' unwillingness to work cooperatively in GW, and this will be explored next.

5.3.2.2.2. Unwillingness to work cooperatively in GW

Many learners explained that one of the negative behaviours that affected GW was the lack of cooperation from certain members. They explained that this may negatively affect members' behaviours and relationships in GW. As a result, some of them preferred working individually to working with uncooperative students. Azhar and Zezo explained this:

It [cooperative work] depends on students themselves. I do not like students being dependent on other members of the group; you have to benefit from group work without being dependent on other students to do your work. (Azhar, female, 21, Institution A).

It [group success] depends on the members of the group, sometimes you find some students talk about unrelated topics; they don't care about the discussion the group has to do. I like group members to be cooperative and discuss topics at hand with each other.' (Zezo, male, 30, Institution A).

Azhar explained that unwillingness to work cooperatively and dependency on other members could be problematic in GW. Zezo said that some of the group members do not pay attention to the group discussion and talk about unrelated topics and this leads to uncooperative groups. Also, in another quote, Zezo explained the importance of cooperation in GW, where all group members are encouraged to participate. He said:

Sometimes I prefer individual learning and other times I prefer group work, it depends on group members. But I think if we do group work we should cooperate with each other because if there is good cooperation, every student can participate in group work (Zezo, male, 30, Institution A).

A further important point raised by the learners interviewed was that the differences in students' characteristics may affect negatively the type of cooperative work. It appeared that in GW some learners tend to rely on others to complete the work.

Some learners explained the reasons and results for the dependency on other in GW.

Reeman and Izza said, respectively:

The different personalities of group members can be a problem, I sometimes find that not all group members cooperate with the others and there are some students who rely on other members in the group. 'If I'm in a group and other students do the work, why should I do it?' seems to be their approach. (Reeman, female, 21, Institution A).

If a student pronounces something wrongly, she will not try again to get the right pronunciation, instead she will stop trying and asking others to help her. (Izza, female, 26, Institution E).

Reeman explained that the differences between learners' personalities could be the reason for uncooperative work and dependency on other learners. Izza asserted that in GW students may not try to find the right answer by themselves: they ask others to help them without making any effort on their own. Also, in another quote, Izza explained the negative characteristics of some learners that could lead to uncooperative work. She said:

When learning by yourself, you need to pay attention to the teacher, but when learning in a group, the group members can also explain things and you can understand better. BUT, IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE GROUP MEMBERS. If some of them are selfish and keep the information for themselves, you don't benefit much from group work. ... In a group, there will always be some students who refuse to cooperate ... Also, if you ask some students to explain things that you did not understand, some of them won't tell you, they keep the answer to themselves. (Izza, female, 27, Institution E).

Izza explained that GW could be more beneficial since students can clarify some elements of the language to understand better. However, if group members were not cooperative, the supportive element of GW was lost and learning did not happen.

To summarise, the findings revealed that many language learners explained that cooperation in GW is essential to take advantage of this activity. They explained the reasons for this lack of cooperation, mainly to do with certain learner characteristics and some learners' dependency on other learners, and the effects of uncooperative work.

5.3.2.3. Conclusion

This section has explained the perceived students' roles in GW and the perceived importance of their role in GW. A correlation test was conducted between these two items. There was a positive relationship between one of the student roles – 'speaking a lot in GW' - and perceived improvement in English. Then, the perceived behaviours of learners in groups were presented, and a correlation test was conducted between learners' behaviours and perceived motivation to participate and perceived improvement in English. There was no significant relationship between learners' behaviours and perceived motivation to participate and perceived improvement in English. For more clarification, the interview data explained the negative behaviours of language learners in GW. There were two significant behaviours which were seen to impact negatively on the dynamics of GW. These were: the dominance of a group activity by certain learners and certain learners' unwillingness to cooperate in GW. Another important factor which may affect group dynamics is the size of group and this will be explained next.

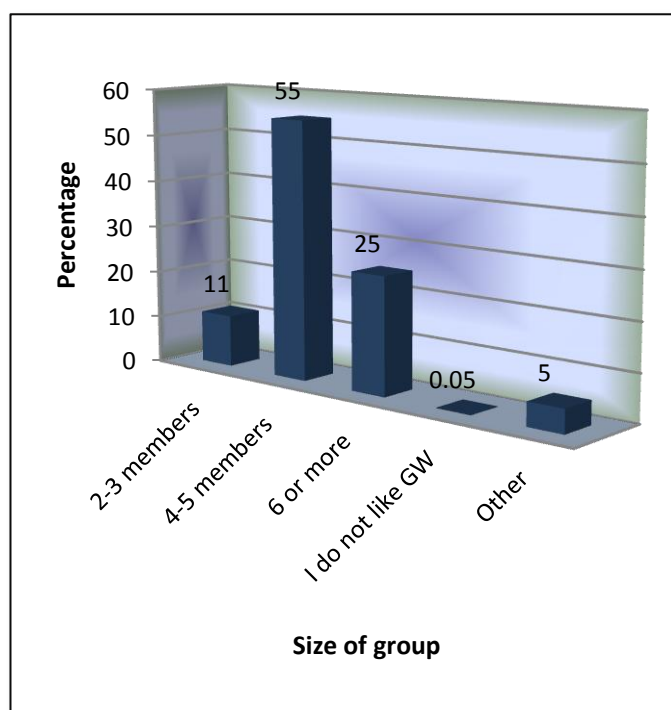
5.3.3. Group size

5.3.3.1. Quantitative findings of the preference of group size

Previous literature (see Chapter 2, Section 2.6.3) found that the group size is an important factor which affects the dynamics of GW. This section will present the students' preference for group size in GW in the present study. Also, the section will report on a group differences test which was used to investigate the differences between three sizes of group (small, medium, large) and students' perceptions in relation to the opportunities to speak English, responsibility in GW, perceived motivation to participate and perceived improvement in English.

5.3.3.1.1 .Descriptive statistics for the size of GW

Figure 9. *Learners' preference regarding group size*



groups at all, and 5% reported being in the 'other' category. Due to the small number of participants in 'I do not like GW' and 'other', these categories were excluded from further analysis.

5.3.3.1.2. Differences between the group size and students' perceptions in relation to the responsibility of learners, the opportunities to speak, the motivation to participate and improvement in English.

The differences between the group size and some perceived benefits of GW (the responsibility of learners, the opportunities to speak, the motivation to participate and the improvement in English language), were explored. The issue under investigation was whether learners who reported preference for certain group sizes also reported differently on the perceived benefits of GW.

A Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to discover the differences between the three sizes of GW and some benefits of GW, namely: 'GW increases the responsibility of

From Figure 9, it appears that language learners differ in their preference for group size in GW. As presented in Figure 9, more than half of learners (55%) reported that they preferred groups of 4-5 members, while 25% reported that they liked to work in groups with 6 members or more, and 11% reported that they liked to work in small groups of 2-3. Only .05% reported that they do not like to work in

learners' (Median=2, Range=4), 'GW provides more opportunities to speak in English' (Median=1, Range=4) 'GW helps learners to improve in English' (Median=1, Range=4), 'GW increases the motivation to participate with others' (Median=1, Range=4).

Table 17. Preferred group size and perceived benefits of group work

	Preferred size of group	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig
GW helps students to be more responsible in their learning	2-3 members	17	66.68			
	4-5 members	93	79.24			
	6 or more members	45	79.72			
	Total	155		1.304	2	.521
GW provides more opportunities for students to speak in English	2-3 members	18	72.44			
	4-5 members	92	79.81			
	6 or more members	46	78.25			
	Total	156		.487	2	.784
GW helps students to improve their English	2-3 members	20	71.45			
	4-5 members	95	87.27			
	6 or more members	46	72.21			
	Total	161		7.213	2	.027
GW increases motivation to participate with other learners	2-3 members	18	73.73			
	4-5 members	93	87.19			
	6 or more members	46	74.65			
	Total	175		4.348	2	.114

As shown in Table 17 above, the rankings were very similar in the three groups in relation to all four perceived benefits of GW. There were no significant differences in relation to items 'GW increases the motivation to participate with others'' ($\chi^2=4.348$, $df=2$, $p=.12$), 'GW provides more opportunities to speak English' ($\chi^2=.487$, $df=2$, $p=.79$), and 'GW helps students to be more responsible in their learning' ($\chi^2=1.304$, $df=2$, $p=.53$).

However, the test revealed a statistically significant difference in the perceived improvement of English language and preferred size of group ($\chi^2=7.213$, $df=2$,

p=03). It appears that the medium sized group is the highest mean rank between the other two groups. Thus, learners who reported that they like to work in medium sized groups also reported that they improved more in English language.

5.3.3.2. Conclusion

This section has presented the students' perceptions for the preferred group size. The findings revealed that the majority of learners preferred to work in a medium group, with 4 to 5 members, while a small percentage of learners like to work in smaller groups. Further, there were significant differences in the three sizes of GW, since learners who like to work in medium groups seemed to report more improvement in English. As group size seemed to be an important factor affecting the dynamics of GW, group composition seems also essential to achieve an efficient dynamics for GW. This factor will be explored in the next section.

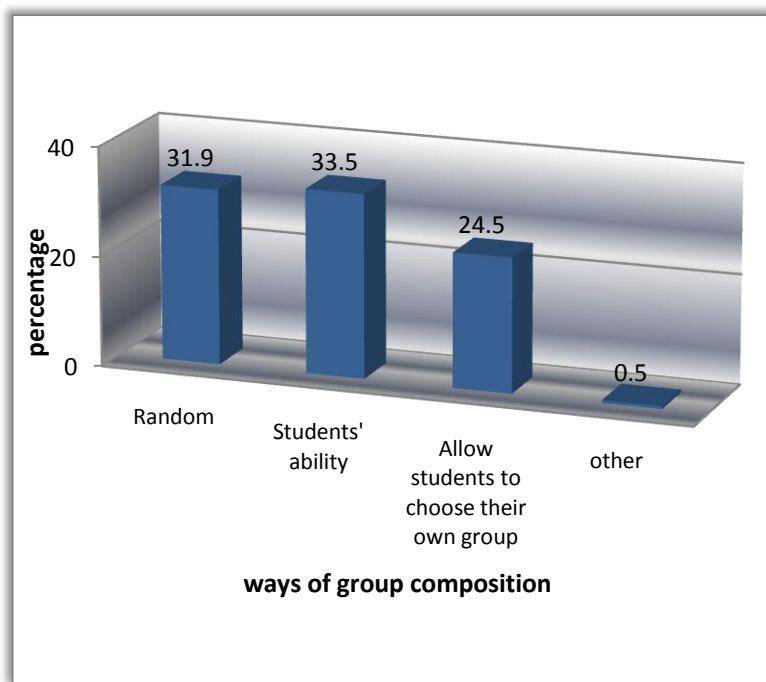
5.3.4. Group composition

Since group composition seemed to be an important factor affecting the dynamics of GW, as emerging from the literature, a question was asked in the questionnaire to explore language learners' preference for group composition. Three approaches were given in the questionnaire: Random selection of group members by the teacher, selection by students' ability and allowing learners to choose their own groups. Since the questionnaire revealed that the majority of learners reported that they considered the students' ability important, a question was asked in the interview to clarify this in detail.

5.3.4.1. Quantitative findings of group composition

5.3.4.1.1 Descriptive statistics for the ways of GW composition

Figure 10. Learners' preference regarding group composition



As shown in Figure 10, grouping by ability was favoured by most learners (33.5%), while 31.9% of language learners reported that they liked the random selection of groups, and 24.5% of learners reported that they liked to choose their

own groups. Only .5% chose the 'other' category, so this category was excluded from further analysis.

5.3.4.1.2. Differences between the language learners' proficiency level and preferred group compositions

Differences between language learners' level of ability in English and preferred group compositions were considered using a Chi-Square test. The issue under investigation was to find out whether beginners differed from the other two levels in preference for the three ways of GW composition.

Table 18. Cross-tabulation of the three levels of English (beginner, intermediate, advanced) and preference for the three ways of group classification.

			Preferred Way for Group Composition			Total
			Random selection by teacher	Group by students' ability	Students choose their own group	
Level of English	Beginner	Count	35	27	28	90
		% within Preferred Way for Group Composition	60.3%	44.3%	62.2%	54.9%
		% of Total	21.3%	16.5%	17.1%	54.9%
	Intermediate	Count	17	22	15	54
		% within Preferred Way for Group Composition	29.3%	36.1%	33.3%	32.9%
		% of Total	10.4%	13.4%	9.1%	32.9%
	Advanced	Count	6	12	2	20
		% within Preferred Way for Group Composition	10.3%	19.7%	4.4%	12.2%
		% of Total	3.7%	7.3%	1.2%	12.2%
Total		Count	58	61	45	164
		% of Total	35.4%	37.2%	27.4%	100.0%

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.49.

Table 18 presents the cross-tabulation for the differences in learners' level of English and preference for different ways of group composition. There were no significant differences between students' level of English and preference for different ways of group composition, $\chi^2(1, n = 164) = 7.96, p = .09$.

To summarise, the findings revealed that the majority of learners preferred students' language ability to be the main factor in group composition. It was expected to find differences between learners at different levels of English and preference for the three types of group composition. However, there were no differences between students at different levels of competence (beginner, intermediate and advanced) and preference for group composition. For more clarification, the interview data further explains learners' perceptions of the importance of students' ability in relation to group composition.

5.3.4.2. Qualitative findings of perceived group composition

Due to the fact that the majority of learners reported that they preferred groups to be formed based on students' ability, a question was asked of students participating in the follow-up interviews to explore further the perceptions of language learners on student grouping by ability. Learners identified two ways of grouping: same ability grouping and mixed ability grouping. The majority of interviewed learners preferred to work in same ability groups, while others preferred mixed ability grouping.

5.3.4.2.1. Preference for same ability groupings

Some students seemed to prefer groups based on students' similar levels of ability in English, as they thought this may increase the opportunities for cooperative work. In these students' view, the group lends itself to stronger relationships if group members have similar levels of ability. Other arguments put forward by students included the fact that low ability students will not be dominated and will achieve greater learning results if they are with members of the same or similar ability as themselves. Also, students thought that ability-based groupings may help the teacher judge the learners' work more fairly. These views will be discussed in the following section in detail with quotes from the interviewed learners.

Several students believed that working with students of same ability helps group members to cooperate since they can share similar knowledge. They also said that mixed ability groupings may lack cooperation since group members have distinct knowledge in terms of vocabulary and grammatical skills, so GW may stand as a barrier for low ability students to share their ideas with others. This may be because low ability students may feel that they have less knowledge than others and they may feel inferior in relation to their skills. One student, Izza, said of this:

I prefer same ability grouping (...) because in the same ability groups you can cooperate better with other members of the group, but in mixed ability groups it is difficult to cooperate with higher or lower ability students. For example, if you work with high ability students, you feel embarrassed because you don't have as much vocabulary as them. (Izza, female, 26, Institution E).

Learners perceived that the relationship between group members is the key to a successful cooperative group. Many thought that the relationship between students in same ability groups is stronger than in mixed ability groups. Thus, cooperative learning may be more prevalent in same ability groupings. Some learners claimed that in mixed ability groups, the high ability students may take over the tasks, so GW may be less effective for some students. This is what two students, Waseem and Meshary, had to say on this:

A good group will have students at the same or similar level of (language) ability, they may help each other. If there is one member of the group with higher level of language ability than other members, he or she may do everything for them, and in this case the group will be less successful ... There should not be great differences between students in terms of their level of English; group members should have a similar level of ability to enable them do work together.(Waseem male, 25, Institution A).

There is a problem in groups if there are both high and low ability students. High ability students take over the group and complete all tasks. This may lead to less learning benefits for the low ability students. But there is a positive effect if the teacher divides the class into groups with same ability students, high ability students in one group and low ability students in another group, so low ability students will try to do their best to get to the higher level. (Meshary, male, 20, Institution A).

