

Perspectives on Collaborative Learning: A case study of teachers and students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within an Algerian higher education institution.

by

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Abstract

This interpretivist case study examines the perceptions of teachers and students towards collaborative learning for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in higher education in Algeria.

Learning English in higher education in Algeria is frequently carried out through individualistic and competitive or collaborative ways. Although EFL students work collaboratively on some tasks, there is evidence that there may be some lack of clarity regarding the characteristics and use of some elements of collaborative learning in relation to EFL teaching, learning and assessment. This study focuses on collaborative learning for EFL students in English language classrooms in higher education. It was found that collaborative learning can be effective in achieving the development of language skills for students, however; it was also found that collaborative learning can mean the development of the social network, communication and critical thinking skills. This contested and unclear meaning of collaborative learning in English language education leads to question whether collaborative learning means a process (where the interaction of students is important) or a product (where the language should be learned). This study endeavours to explore (1) the meaning of collaborative learning for EFL higher education teachers and students; (2) the evaluation and assessment system for such collaborative learning; and (3) the contextual factors that affect collaborative learning for EFL students. Therefore, the originality of this study lies in exploring and seeking to understand the aim of collaborative learning in EFL teaching and its interaction with assessment processes used.

The qualitative interpretive methodology was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of how teachers and students experienced and perceived collaborative learning. The perceptions of three categories of people (teachers, head of the department and students) were investigated through semi-structured interviews, therefore; nine Algerian EFL teachers and eight EFL undergraduate students were selected. Five participant teachers from the above sample also agreed to be observed in the classroom. Moreover, two official Algerian ministry documents were consulted for documentary evidence in addition to the written field notes.

The findings reveal the complexity of the use of collaborative learning as a pedagogical approach. In particular, the participants seemed to focus more on the product, that is; on language related-outcomes because the students are assessed on their individual learning of the language though they work in groups. This major finding contradicts the interaction patterns of social interdependence theory: individual accountability, positive interdependence and promotive interaction (skills). These interaction patterns indicate that collaborative learning is about the process where the interaction skills are vital. The findings also indicate that collaborative learning is affected by the teacher's pedagogy and the policy of higher education.

The implications of this study can be thought provoking to higher education EFL teachers through raising an awareness of their actual thinking and practices regarding collaborative learning. The focus on the interaction of collaborative learning and assessment practices raises questions about the equal importance of both the process and the product of collaborative learning in EFL and the systematic assessment of collaborative learning practices. It could also provide information for Algerian policy makers in any future re-interpretation or redesign of assessment practices. All in all, this study can be used as a reference to enrich the knowledge and practices concerning students' collaborative learning specifically and to contribute to the development of pedagogy in higher education in general.

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Dedication

I dedicate this humble work to my parents, in spite of miles of distance and time between us, you have been always available to share your love and encouragement.

To my most caring sister Awicha whose compassion and support kept me moving forward (I wish you the best of luck in your studies and I wish to see you a future successful doctor).

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Table of contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Preview.....	12
1.1. The context.....	13
1.2. The importance of the study (Original contribution).....	15
1.3. Motivation and development of the research focus.....	19
1.4. The methodological framework.....	21
1.5. Overview of the chapters.....	23

Chapter 2: literature review

2. Introduction.....	26
2.1. Evolution in EFL teaching in higher education.....	27
2.1.1 Methodology of teaching EFL.....	27
2.1.2 Content of English learning (Syllabus).....	30
2.1.3 The cultivation of critical thinking in EFL classrooms.....	31
2.1.4 EFL process-product learning approaches.....	33
2.2 Critical discussion on collaborative learning.....	34
2.2.1 A brief history of collaborative learning.....	38
2.2.2 Theoretical assumptions in collaborative learning.....	40
2.2.2.1 Group dynamic theory.....	41
2.2.2.1.1 Positive interdependence.....	43
2.2.2.1.2 Individual accountability.....	44
2.2.2.1.3 Promotive interaction.....	44
2.2.2.2 Constructivist learning theory	46
2.2.2.3 Transformative learning theory.....	47
2.2.3 Collaborative foreign language learning in higher education.....	49
2.2.4 Barriers to collaborative learning.....	52
2.2.5 Assessment and its link with collaborative learning.....	56

2.3	The context of the study.....	59
2.3.1	A brief insight into EFL learning before the LMD system.....	59
2.3.2	The LMD system and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning.....	60
2.3.3	Assessment within the LMD system.....	61
2.3.4	Teaching and learning in the LMD system.....	62
2.3.5	The student-centered approach in the Algerian university.....	64
2.3.6	Challenges of the LMD system.....	66

Chapter 3: Methodology

3	Introduction.....	71
3.1	Purpose of the study.....	71
3.2	Why the constructivist interpretivist approach in qualitative research?	73
3.3	Acting ethically in qualitative research.....	78
3.4	My reflexivity and position in the research, in terms of strangeness and familiarity.....	80
3.4.1	My position.....	81
3.4.2	My reflexivity	84
3.4.3	The researcher' stance (Part of my reflexivity).....	85
3.5	Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students as a case study.....	86
3.6	Research instruments (Interviews, observation, field notes and documentary evidence).....	86
3.6.1	Semi-structured interviews with higher education EFL teachers and students	88
3.6.2	Classroom observation.....	91
3.6.3	Field notes.....	93
3.6.4	Documentary evidence.....	94
3.7	Sampling.....	96
3.8	The process of data analysis.....	99
3.9	Trustworthiness of the data.....	103

Chapter 4: EFL collaborative learning understanding

4	Introduction.....	105
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4.1	Section one: Understanding collaborative learning from Algerian higher education EFL teachers' and students' perceptions.....	106
4.1.1	Collaborative learning is pedagogically perceived by teachers.....	107
4.1.1.1	Collaborative learning and group work.....	108
4.1.1.2	Collaborative learning vs cooperative learning.....	113
4.1.1.3	Students' learning community and group work.....	114
4.1.2	Collaborative learning is relationally perceived by students.....	120
4.1.2.1	Students' relationships and 'criticism'.....	121
4.2	Section two: The practice of collaborative learning.....	126
4.2.1	Peer-evaluation in the writing task.....	127
4.2.1.1	Peer-evaluation as a training.....	129
4.2.1.2	Peer-evaluation for achieving learning purposes.....	131
4.2.2	Teacher-students collaboration.....	132
4.2.3	Group projects and presentations.....	135
4.2.4	Virtual collaboration.....	139
4.3	Conclusion.....	143
	Chapter 5: The contextual influences of collaborative learning: Assessment strategy, pedagogy and policy.....	138
5.	Introduction.....	145
5.1	Section one: The unsystematic interaction between assessment and collaborative learning.....	146
5.1.1	Who is being assessed?.....	146
5.1.2	What is being assessed?.....	152
5.1.3	How is it assessed?.....	157
5.2	Section two: Factors affecting collaborative learning	160
5.2.1	The module.....	160
5.2.2	Teacher-related factors.....	167
5.2.3	Students-related factors.....	171
5.2.3.1	Dominance and confidence.....	171
5.3	Conclusion.....	175

Chapter 6: Discussion: From data mining to constructed meaning

6	Introduction	177
6.1	Understanding collaborative learning	178
6.1.1	Teachers' understanding	178
6.1.1.1	Collaborative learning process-product: 'each one on his side work on a task...to achieve a goal'	179
6.1.1.2	Collaborative learning relationships and community	180
6.1.1.3	Collaborative learning or cooperative learning	183
6.1.1.4	Is it about teaching collaboration or teaching the language through collaboration?.....	185
6.1.2	Students' understanding	187
6.1.2.1	Students' relationships: 'Even though he criticises me that's normal! Because he is my friend'	188
6.1.2.2	'Criticism' or critical thinking..	188
6.2	The interaction between assessment and collaborative learning: 'Assessment is the dark side in collaborative learning'.....	191
6.2.1	Who is being assessed? 'I had the best mark in my group'.....	192
6.2.2	What is being assessed? 'There are many aspects to focus on when grading them'.....	193
6.2.3	How is it assessed? 'The feedback itself is an assessment' but 'the administration staff need to have the mark.....	196
6.3	Factors influencing students' collaboration: pedagogy and policy.....	199
6.3.1	The pedagogic approach of the EFL teacher.....	199
6.3.1.1	Peer-evaluation in the academic writing module.....	200
6.3.1.2	The teacher's profile and the learner-centered approach.....	201
6.3.1.3	The traditional methods of teaching.....	203
6.3.2	The EFL subject.....	204
6.3.2.1	Skills modules.....	205
6.3.2.2	Content modules.....	207
6.3.3	The system of higher education (LMD system).....	209
6.4	Conclusion.....	212

Chapter 7: Conclusion, implications, limitations, suggestions and contribution

7	Introduction.....	217
7.1	Implications.....	217
7.1.1	The application of social interdependence theory in foreign language education.....	217
7.1.2	Implications for EFL collaborative learning assessment	218
7.1.3	Implications for pedagogy.....	222
7.1.4	Implications for higher education policy.....	223
7.2	Contribution	226
7.2.1	Theoretical contribution	226
7.2.2	Pedagogical contribution	231
7.3	Limitations and suggestions for further studies	232
7.4	My personal research journey.....	235
	List of references.....	238
	Appendices.....	277
	Appendix 1: Ethical forms.....	277
	Appendix 2: Interview’s questions.....	281
	Appendix 3: Observation sheet.....	285
	Appendix 4: Interview’s transcript.....	288
	Appendix 5: Field notes.....	295
	Appendix 6: An example of data analysis process.....	297
	Appendix 7: Learning outcomes.....	298

List of abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

LMD: Licence Master and Doctorate (Policy in higher education)

HE: Higher education

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

CCCU: Canterbury Christ Church University

TD: Travaux dirigés (French word translated into 'Directed work').

GVC: Global Virtual Classroom

MERIC: Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Preview

This case study investigates the perceptions of higher education teachers and students towards collaborative learning for EFL students in Algeria. It looks at the participants' understanding of the term collaborative learning in the process of learning English in higher education. It also considers how teachers assess collaborative learning and what contextual and cultural factors affect collaborative learning for EFL students. EFL is an acronym for English as a Foreign Language, a discipline which is studied on its own in higher education in Algeria which allows students to become English teachers in the future (Azzi, 2012). In this study, collaborative learning in EFL will be investigated according to how teachers and students understand and experience it. The overarching elements of this study are (1) understanding collaborative learning for EFL students, (2) understanding the relationship between assessment and collaborative learning, and (3) identifying contextual factors which have an impact on collaborative learning.

Past studies on collaboration in EFL learning, a number of which are mentioned in chapter 2, did not directly address the aim of collaborative learning in language activities, that is achieving language or achieving skills of collaboration, whereas this study takes a deep look at understanding the aim of collaborative learning in EFL learning. Therefore, if the aim of students' collaboration is learning the language, then the individual product might be assessed, however; if the aim is achieving students' interaction in parallel with the language, then the process of collaboration could be evaluated. Social interdependence theory provides three main elements for the process of collaboration: individual accountability, positive interdependence, and promotive interaction (Johnson and Johnson, 2003). This indicates that the individual, the group, and the social skills are the focal points of any students' collaboration meaning that both process and individual product should be achieved. This area is still under researched in EFL learning, that is it is still unclear what the aim of EFL students' collaboration is. The overriding objective of this thesis, therefore, is to understand the aim of EFL students' collaborative learning by considering the interaction between this kind of learning and the assessment strategy.

Although some research on assessment in collaborative learning has been conducted in other areas (Forsell et al., 2020; Meijer et al., 2020), it is still under researched in English language learning in higher education. In fact, it is not only in this discipline that assessment of collaborative learning is poorly considered; it is also the case more generally. According to Meijer et al. (2020), teachers need suitable management methods for high quality group work assessment. In this research, the interaction between assessment and collaborative learning for EFL students will contribute to understanding the aim of collaborative learning. Therefore, in exploring the nature of interaction between collaborative learning and assessment, this study; will clarify the aim of collaborative learning.

This research case study includes Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students. A sample of EFL teachers was selected, along with a sample of Algerian higher education EFL undergraduate students. In my experience, undergraduate EFL students have more opportunity for collaboration, therefore this was my motivation for the selection of this sample. The fact that this study takes into account the perceptions of both teachers and students towards collaborative learning makes it relevant, as few studies have considered the perceptions of both teachers and students in Algeria. More importantly, this research is conducted in Algeria where there is a limited use of collaborative practices between students and possible misunderstanding of the process of collaborative learning (Belmekki and Kebiri, 2018).

1.1. The context

Since this study investigates collaborative learning for EFL students, it is necessary to be familiar with the EFL discipline in Algeria. EFL is a discipline (or specialty) in higher education in Algeria that is studied on its own. This discipline witnessed some changes following the establishment of the higher education system (LMD) in 2006 (Azzi, 2012). An official ministry published document entitled: 'Overview of the Higher Education System' stated that studying EFL in higher education includes studying different modules at Licence and Master level (undergraduate level) (Saidani and Khecheni, 2017). These modules are included under the unit. The fundamental unit includes modules of the specialism of the student in EFL, these could be: Didactics, Linguistics, Literature and Civilisation. The methodology teaching unit includes modules that develop students' academic

methodological approaches, such as the Methodology module and Academic Writing module. The introductory teaching unit includes modules that develop the skills that students will need in their future careers, for example the Educational Psychology and Study Skills module. The cross disciplinary teaching unit includes modules which cover two different disciplines, such as Sociolinguistics and Psychology, and sometimes it includes modules which are not related to English as a subject yet are recognised to be needed beyond the university, such as ICT, French and Arabic language. There is further classification of EFL modules according to the head of the EFL department, namely; 'skills and content modules'. Skills modules are those which develop the language skills of the students, such as Written Expression, Reading Expression, Oral Expression, Phonetics and Grammar modules. The rest are termed content modules, such as Educational Psychology, Dialectology, Didactics, ESP (English for Specific Purposes), and Pragmatics. EFL students start with skills and content modules from the beginning of their studies at Licence level, then at Masters level they deal extensively with content modules. This study investigates the perceptions of higher education EFL teachers and students towards collaborative learning by EFL students by taking into account the different modules that teachers and students are engaged with, thus collaborative learning might be experienced differently depending on the syllabus of each EFL module.