Waseem and Meshary suggested that students may have more chances to work cooperatively if the high and low ability students are separated in different groups. They also suggested that the low ability students may achieve better if they work in separate groups instead of mixing them with high ability students.

Furthermore, some learners believed that in mixed ability groupings the teacher may not differentiate between students' abilities within the group, which might discourage learners from working with other members in the group. Fadwa explained that the mixed ability group may frustrate her since the teacher may expect all group members to achieve the same level and compare them with high ability students in GW. Fadwa said:

I prefer all students to be of equal ability [in a group], because if there are some students of a higher ability than others, the teacher asks us to work at the level of the high ability students, and this may frustrate me. (Fadwa, female, 34, Institution C).

An interesting point is that some learners believed that competition should be considered as a positive issue in same ability groups, since students seem motivated to work cooperatively in order to achieve good results. In line with this, Meshary said:

The teacher should organise groups by level of ability, if the teacher distributes the group in this way, this may increase competition between students and encourage them to work. (Meshary, male, 20, Institution A).

To summarise, many students appeared to prefer to work in same ability groupings to increase cooperative learning in GW, also it may strengthen the relationships between group's members. There appeared to be some perceived difficulties in mixed ability groupings, particularly for low ability English students. However, some students perceived that working in mixed ability groupings could be beneficial for them, and the next section will elaborate on this issue.

5.3.4.2.2. Preference for mixed ability groupings

In comparison with the previous group, some students explained that they preferred mixed ability groupings. Mixed ability groupings appeared to help learners participate in more useful learning experiences with their peers, as well as giving them opportunities to exchange knowledge with students of different abilities.

Many students stated that they have better opportunities to exchange knowledge and ideas with others in the group if students they are working with vary in levels of ability. They explained that mixed ability groupings may promote better learning outcomes since high ability students can support students of lower ability. Further, some students were of the opinion that a group will not make progress if its members have similar levels of language ability. This is what two students had to say:

Mixed ability grouping has an important role. I prefer group members to be of different ability [in English] because if they are at the same level, the group will not be productive. If you have a group with same ability students, you will not have much progress, but if you have students of different abilities, they will differ in their ideas. (Reeman, female, 21, Institution A).

I prefer a mixed ability group because if I can't understand something I can find someone else in the group to explain it to me. (Razan, female, 15, Institution C).

Despite many learners suggesting that same ability groupings would be beneficial especially for low ability English learners, some learners mentioned that being part of a mixed ability group is useful for low ability students, as they can learn from other knowledgeable learners. Jana explained:

In group work, higher ability students should work with lower ability students, because this will help lower ability students. If we divide groups so that two higher ability students work together and two lower ability students work together, it won't be good for either, because the lower ability students cannot benefit from other lower ability students ... although very low ability students should not work with high ability students. The differences in students' ability should not be too wide. (Jana, female, 27, Institution D).

Despite this, many learners believed that mixed ability grouping is more beneficial than same ability grouping. Some learners asserted that the differences in knowledge and level of ability in English between students should not be too marked, as considerable differences in knowledge may make it difficult for students to learn in such a group. Waffia explained:

It is better to have different language abilities in a group. I have studied in classes with mixed ability groups, and that was good for me, although I do not like it when there are big differences between students. (Waffia, Female, 27, Institution E).

A surprising point is that two students, Meyada and Mohannad, said that they preferred to be in a group with students who are of lower language ability since this gave them a chance to speak more and to practise more English. Also, they explained that working with low ability students gave them a chance to do their work instead of being dominated by high ability students, who could take over. Meyada and Mohannad, respectively, explained:

I prefer to work with low ability students, because I do not like to depend on other students. If I work with low ability students I will depend on myself, and I also like the group to be mixed ability. (Meyada, female, 24, Institution D).

I like to work with students whose abilities are lower than my ability, it gives me a chance to speak more. (Mohannad, male, 29, Institution C).

To sum up, many students believed that working in groups with mixed levels of ability in English could help them gather varied knowledge from different learners and improve their learning of English. They also explained that mixed ability groupings could be beneficial for language learners and particularly for low proficiency students.

5.3.4.3. Conclusion

This section has discussed learners' perceptions on different types of group composition. From the questionnaire results, it appears that the majority of learners preferred the approach where students' ability is taken into account when deciding on group composition. The interview results explained further the differences of learners' views on ability based grouping. There were two different approaches: first, some learners prefer same ability grouping as they think it increases cooperation between learners and strengthens the relationship between learners. Second, some learners prefer mixed ability grouping to be able to exchange knowledge with learners at different levels of competence in English. Group task is another factor that affects students' learning in GW, and this factor will be explained next.

5.4. Group task

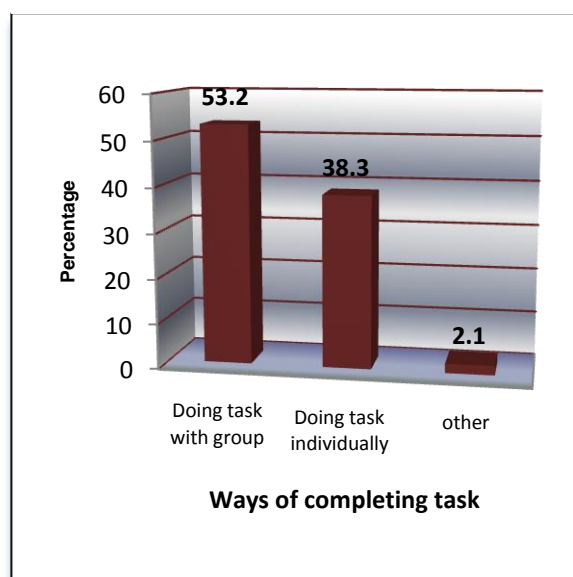
Tasks that group members are asked to work on are an important factor which can affect group work in a considerable way. This section will look first at students' preferences for different types of language tasks. Second, the perceived benefits of group tasks will be presented, as emerging from the questionnaire results. Also, students' perceptions of the benefits of certain group tasks will be discussed. In the final part, preferences for type of task, places to complete the task and the preferred place for doing group tasks and the preferred ways of completing the task will be discussed. Finally, the preference for the kind of task for which it would be useful to be in groups will be discussed.

5.4.1. Quantitative findings of preferred way of completing language tasks

A question was asked in the questionnaire to explore the learners' preference for completing language tasks in groups or individually.

5.4.1.1. Descriptive statistics for the way of completing the language task

Figure 11. Preferred way of completing the task



As seen in Figure 11, it appears that the majority of learners (53.2%) preferred to complete a language task in groups, while 38.3% reported that they preferred to complete tasks individually. Only 2.1% of learners reported being in the 'other' category, so this category is excluded from further analysis.

5.4.1.2. Differences between preference for individual/group task completion and perceived motivation, perceived self-confidence in group interaction, perceived opportunities to speak in English in GW and perceived improvement in English language.

Previous research (Breen, 1987; Prabhu, 1987; Nunan, 1989) suggested that communicative tasks promote the interaction among learners in order to achieve a specific learning goal. Increasing the interaction in GW may impact on learners' perceived motivation and perceived confidence in GW, as well as on the perceived opportunities to speak English and the perceived improvement in English language. Histograms for the four items included in the questionnaire 'GW motivates students to participate' (Median= 1, Range=4), 'GW provides more opportunities for students to speak in English' (Median=1, Range=4), 'Students feel more confident when interacting with other group members' (Median=2, Range=4) and 'GW help students

improve their English' (Median=1, Range=4) were inspected separately. Since the data was skewed, a Mann-Whitney Test was seen as the most appropriate test.

Table 19. *The mean rank of preference for ways of completing a task (with group and individually) and the perceived motivation and confidence in group work, opportunities for speaking in English and perceived improvement in English*

Items	Preferred way of completing tasks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Group work motivates students to participate with other learners in group	Prefers doing tasks with group	94	74.01	6956.50
	Prefers doing tasks individually	69	92.89	6409.50
	Total	163		
Group work help students improve their English	Prefers doing tasks with group	93	74.73	6949.50
	Prefers doing tasks individually	69	90.63	6253.50
	Total	162		
Students feel more confident when interacting with other group members	Prefers doing tasks with group	91	81.18	7387.00
	Prefers doing tasks individually	66	76.00	5016.00
	Total	157		
Group work provides more opportunities for students to speak English	Prefers doing tasks with group	91	77.04	7010.50
	Prefers doing tasks individually	65	80.55	5235.50
	Total	156		

Table 20. *The Mann-Whitney U values and the P values of different ways of completing the task (with group and individually) and the perceived motivation and confidence in group work, chances for speaking in English and the perceived improvement in English language*

	Group work motivates students to participate in group	Group work help students to improve their English	Students feel more confident when interacting with other group members	Group work provides more opportunities for students to speak English
Mann-Whitney U	2491.500	2578.500	2805.000	2824.500
Z	-3.036	-2.806	-.750	-.533
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.005	.454	.594

As shown in Table 20, there were no significant differences between the preference of the two ways of completing task (in group/individually) and the agreement with the statements ‘GW provides more opportunities to speak English’ and ‘Students feel more confident when interacting with other group members’ (U =2824.5, p= .59; U= 2805, p=.45, respectively). However, there were significant differences in perceptions of improvement in English language (U= 2578.5, p=.005) and the perceived motivation to participate in GW (U= 2491.5, p=.002) and preference for the two ways of completing the task (in group/individually). The mean ranks are presented in Table 19 and the value of Mann-Whitney test is presented in Table 20.

The mean ranks were low in relation to preference for doing tasks in groups and the two items that showed significant differences ‘GW motivates students to participate in the group’ and ‘GW helps students to improve their English’. Thus, learners who said they liked to do tasks individually also thought that motivation to participate and improvement in English increase during GW. This means that although some learners prefer to do the task individually, they also see the benefits of doing the task in a group. It appears that these learners saw GW as useful to motivate them to participate and help to improve in their language acquisition. Through the interviews, preference for individual tasks was explored further and these results will be presented next.

5.4.2. Qualitative findings on preference for individual tasks

Some of the interviewed students explained that doing language tasks individually gave them an opportunity to test their understanding, since they could apply what they have learned. Some said that because the task was related to the lesson, it would be easier to do it alone and would give them a chance to practise their skills:

I do not like to do tasks in group work, because the tasks are usually easy and related to the lesson; it is impossible to get them wrong. You can also apply all that you have learned by yourself. (Lola, female, 19, Institution D).

I think tasks should be individual; group tasks wouldn't be good for me, because if I did not do the tasks by myself, I wouldn't practise what I have learnt If the task is with a group, I prefer listening exercises, because you listen to the English pronunciation. (Hisham, male, 22, Institution C).

Meshary saw that task as a small activity that should not be done in groups as is the case in group projects. He said that if students had to do group tasks, they should be done in the classroom, under the teacher's supervision since some students may not participate when doing group tasks and depend on other members. He asserted that group tasks would be good if there was genuine cooperation between group members, and explained:

I think tasks should not be a group activity, but if it is a project, it's good to do it in group, because some students do not participate in tasks and others do everything. I mean if we have to do the group task in class, it's fine, because the teacher will watch us, but if we have to do it outside class or at home, it's not good at all, because out of class, some students will work on the task and others will rely on other people's efforts, so there is no cooperation. (Meshary, male, 20, Institution A).

To summarise, the findings revealed that there were two main reasons why some students showed a preference for individual tasks. Firstly, learners preferred to apply what they learnt individually to make sure they understood things and could apply new knowledge in practice. Secondly, learners did not seem to like to complete tasks in groups since they could not be sure that all group members would work cooperatively to complete the task. However, the majority of learners reported that they preferred to do tasks in groups. The benefits and the positive effects of group tasks will be discussed next.

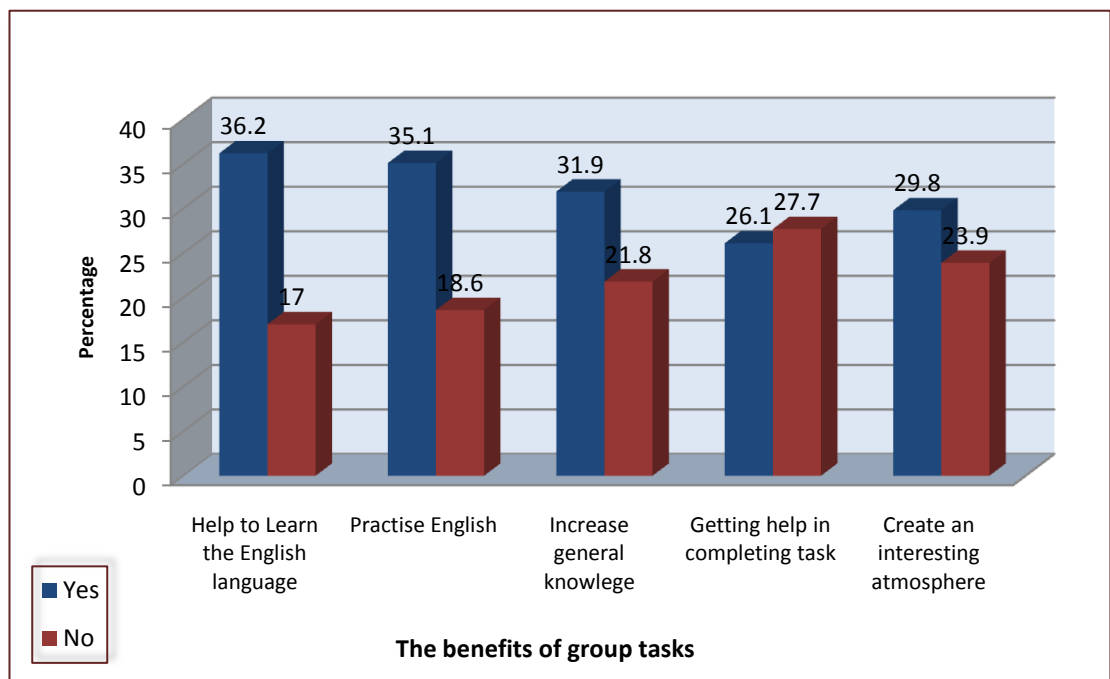
5.4.2. Quantitative findings on the benefits of group tasks

Previous literature (See Chapter 2: Literature review, Section 2.7.) has helped identify possible benefits of group tasks. Thus, five possible benefits were listed in the questionnaire to rate the important benefits of group tasks. The descriptive statistics for learners' views of group tasks will be presented. Also, the interview results for the perceived benefits of GW will be discussed later.

5.4.2.1. Descriptive statistics for the benefits of group tasks

It appears from Figure 12 that the highest percentage of learners reported that the main benefit of group tasks is that it helps learners learn the English language (36.2%); while others reported the main benefits as: practising English (35.1%), increasing general knowledge (31.9%), creating an interesting environment (29.8%) and, finally, getting help in completing tasks (26.1%).

Figure 12. *Perceived benefits of group tasks*



5.4.3. Qualitative findings of the benefits of group tasks

Many learners explained that doing group tasks gave them a chance to share their ideas with other students. They also explained that doing a task in a group allows them to help each other to complete the task, since every member of the group could participate. They also explained that group tasks helped them understand the task better, since they could ask other students for clarification. Waseem mentioned that group tasks helped him improve a range of language skills; while Jeyan explained that group tasks facilitate learning and result in improved English. These are some of the extracts that illustrate the points made:

I cannot do some of the tasks by myself. I do them with my group in class to make sure I get the right answers... I remember that I did a task with my group where I did not know many of the answers, but because we were in a group, we completed all the answers together. (Reeman, female, 21, Institution A).

I find it very useful to do tasks with others, sometimes I ask others, how did you do that? Why did you do it in this way? So I will get lots of knowledge through working within a group. (Mohannad, male, 29, Institution C).

I think group tasks help me learn while I discuss the task with my friends, and to be honest I do not like tasks at all, but within a group, we can discuss a task and I feel I improve my English while doing this (Jeyan, female, 15, Institution C).