The justification for using 'EFL' rather than 'English classrooms' in this study is to reflect the contextual understanding of the meaning. To confirm its exact use in the EFL department in higher education in Algeria, I spoke to the head of the EFL department, whose answer was as follows; 'EFL classrooms is mostly used. English language classrooms is never used at tertiary level, but might be used in lower levels as in middle or secondary schools'. Although there can be some contradictions in the literature regarding the use of such terminologies, I decided to use EFL to reflect the common usage of this term within the context of this research case study.

The LMD system stands for Licence, Master and Doctorate in higher education in Algeria and was implemented as a new reform in higher education in 2006 (Djebbari, 2016). It was claimed that the LMD system brought changes to pedagogy, including teaching and learning, in order to meet the social and economic needs of the country. This reform was applied because of increasing globalisation, as well as socioeconomic changes in Algeria which prompted universities to change the system (Djebbari, 2016). It was believed that the

Algerian educational system had become 'obsolete in a world that moves, goes fast and with the everlasting innovations and the necessary changes induced by the digital revolution' (Haraoubi, Minister of Higher Education, 2007, stated in Miliani, 2010). This Algerian education reform is characterised by its objectives and structure. Among the objectives of the LMD system is to train teachers in the domain, also to teach appropriate content that students will need in their future careers (Mami, 2013; Hanifi, 2018). It is also argued that the LMD system brought a student-centred approach to teaching by giving students more activities, so they were continuously active in their learning and participated more in the learning process (Azzi, 2012). Subsequently, the student-centred approach that the LMD system has encouraged as an approach to teaching and learning may emphasise the collaborative nature of learning for EFL students. It is, therefore, imperative to explore whether collaborative learning is influenced by certain contextual factors.

1.2. The importance of the study (original contribution)

This research uses case study to explore in-depth the perceptions of higher education EFL teachers and students. This is achieved through interviewing and observing the practices of students and teachers in the EFL department. This is different to earlier studies on collaborative learning in higher education which selected both teachers and students. Alahdal and Alahdal's (2019) study considered both teachers' and students' perceptions towards collaborative learning in Saudi Arabia, but they followed a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach and investigated a large number of students' perceptions by using surveys. In contrast, this study is qualitative, mainly based on interviewing teachers and students. In qualitative research, the researcher has openness and flexibility in listening to people's perceptions, thereby allowing unexpected knowledge to emerge. In both Sun and Yuan's (2018) and Le et al.'s (2018) studies, teachers and students were interviewed, yet the difference lies in the participants selected for the study. Sun and Yuan selected students from three language departments whereas Le et al. chose their participants from three distinct disciplines, only one of which was EFL, which means the context is different. However, the current case study research considers collaborative learning in the EFL discipline in higher

education. In this thesis, I argue that the use of a qualitative case study allows a much more in-depth approach to understand the issues involved.

Despite the considerable amount of research on collaborative learning for students in higher education in different contexts in the world; including: Vietnam (Janssen and Wubbels, 2018); USA (Sun and Yaun, 2018),; Saudi Arabia (Alhebeishi, 2018; Alias, 2018; Alahdal and Alahdal, 2019); Palestine (Khalil, 2018); Turkey (Gursoy and Karatepe, 2006; Celik et al., 2012); Taiwan (Chen, 2018); China (Chen and Yu, 2019); Lebanon (Ghaith, 2018); Pakistan (Shazad et al., 2012), which focused on the application of collaborative learning through practical activities in classrooms, little is known about its implication in the Algerian higher education EFL context and specifically in the EFL department. Investigating this research in higher education in Algeria makes it significant as collaborative learning is considered as a needed learning strategy for Algerian students. According to Belmekki and Kebiri (2018, p. 1) who investigated collaborative learning in the EFL context in higher education in Algeria:

Though this method of teaching is discussed in so many books, articles, conferences and workshops; and though an enhancement in the social and academic outcomes has been proved, teachers still neglect this method and rely on traditional ways. Well, relying on traditional ways means either structuring classrooms that are purely competitive or individualistic, or simply putting students to work in traditional groups.

Research of this type would inform Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students. Although a small case study such as this is not readily generalisable, it may provide useful information for other teachers in higher education in other parts of the world. It will also explain their practices on this method of learning which are shaped and affected by contextual factors.

The case study (teachers and students) and the context (Algeria) contribute to the importance of this research in the literature, however; the originality of this research lies in the findings that are constructed. The present research has yielded a considerable amount of in-depth data which brought an understanding to the aim of collaborative learning in the EFL context. Though collaborative learning has been investigated for EFL learning in higher education, the use of the term is contested and unclear from one study to another. In other

words, understanding the aim of collaborative learning in language education has been overlooked. In a quantitative study, Ning (2010) found that the design of textbook-based team tasks and large class instructions improved Chinese EFL students' learning of the English language in higher education. In learning a foreign language, oral fluency is one of the paramount aspects of the curriculum which EFL students have to achieve; Alrayah (2018) claimed that three step interviews, think-pair-share, jigsaw, round table and other collaborative activities could enhance EFL students' oral skills in Sudan. Writing was also found to be more developed when students engaged in collaborative reflective writing, as this enhanced their motivation and confidence (Liao et al., 2019; Anggraini et al., 2020). These studies seem to consider collaborative learning as the achievement of language related outcomes (language skills) (SRINIVAS Rao, 2019), which suggests that the aim of collaborative practices is to learn the language.

However, in other studies, collaborative learning for EFL students was seemingly found to develop not only language but also other aspects/ strategies. Liao and Wang (2016) found that the application of heterogenous cluster grouping helped students to develop their reflective writing and that they strengthened their critical thinking as well as their empathy towards each other. Govindasamy and Md. Shah (2020), on the other hand, claimed that when EFL students work on tasks together, they were in a way developing their problem-solving skills which are needed both for learning English and beyond the university. This suggests that the collaborative skills (process) are developed for students in parallel with the language. It is often unclear in the literature regarding what does collaborative learning mean in the EFL context and what should be assessed? The term itself is contested which raises confusion in terms of understanding collaborative learning for EFL students. It is significant to know what EFL collaborative learning implies; is it a process, or product achieving or both? If it is about the product, then the teacher might be assessing the individual on their achieved language outcomes (Meijer et al., 2020). However, if the students' interaction is necessary, then the group might be the target of assessment. This research tries to understand what collaborative learning, means for students in the EFL context by examining the different types and practices of collaborative learning and how these are assessed.

This small investigative case of Algerian teachers and students will deepen understanding about collaborative learning by considering nuanced aspects in the context,

such as different EFL modules. This study is important in the broad literature of EFL collaborative learning because it investigates the perceptions of both teachers and students. In fact, it is not only teachers' and students' perceptions that are considered in this study, but also the head of the EFL department whose perceptions might differ from the two categories of participants.

Therefore, what is original about this research is that it attempts to understand collaborative learning for EFL students. Unlike previous studies which focused mainly on the collaborative practices that led to learning of the language, this study rather tries to understand the broader aim of collaborative learning in language learning whether it is process or product and how this is learned and assessed. Thus, this study investigates the interaction between collaborative learning in EFL and assessment. The data reveals that great importance was given to assessment by the participants, which should not go unremarked. Therefore, delving deeper into the participants' thoughts to gain a better grasp of collaborative learning and how it is interacted with assessment is significant. According to Forsell et al (2021), further research needs to investigate how teachers describe their practice of group work assessment and how they deal with the different challenges. Future research can also consider how to assess knowledge and social skills as learning objectives for collaborative learning assessment (Forsell et al., 2019). This study, then, attempts to understand collaborative learning in language education and its assessment process. The findings reveal the unsystematic interaction between assessment and collaborative learning which shows that the social skills are overlooked.

Henceforth, the original contribution of this research is in constructing an understanding of collaborative learning for learning English in higher education where its use and aim is contested and unclear in the literature. This understanding reveals how collaborative learning can be understood as product/process achieving depending on the assessment designed.

Therefore, this study aims at:

- 1- Understanding collaborative learning for EFL learning: How it is perceived, practised and assessed for EFL learning.
- 2- Discovering the factors that influence collaborative learning for EFL students.

Accordingly, the following questions are asked for this study:

- 1- What are the perceptions of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students in relation to collaborative learning?
- 2- What are the experiences of these higher education EFL teachers and students with regard to collaborative learning?
- 3- How does the assessment strategy interact with collaborative learning in EFL higher education in Algeria?
- 4- What are the factors that influence collaborative learning for higher education EFL students?

1.3. Motivation and development of the research focus

The drive behind this study is related to my experience as an undergraduate EFL student in higher education in Algeria. Through my reflection on the five year journey at the EFL department and my socialisation with students and teachers, I started wondering about different educational processes, including teaching and learning. As collaborative learning was an existing learning strategy in that context (by collaborative learning I mean here the strategy of learning that exists in the Algerian higher education EFL context rather than how the literature defines it), I reflected on the different issues of this strategy. Therefore, my aim was not to find out whether collaborative learning exists, but to explore the existing collaborative learning in such context.

As students, we had to do different teacher-assigned collaborative tasks but those tasks were not consistent across all the EFL modules. Based on my reflection, I realised that the grade for the task was important for me and other students, sometimes even more than the task itself, and that this resulted in competitive behaviour between students to 'work for the mark'. This experience motivated me to read more about collaborative learning in general and EFL collaborative learning in particular. Inspired by my readings, I realised that the term collaborative learning was used inconsistently the literature depending on the collaborative activities designed for foreign language learning. I wondered what the difference between collaborative learning and group work is?, as these terms were sometimes used

interchangeably in the Algerian EFL department in higher education. It was, therefore, important to understand the aim of collaborative learning in the Algerian higher education EFL context and whether it reflects a process, a product, or both? Therefore, I decided to embark on this journey to explore EFL teachers' and students' understanding of collaborative learning for EFL students in higher education in Algeria. Several research studies in the literature tackled collaborative learning from the perceptions of either teachers or students; however, teachers might have experienced collaborative learning differently from students. So, finding out these differences is important. 'Success in any improvement effort always hinges on the smallest unit of the organisation and, in education, that is the classroom teacher' (McLaughlin, 1991, cited in Guskey, 1994, P. 118) which means that teachers embark changes in classroom, however; what about students who are affected by pedagogy. Thus, the effect of pedagogy can still be discovered through the lens of the student. Thus, this will increase our understanding of the various factors that have an influence on different ways of teaches' and students' thinking and practices.

The focus of the study changed gradually between the start of the research and the end. Some research questions changed after the pilot study and the data collection, especially after unexpected knowledge emerged from the data. Therefore, the research questions were reshaped to fit the existing analysis. At the start, one of the research questions was: What is the impact of the LMD system (a contextual factor) on collaborative learning for EFL students? However, after the data was collected, it was discovered that there are other contextual factors, in addition to the LMD system, thus the focus changed to finding out the factors that influence collaborative learning for EFL students. Though the interaction of the assessment strategy with collaborative learning was not an explicit research question, it became an important aspect in the research which contributed to understanding why teachers focus on the product rather than the process of collaborative learning. At the start, I intended to ask teachers and students about assessment; therefore, the interview included questions about assessing collaborative learning. After reflecting on the data collected from people's perceptions and documentary evidence, I realised that assessment was a complex issue where contradictions appeared. As one of the interviewees in this study commented: 'assessment is the dark side in collaborative learning', it was important to analyse in greater depth the interaction between assessment and collaborative learning and this became an

important focus of this research. The findings show how the unsystematic means of assessment could result in the process (skills) of collaborative learning being neglected.

1.4. The methodological framework

Case study is the research design used for this study. Case study is characterised by its defined unit of analysis, which is selected carefully, and which represents the bounded interest of the researcher (Merriam et al., 2002). It is about 'what' is going to be researched rather than 'how' it is going to be researched (Stake, 2006). In this research, both higher education EFL teachers and students were selected. The pilot study which tested my research questions with higher education EFL teachers helped me to select my participants. Therefore, only experienced EFL teachers participated in this study. By experienced teachers I mean only teachers who had their PhD degree, practitioner teachers who were still undertaking their PhD research were eliminated from this study.

As for students, undergraduate EFL students were recruited. By undergraduate students, I mean Licence and Master students. According to the head of the EFL department, students at both of these levels are called undergraduates. Once Master students get their diploma after completing their thesis, they will be called graduates. So, the term undergraduate is still used for Master students who have not yet finished their degree. As for 'postgraduate', this terminology is specific to Doctorate students and students of the Magister (equivalent degree of Master in the classical system). In a website of an Algerian university, the postgraduate terminology includes specifically the Doctorate level in LMD, it also includes the Magister degree of the former system. Therefore, in my study, the selected Licence and Master students are undergraduate Algerian higher education EFL students. As the aim of this study was to investigate collaborative learning for Algerian higher education EFL students, it was significant to select undergraduate students because in my experience, they have consistent classes, and meet regularly at the EFL department. In addition to that, I experienced some collaborative activities at the undergraduate level which were not consistent in the EFL modules. It is apparent that this is a small case of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students; therefore, the aim is to build an understanding of collaborative learning for Algerian higher education EFL students in a specific context.

According to Merriam et al (2002), a bounded case study does not aim for the generalisability of the results to other contexts, but it depends on what the researcher wants to learn out of it and the significant knowledge it might have contributed for extending the theory or improving the practice.

The constructivist interpretivist approach is used in this research. In qualitative research, meaning is constructed from people living in the targeted context whose experiences and opinions may differ. This denotes the multiple reality in qualitative research and demonstrates that reality is not something fixed that everyone shares the same view of but is instead constructed from multiple viewpoints and answers which might lead to the complexity of the research (Merriam et al., 2002). In this study, the key to understand collaborative learning in the EFL context is through investigating higher education EFL teachers' and students' perceptions because they have already interacted with the EFL context and experienced pedagogy in that context. It is the participants' interaction with their world (Merriam et al., 2002). The methodological justification for following this approach is that research in educational settings has shifted interest from the scientific and positivist approaches which were based on quantifying the causes and effects of human behaviour to understanding the status of the situation through following a systematic process of interpretation (Abedeen, 2015).

In this research, the constructivist interpretivist approach fits the scope of this research which aims to build an *understanding* (Merriam et al., 2002) of collaborative learning from the perceptions of a selected case of people. This understanding is a systematic process in which subjectivity is an integral part (Creswell, 2013). The constructivist approach denotes that the construction of the truth is pluralistic as people's responses are affected by personal, social, cultural, and historical contexts (Prasad, 2005), thus this leads to the multiple truth to emerge. Truth can be independent and dependent thinking (Magolda, 2002) (this will be discussed in Chapter 3). In this research, the interaction of participant teachers and students with the EFL context reveals that the truth is dependent on their personal experiences towards collaborative learning and that these can be shared as well as contradicted. The triangulation that happened in this research between different research tools including interviews, observations, evidence from official documents, also the triangulation of data from different categories of people including teachers, the head of the EFL department and

students ensured the validity of the data collected. Research can be valid when the convergence of information from different sources emerges (Carter et al., 2014).

1.5. Overview of the chapters

This thesis is composed of seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the reader to the focus and relevance of this study and gives a brief insight into how this research was conducted (methodological framework).

The second chapter is the literature review which is composed of three sections. The first section is a critical understanding of the EFL context by discussing the point of teaching content and methodology change. The second section is a thorough representation of a sum of work related to collaborative learning in general and to higher education in particular. This includes collaborative learning defined, its history, the theories that support collaborative learning, collaborative learning in higher education, foreign language collaborative learning and the hindrances that are encountered either by teachers or students in collaborative learning application. This chapter also includes a critical discussion of collaborative learning variation according to its concept and practice in EFL learning. This shows the gap in the literature where collaborative learning is understood differently according to how it is practised in different contexts. The third section gives an overview of the LMD system in higher education in Algeria. Though the LMD system covers different aspects in higher education including teaching, learning and administration, only those aspects relevant to this study were highlighted, primarily learning and teaching. Therefore, this section represents the objectives of the LMD system on pedagogy. This chapter also defines EFL discipline as it is the context for this study; therefore, EFL in this context is explained according to objectives of the LMD system. This section reveals how the LMD system can have an impact on EFL teaching and learning in higher education in Algeria.

The third chapter outlines the methodological approach followed in this study, that is the constructivist interpretivist approach, the case study, and the rationale for choosing this approach and research design. It also summarises my reflexivity throughout the research before, during and after the data collection. My position in the field work ranged from being strange to being familiar; therefore, this chapter represents how I was reflexive in the field work. This chapter also explains in details the research instruments that were used for

collecting data (interviews with teachers and students, observation, documentary evidence and field notes) and the rationale for choosing them taking into consideration the ethical issues. This chapter also explains the recruitment process, how sampling was done and what changes were applied. Finally, my reflexive data analysis process is explained.

The fourth chapter is an analysis chapter which constructs an understanding of collaborative learning from teachers' and students' perceptions and practices. It is divided into two sections: understanding collaborative learning and the practice of collaborative learning.

The fifth chapter is an analysis chapter which highlights the contextual factors of collaborative learning including the assessment strategy, pedagogy and policy. The assessment strategy has been described as unsystematic due to the unsystematic interaction between the assessment, the activity and the learning outcomes. The decision about how to divide the analysis chapters came after the process of analysis, which included making summaries (marginal summaries) of some sections of data (interviews and observation), naming those summaries (using key words) and then collecting key words, sometimes contrasting, sometimes adding key words to each other and other times comparing. This process helped me to develop the full story.

The sixth chapter is the discussion and evaluation chapter where the full picture of the findings became clear. This chapter includes the main themes that emerged from the analysis and discusses those themes with reference to the broader literature as well as highlighting the contribution of this research to the existing literature. This chapter is concluded by stating the findings and the importance of this research.

The seventh chapter concludes the thesis and highlights the main implications of the study, in other words what can be learned from the findings through practical applications into EFL teaching and policy in higher education. This chapter also reveals the contribution of this study by highlighting the original contribution to knowledge, including the theoretical and pedagogical contribution. The limitations that were encountered during the research are highlighted in this chapter, as well as suggestions for further studies. This thesis finishes with a reflection on the whole research process, revealing the development of thinking and research skills.

To sum up, this introductory chapter has highlighted the scope of this research through presenting the different definitions of collaborative learning and the importance of

developing an understanding of collaborative learning in the EFL department in higher education in Algeria. This chapter has also highlighted the relevance of this study by contrasting the scope of this study with similar studies on collaborative learning in higher education in different contexts. It also shows the need for research on the interaction between collaborative learning and assessment in EFL; hence, understanding the aim of collaborative learning in EFL learning. This research is a small case study of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students whose perceptions and experiences give an understanding of what is collaborative learning for EFL students, how it is perceived, how is it assessed, and what are the factors that may influence its practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2. Introduction

This chapter is divided into three related sections. The first section discusses the evolution in EFL teaching and learning including the methodology of teaching, the content of EFL and to how much extent critical thinking is cultivated in EFL. This section discusses how EFL learning approaches have witnessed a change from a dictation of one way of teaching to a non-globalised and contextualised teaching and learning which led to the learning process and product to change. The second section gives a background about collaborative learning as a learning method in higher education. This includes the history of collaborative learning, the three selected theories that support collaborative learning in educational settings, the application of collaborative learning in higher education in general and for learning English in particular. Collaborative learning in different fields was mentioned in this section for the relevance of these studies to understand the concept of collaborative learning. ‘Generalisation from qualitative research is possible and it is also a legitimate goal of a qualitative research endeavour’ (Guenther and Falk, 2019, p. 1028). Therefore, this section does not only focus on collaborative learning in the EFL context but it extends to some studies in other curriculum areas and contexts with the aim of providing more understanding of the concept.

The third section concerns the contextualisation of the study. The context of this study is important to mention as EFL teaching and learning in higher education in Algeria might be different from elsewhere. In Algeria, EFL – like any other discipline – is affected by policy. In Algeria this is the LMD system. This section, therefore, gives an overview of what this system means and what its objectives are in terms of pedagogy in higher education. This section also links EFL to the LMD system by understanding the impact of the LMD system has on EFL modules. An important aspect of this study is that it considers the perceptions of both higher education EFL teachers and students towards collaborative learning in the Algerian context, how it is understood and how it is applied and evaluated. This will allow the study to investigate the interaction of teaching and learning activities from both perspectives. Since

the LMD system affects learning and teaching in higher education in Algeria, it also considers the potential effects of this on collaborative learning and teaching for EFL students.

2.1. Evolution in EFL teaching in higher education

There have been changes in EFL teaching methods and methodologies over time, particularly following the impact of the roll out of private sector organisations and recommended methods by the British council which tended to be imposed in countries because English has become a global medium of communication. Thus, there has been a shift from a structuralist linguist's view which used to consider language as a self-defining and close structure without considering the contextual differences to a translingual practice which considers that language is learned according to spatial orientations which means according to the context where it is practised (Canagarajah, 2017). In the Algerian context, EFL teaching has witnessed a change since the establishment of the LMD system. However, it is still under researched how Algerian EFL students are experiencing this change and how is collaborative learning perceived by Algerian EFL teachers and students taking into consideration the actual language outcomes.

Globally, there are two aspects to consider in EFL teaching and learning in higher education. First is the content which is taught to students (The curriculum/syllabus or the module). Second, these modules are taught through different ways which refer to the method of teaching and learning (pedagogy). English language nowadays is considered as a global language and is therefore clearly affected by the globalisation process. This effect is apparent on the promotion of the spread of the English language by organisations such as TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language which refers mainly to teaching in a country where English is not a primary language) (Alfehaid, 2014). However, though English is considered as a unified language, contexts may differ and so do the teaching approaches. Pennycook (1994) thinks that the export of applied linguistic theory and western-trained language teachers promote inappropriate teaching approaches to varied settings. The three sections below give background about EFL, what is it, what it consists of and how it is taught. It also shows the link between EFL and collaborative learning which is the focus of this study.

2.1.1. Methodology of teaching EFL

Through time, several methods have been developed to teach EFL in higher education. Among these methods is the grammar translation method where the classroom is a teacher-centred and the interaction is teachers-students only (Rahmani, 2021). This method seems helpful for developing writing and reading skills while the speaking aspect is neglected. However, according to Mart (2013), the grammar translation method has become a classical method which is rarely used now because this method follows the teacher-centred approach with the authoritative teacher controlling all the activities. The communicative language teaching approach on the other hand is communication-based teaching. What is favoured about this method is that there is students' interaction between each other, thus the fluency of the language is enhanced, however; the accuracy and the system of the language might be neglected during the communication process (Hao, 2017).

One of the approaches which was developed to support communication in the English language is task-based learning. It provides opportunities for students to be engaged in meaningful activities in the English language in classroom (Jeon and Hahn, 2006). The task-based learning methods developed with the move of teaching English language from grammar translation and accuracy to fluency and communication (Nunan, 2004). So students should work towards the achievement of an outcome while communicating in the target language (Ellis, 2003). Students should accomplish tasks which are goal oriented which means that the content should exclude any free language activities (Liu et al., 2018). Authentic activities are encouraged in EFL learning. According to Arianie (2017), there could be a variety of activities which represent authentic activities including the step interview, whole class debate and role playing but the main idea is that they encourage students' interaction. Ameen and Kamal (2021) found that teaching literature is not done through a transmission model from teacher to students through papers but through documentaries, personal videos and movies which are discussed between students with less involvement and inclusion of teacher. It is, therefore, apparent that teaching the English language is changing gradually through exposure to speaking and listening and encouraging spoken skills rather than only written skills and through encouraging students-centred learning rather than transmitting knowledge from teacher to students.

According to Johnson (2010), in the transmission model, the approach is a teacher-centred where the teacher is the dispenser of knowledge and the academic achievement is the retransmission of the knowledge back to the teacher through standardised tests. However, Safari and Rachidi (2015) found that EFL Iranian teachers were using a mainly transmission style model and the change should have occurred at the level of ideologies and policies. This denotes that the change of the transmission model is not easy to be done.

On the other hand, other views consider that teaching English is not limited to one approach only. That is, each approach might be used to serve different learning outcomes (Hao, 2017). In Saudi Arabia where English is taught as a foreign language in higher education, it was found that teaching English is done through using the grammar translation method along with the communicative language approach, so both writing and speaking are equally assessed (Alsufyani, 2016). According to Nguyen and Terry (2017), nowadays teachers are not concerned about which method serves better for students but teachers and students have an aspiring flexibility for variety of methods that serve their interest, hence they can develop the skills that can be used beyond the university level. The change of teaching approach might be meaningful when it answers the objectives and outcomes. Thus, considering teaching and learning more broadly, Biggs and Tang (2011) considers that teachers (whatever field they teach) should think of the suitability of the activity to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Though the assessment methodology has witnessed change over time, Alvarez (2008) found out that there is no right way of assessing language, however; summative assessment is necessary to affect the decision making for the educational program. However, Widiastuti and Saukah (2017) found that EFL teachers lack the understanding of formative assessment and students are still given summative marks. This could be the result of the lack of the assessment literacy. Ashraf and Zolfaghari (2018) found that when EFL teachers receive an adequate assessment literacy, their reflection on assessment would increase. Thus, though there is a continuous change in the EFL teaching and assessment methodologies but this change is perceived differently according to the context.

In this study, collaborative activities are interrogated in terms of what they represent for both teachers and students by taking into consideration the teaching approach applied. This will be investigated through EFL teachers' and students' perceptions. Further, how these activities interact with assessment strategies by taking into consideration contextual

factors is the key question in this study. According to Al-Yaseen (2014), collaborative activities provide students with the opportunity to practise the language and develop their communicative skills. It is apparent that the reason for collaborative learning is to motivate the students under a new teaching approach, however; for teachers being a facilitator of collaborative learning is different from being good at it. The latter requires a learning process and skills. They need to develop expertise to be able to manage these processes effectively. For students, also, learning to learn in groups does not happen overnight. This learning demands persistence, responsibility and sensitivity (Smith and MacGregor, 1993). It was found that collaborative learning helps students to develop teamwork skills and social interactions as long as the teacher is trained to introduce it and guide it for students (Burke, 2011). In teaching the language, it is unclear whether EFL teachers are aware of those skills and how students perceive working with each other in learning the language. This study, therefore, investigates the perceptions of teachers and students towards collaborative learning by taking into consideration what should be emphasised and assessed for EFL students.

2.1.2. Content of English learning (Syllabus)

A review of the literature found that although English is seen as a global language, the language curriculum can be different from one context to another. Mainly, it is either the written (grammar) or the oral aspects (fluency) or both which are taught. In other contexts, it is the content curriculum which is important, that is teaching different topics through English. This variation of the language outcomes leads to question about the unification of the language curriculum in countries without taking into consideration the contextual differences.