Despite the fact that some learners claimed that the language tasks are easy and should be done individually, other learners suggested that while some tasks may be too difficult for many students to do alone, if done in a group, they become more accessible. This is what two students, Mazen and Razan, said:

Group work is useful for me, but I don't like tasks ... I think the more difficult tasks should be done in a group, as students can help each other if anyone doesn't understand ... I think the conversations we have when discussing tasks are good for me. (Mazen, male, 19, Institution D).

Sometimes we do group tasks, and it is good because it helps me understand how I can do the task. If there was no support from the group, I sometimes wouldn't know how to do the task. (Razan, female, 15, Institution C).

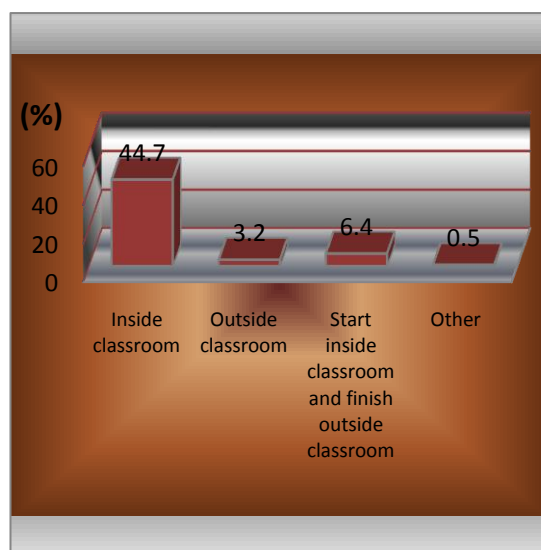
To summarise, the perceived benefits of group tasks were, in order of perceived importance, as follows: help to learn the English language, more opportunities for practising English, increased general knowledge, an interesting learning environment and more opportunities to get help in completing tasks. The interview data revealed that many students believed that doing language tasks in groups could help them understand things better when other students can help.

5.4.4. Quantitative findings on task settings and ways of doing group tasks

Students can often be asked to complete tasks in different settings, such as the class, at home or in the school library. Also, the way in which groups approach a task may differ from dividing a task into smaller activities completed by individual learners, to a group effort in completing the task. The setting and the techniques used in doing group tasks could affect student motivation and cooperation. For this purpose, a question was asked in the questionnaire to explore the preferred setting when doing group tasks of the language learners in this study. Also, another question was asked to explore the technique that language learners liked to follow when they were working on group tasks.

5.4.4.1. Descriptive statistics of learners' preferences for the setting of group tasks

Figure 13. Preferred setting in which to complete group tasks



As summarised in Fig 13, the majority of learners (44.7%) reported that they preferred to complete tasks in the classroom, while only very few learners (3.2%) reported that they preferred to complete tasks outside the classroom. Also, a small percentage of the learners (6.4%) reported that they preferred to start a task in the classroom and finish it outside the classroom, and an even smaller percentage of learners (.5%)

reported being in the 'other' category, so this category was excluded from further analysis.

5.4.4.2. Differences in the preference for the setting of group tasks, and learners' perceptions of the motivation to participate in GW and the importance of group task

The three different ways of doing group tasks and their impact on the perceived motivation of learners to participate in GW and the perceived importance of group tasks were considered using a Kruskal-Wallis Test since the two items were skewed. The issue under investigation was to find out whether the differences in learners' perceptions of the setting for the group task affected the learners' perceptions of their motivation to participate and the perceived importance of the group task.

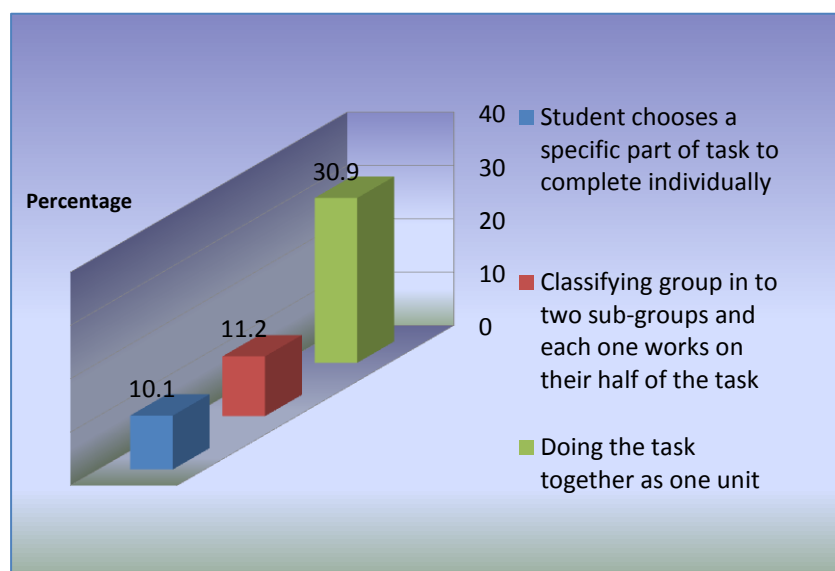
It was expected that the preference for the setting of group tasks may affect the perceived motivation to participate in GW (Median=1, Range=4), and the perceived importance of doing the task in group (Median=1, Range=3). However, a Kruskal-Wallis Test revealed no significant differences between different preferences for settings and the perceived motivation to participate ($\chi^2=5.742$, $df=2$, $p=.057$) and the perceived importance of group tasks ($\chi^2=1.056$, $df=2$, $p=.59$) for a two-tailed test.

To sum up, the findings showed that most language learners preferred to complete group tasks in the classroom. However, there were no differences between the preferred settings for group tasks and the perceived motivation to participate and perceived importance of the group task. .

5.4.4.3. Descriptive statistics for the learners' preferences on the method for completing group task

A specific question was asked in the questionnaire to explore the preferred method approaching a task that learners like to apply when they completed group tasks.

Figure 14. Preferred way of completing group tasks



As shown in Fig. 14, the highest percentage of learners (30.9%) reported that they liked to do tasks together as one unit, while 11.2% of learners reported that they liked to

be split into two sub-groups and have each one work on their half of the task. Only 10.1% of learners reported that they liked to choose a specific part of the task to complete individually.

5.4.4.4. Differences between students' preference for different methods of completing tasks and perceived benefits of GW

Differences between the preferred ways of completing group tasks and perceived benefits of GW were summarised in the following items in the questionnaire: 'GW increases students' motivation to participate', 'GW helps learners exchange knowledge', 'GW allows students to help each other', and 'GW allows learners to be more responsible'. These were considered using a Kruskal-Wallis Test since the variables did not meet the assumption. The issue under examination is whether the preferred way of completing a task in GW affects students' perceptions of these benefits.

It was expected that there would be differences of learners' perception between the preferred ways of doing a task and learners' perception to the following items in the questionnaire: 'GW increases students' motivation to participate (Median=1, Range=4), 'GW helps learners to exchange knowledge' (Median=2, Range=4), 'GW allows students to help each other' (Median=2, Range=4) and 'GW allows learners to be more responsible' (Median=2, Range=4). Results showed no significant differences of learners' perception of different way of doing task and these items: 'GW increases students' motivation to participate' ($\chi^2=.712$, $p=.701$), 'GW helps learners to exchange knowledge' ($\chi^2=4.739$, $p=.09$), 'GW allows students to help each other' ($\chi^2=2.712$, $p=.26$).

The interesting point is that there were significant differences in learners' perception relating to the item 'GW allows learners to be more responsible' ($\chi^2= 7.020$, $p=.03$). For this item, it seemed that mean rank in relation to the method of 'dividing the group into two sub-groups and giving each one responsibility for half of the task' was higher (Mean rank =57) than in the other two methods: 'everyone chooses a specific part to complete individually' (Mean rank=48.53) and 'completing the task together as one unit' (Mean rank=39.86). Thus, learners' who reported that they prefer the way of dividing the group into two smaller groups and making each half responsible for part of the task, they also reported that learners feel more responsible for their learning in GW.

To sum up, the findings indicated that the majority of language learners preferred to work on group tasks together as one unit rather than divide the group into two sub-groups or allow every member to choose a specific part to complete. However, from the learners' perception, the responsibility of GW could increase by dividing the group into two smaller groups and asking each group to work on their half of the task. Another important point is that it seems that being in a group is more beneficial for certain types of language tasks than others. The next section will discuss the preference the language learners expressed for the types of tasks they do in groups.

5.4.5. Qualitative findings on preference for the type of group task

From the interview results, many students suggested that there were certain types of tasks that were better completed in groups. The majority of learners found that conversation tasks were the most useful type of task to be completed in groups, since this could help students practise English with others. Alternatively, some of the learners found that doing writing in groups was beneficial, because all group members can share ideas before writing the task. This section will discuss the reasons for learners' preferences for conversational and writing tasks in GW.

The majority of learners explained that the most useful tasks to be completed in a group activity were conversation-based tasks. They explained that on any other skill people can work individually to improve their English, while speaking can only be practised with others. In addition, speaking in GW allows learners sufficient time to practice with other group members. Some learners believed that not all students had a chance to speak in class if GW was not used. Two examples of students' views follow below:

The important thing for me in a group is the conversation aspect, as it is impossible to do conversation by myself, while I can probably study grammar by myself. Once the teacher divided the class into pairs, and asked us to speak with our partner first, then we had to switch and speak to another student. This was really useful because during the two hours of the class time, I spoke a lot and I learnt a lot from others (Aleem, Male, 24, Institution A).

I think that if I practise speaking by myself, I will get bored, and there is nothing to help me improve unlike in a GW situation, where learners help each other to develop their speaking skills. Also, I don't see any benefit in the whole class speaking activity, since there is only a small chance of me speaking, (Lola, female, 19, Institution D).

Other students mentioned that one other advantage of a conversation task is the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences with other learners. During the conversation tasks in GW, learners often realise their mistakes from the feedback of other students, who also help them learn how to correct them. Some students said that doing conversation tasks in a group helped them learn more about sentence structure and new vocabulary. They believed that speaking in a group helped them learn better, as well as improving their speaking skills. Zezo and Abed explained:

I think the conversation task must be in group, because the group members can exchange knowledge and ideas and learn lots of things from others. (Zezo, male, 30, Institution A).

I like conversation tasks, because it helps me a lot when I speak in a group with other students; it helps improve my speaking, as well as learning from others. (Abed, male, 26, Institution A).

On the other hand, some learners suggested that doing writing tasks in GW was useful when learning English. Learners mentioned that writing in a group helped them improve their own writing by helping their peers in the group. They also suggested that learners may improve other skills such as speaking when they write in a group, since they may discuss a task before starting to do any piece of writing. Meshary explained that doing writing tasks in a group could help students later on in writing good essays, while Razan said that she improved her writing by getting help from others:

I prefer writing tasks, I like it when every member suggests ideas and we write an essay together. When groups do writing together, there will be lots of information and ideas, so you can write a good essay. (Meshary, male, 20, Institution A).

I prefer reading and writing tasks. I have improved in writing because I often help my friends in the group in writing tasks. It is good because we all participate in tasks and I help my friends. (Razan, female, 15, Institution C).

To sum up, it seems that many learners prefer speaking tasks to be done in groups since this gives them increased opportunities to practice English. Some learners believed that conversation tasks could help them improve their speaking skills. On the other hand, some students believed that it is also useful to do writing tasks in groups as it helps them improve their writing skills as well as other skills such as speaking, since students could discuss what they would write beforehand.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has presented students' views on the significant factors that affect learning in GW. The learners' preference for the teacher's roles while they work in groups was explained first. The quantitative results indicated that many learners preferred the teacher to listen to groups and monitor learning, and the qualitative

results explained in more depth learners' perceptions on the specific roles of the teacher in GW. Then, the results on students' views on the dynamics of GW were presented. There were three concepts related to the group dynamics. These were: the students' role and behaviour in GW, group size, and group composition. The data on students' perceived roles and behaviours indicated that many language learners like to contribute in GW. There was a small positive relationship between the positive behaviour of learners and perceived improvement in English. This result means that positive behaviour in GW could help learners improve their language skills. The qualitative results explained the effect of the perceived negative behaviours in GW. The results on preference for group size indicated that the majority of learners like to work in medium-sized groups. There was a significant difference between preference between the three sizes of GW and perceived improvement in language. It was found that the learners who reported preference for medium-sized groups also reported an improvement in language. The results on preference for group composition indicated that the majority of learners prefer the students' ability to be taken into account in group composition. The qualitative results showed that some learners preferred same ability groupings while other learners preferred mixed ability groupings. Group task was the last important factor that was discussed. The results on the preference for group task indicated that the majority of learners preferred to complete language tasks in groups. Many of them preferred to work on group tasks in the classroom rather than outside the classroom. Despite the fact that many learners preferred to work on group tasks as one unit, it seemed that dividing the groups into two smaller groups and having each group complete a specific part of the task helps learners to be more responsible in GW. Finally, the qualitative results for the preference for type of tasks that learners liked to complete in GW were explained. Many of the learners preferred conversation tasks to be done in groups, while some of them liked to work in groups on writing tasks.

CHAPTER 6

OVERALL RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Overview

In this chapter, the research findings as they emerged from the data analysis are discussed. The discussion considers to what extent the findings from the data answer the research questions, as well as whether or not they support previous research. From the data, it was possible to deduce seven major findings and these are initially listed with their corresponding sub-findings. Then, the findings have been summarised in direct relation to the research questions. Discussion of the major and main findings will be presented later in this chapter.

6.2. Research findings

Question 1:

(A): What are the explicit benefits that Saudi EFL learners identify in relation to group work?

(B): What are the perceived impacts of these benefits on students' learning?

Finding 1: Language learners identified significant cognitive and emotional benefits that affect learning in GW. Language learners explained the positive impact of the identified benefits on their attitudes to learning in GW. There were positive relationships between some of the perceived GW benefits and self-declared of practice English and perceived improvement in students' English language skills.

Question 2:

(A): What are the difficulties of group work that Saudi EFL learners identify in the learning context?

(B): How are these difficulties perceived by Saudi EFL learners?

Finding 2: Language learners identified important difficulties of GW that related to learning and emotional issues. Language learners explained the negative impact of these difficulties on their attitudes to learning in GW and on their achievement in learning the English language.

Question 3:

(A): What are the factors that students identify as significant in learning in groups?

(B): How are these factors perceived by Saudi EFL learners?

Finding 3: Language learners perceived that listening to students and monitoring learning is the ideal role for the teacher when students are involved in GW learning. Learners clarified some important roles of the teacher when students work in groups. These were: supervisor, assistant and bystander.

Finding 4: The majority of the learners considered their role in GW as contributing actively to the group. Language learners thought that students' behaviour in GW affects the group dynamics. It seems that positive behaviour in GW helps learners to improve their English. Learners explained the negative impact of undesirable behaviours from other group members on their own learning and motivation.

Finding 5: The majority of the language learners thought that a medium-sized group (4-5 learners) is the ideal size for successful GW. There was a positive relationship between preference for medium sized groups and perceived improvement in English.

Finding 6: The majority of the learners seemed to prefer an approach where students' ability is taken into account when deciding on group composition. Learners explained their preference for this ability-based approach. There appeared to be two different views, one in which learners preferred same ability grouping and another in which learners prefer mixed ability grouping.

Finding 7: The majority of the learners preferred doing language tasks in GW. Language learners identified the significant benefits of group tasks and gave clear reasons for their preference. The classroom was the preferred place for doing group tasks. Learners perceived that doing group tasks in the group as a whole is the ideal technique for task completion. Conversational and writing tasks were perceived as the most important types of task that should be completed in groups.

6.3. Discussion of the findings

Finding 1: Language learners identified significant cognitive and emotional benefits that affect learning in GW. Language learners explained the positive impact of the identified benefits on their attitudes to learning in GW. There were positive relationships between some of the perceived GW benefits and self-declared of practice English and perceived improvement in students' English language skills.