In higher education in Syria where English is taught as a foreign language, it was found that higher education reform gave importance to the oral aspect of the language, therefore, communication methodologies were introduced. Students give more importance to fluency rather than writing and grammar modules. In addition, as EFL students will be future teachers, teaching methodologies modules were emphasised to prepare students beyond the university (Mawed, 2016). The Chinese higher education for language learning has recognised a shift from a traditional teacher-centred approach of teaching to a learner-

based learning. This is done through incorporating different activities that the students can engage in rather than transmitting knowledge from teacher to students (Zheng, 2012; Hu, 2013). So grammatical structures are taught not as an end in themselves but as a means of carrying out communicative functions (Sabbah, 2018). However, the language content may seem different and varied in other contexts. According to Short (2000), Language Content Task integrates relevant tasks into the curriculum. Thus, the language component focuses on written aspects such as semantics and syntax while content incorporates curriculum topics. If for example the content is about animals, this will give the students the opportunity to describe, compare and use fluently the communicative aspects of the language. Meanwhile, the grammatical structure for describing and comparing are taken into consideration (Genc, 2011).

Therefore, it seems that teaching EFL content is not based on a unified content nor it includes the use of specific teaching methods. Ament and Vidal (2015) found that in teaching Linguistics, it is the writing system which is applied more than the speech. Thus, the content of Linguistics is taught in a teacher-centred class with teacher-students interaction. However, Adamson (2006) found that a combination of teacher-transmission model and students' collaboration in Sociolinguistics module for EFL students is used. A students-centred, collaborative learning mode can help students to develop their experiences in the Sociolinguistics module, also students can raise and sustain the general level of comprehension. Genc (2011) thinks that there should be both teacher and students' autonomy for teaching both English program and content-based program. Thus, teachers teach different subjects across the world, also they use different methodologies. This goes against the idea of BANA. BANA which stands for Britain, Australian and American model is the largely private ELT sector originating in the three countries. It is associated with individualism which represents the ideal for the person-interactive classroom (Holliday, 2016). However, a critical view considers teaching language as non-contextualised. There are globalised methodologies of teaching English through using appropriate methods rather than trying to achieve native speakerism (Holliday, 2016). Teaching English, therefore, can include different aspects which are taught through different methods but the question worth asking is how students' group activities can be used to address the outcomes of the language modules.

2.1.3. The cultivation of critical thinking in EFL classrooms

The level of the difficulty of the EFL task can have an effect on students through developing their analysis, evaluation and creation skills. However, when students are not aware of those skills, students can have a negative attitude towards each other in groups.

It was found that there is a link between critical thinking and dialogues in EFL classrooms. Thus, students can develop the former through interacting and engaging in communicative tasks (Bohm, 2004). However, before investigating its link with EFL, it is worth first understanding what is critical thinking in EFL. According to Alexander (2005), critical thinking is not a stand-alone approach but it is the pedagogy that is shaped by the context where it is practised. According to Harijaz and Hajrulla (2017), it is important for EFL students to develop their critical thinking skills first and then use these skills to improve their language skills, thus well- prepared activities that show students how to interact, collaborate and how to use the language could be a good start for achieving their critical thinking skills. In an experimental study that was done by Yaiche (2021) for Algerian EFL students, it was found that engaging students through discovery learning can develop their critical thinking skills. The teacher presents to students the materials in a form of problem solving, therefore; students attain knowledge of the language through questioning and alternating views rather than through given reports by teacher.

It was found that students who are taught through collaboration develop more critical thinking skills as compared to students who are taught through lecturing (Warsah et al., 2021). In teaching writing, students should analyse, evaluate and create written arguments, however; this is only done when students learn basic lower-order thinking including understanding, applying and remembering (Moonma and Kaweera, 2022). However, though engaging EFL students in collaborative activities can develop their critical thinking skills in different EFL modules, students may still not know how these skills can be applied into the classroom. According to Susanti et al (2020), EFL students have positive attitude towards evaluating each other's information in group working. Therefore, though there is a positive link between collaborative learning and critical thinking, as the former can lead students to develop the later, however; students may not have the readability and

guidance for how to apply these critical thinking skills, in other words it is important to find out how do students perceive critical thinking during their collaboration.

To conclude, since English has been considered as a global language, EFL teaching and learning became the concern of many countries. Thus, unified teaching methodologies were dictated by British Council and language organisations. However, there are contextual differences and what works for one context might be ineffective in another. The three themes mentioned in this section indicate how the methodology and the content of EFL can differ according to the context. As a matter of fact, problem solving tasks might not work in some context as students are not equipped with the necessary skills. In this study, collaborative learning will be investigated in the EFL context but what worth understanding is how do EFL teachers and students perceive it by taking into consideration the EFL content.

2.1.4. EFL process-product learning approaches

Teaching EFL content can be seen through the lens of processes and products aspects. According to Taylor (2015), in teaching English in higher education there is a process which represents the content and a product which reflects the students' used means. However, there is a differentiating process which means that the teacher can choose from an array of activities to design for students and there is a differentiating product which means students have freedom in demonstrating what they learned, for example students can write a paper, conduct a lab and report results. In teaching writing, Khan and Bortha (2014) found that there are process and product approaches. Thus, students go through the analysis and the reading processes in order to produce pieces of writing through applying the structural knowledge. However, when EFL students are learning through group working activities, the process and product approaches might be different which calls for an investigation of how both approaches are perceived. Laal and Laal (2012) found that the process and product notions are in the differentiation between collaboration and cooperation. In cooperation, the structure of interaction is designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific product. However, collaboration is the philosophy of interaction including learning process, respecting and responding to other's views. It seems that collaboration encompasses both process and product. It is the

application of skills that are required prior to the outcomes. Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of research which considers the process and product of collaborative learning especially in the context of learning English language in higher education.

2.2. Critical discussion on collaborative learning

Since the focus of this research is collaborative learning for EFL students in higher education in Algeria, it is worth undertaking an in-depth and critical investigation of the literature related to collaborative learning for learning foreign language in higher education. This research aims to investigate collaborative learning for EFL students (students who are learning English as a foreign language in higher education) in a context where its use is contested and unclear. In the literature there is limited research investigating collaborative learning for foreign language students in higher education, compared to other fields of study, yet this section sheds light on collaborative learning in general and for learning a foreign language in particular. Though qualitative research underlies the selection of the literature review which means that the literature review is focused to collaborative learning for EFL students in higher education, however; it is acknowledged that there is certain generalisation to collaborative learning in other fields. The aim is to understand the extended concept of collaborative learning in higher education based on the findings. Though a qualitative literature review is based on the quality of the findings but there is always a cycle of generalisation of theory and history for the sake of creating new knowledge. This is where truth statements are contested and confirmed drawing on evidence and theory. This does not mean that the role of qualitative researcher is to look for generalisable truth to emerge but truth emerging from particular are just as useful and used as those that had to the general (Guenther and Falk, 2019). In this section, It is important to understand the non-boundary concept of collaborative learning according to the findings in higher education, therefore; this helped me to understand what is role play, community of learning, teacher-students collaboration and problem-solving instruction which are collaborative activities that are not bounded by fields. However, these helped to draw a line of argument about the EFL context, that is with encouraging such types of collaborative activities, it is unclear whether the skills of collaboration or the content of the language is encouraged while learning language in groups and how this should be assessed. This section of literature shows how collaborative

learning is defined broadly in higher education as compared to EFL and the argument that is drawn about collaborative learning in EFL.

Collaborative learning is an approach to teaching and learning that encourages students to be active in the classroom thereby participating actively in the learning process (Bransford, Brown and Cocking, 2006). It encourages students and teachers to use new methods of learning, moving away from old methods such as memorisation and regurgitation of materials towards an environment where they actively process and synthesise information. It is defined as 'intellectual endeavour in which individuals act jointly with others to become knowledgeable on some particular subject matters (Koehn, 2001, p. 160). However, there are several interpretations and definitions of collaborative learning. According to SRINIVAS Rao's study (2019) on collaborative learning in learning English, collaborative learning is about practical activities that include role play, think-pair-share and problem solving through classroom discussions. However, in Karmat and Petrova's study (2009), collaborative learning is about creating a learning community of students and even teachers. These communities engage in different activities/projects throughout the study term, which means that the communities are long lasting. In higher education, communities of learners are set according to the university's goals, needs and resources (Brownell and Swaner, 2009), so they are sustainable when matched with the university's needs (Smith 2004). In learning communities, students are often housed together in groups which share the same interest, which means they meet beyond the classroom context, for example sharing dormitories, attending and performing and visiting libraries together. However, this depends on the interest and objectives of the groups (Otto 2015). For instance, there are communities which focus on global politics, gender and identity, or language learning, and these broad topics include activities which students do continuously (La Guardia Community College, 2015, cited in Otto et al., 2015). Therefore, setting up learning communities depends on a clear understanding of the university, its students and its resources (Otto et al., 2015). In the same line of thought, Kuh (2008) describes a different type of collaboration in higher education, i.e., teacher-student collaboration, where the teacher becomes a member of the students' group and engages in different activities/projects to fulfil a certain aim. Collaborative learning was also described as problem-solving instruction, when students are encouraged to immerse themselves in classroom discussions, guided design and cases in order to solve complex

issues, in other words, through letting students experience real world problems (Smith and MacGregor, 1992). Problem-solving is both a method and a goal of learning; the task is what the learners should resolve; however, by doing so, the learner is following a process. Therefore, this process becomes embedded in the learner's mind as a tactic and method for solving problems (Chan et al., 2018).

Such variation of collaborative learning as a practice which includes practical activities such as role plays (SRINIVAS Rao, 2019), community of learning (Karmat and Petrova; Otto et al., 2015), teacher-students collaboration (Kuh, 2008), problem-solving instruction (Smith and MacGregor, 1993; Chan, 2018) makes it a contested term and it opens the door to know what collaborative learning implies in EFL learning. According to Smith and MacGregor (1992), collaborative learning depends on the context where it is practised and can reflect the continuous practice of collaborative activities in the classroom or can be the spontaneous practice of activities. This explains how collaborative learning can be either the process or the product of learning. In terms of process, collaborative learning can be the continuous practice of activities which aim to achieve a collaborative objective; in terms of product, it is the final objective that any collaborative activity achieves which is important (Smith and MacGregor, 1992).

With regard to the context where collaborative learning takes place, in his revisited work of students' learning in Egypt Holliday (2010) stated that there was no observed collaborative work being encouraged inside the classroom, yet he discovered that students collaborated with each other outside the classroom setting. This indicates that collaboration occurs between students inside and outside the classroom setting. When students work collaboratively, they are directed to co-construct knowledge in a social environment. It is not necessary for this to be initiated by the teacher, but it is a deliberate process by the students (Chi and Wylie, 2014), which may allow students to strengthen their communication skills, and develop teamwork and problem-solving skills outside the educational setting (Ravenscroft and Luhanga, 2014). Both Holliday's and Chi and Wylie's views indicate that collaboration is naturally embedded in the culture of students who decide how to approach their learning. However, if collaborative learning is an embedded learning strategy in the classroom, what shape might this take? How can teacher-initiated tasks affect collaborative learning for students? In other words, pedagogy might have an impact on collaborative

learning in the classroom. Collaborative learning can be a specific method through which learning is approached as in Holliday's and Chi and Wylie's studies, yet it might not be the same in other contexts. Thus, Algerian EFL students might have their own preferred method of learning the language which is not necessarily dictated by the teacher. Investigating both teachers' and students' perceptions might offer insights into how each of these groups think of collaborative learning. Thus, this study intends to cover the cultural and discipline-specific factors that shape the understanding of Algerian higher education EFL collaborative learning.

In the EFL context, according to SRINIVAS Rao (2019), teaching a foreign language should include a variety of activities aimed at promoting the speaking and the listening skills of the students. It was found that such activities can develop three aspects. First, problem-solving skills can be developed through making students resolve issues together through discussion and competitive games. Some intended language vocabulary can be developed when discussing about topics by using agreeing and disagreeing opinions. Other activities could develop the listening skill of the students (SRINIVAS Rao, 2019). However, these outcomes that are claimed by SRINIVAS Rao represent language-specific outcomes except for the problem-solving skills. Brown (2008) believes that collaborative language learning can enhance other aspects including problem-solving skills and motivation, while Govindasamy and Md. Shah (2020) think that collaborative learning can improve students' speaking abilities as it positively affected their grammar and pronunciation learning. This might indicate that the focus is on the language product that should be achieved by individual students, rather than the process of interaction. It seems that collaborative learning in foreign language teaching can mean the achievement of the language curriculum objectives, but it could also mean the development of skills which the teacher is aware about.

Although collaborative learning can be used to serve the language outcomes related to learning the foreign language, it is important to ask why collaborative learning is encouraged. According to Bernaus and Gardner (2008), students' participation in different activities encourages learner autonomy and the promotion of social skills. Holliday (2005) justified the use of group work by some teachers, asserting that it met the current teaching approach, which is learner-centred. However, if collaborative learning assists students to promote their social networking, communication skills and critical thinking (Liao and Wang, 2016) in foreign language learning, it is still not clear what purpose this collaborative learning

serves (whether language, skills, or both or other purposes). If students should achieve language-related outcomes in groups, teachers might assess their (individual) product of collaboration, however; if students should interact and are aware of their skills, then their process (and maybe their product) might be evaluated by their teachers. The contested and unclear meaning of 'collaborative learning' in English language learning in higher education requires solving. Understanding what collaborative learning implies in the EFL context for EFL teachers and students is significant and can give a contextual understanding. In an attempt to investigate collaborative learning in the EFL context in higher education in Algeria, it was found that EFL teachers misunderstand the essence of collaborative learning although it is applied in their design of activities. Teachers keep teaching grammar using traditional lecture-based methods despite claiming to follow a learner-centred approach (Belmekki and Kebiri, 2018). Understanding the teachers' perspectives is important but understanding the factors that shape these is equally significant. This research will not evaluate the extent to which collaborative learning is used but it aims to understand the existing collaboration in the EFL context in higher education in Algeria. In other words, knowing the general aim of the application of collaborative learning for EFL students in higher education in Algeria will explain the teachers' and students' perceptions and behaviours. It is about *understanding* (Merriam et al., 2002) the situation. According to Little and McMillan (2014), at universities there are learning outcomes which should be achieved, but there are also graduate attributes which students need to develop to benefit them beyond the university. Although this is said in the context of general learning in higher education, it is significant to know why collaborative learning is chosen by teachers for EFL learning, what it means, and what aim it serves.

2.2.1. A Brief History of Collaborative Learning

The idea of collaborative learning has its roots far back in history. It emerged first in politics in the 17th century when John Amos Comenius, who was a Czech educational reformer and religious leader, called for political unity, religious reconciliation and educational cooperation in his writings between 1592-1670. In the same period, he talked implicitly about collaborative learning when asserting that students might feel confident and motivated when being taught by other students like them (Johnson et al., 1991; Diggins, 1997; Pappas et al.,

2003). Thereafter, the idea of collaborative learning became explicit through the use of the term 'peer learning'. In the late 18th century, Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell opened schools in England that focused on teaching students through peer learning activities (Johnson et al., 1991). During the 19th century, peer learning was adopted in the USA, with Colonel Francis Parker, who was the superintendent of public schools in Quincy, Massachusetts (1875-1880), showing an enthusiasm for implementing peer learning activities in the classroom and inspiring other teachers and lecturers who came to his classroom to observe peer activities (Campbell, 1965, cited in Johnson et al., 1991).

Thereafter, a comparative study between competitive, individualistic and peer learning started to gain ground in the literature. A study was done by Tuner in England and Triplett (1898) in the United States who started comparing their effectiveness, and their efforts were later followed by several investigations in the early 20th century in order to find out the advantages and disadvantages of each of them (Johnson et al., 1998). The importance of peer learning was recognised and prominent. It was encouraged around schools and universities in the world. The reason was that educators were interested in improving the efforts of some students through the help of their colleagues, thus creating a collaborative zone among students was helpful (Oslen and Kagan, 1992).

In the 1970s, a group of researchers began to investigate cooperative/collaborative learning methods in schools through experimental studies in classroom settings (Slavin, 1991). The 'Jigsaw Method' was developed by Elliot Aronson and his associates; 'Learning Together' was developed by David Johnson and Roger Johnson (Cooperative Learning Centre at the University of Minnesota), and 'Teams-Games-Tournament' and 'Student Teams Achievement Divisions' were initiated by David DeVries, Keith Edwards and Robert Slavin (Centre of Social Organisation of School at the Johns Hopkins University) (Almashjari, 2012). Changes in classroom activities began with the shift of the teaching model from transmission to construction of knowledge. The transmission model was criticised for restricting the students' ability to construct their own knowledge, which often created a dilemma for teachers to either present the knowledge to students or help them construct their own knowledge. In the construction of knowledge, the shift of the role of the teacher is from knowledge holder to guide, motivator and advisor. Constructivism encourages a learner-

centred approach and a collaborative learning environment in which learning is supported by the teacher through scaffolding and authentic activities (Dagar and Yadav, 2016).

It should be noted that collaborative learning between students started in higher education and many studies into this took place. However, by the early 1970s, it started to be investigated in primary, elementary and secondary schools while research on collaborative learning in higher education was decreased at that period. It wasn't until the 1990s that collaborative learning at higher education started to regain the attention of researchers and educators (Johnson et al., 1998).

This shift in pedagogical approach marks the beginning of encouraging students to construct their own knowledge and of encouraging students' collaboration. However, although history shows a gradual development of collaborative learning and a shift in teaching approaches, it is still important to consider other pedagogical approaches. While collaborative learning is considered to be a positive learning method, one cannot overlook other teaching approaches such as the transmission model. Therefore, it is worth asking whether all learning outcomes can be achieved through collaborative learning, or are there situations where collaborative learning cannot help in achieving the intended outcome? In this study, it is significant to look at the different content of EFL modules and explore to how much extent this content can have students working in collaboration. In addition, the pedagogical approach might have influenced the learning method. In this study, the teacher will be investigated as a factor that might/might not influence EFL students' collaboration.

2.2.2. Theoretical assumptions in Collaborative Learning

Owing to the application of collaborative learning in educational context, some theories talked about collaborative learning as a method of learning for students either in education or in higher education (Johnson et al., 1993; Ellis, 1993; Mezirow, 1991). Three main theories were selected for discussion in this section: group dynamic theory (which was developed later into social interdependence theory), constructivist theory and transformative learning theory. Group dynamic theory seems the first and the basic pillars for collaborative practices to students (Johnson et al., 1993). Although this theory did not specify the age of the learners who should participate in collaborative activities (Toseland et al., 2004), it

provides some theoretical conceptions and a basis for the concept of collaborative learning. This is the most discussed theory in relation to the findings in this study due to the aspects it provides. The justification for discussing this theory more than the others is because it provides the elements of interaction between students by considering both the process and the product of collaborative learning and can be linked to the findings of this study. Constructivist and transformative learning theories seem to complement each other, and they both support the collaborative practice to students (Ackermann, 2017). Transformative learning theory is particularly for adult learners, it thoroughly explained the learning of adult students through different facets and methods, collaboration is one of them. This theory has 'critical discourse' and 'disorienting dilemma' as the main elements of students' collaboration (Mezirow, 1991). It has its roots in the constructivist theory which will be discussed later.

2.2.2.1 Group Dynamics Theory

Collaborative learning was first understood through group dynamic theory. This explained collaborative learning as a group that works together to achieve a shared purpose or aim, and if this is achieved then this group has what is called 'the dynamic whole'. Changing a single member may lead to a change of the whole or to the shared achievements of the objective (Johnson et al., 1993). However, creating a dynamic within the group does not necessarily mean the control of one member within the group by their decisions because differences may exist. As a matter of fact, a successful group is one where ideas are well communicated and understood by all parties. As a result, this could change the attitude and the behaviour of students as it could lead students to getting involved in discussions and giving feedback about others' views (Toseland et al., 2004).

In America, Johnson and Johnson (2005) developed the theory of group dynamic under the name of 'social interdependence theory'. They differentiated between social interdependence, dependence and independence. Social interdependence is when the outcomes of individuals are affected by other's actions. There are two types of social interdependence: positive, when the actions of individuals promote the achievement of joint goals, and negative, when the actions of individuals obstruct the achievement of each other's goals. Social independence is when the goal achievement of a person A is unaffected

by person B's actions and vice versa, while social dependence exists when the goal achievement of a person A is affected by person B's actions. Research about the theory of social interdependence started in the 1800s when a group of researchers started investigating cooperative, competitive and individualistic learning. Among those early researchers were Triplett (1898) in the United State, Turner (1898, cited in Triplett) in England, and Mayer (1903) in Germany, who conducted a series of studies on factors that affected competitive learning. Following this, researchers have studied the imperative value of cooperative, competitive and individualistic efforts and the conditions under which each might be relevant (Johnson and Johnson, 2005). In the context of EFL learning in higher education in Algeria, there is very limited knowledge about the type of learning that is applied there. It is claimed that EFL learning in higher education in Algeria has changed due to the LMD system and that EFL teachers are following the student-centred approach in teaching rather than any previous approaches (Azzi, 2012). It is also claimed that EFL students are evaluated based on their continuous achievement in activities in higher education, unlike in the past when their mark for the final exam was the only indicator of their achievement (Djebbari, 2016). This research is an attempt to understand collaborative learning in that context. EFL collaborative learning in Algeria might be understood through certain activities but it is important to understand what collaborative learning really reflects, i.e. whether it is about skills or content teaching. According to Johnson and Johnson (1989), in order for group interaction to be achieved and the teaching method to be efficient, there should be a cooperative structure in learning, therefore, the core benefit of interdependence theory is that learners come to depend on each other (A depends on B and vice versa) to achieve a common goal and, as a result of this interdependency, they encourage each other, help each other and respect each other, thereby increasing the connection between the students (Wang, 2001). This research aims to investigate EFL collaboration in higher education in Algeria, its aspects and factors and how these can be linked to the aspects of social interdependence theory.

The social interdependence theory is characterised by three psychological processes which were described by Deutsch (1949) and its interaction patterns. These psychological processes depict the relationship of the members of the group with each other. These processes are substitutability, cathexis, and inducibility, which promote positive interdependence, while non-substitutability, negative cathexis, and non-inducibility or

resistance lead to negative interdependence (Deutsch, 1949). Substitutability is when the actions of one person can be substituted with the actions of another member of the group (Deutsch, 1949) creating harmony among the group's members. Cathexis is the investment of psychological positive energy in objects outside of oneself (Deutsch, 1949). The cathexis that is attached to other's individual actions generalises to all the members, so when there is positive cathexis, effective actions will result from the group as they are contagious. According to Neumann and Strack (2000), emotions and cathexis are contagious, which can create an emotional interdependence in the group, i.e. all members of the group can be experiencing the same emotions as each other. However, Deutsch (1949) noted that just because people work in groups does not mean that all of them will have the group's best interests at heart; sometimes they can encounter negative cathexis. Inducibility is the actions of being influenced and of influencing others. The influence of group members on each other is more successful than influence attempts by the outer group (Tuner, 1991). Although these psychological patterns are discussed here, they are not an important aspect of the findings of this study, simply because this study does not look at the psychological detail of the EFL students' collaboration but on their external interaction, which will be explained in the next section.

The interaction patterns of social interdependence theory include positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, social skills, and group processing (Johnson and Johnson, 2003). Social skills and group processing are related to the promotive interaction (Johnson and Johnson, 2003), and are discussed below.

2.2.2.1.1. Positive interdependence

Positive interdependence is when the performance of a person affects the success of the group's other members, which indirectly increases one's responsibility to work hard (Johnson and Johnson, 2003). It was found that the interaction of both positive goal interdependence and positive reward interdependence increases the achievement of the group (Johnson and Johnson, 1996), that is, one cannot succeed unless all members succeed (Johnson et al., 1998). Research on positive interdependence primarily tackles two types: positive goal interdependence and positive reward interdependence (Deutsch, 1962; Johnson

and Johnson, 1989). Positive goal achievement is the belief that the group member cannot achieve his/her goals unless the other group members achieve theirs (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). Conversely, positive reward interdependence is when group members work collaboratively to achieve joint rewards (Slavin, 1991). According to Cohen (1994), a reward is considered to be an external incentive to interact, and should be supported only when needed, while positive goal interdependence is what matters when students really need to interact. This positive interdependence results in the individual members of the group becoming responsible for his/her own and for others' success (Johnson and Johnson, 2003).

2.2.2.1.2. Individual accountability

When an individual's performance affects the outcomes of the group, they are responsible for (1) completing their own share of the work and (2) facilitating the work of other group members (Matsui et al., 1987). 'Failing oneself is bad but failing others as well is worse' (Johnson and Johnson, 2003, p. 939). Group members realise high achievement when personal accountability is structured and well understood by the members (Hooper et al., 1989). Individual accountability is not something that is easy to be applied, it needs time and patience for each member to maintain it in the group (Laal et al., 2013), but when it is well maintained, group members can avoid 'free riding' of the members (Laal et al., 2013). It is, therefore, significant in this study to take into consideration not only the group interaction but also the individual contribution as this theory emphasised.

2.2.2.1.3. Promotive interaction

Positive interdependence results in promotive interaction, which can include effective help and exchange of resources between group members (Johnson and Johnson, 2003). Helping behaviours in the group promote the process of the work and the interaction inside the group (Webb et al., 2002). According to Gillies (2006), the teacher should develop on students the interpersonal behaviour through showing them how to give explanations and detailed responses to each other. Promotive interaction requires the use of appropriate social skills and regular group processing (Johnson and Johnson, 2003). Group processing indicates

the reflection of members on how effective their process is and how they can do better, which helps to improve high, medium and low achieving students (Johnson and Johnson, 2003). Group processing results in contagious motivation to achieve their objective, and a more positive relationship between participants (Archer-Kath et al., 1994).

The above-mentioned elements are a set of theories about the social interdependence theory. The question worth asking is how this social interdependence theory can be applied to education, and specifically higher education, contexts. According to Johnson and Johnson (2007), teachers can easily group students and assign tasks, but it is difficult to achieve social interdependence unless they have an awareness of what they are doing. They need to understand how to structure positive interdependence, individual accountability and promotive interaction. Not only this, but social interdependence should become an integrated system for the academic institution. When this is literally structured, any subject area and any age group of students can work collaboratively. A conceptual understanding of social interdependence theory by teachers gives a framework that guides their practices (Horton and Mills, 1984). According to Johnson et al (2008), collaborative learning can be emphasised in either formal or informal ways. In considering formal collaboration, students work together for a long period of time for projects to achieve joint goals, so the teacher should explain positive interdependence to students and help students process their work. In informal collaboration, achieving a joint goal is temporary and can include quick dialogues or activities that achieve short-term learning.