Finding 1 revealed that several students perceived that GW had clear benefits for learning a foreign language. Getting help in learning and asking others for clarification were perceived as the most important benefits of GW for learning. These benefits seemed to increase individual learners' interaction with other members. This finding is in line with previous research. Hertz-Lazarowitz (1989) found that cooperation and helping or explaining to another learner in response to the other learner's need for help are considered as essential behaviours for peer interaction and problem-solving. Learners explained that more interaction could help them be aware of their mistakes since they may get feedback from others. Thus, GW helps students develop their accuracy in the target language. This result could support previous research (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994) on the interaction

hypothesis in L2 acquisition, which suggests that interaction in the classroom may help language learners get the appropriate feedback to enable them to identify grammatical errors and drive them to produce accurate utterances in the target language.

It appears also that group interaction helps learners increase their knowledge by asking other members for clarifications, if needed. As Long (1983) explained, the most important way for language learners to increase their input is by interactional adjustment, i.e. asking others to clarify problem utterances, through which other learners provide repetition, elaboration and simplification of the original utterances. Also, other previous studies (Gass and Varonis, 1985; Doughty and Pica, 1986) found that successful interaction helps learners acquire new forms of the target language. Therefore, receiving help from other learners in GW helps them interact with each other. Learners in this study were of the opinion that group interaction helped them improve their English language skills.

One other important finding is that since it was not easy for most students to ask the teacher for clarification, many of them preferred working in groups in order to have an opportunity to ask other students to facilitate their understanding. They considered 'facilitating understanding' as very beneficial and a clear outcome of GW. A possible explanation of this can be found in previous research (Damon, 1984; Bejarano, 1987), which showed that in group interaction: students may speak at a level that other students can understand; students can confront each other and try to resolve any disagreements; students can get feedback from other students and can accept more easily corrections from other students. All of these findings play a role in the effectiveness of collaborative work in groups. Another possible reason for learners' preference for GW is that some students may feel anxious in teacher-led situations, which may prevent them from asking the teacher to repeat things to clarify their understanding. This study revealed that most students feel comfortable in situations which may enable them to get help from their colleagues in the classroom. An additional reason for preferring GW is that learners can add more knowledge and understand better when they listen to other learners asking questions and answers

that they receive from other group members. Thus, GW may help students improve their understanding of the information heard from other learners.

It seems also that, in GW, students scaffold each other in order to achieve the required knowledge for learning the target language. Vygotsky explained the meaning of scaffolding, in which an adult scaffolds a child's learning to facilitate the cognitive process by providing help to facilitate understanding or a task. Vygotsky (1978: 128) asserted his perspective of cooperative learning and points out that children need to interact with able members who are familiar with their level of understanding and can provide support to get them to the next level of cognitive development. This assistance is referred in the literature as "scaffolding". In research on GW, Donato (1988) investigated what "collective scaffolding" means when learners work in groups. In "collective scaffolding", there is no identified expert between the group members: all members scaffold their resolution to the problems which they encounter in the language.

It appears that Vygotsky's theory is applicable to the use of GW in EFL learning, since learners need to go through similar processes of scaffolding which help them learn English as they learnt their first language. In this context, GW seems to help learners learn English in a natural way, as it allows them to scaffold each other to develop the cognitive functions for learning the target language. Further, findings of the current study revealed that scaffolding in GW helps some students cope better with the difficulties of learning a foreign language, since groups' members work cooperatively to solve their learning problems. This finding is in line with previous work (McDonnell, 1992), which found that cooperative work is the appropriate approach in the second language classroom, since students can help each other solve the problems they encounter.

Another interesting result is that individual group members' familiarity with other members' misunderstandings of specific aspects in the target language often results in swapping assistance when learning in groups, i.e. students help other learners with specific language issues, as well as receiving help with issues that they are not

familiar with. Consequently, both parties could benefit from the process, as helpers may improve in the target language through their teaching and explanation for other members (Lier, 1996; Allwright, 1984) and people who need help will receive the required assistance and solve their learning problems. This seems to be in agreement with previous research (Brown & Palinscar, 1989), which found that, in group settings, students become usually familiar with each other's misunderstandings and they are able to explain concepts in a comprehensible way, so students can often introduce effective scaffolding to their colleagues. Specifically, they may be mainly able to offer assistance which is at the right level, rather than assistance that is far from the learners' understanding or assistance that is not needed. This indicates that giving and receiving explanations works as an essential component of scaffolding in GW (Webba and Mastergeorgeb, 2003).

A further important benefit of GW as emerging from this study is that it helps language learners stay focussed during group interaction. It seems that GW helps language learners to recover the acquired knowledge when they need it. There are some possible reasons that learners are focussed during GW. The first possible reason is that groups are composed of a limited number of students, so it could be easier for some learners to retain the information shared by their colleagues and remember what they heard from other group members. The second possible reason may be the close relationship between group members, as was explained by some learners. It seems that individuals' concentration may increase in cohesive groups, because members create a successful interactional setting. This is in line with previous studies (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003), which found that the positive interdependence among all group mates encourages them to help each other and put more effort to achieve group success. They also noticed that students in a cohesive group have a strong relationship which helps them exchange and share their thoughts, participate and talk more, and work easily with each other. Another possible explanation for staying more focussed in GW is that all participants need to be prepared to talk in a group, since the turn to talk will change more often from member to member. This is in contrast with the teacher-centred approach, where the teacher talks most of time and there is little chance for students to have a turn.

Adding to the previous benefits, GW introduces more opportunities for students to practise English with others learners. This result supports Foster's claim (1998) that GW is beneficial for language acquisition because students learn and practice the language in a less threatening environment and the group encourages them to produce output and acquire input through interaction. A study by Swain (1995) found that producing more output in the target language helps the language learners to notice the accurate form of the target language, assess their own use of the language and reflect on their learning of the language. It seems that GW helps students produce more output and reproduce more accurate forms since they notice their own language skills (Swain, 1995) and this could help them to make more progress in the English language. Another important point from the current study is that language learners identified that GW maximises the time in the classroom in which many students can engage in group conversation, as shown also by previous research (Long and Porter, 1985). This means that GW creates more chances and sufficient time for language learners to practise English with their colleagues.

In connection with the previous benefit, there was a positive relationship in the data between declared frequency of practising English and GW seen as introducing more opportunities for learners to speak English. Additionally, some of the language learners explained that communication and practising English with group members helped them speak in the wider social environment outside the class with non-native speakers. It seems that GW offers chances for students to prepare themselves to communicate in a wider social environment. Thus, it appears that language learners use both modified interaction which helps them achieve a communicative goal in foreign language situations, and social interaction which helps them be good communicators in any social setting (Bejarano, 1997).

A further important finding that deserves consideration is the emotional benefit to learners of GW. Motivation was perceived as the most significant emotional benefit of GW. The findings revealed that there are several factors which help students to be motivated in GW. The first factor is that there is competition in GW, in which all

members try to do their best to contribute to the group success. Thus, it seems that the competitive atmosphere could result in increasing the motivation in GW. This is seen as a positive factor, since language learners' responsibility for learning may be enhanced if the motivation is increased in GW. A previous study by Cheng (2006) found that GW seems to motivate many learners to work hard and be responsible in their learning. The second possible factor is that, as some students stated, the method used to assess students' work could motivate students to work cooperatively. Language learners differed in their views with regard to GW assessment, some of them thought that assessment should be done individually for every group member and others thought that assessment should be as one unit for all group members. Both of these methods, as learners also noticed, affect positively and negatively on the way the group members work together. Martinez *et al.*, (2002) found that it is important to investigate students' attitudes with regard to GW assessment, since attitudes play an important role in group success. Thus, it seems useful for teachers to take into consideration students' perceptions of different types of group assessment (individual or as one unit) in order to promote motivation in GW.

Language learners explained that GW helps students of lower ability since they often needed other learners to support their learning and motivate them to work cooperatively. This result is in agreement with Ghaith and Yaghi's findings (1998) that low ability students benefit more from cooperative learning than high-achievers. Thus, it seems that cooperative learning in GW could lead to increased student motivation in EFL. In the current study, there was a positive relationship between the motivation to participate in GW and the perceived confidence in group interaction. Also, there were a positive relationship between the perceived motivation to participate, perceived confidence to interact and perceived improvement in English.

Another interesting finding is that GW appears to make the learning environment more enjoyable for language learners. It appears that the different activities in GW are possibly an aspect that makes students enjoy their learning more. Another possible explanation is that GW helps students make new friends and build new social relationships with their group members. Further, the slightly competitive

atmosphere may make students enjoy the learning more. This means that a pleasant environment in EFL classrooms may impact positively on academic achievement. This result could support a previous study by Martinez *et al.* (2002) which investigated students' perceptions of GW and the results indicated a positive relationship between degree of preference for GW, enjoyment of GW activities and academic results.

In general, this first finding of the study showed that language learners found GW as a beneficial activity in learning EFL. The results of the benefits of GW seem to be in agreement with previous studies. A study by Garrett & Shortall (2002) found that GW could: increase the shared help between students; allow them to practise more the language; increase concentration in learners and engagement with the interaction sitting; reduce anxiety for language learners. Another study by McDonough (2004), which investigated learner-learner interaction through pair and group work in a Thai EFL context, found that several students said that talking to others was helpful for them to learn English. The reasons they gave varied: some indicated that talking to others would help them because their friends could explain what the teacher said; others indicated that it was good to practise oral English; yet another group said that GW was useful for learning vocabulary and grammar. Finally, according to McDonough (2004) pair and small group activities produce learning opportunities through various interactional aspects that occur when learners engage communicatively with other learners in the classroom.

Finding 2: Language learners identified specific difficulties of GW that related to learning and emotional issues. Language learners explained the negative impact of these difficulties on their attitudes to learning in GW and on their achievement in learning the English language.

There appears to be several learning-related and emotional barriers for language learners when involved in GW. Language learners expressed negative views of GW if they felt learning was not achieved. Thus, some of the language learners explained that GW was a waste of time if they spent time working with others without gaining any benefits for their own learning. One possible scenario related to those students

who may be working in mixed ability groupings, where the low ability students may ask many questions to clarify their understanding. Therefore, too many questions might annoy some group members, as this may decrease their chance to participate. Another important point is that learners expressed their negative feelings towards other group members who talked about topics unrelated to the group task. This seemed to be viewed as wasting group time, as well as disrupting other members' comprehension. However, there was a small positive relationship in the questionnaire data between students believing to have more opportunities to speak English in GW, and the agreement with the statement that 'GW is a waste of time'. This result could reveal that although some learners saw GW as 'a waste of time' occasionally, they also saw it as beneficial, as it gave them more opportunities to speak English.

Another point is that some of the language learners perceived that large groups could cause difficulties in learning. Two possible reasons could explain this barrier. First, in a large group, learners felt they did not have enough chances to participate and practise the target language with their group members. Second, the competition between learners may increase as some members try to do more than other members, which may result in uncooperative work. A possible negative result of competition in GW is that the success of the high achievers in the group may result in decreased chances for the low ability students. It seems that competition can be positive if it is between different groups, as this seems to help individuals' motivation and achievements. Competition could be also negative, if it is between members of the same group, as it reduces the cooperation and the support that learners give each other in normal circumstances.

A final potential disadvantage of GW is that a certain level of anxiety in GW may result in lack of cooperation between group members. It appears from the data that some language learners do not like to work in groups where certain individuals feel shy and do not participate. A possible reason is that students of low proficiency in the target language may feel less confident to contribute to the group. Also, if these shy learners were working in a rather large group, the group size may be a barrier for them to communicate with others. The findings also show that there are potential

negative effects to being part of a group in which some members feel anxious. Group members may face difficulties in understanding the needs of these shy students. They may be ignored since they do not contribute much. A further point is that language learners of low ability may speak in their native language rather than using the target language, since it may be easier for group interaction and their own understanding. This could irritate some of the more advanced language learners, as they explained, as speaking in Arabic may be seen as detracting from their academic achievement in English.

Finding 3: Language learners perceived that listening to students and monitoring learning is the ideal role for the teacher when students are involved in GW learning. Learners clarified some important roles of the teacher when students work in groups. These were: supervisor, assistant and bystander.

Despite the diversity of students' perceptions on the teacher roles in GW, the results from the questionnaire and the interview data indicated that learners perceived the supervisory role of the teacher as essential. During the interviews, language learners expressed their willingness to work with other members of the group, but they thought they needed the teacher to monitor their learning and guide them if the group was not heading in the right direction with an activity. Language learners believed that GW is more beneficial if the teacher works as a supervisor and guides their learning when needed.

An explanation for the learners' preference for the teacher to act as supervisor is that students need to be clear and certain of their work heading in the right direction. Teachers can rectify misunderstandings, confusions, and contradictions during an activity, which means that successful cooperative work is more likely to be achieved. Previous studies support this finding. Johnson and Johnson (1990) suggested that teachers should observe groups to supervise the cooperative process for learning to take place. Another study by Thomas (2005) suggested that teachers should listen to groups to make sure that pupils understand the topic and follow the instructions given.

Another important role for the teacher as identified by learners is that of an assistant for learners when they are involved in GW. From the questionnaire data, it emerged that many learners perceived that one other teacher's role is to participate as an equal with the group members in an activity. It seemed that learners believed that teachers can help their learning in GW when doing this. From the interview data, many learners expressed their preference for the teacher to play a facilitating role and help them complete the group activity. Learners believed that having the teacher play this role may be useful for them, as the teacher will be present in case they needed help. This is in agreement with previous studies. Thanh (2008) suggested that the teacher's role in cooperative learning changes from 'knowledge transmitter' to 'knowledge assistant'. Hertz-Lazarowitz and Shachar (1990) found that there were differences between teacher input in cooperative learning and in whole class instruction. They found that teachers increase the positive instructional behaviours in cooperative learning, such as encouraging students to work with each other and helping students to discuss things well.

In connection with the previous result, it was interesting to find that some learners considered that teachers should help groups mainly in some types of tasks, such as writing tasks. However, they showed their unwillingness to work on conversational tasks under the supervision of the teacher. An explanation for this is that language learners may need the teacher's expertise to support their writing skills, while when practising speaking with other students; they need more freedom and a more relaxed environment to engage in conversation.

A small percentage of students saw the ideal role for the teacher when students are involved in GW as being 'a guide on the side'. In the interviews, these learners said that they needed to work with other students in a more relaxed environment, since this makes them more confident to participate in GW. Thus, having the teacher away when they are working with other members may reduce the difficulties and anxieties in group interaction.

Another point made by these students is that teachers should leave groups and check their work when they finish to see how things are progressing, to give suggestions, and to answer the students' questions. This allows learners to work by themselves and encourages them to make an effort to solve learning difficulties between themselves rather than rely on the teacher for help. This may increase students' autonomy and make them more responsible for their learning (Richards, 2006).

Finding 4: The majority of the learners considered their role in GW as contributing actively to the group. Language learners thought that students' behaviour in GW affects the group dynamics. It seems that positive behaviour in GW helps learners to improve their English. Learners explained the negative impact of undesirable behaviours from other group members on their own learning and motivation.

Another important finding emerging from the data is that students' own roles and behaviours in GW can affect the group dynamics. Certain positive behaviours from the group members can promote cooperative learning. From the questionnaire data, it appears that a high percentage of students perceived that their role was to contribute to GW whenever they had a chance to do so. There was a positive relationship between the perceived positive role of students and how behaviours of others were seen in groups, and perceived improvement in English. It seems that most of the language learners involved in the study were willing to contribute to GW and adopt positive roles and behaviours in GW.

Despite the high percentage of students who reported that GW affects the learners' behaviour positively, there was a small percentage of learners who reported that GW affected learners' behaviour negatively. In interviews, learners explained the negative effect on the group dynamics of someone who adopts a passive role in the group. They explained that the unwillingness from some learners to contribute in GW may lead to uncooperative learning, as well as the emergence of negative patterns of interaction, in which learners do not interact much. Another passive role is the dependency of some learners on other group members. This may lead to lack of willingness to cooperate in group and to unfair workloads for some group

members, who are more conscientious and want the group to do well. Finally, another negative role, as some learners explained, is the dominance of the group by some individuals, who would take over the activity. This can also result in uncooperativeness, as the dominant learners do not allow the others to contribute.