It is summarised from the three key interaction elements that social interdependence theory focuses on the outcome, the process, and the interaction of the group members, and also on individual and group accountability, i.e. positive interdependence is interactive work towards achieving a shared aim or objective. In order for this positive interdependence to be successful, there needs to be individual responsibility for one's own work which is the individual accountability. Promotive interaction is the process of collaboration which includes different skills and behaviours for achieving the needed objective. These elements summarise the meaning of social interdependence, although this study does not intend to evaluate the theory but to consider what interaction means and what elements it includes. It is therefore significant to explore EFL collaboration in terms of individual accountability, positive interdependence and promotive interaction in respect of both the process and the product

of collaboration. Although this theory could be found to support cooperative learning in the literature (Johnson and Johnson, 2003) and is sometimes linked to collaborative learning (Shimizu et al., 2020), the aim of this study is not to look at which type of learning this theory is most closely linked to but to look at interaction patterns between students. According to Srijbos in a recent online conference (2021), 'The distinction doesn't really help, but we need to focus on the interaction'. Therefore, this theory explains how students interact, including both their process and the product of their learning.

2.2.2.2. Constructivist learning theory

Constructivist learning theory has its roots in Piaget and Vygotsky's work (Hua Liu and Matthews, 2005). By taking both their views into consideration, it is suggested that learning occurs when students gain experience from what they are learning, i.e. that people create their own meaning through experience (Aljohani, 2017, P. 98).

However, this meaning can be created when the individual student is in contact with other students, that is, the social construction of meaning. The teacher should create a collaborative atmosphere where students give feedback, evaluate, assess and learn from each other (Aljohani, 2017, P. 98). This indicates that the construction of learning is pluralistic; that is, each individual learner's construction is different, but they are affected by the thoughts of each other (Ellis, 1993). This philosophy is called constructivist teaching where the teacher has become a facilitator, rather than the only knowledge holder, who constructs knowledge with the students (Kamis AlMashjari, 2012). According to Korpershoek et al (2014, P. 11), the teacher's task is to make learning stimulating for students by encouraging their engagement by using their social skills. Thus, knowledge and learning are constructed when students are socially engaged in dialogues and active experiments, that is through interpersonal dialogues. In order for this to be successfully achieved in the classroom, the teacher needs to consider co-operative learning, class management and grouping of students (Suhendi and Purwarno, 2018).

This theory has its wide implication in learning English as a foreign language, mainly through project completion (Suhendi and Purwano, 2018). In learning a foreign language,

students develop experience through gaining an intercultural awareness, it means when they become aware of the content which is about the target or authentic environment (Suhendi and Purwano, 2018). Project completion between students might be an aspect in the context of this study; however, it is still important to understand what collaborative learning indicates in term of the process and the product which could be comparatively and clearly understood from the above social interdependence theory.

It is concluded that learning is a social phenomenon that is supported in a collective context between other students. Additionally, learning has to relate to the students' own experience so that they can construct their learning (Aljohani, 2017). This theory describes learning as a cognitive process and, more importantly, a social process, yet although it is applied in the EFL context to raise intercultural awareness for students through project completion, it is significant to understand what purpose this collaboration serves, whether it is an end in itself or a means of achieving a particular learning outcome.

The social constructivist theory, while focussing on the collaborative work of students, does not specify the age of participating students. Since this research considers EFL higher education students, it was important to read about the transformative learning theory which covers adults' learning and whose main aspect is students' collaboration. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.2.3. Transformative Learning Theory

Although social constructivist learning was concerned with the development of the child's cognitive capacities, it also offered insight into adult learning theory (transformative learning theory). It is likely that the constructivist approach paved the way for adult learning theory to emerge by shedding light on the steps that children take to construct knowledge socially (Ackermann, 2017).

Transformative learning is an adult learning theory that was constructed by Mezirow in 1981 who relied on constructivist assumptions in drawing his theory (Taylor and Cranton, 2012, p.6). Mezirow (1991, p.xiv) defined transformative learning theory as 'conviction that meaning exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books and that personal

meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction and experience.’ This means we are responsible for the interpretation of our experiences in our own way and that we observe the world through examining, questioning and revising our experiences.

When the learner is given room for engaging in critical reflection in the classroom, this can lead them to change their beliefs, behaviours, ways of thinking or perspectives. This is often referred to as constructing meaning and constructing a learning environment (Merriam et al., 2007; Mezirow, 1981). Mezirow (1991) defined the meaning that we construct in our mind as meaning schemas and meaning perspectives. Meaning schema is the belief in how something works, how to do something, how to understand something (Mezirow, 1991, p. 42) and this type of meaning can be easily changed, whereas meaning perspective may include enduring beliefs, like the notion of a person’s legitimate role in society, the importance of the family and the individual’s identity (Mezirow, 2012). This means when being critical, the learner should take into consideration potential issues that might be raised, such as discrimination and emotional effect. As Mezirow (2009, p.22) explained in his extension of the theory of transformative learning, that learning is defined as a transformation from a problematic raised to a more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open and emotionally able to change.

The theory of transformative learning supported collaborative learning between students through discourse and critical reflection between students, as a result, students develop new shared perspectives (Mezirow, 1978; Merriam et al., 2007). The activity given to students should display a certain level of problematising, which Mezirow referred to as ‘the disorienting dilemma’. This was referred to as ‘problem-based learning’ in the original work of Dewey (Chan et al., 2018). It was also clear in the work of Piaget (1983) who explained how the assimilation and accommodation process occurs in the construction of schemas of knowledge, asserting that there should be a certain level of difficulty that the student should resolve in order to build such schemas in his mind. This should trigger students to examine their own experiences as well as each other’s and, by critically reflecting on the assumptions they made because of these experiences, to develop a shared perspective of the discussed issue (Mezirow, 2000). Practically, these activities should be supported in higher education

by any lecturer by engaging structurally the students with communities and groups inside or outside the classroom setting (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 391).

When students are exposed to the intellectual critical diversity of the group, they can rehearse and restructure information in their memory (Johnson and Johnson, 2002). Quitadamo et al (2009) found correlation between collaborative learning and critical thinking and that students who work on collaborative learning activities perform better on critical thinking. Students develop their critical thinking through problem-solving tasks. It was found by Terenzini et al (2001) that students who engage in collaborative learning activities can develop problem-solving skills for engineering students. However, a recent quantitative study by Loes and Pascarella (2017), found no correlation between collaborative learning and critical thinking. Students can work in groups without using their critical thinking skills.

In this research, although transformative learning is not the target that is explored yet it brought some ideas to understand collaborative learning for adult learners. What is understood from transformative learning theory is that learning can occur in groups of adult learners for the sake of developing critical thinking for students. The latter is developed when the student is exposed to activities which are 'problematizing', that is through problem-based learning. Therefore, since the first line of enquiry of this research is to understand collaborative learning for EFL students in Algeria, it is important to know how this collaborative learning is processed.

It can be inferred that the three above-mentioned theories share something in common, that is explaining collaborative learning and its practice in education and in higher education. They identified some features which seem imperative for collaborative learning, such as individual accountability, social interdependence, the co-construction of knowledge, promotive interactions, problem-based learning and critical thinking in collaboration. In this study, collaborative learning is investigated as a concept and as a practice in the EFL department, it is therefore imperative to have an overview of how collaborative learning is defined theoretically and how it is actually conceived in the EFL context in Algeria.

2.2.3. Collaborative foreign Language Learning in Higher Education

Collaborative learning is an activity for students in many domains in higher education. Learning a foreign language, in this context the English language, was also found to be successfully achieved through collaboration between students in some contexts. In the following section, the importance of learning a foreign language through collaboration between the students, particularly English in higher education, will be highlighted and the factors (positive and negative) affecting collaborative activities in general will be tackled.

While collaborative learning in higher education has been studied by many academics, collaborative language learning was also the main focus of some researchers due to its vital importance in learning a second/foreign language. Autonomy was considered as the result of collaborative work between students. Collaborative activities in classroom for learning the foreign language give students freedom to engage in classroom practices, in this way students will feel free to practice their needs in the language through collaborating with each other. This is the result when the higher education teacher is more or less a feedback provider rather than a controller of students (Bernaus and Gardner, 2008; Chen, 2017).

Students working in collaboration can develop their communicative language skills, oral skills and problem-solving skills in the foreign language (Wentzel and Wakins, 2002; Brown, 2008; Osman et al., 2010). Some collaborative activities may include diverse students with different views who share a common interest, and this is where students may develop experience in resolving a problem collaboratively (by taking account of different views and explanations) as well as developing their oral skills in the foreign language. The kinds of activities which higher education teachers design for foreign language learners gives students the opportunity to practice their language with their peers as well as to share their knowledge and experiences with their classmates (Osman et al., 2010). Some teachers are aware of the differences between students in a group, and according to Liao and Wang (2016) heterogenous cluster grouping could enhance the students' empathy and critical thinking in their reflective writing. On the other hand, the critical thinking of EFL students can help students to engage in problem-solving discussions, they may end up having some sort of judgmental views and maybe stereotypes. Therefore, it should be made clear before any activity that tolerance and acceptance of each other's views are necessary and more

important than the activity itself (Osman et al., 2010; Tosuncuoglu, 2018). According to transformative learning theory, critical reflection should be part of collaboration and it should be the aim of the teacher to achieve this (Mezirow, 1991). However, the context can lead to having different outcomes of such activity especially where the higher education system might have an impact in learning.

It seems from the above discussions on collaborative learning that student collaboration in the foreign language classroom could help develop certain skills such as heterogenous cluster grouping, critical thinking and problem-solving skills which can be utilised to enhance learning the language. However, it is worth questioning whether teachers have an awareness of the process of collaboration and how collaborative learning can be understood in terms of learning a foreign language. According to Ning (2010), the design of three step interview, think pair share, jigsaw, round table and other activities could help EFL students to develop fluency in learning the language. Both speaking and writing skills were found to be enhanced when students develop confidence in sharing their ideas in a group (Anggraini et al., 2020). It seems that the four language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) can be effectively improved through grouping techniques (Liao et al., 2019). Henceforth, understanding collaborative learning for learning English is unclear and contested depending on the purpose it serves. Therefore, this research aims to uncover the teachers' and students' version of the truth about EFL collaborative learning in higher education in Algeria through the contextual factors.

Some researchers focused on collaboration to be between the teacher and the students. Ahlstrom (2003) stated that when teachers engage in dialogues with students to investigate an issue and create new understanding, the teacher might already know the students' needs and performance therefore they will be indirectly evaluated on their performance with their teachers. This collaboration between the teacher and the student was referred to as peer coaching by some academics. Peer coaching is a teaching strategy that seems helpful in collaborative activities between students. Peer coaching should precede collaborative activities with the teacher sharing their knowledge and expertise and designing activities that take account of the students' different cultural/linguistic background (Payton Farrell Buzbee, 2005). Peer coaching between the teacher and the student might control the level of personal knowledge and experiences about the students that should be required for

designing collaborative activities to students (Perez, 2004). This means that a prior peer coaching between the teacher and the student might be helpful for knowing about the students' cultural background and experiences especially in teaching a foreign language (Students from different cultural background might be studying together). Foreign language learners are studying a language which is different from their own and which comes from a distinct cultural background and families, and students might end up using their own language to interpret the subject language. Peer coaching can raise the teacher's awareness of these differences when designing collaborative activities (Bowman and McCormick, 2000). Although there might not be a clear connection between peer coaching and the three above mentioned theories about collaborative learning, because the former includes teacher-students interaction, while the latter involves learners' interaction, the teacher still has a pivotal role as guide, controller or advisor. Therefore, in both cases, the teacher still has an important part to play. In this research, since the aim is to build an understanding about how collaborative learning is viewed, perceived and practiced by higher education EFL teachers and students, peer-coaching might be part of such understanding, yet each context may function differently.

All in all, collaborative learning can be a contested term in learning English as a Foreign Language because it is not clear what aim it serves. In learning English, there are particular learning outcomes to be accomplished, and it is therefore significant to understand whether collaborative learning can be among the language outcomes, or whether it is a means to achieve other outcomes for students.

2.2.4. Barriers to collaborative learning

Like other learning methods, collaborative learning can face barriers. According to Davis (1993), some lecturers in a Californian university were reluctant to encourage collaborative activities with their students because of some issues, these are: the type of task assigned, group organisation and the type of evaluation employed. In terms of assessment, group work would make it difficult for teachers to fairly evaluate each student and identify their individual contributions (Strijbos, 2020). Some higher education institutions like Macquarie in Australia restricted the level of group work between students because of the

difficulty of having a clear assessment strategy (Bower and Richards, 2006), as well as other factors including loss of control in the classroom and concerns about the loss of content coverage (Nayan et al., 2010).

A lack of teacher training may also contribute to a reluctance to use different teaching methods, including collaborative activities (Gillies and Boyles, 2011) and some teachers may lack confidence in terms of allowing discussions in the group as some difficult questions might be raised by students (Nayan et al., 2010). It was also found that some higher education teachers had problems with designing group tasks, composing groups and managing class time (Gillies and Boyle, 2011), while others were unsure how to handle discussion between students in collaborative work, which impacted on students' experience of the quality of the collaborative process (Van Leeuwen et al., 2013). Those teacher-related hindrances were found in research on collaborative learning in different contexts; however, in the Algerian context collaborative learning might be conceived differently because of the impact of the LMD system. That is, the training of teachers might vary, depending on higher education policy.

The above-mentioned hindrances were identified by higher education teachers; however, students have their own perceptions of why collaborative learning might not always be successful. According to Nayan et al (2010), students sometimes ignore how collaborative activities should be undertaken, therefore the lecturers find it difficult to give them collaborative tasks. In addition, the materials (content) that higher education teachers are obliged to teach might not lend itself to collaborative learning, therefore it is necessary for the lecturer to lead the session (Le et al., 2018). Additionally, problems are apparent when students are forming their own groups, i.e. choosing group members. Some students choose some members on purpose because they are friends to each other (Ferdous and Karim, 2019). This can be the result when there are 'unskilled' (Le et al., 2018) or 'untalented' (Ferdous and Karim, 2019) students in groups. Competence status can also be a factor that affects the effectiveness of the work in groups (Bunderson and Reagans, 2011), because low-achieving students can be marginalised when the work is dominated by other students (Le et al., 2018). However, the dominance issue might be apparent and might be the result of pedagogy. That is, some tasks, though they are collaborative, may require from students to compete so that to get the desired mark. This research is significant because it takes into consideration the

evaluation system that underlies Algerian EFL students' collaboration. This will be through a triangulated understanding of collaborative learning from the perceptions of the head of the department, teachers and students.

Classroom size could be also a hindrance for implementing collaborative learning activities, with larger classrooms making it more difficult for lecturers to manage groups (Nayan et al., 2010). A class with a large number of students would require a high level of participation by the students and careful monitoring of the process of the work by the teacher (Raul, 2016). As well as class size, language could also be a hindrance. Since the communicated used language is a foreign one, it might be difficult to design collaborative activities for students who have limited proficiency in that language. That is, students learning a foreign language might find it hard to communicate, discuss and reflect when working in groups (Nayan et al., 2010).

Communication itself might not be the only problem as some higher education teachers stated that their students lacked the collaborative skills to work in groups. A study revealed that this inhibits first year Master students from engaging in group work and contributing to group outcomes, therefore lack of collaborative skills is one of the antecedents of collaborative problems the students are faced with during collaborative work in classroom (Popov et al., 2012). Those collaborative skills were explained by Le et al., (2018, p. 105) as how opposing views are accepted, how students elaborate explanations to each other and how they provide and receive help and negotiate. This can be an issue in assessment where the teacher can be confused with either assessing the skills or the content being studied (Forsuland Fkykedal and Hammar Chiriatic, 2017). In this study, higher education EFL teachers might be aware of the collaborative skills for their EFL students, yet the question worth asking is whether these skills ought to be taught and whether the pedagogy of the teacher, including their design of the activity and assessment strategy, helps students to use these skills in language classrooms. Other factors which seemed to impede collaboration between students included free riding, competence status and friendship. Free riding is the inconsistent roles of the group members which affect assessment, and competence status refers to students who are more intellectual and who tend to underestimate low-achieving students. Friendship is another factor that affects collaborative work between students as it

may lead to subjectivity, causing students to deviate from their academic task (Le et al., 2018, P. 15).

All the above-mentioned factors are related to classroom and higher education teachers (Gillies and Boyle, 2011, Nayan et al., 2010) and sometimes they are student-related factors (Povov et al., 2012; Brandt, 2015; Le et al., 2018). In some contexts, it is important to look at cultural and social behaviours. For example, in a study undertaken by Baker et al (2002) to investigate the nature of the learning environment in computer sciences classrooms in the United States, it was found that fewer collaborative activities were encouraged amongst students because of the impersonal environment and informal hierarchies that existed between them. As a result, learning was considered competitive rather than collaborative. This defensive climate led to competitiveness, judgement of others and superiority of some students because when competition between students is high, collaboration between them will be low (Baker et al., 2002). According to Le et al (2018), there are some countries like Vietnam and other Asian countries where criticism and disagreement are avoided and interactions between members should be free from personal feelings and judgment in order to progress the interaction. In the current study, it is significant to investigate how learning is viewed in the minds of EFL students and what exterior factors, such as pedagogy or assessment, shape this learning. Although Algerian sociocultural aspects can be a significant factor to look at, this is not the aim of this study, although future research could usefully consider the effect of society on students' collaboration.

Sometimes competition is not the product of the social status of students but rather the result of the testing system in higher education which obliges students to compete rather than work in partnership. In a study undertaken by Benmoussat and Benmoussat in higher education in Algeria (2018), it was found that Algerian higher education EFL teachers rely mainly on testing students through written exams at the end of the term, therefore the learning is managed in order to meet the needs of the final test and the curriculum is designed to prepare students for this, but the question worth asking is how this assessment can be linked to collaborative learning?

All the situations mentioned above that have tackled the potential reasons that impede collaborative learning for students in higher education in different domains, and foreign language learning in particular, were mostly related to the students, the higher

education teachers, the physical environment, or beliefs about learning and the nature of the testing system. However, are these considered as hindrances or are they factors that help to understand what collaborative learning is in that context? That is, if students think they have to compete with each other because this is what their culture is about, and teachers think students should work in collaboration for the sake of achieving marks, then this would explain how collaborative learning is understood according to these factors. Thus, this study aims to understand EFL collaborative learning through the interconnectedness of different factors, including the higher education policy and the pedagogy of the teacher. It is assumed that when factors are connected, the full picture will be then clear. In addition, since the methodological framework of this study is the constructivist interpretivist approach, this will lead to an understanding of the connection between the different contextual factors which shape our understanding about collaborative learning. According to Schwandt (1994), the constructivist interpretivist researcher focuses on the process of creating a meaning, this is by negotiating, contrasting, modifying and creating meaning within a particular context. However, it is not only the process of creating meaning which is important but also the product which is *understanding* the researcher's mechanism (Merriam et al., 2002).

2.2.5. Assessment and its link with collaborative learning

There is a broad discussion in the literature about the two main types of assessment in education: formative and summative. Formative assessment is diagnostic while summative assessment is evaluative (Bhat and Bhat, 2019). There are two different views on formative assessment: sometimes it is considered a diagnostic test and sometimes it is the continuous evaluation of the process (Bennett, 2011). According to Shepherd (2008), formative assessment is the evaluation of students through making observations and asking appropriate questions, these are the qualitative insights in the students' learning which is different from giving grades. On the other hand, the general aim of summative assessment is to report on the students' learning rather than to contribute to ongoing learning, so by the end of a year, a semester or a particular stage, the student has to be graded on tests and examinations in order to record their performances (Dolin et al., 2018).

One of the limitations of summative assessment is that it is decontextualised and isolated from the learning process. It takes place only at the end of the course to judge how well the student performed. However, evaluating students should be iterative and should go alongside the learning process. Thus, formative assessment focuses not only on the cognitive aspect of learning but also the social one (Strijbos et al., 2016). De Hei et al (2016) constructed a model for applying collaborative learning in higher education. This model is composed of eight elements which are: interaction, learning objectives and outcomes, assessment, task characteristics, structuring, guidance, group constellation, and facilities. Amongst these, the assessment component appears to be under-researched (Strijbos, 2011, 2016; Forsell et al., 2020; Meijer et al., 2020). It was found that there is often a lack of alignment between collaborative learning and assessment (Strijbos et al., 2009). Among the challenges teachers face when designing collaborative learning is achieving a sound assessment (Gillis and Boyle, 2011; Forslund Frykedal and Hammar Chiriack, 2011; Hei et al., 2016). Thus, there were efforts to establish a 'collaborative learning assessment literacy' in higher education. The assessment of collaborative learning can be challenging for two main reasons: firstly, different domains can have different ways and methods of assessment depending on assessing the skills or the knowledge and secondly, behaviour of students in groups can vary, as can their efforts (Pitt, 2000; Van Aalst, 2013; Meijer et al., 2020). A set of research investigated the construct validity in collaborative learning assessment. Validity is when the group is given a score, a grade or a comment which represents the method of assessment (Meijer et al., 2020). However, it seems challenging to achieve validity because there is a tension between assessing group performances and assessing individuals. Individual effort can become indistinct when students are given a collective mark and therefore their positive interdependence is high (Dijkstra et al., 2016; Forsell et al., 2020). Conversely, assessing the whole group and giving each student the same mark can be threatening as the score may not reflect the student's individual domain-specific abilities (Meijer et al., 2020). High achieving students can receive a lower mark because of the impact of low achieving students on the group, while low achievers can get good grades from collaborating with high achieving students (Moore and Hampton, 2015; Harvey et al., 2019).

The literature discussed above indicates that teachers struggle to assess collaborative learning because of the validity of assessment, that is the criteria that either reflect the skills

and behaviours or the content which differ in the same group. However, this can be critical because since collaborative learning is meant to reflect a formative assessment, why should then students be marked? 'Who should be assessed' is problematic in collaborative learning assessment. If students working in a group are assessed individually, why do teachers bother to design collaborative activities? More importantly, if individual assessment increases competition and decreases collaboration, it is important to understand the intended purpose of collaboration. In short, what is the aim of collaborative learning and how does it relate to assessment? This research is going to explore assessment strategies relating to Algerian higher education EFL students. It also aims to understand what factors led to the assessment being developed in such a way and how this assessment interacts with collaborative learning. In the interpretivist approach, meanings are 'the categories that a participant views about reality with which actions are defined...culture, norm, understanding, social reality and definitions of the situation' (Kraus, 2005, p. 762); therefore, understanding cultural and contextual related factors helps the researcher to understand why assessment is viewed in such a way.

Assessment could be linked to intended learning outcomes. EFL students in higher education should achieve content-based learning (Genc, 2011); however, the emphasis on the language can differ, as can assessment. That is, some content can be language driven while others are content driven (Snow, 2001). Predefining learning outcomes can be unrealistic because the quality of learning is not measured. University teachers should rather seek for the richness of the learning experience (Scott, 2011). In this research, it is important to know where collaborative learning is taking place in terms of the EFL predefined learning outcomes of the curriculum. In other words, if collaborative learning is an implemented learning strategy that the students should achieve, the assessment might be designed to meet this objective. However, if collaborative learning is not the aim of the university as a whole, achieving it might be related to the teacher and so does its assessment. According to Kuwabara et al. (2020), the support of collaborative learning in different teaching modalities was equal, which resulted in positive attitudes from the students and facilitated their mastery of course-specific learning outcomes. However, in those modalities collaborative learning was among the stated learning outcomes and its assessment was therefore designed accordingly.

Assessment of collaborative learning seems to be a thorny issue for the teacher, but it is important to take into consideration the different disciplines in higher education. Learning a foreign language can be characterised by specific objectives; it is therefore important to understand what collaborative learning means in terms of these objectives and how its assessment is developed. This would help in understanding why teachers and students think the way they do about collaborative learning.

This section provided a thorough review of literature on collaborative learning in higher education and specifically for foreign language learners. It highlighted three underlying theories which could theoretically explain collaborative learning. Each theory has its own aspects but the social interdependence theory provided the interaction patterns which should happen in any students' collaboration. These interaction patterns were identified as process and product achieving in collaboration. Therefore, it is significant to know how those patterns can be related to EFL collaborative learning. The argument that is developed out of the above extensive literature is that collaborative learning for EFL students in higher education needs to be explained according to the teachers' and students' experiences and according to the aim of any collaboration and how these aims are related to the assessment strategy. This study aims to identify any contextual factors that may affect the teachers' and students' understanding of collaborative learning. The next section will highlight the context of this study, including the policy of higher education and the EFL institution, as contextual factors are key to constructing an understanding of collaborative learning.

2.3. The context of the study

2.3.1. A brief insight into EFL learning before the LMD system

The construction of the first EFL department in Algeria dates back to 1969, after the country gained independence. Learning English as a foreign language was a three-year course of study leading to a Diploma. Both English and French were studied in the first year, while the following two years focused on the English language by studying British and American literature and civilisation (Barka, 2003).

Starting in 1971, English and French started to be taught separately in their own departments and the curricula changed. At that time, the curriculum was composed mainly of oral comprehension and expression, written comprehension and expression, general sociology, phonetics, literature, general linguistics, civilisation (until the 3rd semester), and psychology (during the 5th semester). These were the main taught modules, alongside some additional modules, such as Arabic and French literature. The year was divided into two semesters and progression from one semester to the next was dependent on students passing all modules (Sarnou et al., 2012).

Present-day lecturers complain about students being unprepared for the LMD system. EFL students come to the university 'lacking many features as learners' strategies and autonomy, study skills and reading skills and more significantly, interest and motivation. Students tend to favour memorisation and rote-learning' (Benmati, 2008, P. 118).

2.3.2. The LMD system and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning

The LMD system started in higher education in Algeria in 2004 and was officially applied in 2006. Decisions about this system were made by 60 higher education teachers from different universities in Algeria (Ahouari-idri, 2005, p. 2). Among the aims of this reform is to have an impact on teaching and learning influencing both teachers and learners as well as to bring creativity and novelty to the content of the teaching curriculum. The EFL (English as a Foreign Language) department, which is the targeted context for this study, has experienced the LMD system as a reform for teaching and learning English yet the system is still continuously assessed as far as EFL learning is concerned. It is still unclear whether academics have been given clear instructions about how the system should work and what its aims and purposes are (Sarnou et al., 2012, P. 179).

The main changes that occurred following the introduction of the LMD system were the reduction of the License (Bachelor) degree from four to three years of study and also the students' mobility across other universities around the globe. Under the LMD system, awards were as follows (Benmati, 2008):

- The License: Granted after 3 years of study (corresponding to 180 credits earned).

- The Master: Given after 2 years of study (corresponding to 120 or 130 credits earned).
- The Doctorate level: Conferred after the completion of in-depth thesis and the defence of this at *viva voce* after 3 years.

What also made the system different from the previous one was the division of years into semesters, so that instead of evaluating students annually, students were evaluated and graded at the end of each semester (Benmati, 2008). This suggests that assessment in EFL is based not only on 'the end of learning assessment' but also on 'the process of learning'. In this respect, collaborative learning might fall into the second category.

This is as far as the organisation of years of studies are concerned, however the change has occurred also at the level of the studied content as new modules were introduced and others were eliminated. Concerning learning English as a foreign language in higher education, modules are divided into learning units, which means other additional modules were added (Benmati, 2008):

- Basic units (16 hours a week): These comprise all the subjects that are mandatory and essential to a particular discipline. In the case of EFL in higher education, these may include written and oral expression, grammar, linguistics, phonetics, and an introduction to the literature and civilisation of the target language.
- Methodological units (3 hours a week): These might encompass study skills that students will use throughout their learning (notetaking, use of dictionary, reading for collecting information, using critical reflection, collaborative skills, etc.).
- Discovery units (3 hours a week): These may focus on specific language, that is language used for specific domains, or using English for different discourses, for example sociology, psychology, and psycholinguistics.
- Cross-Section unit (3 hours a week): Learning an additional foreign language such as Spanish or German. Students may also choose between language and technology, a subject in human and social sciences and an introduction to arts.