There are several possible reasons to explain the above findings. First, those uncooperative learners who tended to adopt a more passive role in GW may not be motivated enough in learning. Richards (2006) found that motivation may increase in cooperative learning because it promotes individual responsibility, making it more likely for students to depend on other members. However, in the current study there was no significant correlation between different perceived roles adopted by students and perceived increase in motivation to participate in GW. Another possible reason for the negative views of GW expressed by some learners could be that those learners had experience of working in non-cohesive groups, in which there were no positive relationships between group members. Previous studies are in line with this result (Evans & Dion, 1991; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003); they found that there was a positive relationship between the cohesiveness of groups and the productivity of GW. They also found that members in cohesive groups tend to participate more and cooperate better with each other. Furthermore, another study (Clement *et al.*, 1994) found that group cohesion helps increase L2 learners' motivation and interaction in the classroom.

The results of this study on the importance of students' roles and behaviours in GW seem in agreement with the findings of Storch (2002), who investigated the nature of pair interaction in an adult ESL classroom. Storch explored the dynamic of pair work and how students' behaviour affects positively and negatively the interaction and its outcomes. The findings revealed that there were four patterns of pair interaction: collaborative, dominant/dominant, dominant/passive, and expert/novice. Two of these patterns: collaborative and expert/novice, showed knowledge transference. However, the pattern of dominant/dominant showed no transfer of knowledge and the pattern of dominant/passive showed missed opportunities in learning.

The findings from the data presented here revealed that several learners were not expecting to gain any benefits from GW, if the group dynamics did not work well. Thus, it seems that assigning a role for each group member is very important for achieving successful GW (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). Cohen (1994) suggested that every member of GW should have a specific thing to do, i.e. ask for and give information, give examples, synthesise and summarise the discussion, or take notes and record information. Cohen (1994) believed that by specifying a role for every member, most group members would be satisfied with their role, and the productivity of the group would increase. However, this is depending on learners' acceptance of their assigned roles. This is also in line with Piaget's work, (1976) who thought that group interaction facilitates learning when students participate as equals, share the interaction, and share each other's opinions. The Piagetian perspective is that collaborative settings in GW offer chances for all students to learn and communicate equally.

Finding 5: The majority of the language learners thought that a medium-sized group (4-5 learners) is the ideal size for successful GW. There was a positive relationship between preference for medium sized groups and perceived improvement in English.

The findings revealed that the vast majority of learners prefer to work in a medium-sized group, composed of 4 to 5 learners. The most likely reason for this preference is that group members might think that medium sized groups combine the advantages of both small (2 to 3 people) and large (6 or more people) groups. Medium sized groups seem to give group members sufficient time to participate. Also, it seems to help group members to complete complicated tasks, since they can divide the work between them and have enough people involved to ask questions and get help, if needed.

It appeared that learners thought that medium sized groups combined some of the benefits of both small and large groups, which previous studies have also found. One advantages of working in small groups is that it maximises class time and increases the level of communication among learners (Long & Porter, 1985). Kutnick *et al.*

(2002) suggested that the small group interaction will involve all members as opposed to only some members, as it is the case in large groups. Ghaith & Yaghi (1998) claimed that small groups supply the language classroom with comprehensible, appropriate, and to some extent accurate input, as well as supporting the communication and the interaction between group members.

On the other hand, Kutnick *et al.* (2002) suggested that, in large groups, learners have the advantage of being able to diffuse the responsibility between them. Richards (2006) adds that, in complex tasks, large groups are better since different learners have different experiences which they can share to complete the task.

It seems that the advantages of both small and large groups are combined in medium sized groups. From the data, there were significant differences between the students' perceptions in relation to the three sizes of group (small, medium, large) and the students' perceived improvement in English. The medium sized group had the highest mean rank, thus, medium sized GW was perceived by learners as the ideal group to help them practise English.

Finding 6: The majority of the learners seemed to prefer an approach where students' ability is taken into account when deciding on group composition. Learners explained their preference for this ability-based approach. There appeared to be two different views, one in which learners preferred same ability grouping and another in which learners prefer mixed ability grouping.

From the questionnaire findings, it seems that the majority of the learners preferred the student ability to be taken into account when deciding on group composition. Thus, peers' ability in English language seems to be an important factor when learning in GW. From the interview data, there seemed to be two different perceptions in relation to ability-based grouping. Although learners spoke about differences between group members, such as amount of life experience, individual characteristics and knowledge, some learners thought that too much variety could cause difficulty in communication and interaction in GW.

Many language learners expressed the view that same ability grouping could help increase cooperation in GW. It appeared, as some learners explained, that it is somehow easier to share the misunderstandings and the difficulties of learning with learners at the same level of competence. In mixed ability grouping, learners may differ in their level of knowledge and language skills, which may stand as a barrier for low ability learners to share their opinions with others. Thus, it appears that same ability grouping leads to a stronger relationship between group members.

Another point is that the disagreement among learners may increase in mixed ability groups, which could affect negatively some students' academic achievement. It seems that mixed ability grouping could be problematic since the high ability learners may control the group and other learners may benefit less from GW. There appear two possible results for working in mixed ability groupings. The first and significant result is that since conflict increases in these groups, learners may not contribute cooperatively in GW (lack of cooperation). Another result is that the differences between group members may cause an even wider gap between students. Further, it appeared from data that learners perceived that mixed ability groupings may frustrate the low ability students. Some researchers believe that when the group includes low and high achievers, the low achievers feel intimidated (Oakes, 1992; Richards, 2006).

However, some learners of low ability perceived mixed ability grouping to be more useful to them. These language learners expressed the view that a same ability grouping would not help them much, because the other learners could not offer new knowledge and they could not learn much from their peers. Therefore, they perceived that mixed ability grouping could help them in receiving help from more knowledgeable learners (Richards, 2006). There may be another explanation for preferring mixed ability groups. Johnson *et al.* (1998) suggested that high achievers can help themselves by helping the low achievers when they work together, as in the process they can improve their memory and deepen their understanding by explaining things to their group members.

Another interesting point is that some learners explained their preference to work with those learners who are of a lower level of English than themselves. Their reason for this was that they thought they had more opportunities to contribute and practise more English in a group where they were the more able students. Also, they said that working with learners at a lower level than themselves helps decrease the chances of dominant learners taking over the group as no one feels very competent. A possible explanation of these students' preference for working with students of lower ability is that they may need more time to practise English in order to become more competent and confident to work with students at their own level. Another possible reason is that these learners may feel confident when they work with low proficiency learners, while they may feel frustrated when they work with learners of a higher proficiency.

It seemed that language learners' preferences varied in ability grouping, some of them prefer same ability grouping while the other prefer mixed ability grouping. There appeared that ability grouping was seen as important issue that concern learners, since it could impact their learning in GW.

Finding 7: The majority of the learners preferred doing language tasks in GW. Language learners identified the significant benefits of group tasks and gave clear reasons for their preference. The classroom was the preferred place for doing group tasks. Learners perceived that doing group tasks in the group as a whole is the ideal technique for task completion. Conversational and writing tasks were perceived as the most important types of task that should be completed in groups.

The questionnaire data showed that the majority of students preferred to do language tasks in groups. The potential reason for this is that learners see many benefits in doing tasks jointly with others. First, group tasks seem to help learners share ideas and experiences with other group members, as they generate a more communicative atmosphere in the language classroom (Ellis, 2003). Second, it appears that group tasks increase input and allow learners to produce more accurate output (Jacobs & Navas, 2000). The last possible reason is that group tasks create a more realistic

environment, which motivates learners cooperate with each other (Jacobs & Navas, 2000).

In summary, group tasks seem to promote cooperation between group members. These benefits of GW and group tasks may facilitate learning and result in improvements in the target language (Foster, 1998). Another important point is that group tasks could be a logical reason for assigning language learners into groups to complete this work. Doveston & Keenaghan (2006) claimed that ‘the democratically agreed group task provided a common purpose and motivation for the students to be involved with each other’ (2006:8). Therefore, group tasks may motivate language learners to work better with other learners to complete the required task.

However, some learners said they preferred to complete language tasks individually. There are two main reasons for this. First it seems that, as some learners stated, the task is a chance for them to test their own understanding of the lesson. Second, language learners explained that cooperation is an essential component for a group to complete successfully a task, and if this is not achieved, learners may not complete the group task. This view may mean that those learners may have been working in uncooperative groups which affected negatively their perception of group tasks. A further important finding is that learners’ preferred place to complete group tasks was the classroom. A possible explanation for this is that learners may perceive that the classroom is the appropriate environment to work with other learners. Also, it could be that learners may feel they need the teacher to supervise or help them to complete a group task.

Another interesting finding is that learners said they preferred to complete group tasks together as one unit. A possible explanation for this is that learners are motivated to work cooperatively with other learners in GW when they do tasks together. Also, they may perceive that the purpose of the group task is to allow all group members to work together. However, from the data, it seems that the responsibility may increase when learners divide the task between group members rather than doing the task as one unit.

Language learners explained that there are some types of tasks which are more appropriate for groups. The findings revealed that the majority of learners considered conversational tasks to be the most appropriate task for groups. There are some possible reasons for this finding. First, it seems that most learners could not get a chance to speak if they were working individually (in a teacher-centred classroom), hence their view that speaking in groups would allow them more opportunities to practise the target language. Many learners mentioned that conversation in groups could make them notice and learn more easily the accurate use of specific words, phrases or grammatical rules. A further important point is that conversations in groups seemed to help some learners apply their learning in a wider social context.

Other learners thought that it would be useful to complete writing tasks in GW. These learners explained that doing writing tasks in groups helped them improve their writing skills since they could learn from other members. An interesting point, as some learners explained, is that doing writing tasks in groups often helped them to improve other language skills, since groups would often have a discussion before they write, as well as read what they have written after they completed the task.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has presented the major findings of the current study and the possible reasons that may explain the ways in which the learners in the study perceived GW. Previous related studies have also been referred to here in relation to each of the findings. In general, it can be concluded that although there were many factors affecting GW in the EFL classroom in Saudi Arabia, language learners identified many benefits of GW which have helped them to improve their academic achievement in English. Language learners found GW a feasible teaching method, which not only enhances the students' communicative competence and increases their motivation to learn English as a foreign language, but also cultivates the students' overall ability as social human beings, giving them the opportunity to share ideas and cooperate in learning with others.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

7.1. Introduction

The first part of this chapter will offer an overview of the study in terms of its objectives, importance, methods used, and summary of the main findings. In the latter part of this chapter, limitations and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

7.2. Overview of the study

Currently, many Saudi researchers are trying to find solutions to the current problems in EFL teaching in Saudi Arabia. Since the early 1990s, researchers (Zaid, 1993; Sheikh, 1993) have criticised the system of teaching methods applied in Saudi schools, which does not produce students who are highly proficient in English. Several authors (AlEssa, 2003; Al-haidari, 2006; Almaiman, 2005; Almotairi, 2005; Sheikh, 1993; Zaid, 1993) have suggested in the last 20 years that the efficacy of EFL teaching methods in Saudi Arabia should be reviewed.

Several authors have suggested the need for more communicative methods in Saudi Arabian EFL classes. As part of this, a possible strategy to address the problems of low English proficiency and low motivation in EFL teaching could be the use of GW as a cooperative learning method. There have been no studies conducted in Saudi Arabia to investigate EFL students' attitudes and perceptions with regard to GW. The study presented here is important since it aims to find out what are language learners' perceptions of GW in Saudi Arabia and explore the significant factors that should be considered by teachers when using GW. Also, because GW learning is a relatively

new method to Saudi Arabia, knowing more about language learners' perceptions may give a clearer understanding of the important aspects of GW. Previous researchers found that to apply GW activities, it is essential to identify the factors which influence students' attitudes towards groups. The study presented here might then be used to deal with language learners' concerns and explore potential approaches to improve students' attitudes towards GW (Martinez *et al.*, 2002).

A mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative) was used in the current study. A questionnaire was used to explore the views of a larger number of students, in relation to their perceived benefits, difficulties and significant factors that affect GW. Students' general views of GW were explored through this questionnaire. At a second stage in the research process, follow up interviews with selected individuals were conducted in order to explore in more detail the results of the questionnaire. The interviews helped illustrate and explain further the important issues identified through the questionnaire, as well as eliciting enough information to enable the researcher to understand the more in-depth reasons for language learners' perceptions of GW.

Although several studies have identified the major benefits of GW, there are students who do not like or enjoy GW (Butts, 2000). Some of the recent studies suggest that students' attitudes to GW could be related to several factors: gender, education level, interpersonal relationships and division of GW (Martinez *et al.*, 2002). Given the range of factors, it is logical to find a diversity of perceptions on GW among students, and often these differences are clearly related to students' personal reasons for studying English (Martinez *et al.*, 2002). This leads to a general dilemma: if GW shows highly beneficial results, it would appear wise to implement GW into the curriculum. On the other hand, if the teacher notices that negative attitudes towards GW among learners, they may become unwilling to adopt GW in class (Martinez *et al.*, 2002).

The major findings of the current study can be summarised in three points. First, language learners identified many benefits of learning in GW which related mostly to

advantages for EFL learning. It has been found that, in learners' view, GW seems to be beneficial for their academic learning, motivation to learn, and the development of knowledge. Learners perceived that GW creates a more friendly and supportive learning environment within which students have more opportunities and more freedom to practice English. Learners have seen that GW creates natural, real life interactions, in which they have logical reasons to listen to one another, asking questions, clarifying issues, and helping each other. These interactions seem to increase the amount of student talk and student participation in the classroom. Therefore, GW increases the opportunities for students to produce and listen to input in the target language and to benefit from modelling and feedback from their peers. Finally, learners generally thought that GW is an efficient teaching method that can increase their motivation by promoting a supportive environment in the classroom that makes learning more enjoyable, lively, and encouraging, and results in enhanced student motivation.

The second major finding refers to the negative effects and difficulties that language learners perceived in GW. These related mostly to learning and emotional aspects and they need to be taken into account by language teachers when planning to use GW. The learners' attitudes towards GW are affected by these perceived difficulties. The main difficulties identified by learners in this study related to the selection of groups and the criteria used for this selection. GW may result in missing learning opportunities of EFL for language learners, if membership is not appropriate. There appears to be a diversity of students' opinions with regard to group composition, and taking into account these preferences when classifying them into groups may reduce the potential difficulties that may impact on learning. Another important issue is that the negative attributes of some language learners may affect GW negatively. The implication for teachers is that they could make an effort to find the aspects that help in promoting cooperative learning in GW to reduce the negative behaviours of some group members as well as promote motivation in learning.

Therefore, discovering the difficulties that learners may encounter could help language teachers to identify some possible solutions to reduce the problems. Several

suggestions on how to improve GW and decrease the difficulties of GW given by the language learners or emerging from previous studies have been explained in the discussion (Chapter 6). Finally, it seems that the consideration of the group difficulties by language teachers could lead to successful achievements in GW.

The third important result is that there were three important factors that could affect both positively and negatively GW: the role of the teacher, factors related to group dynamics and the type of group task. There was a clear diversity of learners' perceptions in relation to the teacher's role in GW. Thus, it is very important for the teacher to consider the learners' point of view with regard to their preference for the role that teacher should adopt to encourage them in GW. Promoting learning in GW could lead to students' motivation to learn cooperatively. This may help learners to adopt an efficient role and contribute to GW, which in turn leads to successful achievements in GW.

The appropriate group composition could help language learners work more cooperatively in GW, which in turn can lead to an increase in positive behaviours and decrease in negative behaviours from learners in GW. The possible reasons for learners' views with regard to group membership were explained by the qualitative data in Chapter 5. GW is a possible teaching strategy that may address the various needs of the students at all levels of ability in English. Many learners assert that cooperative learning is the best option for all learners, because it emphasises active interaction between group members in mixed ability groupings. Both low and high proficiency learners are able to progress at the same time when contributing cooperatively to GW. However, some language learners asserted that same ability groupings could de-motivate them to work in GW, since the differences between learners could stand as a barrier for learners to adopt a communicative approach. Therefore, teachers should give learners an explanation of the benefits of the chosen methods for group classification, to help the learners to gain the required benefits, as well as possibly reducing the difficulties in GW.

The last important finding is that effective group tasks may help language learners to be clear of their learning aims in groups. Also, their knowledge of the English may increase when they communicate with other learners to complete tasks. Thus, it seems important to give the appropriate tasks to groups, in order to promote a communicative environment for the language learners.

The current study found that GW may provide abundant opportunities for EFL learners to continually exchange information, activate background knowledge, and construct new knowledge. Therefore, GW as a cooperative method is highly recommended as a key instructional method in EFL classrooms in Saudi Arabia. Teacher-centred EFL classes could be replaced by student-centred classes, which offer language learners more freedom in learning, and where students learn through communicative approaches and help one another achieve learning goals through real-life environments.

7.3. Limitations of the study

Previous research on communicative approaches and cooperative learning in Saudi Arabia is limited. Thus, it was difficult to find sufficient related studies that investigated these issues within Saudi Arabia, to compare and relate to the findings of the current study. Therefore, the researcher related all the research findings to studies from different countries rather than depend solely on research from Saudi Arabia.

Since no previous research has investigated group work use in EFL classes in Saudi Arabia, it was thought that exploring in-depth learners' attitudes to GW would help to understand its place in the Saudi Arabian classroom. However, one of the limitations of this study is that the researcher was reliant on learners' own perceptions and self-reported experiences, rather than observing directly the use of GW in real classrooms or assessing the learning outcomes achieved through group work by the learners involved. Limited research time prevented not only this direct classroom observation, but also alternative methods of gathering data which would have required more time in the field and resources to conduct the study.

Another limitation to acknowledge is that the study had gathered data on students' own perceived and their achievement whilst taking part in group work was not measured or evaluated directly. As students' perceptions may not exactly indicate the real effect of group work on learners, the findings of this study could be affected by their past positive or negative experiences in relation to GW. The study relies exclusively on students' self-reports, which may not always be an accurate expression of the actual effectiveness of group work. This is a potential criticism of all studies reliant on participants' self-reports. Furthermore, the researcher did not speak to the language teachers who may have had different views from the learners; this is another possible drawback to the overall evaluation.

In addition, the researcher aimed to contact several institutions in different cities to carry out the current research. It was however difficult to gain permission from some language institutions to carry out the study because of policies in those institutions that prohibited research. Thus, only five institutions participated in the current research.

A further limitation is that although the telephone interviews gave clear information on the students' perceptions of GW, the interview data was collected on the phone and therefore missed out on the non-verbal input. The non-verbal input could explain further the findings. Also, the setting at the time of the interview could affect students' answers in the interview. In the telephone interview, interviewed participants were in different settings at the time of the interview, which could have affected slightly their answers.

Also, most of the participants were at the 'beginner' level in English. Thus, there were similarities in most of their answers, which means that there were no big differences between students' levels of English. Therefore, it appears that many of the difficulties reported when working in a group were related to the learners' low proficiency in English language.

Related to the above, even though the diversity of learners' perceptions of GW, generalisations are limited to Saudi language learners in the five participating language institutions. Finally, despite these limitations, the study makes a valuable contribution to what we know about Saudi students' perceptions of group work in the language classroom and gives an insight into what learners like and do not like when involved in group work.

7.4. Recommendations for further studies

The results of the study highlight several points worthy of further investigation. Since the current study explored Saudi learners' perceptions of GW in EFL, the findings revealed that many areas of GW use in EFL in Saudi Arabia need further investigation. Some potential areas for further work are:

- The evaluation of EFL learners' achievement in GW.
- The evaluation of the role of the teacher in GW in the EFL classes.
- The effect on language learners of factors related to group dynamics in EFL classes.
- The study of students' roles and behaviours in GW in EFL classes and how these impacts on learning that take place.
- The effect of group composition on cooperative learning in EFL classes.
- The role of language tasks in promoting learning in GW in EFL classes.
- The evaluation of students' motivation in GW in EFL classes.
- The effect of group size on learners' achievement in EFL classrooms.

These are some of the possible research directions which emerge as relevant from the current study. In the current study, there were clear differences in the language learners' views of GW and it appears that certain factors have affected learners' perceptions. A number of factors which should be considered in future research with Saudi students learning English are: students' proficiency level in the target language; students' motivation in learning English; reasons for learning English; and the setting of learning English (public schools, university, private institution).

7.5. Final remark

By completing this study, which explored Saudi learners' perceptions of GW in EFL classrooms, it is hoped that a new contribution is made to EFL research in Saudi Arabia, which could promote the use of GW as a cooperative learning method in language institutions in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it is hoped that the benefits of GW for learning identified from literature and as seen by the learners, will motivate teachers to use GW in public schools to increase the academic proficiency of EFL learners. Finally, because of the importance of GW in enhancing the quality of EFL teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia, and the limitations of the present study discussed above, it is recommended that future researchers carry out related studies on communicative and cooperative learning approaches in EFL in Saudi Arabia.

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Appendix 1 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please note: Font is smaller than authentic copy to fit the thesis margins

Group Work in Learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia

Please tick the appropriate answer. Thank you very much.

1- Are you..... [tick one]

2- Your date of birth :.....

[Write a number]

- Male.
- Female.

3- What is the highest level of Education that you have completed?

- Intermediate school
- Secondary school.
- Undergraduate.
- Post graduate.
- Other.....

4- What is your level of English that you are studying at currently

- Beginner.
- Intermediate.
- Advanced.
- Other.....

5- Do you have a job?

- Yes
- No

6- Pleas rank in order the reasons for you to study English? [pleas leave blank in front of the sentence that does not apply to your reasons]

<input type="checkbox"/>	To get a job.
<input type="checkbox"/>	To improve my position at work.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I plan to study abroad in future.
<input type="checkbox"/>	To use the language if I go on holiday.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Just for fun.

7- How long have you been learning English for?.....[write a number of years or months]

8- How long have you been learning English in this English language institution?

- 1 – 6 months
- 6- 12 months
- 1- 2 years.
- 2 year or more
- Other.....[write how long]

9- How often do you practise your English language?

- Daily.
- Once – twice a week.
- Once – twice a month.
- I do not practise at all.
- Other.....(write how often)

10- Where do you practise your English most? [tick one or more]

- In class.
- At home.
- With friends.
- Online.
- Another way, write how.....

11- Name three things that you like and 3 things that you don't like about working in a group in an English class. [please write the appropriate answer]

3 things that I like as a group

.....

3 things that I don't like as a group

.....

12- Do you prefer to continue doing a task with your group that you have started from class outside the school? (For example, if the teacher give you a task and you have to submit it in the next day, do you prefer to discuss the task with group outside the class)? [tick one]

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- It is depend on the kind of task

Tell us **why** that is

.....

13- What size of group do you like? [tick one]

- With only 2-3 people in it.
- With 4 -5 people in it.
- With 6 or more members.
- I do not like to work as a group.
- Other.....

14- How do you think group work affects the way in which the group's members are working together? [tick one]

- Positively.
- Negatively.
- No, it does not affect at all.

Tell us **why** you think this

.....

.....

15- Tell us how much you like to work with others in a group.
[please circle the appropriate number for you]

	I like very much			I do not like at all	
	1	2	3	4	5
• With people I know well.	1	2	3	4	5
• With people I don't know at all.	1	2	3	4	5
• With a mix of people I know and people I don't know.	1	2	3	4	5

16- What do you normally do in a group? [tick one]

- I tend to listen to others
- I tend to speak a lot
- I try and contribute when I have something to say
- I don't contribute much, I prefer individual tasks.
- Other.....

17- How important for you is the role that you have in the group? [tick one]

- Very important.
- Important.
- Don't know.
- Not so important.
- Not important at all.

Tell us **why** that is [write your thoughts]

.....

.....

18- Some people find the factors below more or less important when they work in a group. What do you think about these factors?

Please, circle the number under the initials that applies.

[VI= Very important; I=Important; N=Neutral; U= Unimportant; VU= Very Unimportant]

	VI	I	N	U	VU
• The technique of the teacher in organising the group.	1	2	3	4	5
• The other students' behaviour and their respect for others.	1	2	3	4	5
• The type of task we have to work on in the group.	1	2	3	4	5
• The level of ability in English of other students in the group.	1	2	3	4	5
• To have a leader for the group who can organise the group.	1	2	3	4	5
• The assessment of the whole group rather than individually.	1	2	3	4	5

19- Please rate how common are the behaviours below for other students when you work in a group.

Please circle the number under the initials that applies.

[[VC= Very Common; C=common; N=Neutral; U=Uncommon; UN= Uncommon at all]

	VC	C	N	U	UN
• Most students try to be leaders in a group.	1	2	3	4	5
• Most students respect the other members' ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
• Some students do not give other members a chance to participate.	1	2	3	4	5
• Some students do not like other members' ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
• Some students keep their knowledge to themselves.	1	2	3	4	5

20- Based on your experience of studying English, what do you like more when you doing a task [tick one]

- Doing the task with a group.
- Doing the task by yourself.
- Other.....

If you choose 'doing the task with a group' please answer the four questions in the box below [19 – 22], otherwise move to the questions after the box.

21- Where do you like to do the group task?*[tick one]*

- In the classroom.
- Outside the classroom.
- Start in the classroom and finish it outside the classroom.
- Other..... *[please write]*

22- How do you like doing the task in group? *[tick one]*

- Every student chooses a specific part to do individually in the task.
- Divide the group into two groups and each group works on the half of the task.
- Doing the task together as one unit.
- Other.....

23- How important for you are the tasks you get to do when working in a group? *[tick one]*

- The task is very important.
- The task is relatively important.
- I'm not sure.
- The task is not that important.
- The task is not important at all.
- Tell us why:

.....
.....

24- Are there any benefits of the group task? Yes___ No___

If yes, do any of these benefits apply to your experience? *[tick one or more]*

- You learn more about different aspects of the language through a group task.
- You practice more English while doing the task.
- You get more knowledge from other students.
- You Get help from other students if you need with the task.
- Group task makes the learning atmosphere more interesting.
- Other.....*[write your answer]*

25- How do you like the assessment of group work? [tick one]

- Assess all group members equally on the final outcome of the work.
- Assess every member on his/her contribution to the work.
- Other..... [write your answer]

26- How would you like the teacher to organise the groups? [tick one]

- Randomly.
- According to students' abilities.
- Allow students to choose their own groups.

27- What do you expect the teacher to do when you work in a group? [tick one or more]

- The teacher should be there if we need help.
- The teacher should listen to groups and monitor learning.
- The teacher should participate as equal.
- The teacher should not interfere at all.

Tell us why you think this:

.....

**28- Please tell us your answer to the following questions.
(Please circle the relevant number)**

	Strongly				Strongly
	Agree				Disagree
Does group work make you more motivated to participate in the group?	1	2	3	4	5
Does group work help you to become more confident in a group situation?	1	2	3	4	5
Does group work help you to improve your English language?	1	2	3	4	5

29- Please rate the sentences below according to your experiences of group work in the English class. (For each of the four items, circle the number that is appropriate under one of the five categories which applies NT – not true, SU - somewhat untrue, N – neither true, nor untrue, ST – somewhat true, VT – very true).

	NT	SU	N	ST	VT
• Group work encourages students to participate more in class. .	1	2	3	4	5
• Some students are likely to take over in a group.	1	2	3	4	5
• Group work allows students to be more responsible in their learning.	1	2	3	4	5
• Students feel more confident during a group-based interaction.	1	2	3	4	5
• Some students are lazy and they do not contribute much to the group.	1	2	3	4	5
• Group work gives students more opportunities to speak in English.	1	2	3	4	5
• Group work is a waste of time; I prefer to listen to the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
• Group work allows students to help other group members.	1	2	3	4	5
• Group work allows different groups of students to do different activities.	1	2	3	4	5
• Group work allows students to learn from others.	1	2	3	4	5
• Group work allows students to exchange the knowledge with others.	1	2	3	4	5
• Students can practise more language when they participate individually.	1	2	3	4	5
• Some students do not give a chance to other members to participate.	1	2	3	4	5
• Some students in groups make mistakes and others may adopt these mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5

30- Is there anything else that you would like to mention about group work in the English language class?

.....

31- I would like to follow up this questionnaire with a short interview about your experience of group work. This would be a short phone call, no longer than 20 minutes. It would be very useful if you could agree to do this. If you would be interested in participating, please write your details below.

Name.....
 Telephone number.....
 Suitable time to contact you.....

I am looking forward to your reply. Thank you for your cooperation and good luck with your English learning!

Appendix 2 THE LETTER TO INSTITUTIONS

Group Work in Learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia

NAME OF HEAD TEACHER

ADDRESS OF SCHOOL

Dear Sir/Madam (name of head teacher),

Further to our telephone conversation, I am writing to ask if you would be interested in participating in the above research project which I am planning as part of my Master degree at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland. Your language centre/school has been chosen to collaborate with this project because the teachers use group work in teaching English language.

Overview of the project

Group work is a teaching method which allows students to work together, exchange their ideas and support each other's language skills. It is a communicative method that encourages learners to interact with others. It prepares the learners to use the English language outside the classroom. This study will explore what language learners in Saudi Arabia think about the use of group work in classrooms and what would help them learn better. I would appreciate very much your support in conducting this study, which is focussing on improving the provision of English language teaching in Saudi Arabia.

The data collection:

The main method of the data collection will be a questionnaire distributed to language learners and I will follow this up with an optional interview. A sample of the questionnaire is attached with this letter for your information.

Timing, consent and use of data

If you agree for the study to take place, the study will be conducted in one visit to your language institution. This visit will be in March or April 2008. The institution and the students will not be named in the project, everything will be anonymous.

The research will be used for my Masters dissertation and it may be published in academic journals in the future. The findings of the research will be sent to all institutions that participated in the project.

I hope you find the proposal interesting and wish to support this project as a way of improving our knowledge about English language teaching and learning in Saudi Arabia. If you decide to participate, please send back the attached form, called 'Consent Form- Organisations'. If you have any further questions before you decide, please contact me via the email or telephone, details below, or my research supervisor, Dr Daniela Sime, at daniela.sime@strath.ac.uk

Thank you very much,

Nurah Alfares

Research Student

University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland.

Email: nsfares@yahoo.com

Phone number: 00447892717254

Appendix 3 THE CONSENT FORM TO INSTITUTIONS

Consent Form

Group Work in Learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia

Researcher: Nurah Alfares,
Department of Educational and Professional Studies,
University of Strathclyde, Scotland.

Dear head teacher,

Thank you for expressing an interest in collaborating in the above research project. Your contribution is extremely valued.

The purpose of this study is to inform the English language teachers in Saudi Arabia on the uses of group work in the teaching English as a foreign language. This study aims to explore language learners' perceptions of group work. It will investigate also the possible advantages and disadvantages of group work and how it contributes to learning, from the learners' perspective.

We aim to collect data for this study by:

- Distributing a questionnaire to the language learners at all levels in the participated institutions. The questionnaire also invites the students to volunteer for a telephone interview.
- Interviewing the volunteering students, by phone

This research study will be conducted in accordance with the Ethical Guidelines of the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA). These are available at http://www.education.strath.ac.uk/erica/Module1_reader/unit5/SERA_Ethical_Guidelines_final.PDF

In addition to the general points laid out in the guidelines, the research student, Nurah Alfares, wishes to make the following statements with reference to the project.

- **Confidentiality.** The answers to the questionnaire and the interview recordings will not be shared with any other researchers. The respondents' answers and the interview data will be treated confidentially and every effort will be taken to protect anonymity at all times.
- **Right to withdraw.** You have the right to decide for your institution not to take part in this study at any point.
- **Students' consent.** A similar set of guidelines will be adopted in relation to the students directly participating in the study. Their consent will be sought before distributing the questionnaire.

If you have any questions at any point during the study please do not hesitate to contact me, Nurah Alfares (Email: nsfares@yahoo.com or phone: 00447892717254) or my research supervisor, Dr Daniela Sime (email: daniela.sime@strath.ac.uk).

If you understand the information presented above and agree for your institution to become involved in the study, please sign below.

.....

I agree to allow Nurah Alfares to conduct her study in..... (name of your institution). I understand the findings will be used in the dissertation and academic publications, but that the identity of the institution and the students involved will be protected by pseudonyms. I also understand that I have the right to withdraw the participation of our institution at any time.

Name of institution:

The head teacher's name:

Signature of head teacher:

Date:

Appendix 4 THE INSTRUCTIONS SHEET TO STUDENTS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Student,

Before you start completing the questionnaire:

- Read the *Information Sheet* about the study first. This is yours to keep.
- Then, read and sign the Consent Form, if you are happy to participate in the research. Return one copy and keep one copy for yourself.
- Read the questions of the questionnaire and answer all questions, if possible.
- There are some questions that ask you to simply tick the answers that apply to you, and other questions that ask you to write about your experience. If you need more space to write you can continue your writing on the back of the page.
- If you are not sure about a question, you can write ‘I don’t know’ or ‘I’m not sure’ as an answer. But please make sure you have completed all questions.
- If you would like to help me further with the project, please leave your contact details at the end of the questionnaire. Otherwise, submit the questionnaire to the responsible person.

Thank you very much for your help.

Nurah Alfares, Research Student

Appendix 5 THE INFORMATION SHEET TO STUDENTS

INFORMATION SHEET

Group Work in Learning English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia

Dear student,

I would like to invite you to participate in this project. Your contribution would be extremely valuable, please give the time, if you can.

The purpose of the project

The purpose of this study is to find out if group work is useful or not in learning English as a foreign language. This study will examine what students think about the use of group work in classes and if this helps them learn better or not.

Who will be involved?

Students like you, aged 15 and over, who are studying at an any level of English language will be invited to participate. I want to contact students from 5-6 schools and you are in one of the schools I have identified.

Your participation

I would like you to participate in the project because you are a language learner of English. You will only have to answer a questionnaire about your experiences and views of group work. If you would like to help me further with the project, you could also volunteer for a phone interview at the end of the questionnaire.

Confidentiality

The information you give me will not be shared with anyone else, including your teachers. All responses will be treated confidentially and every effort will be taken to protect your anonymity at all times. When writing my thesis or in any publications, I

will use pseudonyms when citing any extracts from your answers to protect your identity.

Right to withdraw

You have the right to decide not to take part in this study at any point. During the interviews, you have the right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and ask for the recording to be destroyed.

If you have any questions at any point during the study please do not hesitate to contact me, Nurah Alfares (Email: nsfares@yahoo.com or phone: 00447892717254) or my supervisor, Dr Daniela Sime (email: daniela.sime@strath.ac.uk)

If you understand the information presented above and wish to become involved in the study, please sign the Consent Form on the following page.

Thank you very much for your time and I hope you decide to participate.

Best wishes,

Nurah AlFares

CONSENT FORM – STUDENTS

I agree to take part in this research, which aims to investigate the language learners' perceptions of group work.

I understand that all the information I give will be treated confidentially and every effort will be taken to protect my anonymity at all times.

I understand that my responses may be used in an academic study, but my name will not be used.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason and that I can request any data I have given to be destroyed.

STUDENT NAME.....

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

Appendix 6 THE INTRVIEW SCHEDULE

Interview Schedule- Group work in EFL classes in Saudi

Arabia

The interviewer thanks the participant for volunteering to do the interview .The interviewer asks them if this is a suitable time to call. She identifies herself, and then she reminds the participants of the ethical issues, mainly confidentiality and anonymity. She asks for permission to record the interview. She mentions that interview should not last more than 25 minutes.

- 1- Tell me a bit about your experience of working in a group in English classes.
- 2- How do think working in group affects your English language learning?
Could you give me an example?
- 3- How would you compare learning in group with learning by yourself? What is different?
- 4- What are the benefits for you of learning in a group?
(Refer to the comments in the questionnaire Q11 and ask to elaborate on these answers)
- 5- What makes a good group for you?
- Prompt for colleagues, task, student ability etc.
- 6- And what are the difficulties for you when working in a group?
(Refer to the comments in the questionnaire Q11 and ask to elaborate on these answers)
- 7- What kind of tasks do you like to do in a group? What makes a good group activity for you? Why is that?
- 8- Do you ever get help from your peers? Can you give me an example?
- 9- What do you expect the teacher to do during group work?
- 10- What about your learning outside the classroom? Do you practise your English outside the classroom at all? Can you give me an example?
- prompt for practising with friends, family, online etc.

11- Do you use any media in English? How do you use these?

- Prompt for TV, newspapers, internet, computer games etc.

12- How would you rate your English language skills? (very good/ good/not so good) And what would help you learn more in class?

13- Is there anything that you want to add in relation to the use of group work in English classes?

Thank the participants for their time.

Appendix 7 ARABIC VERSION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

(استخدام طريقة المجموعات في دراسة اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المملكة العربية

(السعودية)

اختر الاجابة المناسبة:

- 1 - الجنس :
 أنثى
 ذكر
- 2 - اكتب تاريخ ميلادك.....
- 3 - ما هي مرحلتك الدراسية التي أنهيتها؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)
 المرحلة المتوسطة
 المرحلة الثانوية
 المرحلة الجامعية
 مرحلة الماجستير
 أخرى.....
- 4 - في أي مستوى تدرس حاليا في معهد اللغة الانجليزية؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)
 المستوى المبتدئ
 المستوى المتوسط
 المستوى المتقدم
 أخرى.....
- 5 - هل أنت موظف حاليا؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)
 نعم
 لا
- 6 - رتب بالأولوية الأسباب التي دفعتك لدراسة اللغة الانجليزية (الرجاء ترك فراغ عند السبب الذي ليس سبب من الأسباب التي تخصك)

للحصول على عمل	
للحصول على مرتبة أعلى في مجال عملي	
أريد الدراسة خارج الدولة	
لاستخدم اللغة إذا كنت مسافرا في عطلة	
فقط للمتعة	

7 - كم المدة التي استغرقتها لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية ؟ (اكتب عدد السنوات أو الشهور).

8 - كم المدة التي استغرقتها لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية في المعهد؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

- 1-6 شهور.
 6-12 شهر.
 1-2 سنتين.
 سنتين أو أكثر
 أخرى.....

9 - كم غالباً تمارس لغتك الانجليزية؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

يوميا.

مرة أو مرتين بالأسبوع.

مرة أو مرتين بالشهر.

لا أمارس إطلاقاً.

أخرى.....(اكتب كم مرة)

10 - أين تمارس غالباً لغتك الانجليزية ؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

في الفصل.

في البيت.

مع الأصدقاء.

على شبكة الانترنت.

طريقة أخرى.....(اكتب المكان او الطريقة).

11 - اذكر ثلاثة أشياء تفضلها وثلاثة أشياء لا تفضلها في الدراسة بمجموعات صغيرة في فصل اللغة الانجليزية؟

ثلاث أشياء لا تفضلها

ثلاث أشياء تفضلها

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

12 - هل تحب أن تستمر بالعمل مع المجموعة التي بدأت بالدراسة معها خارج الفصل (مثال : إذا كان لديك واجب وطلب منك

تسليمه في اليوم التالي هل تفضل حل ومناقشة هذا الواجب مع زملائك خارج الفصل)؟(اختار اجابة واحدة)

نعم

لا

احياناً

يعتمد على نوع الواجب

لماذا؟ (اكتب السبب من فضلك)

.....

13 - كم عدد الطلاب في المجموعة التي تفضل أن تدرس معها؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

2-3 طلاب.

4-5 طلاب.

6 طلاب أو أكثر.

لا أفضل أن ادرس مع مجموعة.

أخرى.....

14 - هل تعتقد أن الدراسة مع مجموعات من الطلاب / الطالبات تؤثر ايجابيا أو سلبيا على طريقة عمل أعضاء المجموعة مع بعضهم لبعض؟ (اختر اجابه واحده).

ايجابيا.

سلبيا.

لا اعتقد أن لها تأثير.

لماذا؟

15 - ماذا تفضل أن يكون أعضاء المجموعة التي تدرس معها (اختر الرقم المناسب من كل فقرة)

لا أفضل إطلاقا

أفضل كثيرا

5	4	3	2	1	• مع الطلاب الذين اعرفهم تماما.
5	4	3	2	1	• مع الطلاب الذين لا اعرفهم إطلاقا.
5	4	3	2	1	• مع مجموعة مختلطة من الطلاب (اعرفهم و لا اعرفهم).

16 - ماذا تفضل أن يكون دورك في المجموعة؟ (اختر اجابه او اكثر)

أفضل أن اسمع رأي الطلاب الآخرين.

أفضل أن أتكلم كثيرا مع أعضاء المجموعة وأعبر عن وجهة نظري.

أحاول أن اشترك في مناقشة الطلاب لموضوع معين عندما أريد أن أضيف شيء.

لا أحاول الاشتراك في المناقشة إطلاقا , أفضل العمل الفردي.

أخرى.....

17 - ما أهمية دورك في المجموعة؟ (اختر اجابة واحده)

مهم جدا.

مهم.

لا اعرف.

غير مهم .

غير مهم إطلاقا.

لماذا تعتقد ذلك؟

- 18 - بعض الطلاب يعتقدون بعض العوامل في دراسته بمجموعات مهمة وبعضها غير مهمة , ما هي وجه نظرك من حيث الأهمية بالنسبة لهذه العوامل (المذكورة بالاسفل) حسب ترتيب الأهمية الموضحة؟
(ضع دائرة حول الإجابة المناسبة)

مهم جدا	مهم	أحادي	غير مهم	غير مهم إطلاقا	
1	2	3	4	5	• الطريقة التي ينظم بها المدرس المجموع
1	2	3	4	5	• سلوك الطلاب واحترامهم للآخرين.
1	2	3	4	5	• نوع التمرين الذي يعمل به أفراد المجموعة.
1	2	3	4	5	• مستوى طلاب المجموعة في اللغة الانجليزية
1	2	3	4	5	• تحديد رئيس للمجموعة لينظم العمل.
1	2	3	4	5	• تقييم المجموعة ككل بدلا من التقييم الفردي.

- 19 - قيم السلوك الشائع بين الطلاب خلال العمل بمجموعات ؟

(ضع دائرة حول الرقم المناسب تحت المصطلح المختار)

شائع جدا	شائع	أحادي	غير شائع	غير شائع إطلاقا	
1	2	3	4	5	• رغبة معظم الطلاب رئاسة المجموعة.
1	2	3	4	5	• معظم الطلاب يحترمون وجه نظر الآخرين.
1	2	3	4	5	• بعض الطلاب لا يسمحون فرصة لمشاركة باقي الأعضاء.
1	2	3	4	5	• بعض الطلاب لا تعجبهم أفكار الآخرين.
1	2	3	4	5	• بعض الطلاب يحتفظون بمعرفتهم لرفسهم

- 20 - ماذا تفضل عند حل تمرين باللغة الانجليزية ؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

حل التمرين مع أفراد مجموعتك.

حل التمرين بمفردك.

أخرى

إذا كان اختيارك في السؤال 20 (حل التمرين مع أفراد مجموعتك) الرجاء الإجابة على الأربعة الأسئلة الآتية في الإطار الموضح (22 - 25) , وإذ لم تكن تلك إجابتك فضلا انتقل إلى السؤال 26.

21 - أين تفضل حل التمرين مع أعضاء مجموعتك؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

- في داخل الفصل.
 في خارج الفصل.
 الانبداء في حل التمرين داخل الفصل وانهائه خارج الفصل.
 اخرى.....

22 - كيف تفضل حل التمرين مع المجموعة؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

- كل طالب يختار جزء معين في التمرين لحله.
 تقسيم المجموعة إلي مجموعتين وكل واحدة تنجز نصف التمرين.
 جميع أعضاء المجموعة يتشاركون في حل التمرين كوحدة واحدة.
 أخرى.....

23 - ما أهمية تمرين المجموعة بالنسبة لك؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

- التمرين مهم جدا.
 التمرين مهم.
 لا اعرف.
 غير مهم.
 غير مهم إطلاقا.

لماذا؟

24 - هل تعتقد من وجود فائدة من حل التمرين في مجموعات؟ نعم لا

اذا كانت إجابتك بنعم , أي من هذه الايجابيات تعم على أعضاء المجموعة؟

- الزيادة في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.
 ممارسة اللغة أكثر خلال عمل التمرين.
 كسب معرفة أكثر من الطلاب الآخرين.
 مساعدة الطلاب الآخرين لك عند الحاجة.
 عمل التمرين في مجموعات يجعل الجو الدراسي اكثر متعة.
 اخرى.....

25 - كيف تفضل تقييم المجموعة؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

- تقييم جميع أعضاء المجموعة بالتساوي على حسب النتيجة النهائية للعمل.
- تقييم كل شخص في المجموعة على حسب العمل الذي ساهم فيه.
- أخرى.....

26 - أي من هذه الطرق تفضل أكثر عندما المدرس يقسم المجموعات؟ (اختار اجابة واحدة)

- عشوائي.
- على حسب قدرات الطلاب.
- يسمح للطلاب اختيار المجموعة التي تناسبه.

27 - ما ذا تفضل أن يعمل المدرس عندما تشتغل مع مجموعتك؟ (اختار اجابة او اكثر)

- المدرس لايد أن يكون في الفصل إذا احتاج احد الطلاب/ الطالبات مساعدة.
- المدرس لايد أن يستمع لمجموعات الطلاب ويراقب كيفية عملهم.
- المدرس لايد أن يشارك أفراد المجموعة العمل.
- من الأفضل أن لا يشارك العمل مع الطلاب إطلاقا.

لماذا؟.....
.....

28 - ضع دائرة حول الرقم المناسب لإجابتك؟

	موافق جدا				غير موافق إطلاقا
هل العمل الجماعي يشجعك لتشارك مع مجموعتك	1	2	3	4	5
هل العمل الجماعي يساعدك لتزيد ثقتك بعملك؟	1	2	3	4	5
هل العمل الجماعي يساعدك لتطور لغتك الانجليزية؟	1	2	3	4	5

29 - قيم الجمل من خلال وجه نظرك للعمل الجماعي في فصل اللغة الانجليزية ؟

(ضع دائرة حول الرقم المناسب لإجابتك من (1) غير صحيحه اطلاقا الى (5) صحيحه تماما).

صحيحة

غير صحيحة

تماما	إطلاقا				
5	4	3	2	1	• العمل الجماعي يشجع الطلاب للمشاركة مع الآخرين.
5	4	3	2	1	• بعض أعضاء المجموعة يسيطرون على العمل كليا.
5	4	3	2	1	• العمل في مجموعات يجعل الطلاب أكثر مسؤولية في تعليمهم.
5	4	3	2	1	• العمل في مجموعات يعطي الطالب الثقة للتفاعل مع الآخرين.
5	4	3	2	1	• بعض الطلاب لا يفضلون أن يساهموا في عمل المجموعة.
5	4	3	2	1	• العمل في مجموعات يمنح الطلاب فرص أكثر للتحدث باللغة الانجليزية
5	4	3	2	1	• العمل في مجموعات يستغرق وقت , أفضل الاستماع للمدرس.
5	4	3	2	1	• العمل في مجموعات يسمح للطلاب مساعدة الأعضاء الآخرين.
5	4	3	2	1	• العمل في مجموعات يسمح للطلاب بالعمل بنشاطات مختلفة تناسب قدراتهم.
5	4	3	2	1	• العمل في مجموعات يسمح للطلاب التعلم من الآخرين.
5	4	3	2	1	• العمل في مجموعات يسمح للطلاب تبادل الأفكار مع الآخرين.
5	4	3	2	1	• يستطيع الطلاب ممارسة اللغة في العمل الفردي.
5	4	3	2	1	• بعض الطلاب لا يعطون فرصة لأعضاء المجموعة الآخرين للمشاركة.
5	4	3	2	1	• بعض الطلاب تصدر منهم أخطاء وبعض الأعضاء يكتسبون هذه الأخطاء.

30 - هل تريد إضافة أي معلومة أخرى عن العمل الجماعي؟

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

31 - يسرني أن أدعوك لمقابلة تلفونية قصيرة لن تكون أطول من 20 دقيقة , المقابلة سوف تكون عن

إنطباعاتك ووجه نظرك حول العمل الجماعي, سوف أكون ممتنة جدا لمشاركتك في المقابلة.

إذا كنت ترغب الاشتراك في المقابلة الرجاء كتابة بياناتك :

.....الاسم
.....رقم الهاتف
.....الوقت المناسب للاتصال بك

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم

Appendix 8 ARABIC VERSION OF THE LETTER TO INSTITUTIONS

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

(استخدام طريقة المجموعات في دراسة اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المملكة العربية

السعودية)

المحترم

المكرم مدير/مديرة معهد اللغة الانجليزية

وبعد

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

بالإضافة إلى المكالمات الهاتفية التي جرت بيننا ، أود أن أرسل خطابي هذا لأستفسر عن رغبتكم بالمشاركة في موضوع البحث الموضح أعلاه والذي سوف يكون جزء من دراستي للماجستير في جامعة ستراتكلاند في ولاية سكوتلندا. ولقد تم اختيار هذا المعهد نظرا لإستخدام المدرسين/ المدرسات طريقة الدراسة بمجموعات في دراسة اللغة الإنجليزية.

نبذة عن مشروع البحث:

الدراسة بمجموعات هي طريقة من طرق التدريس التي تسمح للطلاب بالعمل الجماعي ، تبادل الأفكار ودعم بعضهم لبعض لممارسة مهارات اللغة . بالإضافة إلى ذلك أنها طريقة اتصال بين الطلاب والتي تشجعهم على التفاعل مع الطلاب الآخرين . كما إنها تهئ الطلاب للممارسة اللغة في خارج فصول الدراسة . من خلال هذا البحث سوف أتمكن من معرفة إنطباع الطلاب/ الطالبات عن إستخدام هذه الطريقة في مجال دراسة اللغة وكيف تساعدنهم لتحسين لغتهم. كما سأقدر كثيرا دعمكم لي بمشاركتكم في بحثي هذا والذي يسعى الى تطوير دراسة اللغة في المملكة العربية السعودية.

طريقة جمع البيانات:

الطريقة الرئيسية لجمع البيانات سوف تكون عن طريق توزيع استبانات للطلاب/ الطالبات في جميع مستويات اللغة الانجليزية. كما أنه سوف تجرى مقابلة اختيارية مع الطلاب / الطالبات وذلك من خلال مكالمات هاتفية قصيرة. وسوف الحق نموذج من الإستبانات مع هذا الخطاب للإطلاع.

الوقت, الموافقة واستخدام البيانات:

إذا تمت لي الموافقة لعمل مشروع البحث في المعهد فسوف يتم إجراء البحث من خلال زيارة الباحث للمعهد خلال شهر مارس او ابريل لتوزيع الإستبانات إن أمكن او لتسليمها لمدير/مديرة المعهد . سيتم توزيع الإستبانات بعد الموافقة التامة من قبل الطلاب / الطالبات مع العلم بأن اسم المعهد و بيانات الطلاب وإجاباتهم سوف تراعى فيها السرية التامة ولن يطلع عليها سوى الباحثة.

سوف يتم إستخدام نتائج البحث في رسالة الماجستير مع إحتتمالية نشرها في م جلات علمية في المستقبل . كما سوف أرسل نسخة من البحث إلى جميع معاهد اللغة اللّهي شاركت في مشروع البحث. وأخيرا, أتمنى أن تلقى هذه النبذة المختصرة عن المشروع رضاكم . كما أتمنى أن ألقى دعمكم بالمشاركة في البحث والذي يسعى إلى تطوير طرق تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في المملكة العربية السعودية.

في حال الموافقة , ارجو منكم إعادة هذه النسخة بواسطة البريد الإلكتروني أو ا لفاكس م صحوبة بتوقيعكم في أدنى الصفحة.

وللاستفسار عن أي معلومة في مشروع البحث , الرجاء الإتصال بالباحثة عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني أ ورقم التلفون الموضحة أدنى الصفحة, أو الإتصال على مشرفة البحث : الدكتورة دانياالا على هذا البريد الإلكتروني daniela.sime@srath.ac.uk

اسم معهد اللغة الانجليزية:.....

عنوان معهد اللغة الانجليزية.....

ولكم مني جزيل الشكر والتقدير

نورة الفارس

طالبة ماجستير

جامعة ستراثكلاید , جلاسكو, سكوتلندا

البريد الإلكتروني nshares@yahoo.com

رقم الهاتف: 00447892717254

Appendix 9 ARABIC VERSION OF THE CONSENT FORM TO INSTITUTIONS

نموذج موافقة

(استخدام طريقة المجموعات في دراسة اللغة الانجليزي ية كلغة أجنبية في المملكة العربية

السعودية)

اسم الباحثة: نورة الفارس

جامعة ستراثكلاید , المملكة المتحدة البريطانية

عزيزي المدير/المديرة,

في البداية يطيب لي أن اتقدم لكم بالشكر الجزيل على موافقتكم في المشاركة في البحث الموضح عنوانه في أعلى الصفحة.

الغرض من مشروع البحث

الغرض هو تقديم معلومات مفيدة لهدرسين وللطلاب عن طريقة الدراسة في مجموعات في ت علم اللغة الإنجليزية. هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى معرفة إنطباع الطلاب والطالبات عن الدراسة في مجموعات. كما أنها تهدف إلى معرفة السلبيات والإيجابيات من تقسيم الطلاب إلي مجم وعات في الفصل الدراسي وعن مدى تأثير هذه الطريقة على تعلم الطلاب / الطالبات وذلك من خلال وجه نظرهم.

طريقة جمع البيانات:

- توزيع استبانات إلى الطلاب / الطالبات في جميع المستويات في معهد اللغة الإنجليزية .
 - إجراء مقابلة اختيارية ل الطلاب/ الطالبات , وهذه المقابلة سوف تجرى خلال مكالمة هاتفية قصيرة .
- هذا البحث سوف يتم إجراءه بموافقة النظام التعليمي للأبحاث في سكوثلندا , للمزيد من المعلومات يمكنك الاطلاع على الرابط الآتي :

http://www.education.strath.ac.uk/erica/Module1_reader/unit5/SERA_Ethical_Guidelines_final.PDF

بالإضافة إلى الشروط العامة للنظام التعليمي للأبحاث في سكوثلندا , أود في أن أوضح بعض النقاط الهامة والتي سوف يتم إتباعها للمحافظة على حقوق المعهد والطلاب والطالبات المشاركين في البحث.

أولاً: السرية التامة:

لن يحق لأي شخص ماعدا الباحثة , أن يطلع على الإجابات في الاستبانات والمقابلة الإختيارية . كما أيضا سوف تعامل جميع المعلومات بسرية تامة من قبل الباحثة وذلك لحماية حقوق المشتركين.

ثانياً: أحقية الانسحاب:

يحق لمعهد اللغة الإنجليزية انسحاب من المشاركة في البحث في اي وقت يشاء مع عدم ضرورة ذكر سبب الانسحاب.

ثالثاً: موافقة الطلاب/ الطالبات:

سوف يتم توزيع نبذة عن موضوع البحث ونموذج الموافقة لـ الطلاب/ الطالبات الذين يرغبون الإشتراك في البحث قبل توزيع الاستبانات.

للاستفسار عن أي جزء في البحث ا لرجاء الإتصال ب الباحثة على البريد الإلكتروني nsfares@yahoo.com أو الإتصال على رقم الهاتف (00447892717254) كما يمكنكم الاتصال بالمشرف الدراسي على البريد الإلكتروني الآتي daniela.sime@strath.ac.uk

وأخيراً, أرجو منكم التكرم بالتوقيع في حال موافقتكم بالسماح لي بتوزيع الاستبانات

على طلاب وطالبات المعهد .

أوافق بالسماح لطالبة الماجستير نورة الفارس لإجراء دراستها في

لقد تم علمي بلبن نتائج البحث سوف تستخدم لأغراض علمية في رسالة الماجستير أو مقالات علمية مع العلم ان أسم المعهد وأسماء الطلاب / الطالبات لن تستخدم إطلاقاً في رسالة البحث وذلك للحفاظ على السرية التامة. ومع العلم أيضا أنه يحق لي الانسحاب في أي وقت ولأي سبب ما .

.....المعهد

.....مدير المعهد

.....توقيع مدير المعهد

.....التاريخ

Appendix 10 ARABIC VERSION OF THE INSTRUCTIONS SHEET TO STUDENTS

البيانات الالزم اتباعها لإكمال الاستبانة

عزى الطالب / الطالبة

قبل أن تبدأ بحل الاستبانة الرجاء إتباع الأتى:

- قراءة النبذة المختصرة عن البحث , مع العلم أنه بإمكانك الإحتفاظ بهذه النسخة.
- فى حال رغبتكم بالمشاركة بتعبئة الاستبانة الخاصة بالبحث , أرجو التوقيع على نموذج الموافقة.
- اقرأ أسئلة الإستبانة وحاول أن تجيب على جميع الأسئلة المطروحة.
- يوجد بعض من الأسئلة التى قد تتطلب منك فقط اختيار الإجابة المناسبة والبعض الأخر يتطلب منك الكتابة عن سبب اختيارك للإجابة ووجه نظرك عن الموضوع, فإذا كنت تحتاج مساحة أكبر للكتابة يمكنك أن تكمل كتابتك خلف الصفحة.
- إذا لم تتأكد من فهمك للسؤال يمكنك الإجابة ب (لا اعرف أو لست متأكد).
- فى حال رغبتكم لتقديم المزيد من المساعدة فى هذا البحث وعدم الممانعة من إجراء مقابلة تليفونية قصيرة معك, أرجو كتابة بياناتك فى الجزء المخصص فى أحر الإستبانة .
- بعد الانتهاء من إكمال الإستبانة أرجو تسليمها للشخص المسئول عن جمع الإستبانة.

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم

Appendix 11 ARABIC VERSION OF THE INFORMATION SHEET TO STUDENTS

نبذة مختصرة عن موضوع البحث

عنوان البحث (استخدام طريقة المجموعات في دراسة اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في

المملكة العربية السعودية)

عزيزي الطالب/ الطالبة:

يسرني دعوتك للمشاركة في البحث, واتمنى تعاونكم .

لقد تم إجراء هذا البحث كجزء من رسالتي للماجستير التي هدفها الرئيسي هو معرفة إنطباع الطلاب/ الطالبات عن الدراسة في مجموعات في تعليم اللغة الانجليزية.

الغرض من مشروع البحث:

الغرض من هذا البحث هو معرفة الإيجابيات والسلبيات من استخدام طريقة المجموعات في دراسة اللغة الإنجليزية لطلاب وطالبات معاهد اللغة في المملكة العربية السعودية. من خلال هذا البحث سوف يتسنى للباحثة معرفة آراء وانطباع الطلاب والطالبات حول مدى تأثير الدراسة في مجموعات على تحصيلهم العلمي.

المشاركين/المشاركات في البحث:

سوف يتم توزيع الاستبانات على الطلاب/ الطالبات الذين يدرسون في معاهد اللغة المشاركة في البحث والذين تتراوح اعمارهم ما بين 15 سنة فما فوق.

الفائدة من المشاركة في البحث:

سوف تكون مشاركتك في البحث محل التقدير والإحترام . ما عليك سوا الإجابة على أسئلة الإستبئنة المرفقة. كما يمكنك تقديم المزيد من المساعدة من خلال المشاركة في المقابلة التلفزيونية القصيرة وذلك بكتابة بياناتك آخر الإستبئنة.

سرية المعلومات:

سوف يتم معاملة بياناتك بسرية تامة ولن يطلع عليها أي شخص اخر سوى الباحث, كما أنه سوف يتم الاستعانة بأسماء مستعارة للطلاب/ الطالبات المشاركين في المقابلة التلفزيونية وذلك بغرض المحافظة على السرية التامة لمعلوماتك.

الانسحاب:

سوف تكون لك مطلق الحرية في أن تقرر الانسحاب في أي وقت تشاء ولأي سبب ما وتستطيع أن تطالب بإتلاف جميع المعلومات التي قدمتها.

إذا قرأت النبذة المختصرة عن البحث وتريد المشاركة في الاستبيان , الرجاء التوقيع على
الموافقة في الصفحة التالية.

نموذج الموافقة

أوافق على الإشتراك في هذا البحث والذي يهدف إلى معرفة انطباع الطلاب حول الدراسة
بمجموعات في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.
لقد تم إخباري بأن جميع المعلومات سوف تعامل بسرية مطلقة من قبل الباحث,
لذا أنني أوافق على إستخدام المعلومات التي أقدمه في أغراض دراسية لكن من غير إستخدام
الأسماء الحقيقية.
وأخيرا, فإن لي حرية الإنسحاب في أي وقت أشاء ولأبي سبب ما وأستطيع أن أطلب بإتلاف
جميع المعلومات التي قدمتها.

اسم الطالب.....
التوقيع.....
التاريخ.....

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم
وجزأكم الله خير

Appendix 12 ARABIC VERSION OF THE INTERVIEW

SCHEDULE

اسئلة المقابلة التليفونية (استخدام طريقة المجموعات مجموعات في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية في المملكة العربية السعودية)

اولا: أود أن اقدم لك الشكر الجزيل لموافقتك على إجراء مقابلة تليفونية

ثانيا : هل الوقت يناسبك أم تفضل أن أتصل بك لاحقا في وقت اخر

ثالثا : سوف نظطر الباحث لتسجيل المقابلة التليفونية فقط لأغراض دراسيه وسوف تعامل بسريه تامة ولن

يستمع الى التسجيل سوى الباحث

أخيرا اتمنى ان لا تستغرق المقابلة اكثر من ربع ساعة.

1- تكلم عن خبرتك سابقا بالعمل بمجموعات في دراسة اللغة الانجليزية؟

2- كيف أثرت الدر اسه بمجموعات على لغتك الانجليزية؟ اشرح لي مثال ؟

3- كيف تقارن الدراسة بمجموعات بدراستك الفردية؟ اشرح لي مبسطا الفرق بينهم؟

4- أذكر بعض من الفوائد التي عمت عليك من خلال دراستك مع مجموعات؟ أشرح بعض من إجابتك في

السؤال 11؟

5-مالذي يجعل الدراسة بمجموعات مفيدة لك (من ناحية الواجبات , قدرات الطلاب)؟

6- ماهي الصعوبات التي تواجهك عند دراستك بمجموعات؟ أشرح لي مبسطا اجابتك في السؤال 11 ؟

7- ماهي انواع التمارين والواجبات التي تفضل عملها مع مجموعة من الطلاب؟ مالذي يجعل التمارين مفيدة ؟

لماذا؟

8- هل عمرك حصلت على مساعدة من مجموعتك ؟ وضح لي مثال من فضلك؟

9- ماذا تفضل المدرس أن يفعل خلال العمل بمجموعات؟

10- ماذا عن دراستك للغة خارج الفصل؟ هل تمارس لغتك الانجليزية خارج الفصل؟ هل تستطيع ان توضح ذلك بمثال؟

11- هل تستفيد من وسائل الاعلام (الانترنت – التلفاز - الصحف) في دراسة اللغة؟ كيف؟

12- كيف تقيم مهاراتك في اللغة الانجليزية (ممتازة- جيدة – لاسباس بها – ضعيفه)؟

13- هل تريد إضافة معلومة تخص الدراسة بمجموعات في تدريس اللغة الانجليزية؟

ولكم مني جزيل الشكر والتقدير على المشاركة