These modules give students 25 hours of teaching per week unlike the former system where the average was only 15 (Benmati, 2008).

2.3.3. Assessment within the LMD system

In an official published document 'An Overview of Algerian Higher Education' by Saidani and Kecheni (2017), completed learning is measured in credits. Students must accumulate 180 credits to complete their License (Bachelor) and 120 to complete the Masters degree. Each year is divided into two semesters and Algerian higher education students progress from first to second year by successfully completing both semesters. Students are required to meet a pass threshold of 10/20 in every teaching module in the academic year or by achieving an overall average mark of 10/20. The total number of credits required to obtain a License degree is 180. As students are expected to finish within three years, they should accumulate 30 credits in each semester, i.e. 60 each year. The teaching units can also be passed by compensation: (1) Between the grades achieved for the modules of the same unit. (2) Between the grades achieved for different units in the same university year. Students also receive a TD (Travaux dirigés) mark, which represents the formative assessment of students in the different activities they engage in during the process of learning. This TD mark can be combined in some modules with the summative mark of the final term exam. (Saidani and Kecheni, 2017). Hanifi (2018) found that assessment of EFL students is relied on marking students through the final exams and the TD test. The TD mark is supposed to be given after a chain of activities yet most of teachers give students a single test to determine the TD because of the lack of time.

To summarise this section, the Algerian system of higher education (LMD) emphasises assessment system through marks. Although the system supports formative assessment, students are still assessed through grades in the final exam and the TD mark. The aim of this study is not to evaluate the LMD system but to identify contextual factors that may affect collaborative learning for EFL students. Since assessment is an integral part of this research and the LMD system does show how assessment is done in higher education, this can help to understand the emerging factors.

2.3.4. Teaching and Learning in the LMD System

It is relevant to consider the impact of the LMD system on pedagogy and EFL learning and how collaborative learning might be considered to be an innovation that resulted from the new system.

The LMD system brought innovative teaching practices to enhance the performance of the university system. This meant there was a transformation in the methods of teaching applied by teachers in the classroom. Therefore, the teacher was expected to master not only the subject matter but also the methodology of teaching which demanded that teachers had a clear vision for the learning process (Sarnou et al., 2012, P. 181-182). In an official published paper entitled 'An Overview of the LMD System in Algeria' (Saidani and Kecheni, 2017), it was stated that teachers should design lectures in the form of seminars and give high importance to practical work between students, yet sometimes the classroom is large (Number of students), so the teachers must decide whether or not to give such activities (Saidani and Kecheni, 2017). This suggests that while the LMD system emphasised students' engagement, in reality this depended on class size. In this research, the higher education EFL teachers might have an awareness of collaborative practices in the classroom for EFL students but there could be factors affecting it. The LMD system is a widely applied system in higher education (Sarnou et al., 2012), however it does not necessarily function in the same way in all domains. The way it impacts on collaborative activities for EFL students might be particular to EFL learning, as official published documents stated that practical work in classroom should range from 20% to 50% of student learning but that this depended on the domain studied. Some domains might be more practical (Have more practical work) than others, such as scientific domains (Saidani and Kecheni, 2017). Concerning EFL, it might depend on the modules students are expected to fulfil. According to Saidani and Kecheni (2017), the types and the classification of modules in EFL learning are meant to deal with according to skills and content modules, however it is unclear in which kind of modules practical activities are encouraged.

As practical work for students in classroom gained greater importance and status, the assessment system also changed. It is a mixed assessment combining continuous assessment and a summative assessment in the form of an exam. Continuous assessment goes hand in hand with the practical work done by students in the classroom. This could take the form of

written or oral questions and answers to students, or collaborative work between students including presentations, group discussion, etc. However, more attention should be given to the final exam assessment which represents between 50% and 70% of the students' overall grade (Saidani and Kecheni, 2017). If collaborative learning is utilised in some of the above-mentioned modules, how is this collaborative learning assessed and what strategy is applied for evaluation?

There was another more advanced facet of learning in higher education in Algeria introduced following the adoption of the LMD system, these are online multicultural courses which support the interaction of students with students in other universities. The aims of these programmes were to allow mobility of students and partnerships between students physically and online from different part of the world to achieve shared academic purposes (Saidani and Kecheni, 2017). In an EFL context, if such kind of multicultural connection is made, there might be then a way through which students with other students from different universities in the world are connected (Such connection may imply using communication and collaboration). Therefore, it would be necessary to investigate such kind of collaboration if it is really the case in the EFL context.

The LMD system also introduced rules for learning and teaching in higher education, such as a quality assurance programme. According to an official published document about the LMD system, 'An Overview of Higher Education in Algeria' (2017), this evaluates different learning and teaching practices in higher education and provides development and enhancement in learning practices as well as training for teachers. If collaborative practices are encouraged for EFL students in the department of English in higher education, the quality assurance system might have impacted such type of learning because it requires teachers to ensure that the required approaches are being followed in the classroom (Saidani and Khecheni, 2017). Additionally, since Master studies in EFL department is dedicated to writing theses in the field of interest (Saidani and Khecheni, 2017), there might be then a need for collaboration between students to widen their knowledge specifically when the LD system emphasised the student-centred approach.

2.3.5. The student-centred approach in the Algerian University

The LMD system encouraged a student-centred approach, with students being more responsible for their learning and less dependent on their teachers (Mehiri, 2017, p.1794). Higher education teachers are giving more attention to learners in the learning process due to the LMD system (Boudersa and Hamada, 2015). These changes in learning practices are intended to make learning more interesting and relevant as students are more active in the classroom setting (Barraket, 2005). Therefore, the teacher becomes less an information provider and more of a facilitator because in a learner-centred environment the focus is placed on what students are learning, how they are learning, how their learning is assessed and how they can apply that learning in a real-life context (Boudersa and Hamada, 2015). Encouraging students to become active in classroom and build their own knowledge in a student-centred classroom is the principle of the LMD system to change learning and making learners engage in the classroom (Ahouari-idri, 2005).

However, some EFL higher education teachers might have an awareness of this teaching approach while continuing to follow old methods of teaching, or they might have flexibility which allows them to practice their teaching approaches freely. Ball (1993) claimed that some teachers can be confused about the policy and how it can be mirrored in their pedagogy in the classroom and suggests that it is important to have a mediator between the teachers and the policy, such as a head teacher or head of department. Although Ball's ideas related to schools, this might be applied to higher education as well, particularly in the Algerian context where higher education has a structured system that governs pedagogy. This study is not going to examine who is responsible for explaining the LMD system to higher education teachers but rather to familiarise oneself with the different aspects of learning which is dictated by the LMD system in the context of EFL.

Although the student-centred approach is supported by the LMD system in higher education in Algeria, according to Miliani (2014) there is a clash between pedagogies in higher education in Algeria as different teaching approaches are evident. Such multiplicity of teaching approaches should be encouraged at the level of the university and should be communicated to the whole university community. According to Benmoussat and Benmoussat (2018), teaching EFL in higher education in Algeria should be less focused on

language structure and EFL teachers should instead give importance to students' oral communication and the production and comprehension of written texts. Furthermore, they suggest that the testing system should not be based on the grammar and structure of the language, but on the use of the language in the social context. This means that students should engage in the learning process actively instead of following the transmission method of teaching. This does not mean that teaching approaches should be neglected, in this regard, Mpho (2018) claimed that foreign language teaching in higher education should take both the teacher and student-centred techniques depending on the resources available and the needs of the learner. Teaching the curriculum should have the teacher's flexibility to teach what is relevant for students. This can encourage the interaction between the teacher, the learner and the curriculum. Following this approach can lead teachers to move from teaching the curriculum to understanding and developing the curriculum. Biggs and Tang (2011) proposed a model that links the activity, the learning outcomes and the assessment, and say that learning outcomes should be understood by the teacher and communicated clearly to the students. To meet curriculum aims, an appropriate activity must be designed, and the assessment should have precise criteria that fairly assess learning outcomes. Recent studies reclaimed this model of constructive alignment, among them Loughlin et al (2020) who claimed that supporting outcome-based education can happen at the level of the policy. Even though policies are reconstructed, there still be a disconnection between policy and teaching. The teaching approach is not a robotic way to mirror literally the content of the policy but it is a flexible process. According to Nelson (2018), when encouraging the outcomes-based education as a tool of process validation, the ownership will move from the academics to the administrators which can encourage the resistance and rejection from academics, thus teachers' flexibility is needed.

The critical discussion mentioned above on pedagogy and the alignment between the curriculum, the activity and the assessment is necessary to investigate collaborative learning critically and widely. This discussion indicates that collaborative learning can take place according to the pedagogical approach followed, i.e. students can be supported to construct their knowledge in a social environment only if the teacher thinks that students should engage actively in the learning process and guided by their teachers. In addition, one should question whether this collaborative learning serves the language learning outcomes and how

it interacts with the assessment (Biggs and Tang, 2011). Although it is important to critically explore collaborative learning in a broad context, contextual factors also need to be taken into account. According to Maraf (2016), improving pedagogy for teaching EFL in higher education in Algeria is not an easy task because decision making takes place at the Ministry of higher education and there is insufficient coordination between the ministry and the teacher. Therefore, this research will investigate and explore collaborative learning in relation to the contextual and the cultural factors.

2.3.6. The challenges of the LMD system

The LMD system has enacted radical changes to be exerted in any course in higher education; however, from the perspectives of both higher education teachers and students, certain limitations have been encountered. It is not clear whether the LMD system has encouraged collaborative learning for EFL students. Ahouari-idri (2005) conducted a study into classroom discussion between groups of students in one Algerian university, which found that such discussions were inconsistent. Therefore, EFL students are sometimes taught the same subject differently. This might indicate that EFL teachers have a degree of freedom under the LMD system. There were also other challenges which were summarised by Hanifi (2018, p.30): 'In addition to some obstacles that prevented the fast success and efficiency of the LMD system such as the lack of human and material resources, the big size of the groups and the number of groups per module'.

It was found that some higher education teachers were still resisting the changes in behaviour and ideas 11 years after the LMD system's implementation, which is due to many reasons including the context where the teachers interact and their knowledge of the system and its application (Mehiri, 2017, p.1780). Consequently, EFL teachers are still relying on traditional methods of teaching and are hesitant about taking on innovative classroom practices (Benttayeb-Ouahiani, 2016, P. 9). Theoretically the LMD system brought innovation in behaviours and actions at the university, but the literature claims that what happens in practice demonstrates the resistance of some teachers as well as learners to work and study in a student-centred classroom because of some limitations. Thus, investigating students' and

teachers' perceptions may help to identify the factors that are limiting the use of collaborative learning.

The LMD system governs three levels of study in higher education in Algeria, namely Licence, Master and Doctorate, yet this study only examines undergraduate level (Licence and Master). In an official ministry document, 'Overview of the Algerian Higher Education System' (Saidani and Kecheni, 2017), the teaching methods are claimed to be the same at both Licence and Master levels and these include in-class tests, homework assignments, presentations, practical tests and practical work and exams. Therefore, both Licence and Master are considered as a common branch for this study (undergraduate students).

Therefore, those captured limitations should not be taken totally for granted simply because contexts may differ as well as teachers' perceptions and perspectives. Thus, collaborative learning for higher education EFL students may or may not be encouraged by the LMD system. It is therefore significant to familiarise oneself with this context and to know what aspects of it as far as learning and teaching are concerned.

In summary, this section discussed the Algerian LMD system and EFL in general and the impact of the LMD system on learning and different pedagogic approaches. It also draws the possible relationship between these and collaborative learning which formed the argument for this research. This study does not intend to evaluate the policy of higher education but to investigate the different contextual factors that may affect EFL students' collaborative learning, including assessment and pedagogy.

Despite the considerable research on collaborative learning in higher education, there are still complexities to be investigated in this context. EFL collaborative learning is still a confusing learning method in terms of what it represents and what its aims are and how this is evaluated. In teaching English as a foreign language, different learning outcomes should be met by the teacher. Encouraging collaborative learning for language learning can be an end in itself, as it can be a means of achieving a particular language aim, therefore; investigating what collaborative learning implies from the teachers' and students' experiences is what matters for this research. Understanding contextual and cultural factors will contribute to understanding collaborative learning and help to determine why collaborative learning is this way with its assessment processes. Although interdependence theory says that collaboration

needs individual accountability and positive interdependence, when individuals are assessed and when the teacher is required by the policy to give marks rather than feedback, collaborative learning could be considered to be a product rather than a process. In this study, this will be investigated through the perceptions of higher education EFL teachers and students. The fact that both teachers' and students' perceptions are taken into consideration is highly important for two reasons. Firstly, very few studies have considered the perceptions of both teachers and students towards collaborative learning in higher education (Le et al., 2018; Sun and Yuan, 2018; Alahdal and Alahdal, 2019); and secondly, investigating the issue from different categories of people as well as different viewpoints gives more depth to the data as this helps to achieve the triangulation of the data, hence the trustworthiness of the information. The importance of this research seems in investigating collaborative learning in the Algerian context. Though the discipline of EFL in higher education does not make from this study a new one (Celik et al., 2013; Ghaith, 2018; Shazad et al., 2012; Gursoy and Karatepe, 2006; Al-kaabi, 2016), yet learning EFL in the Algerian higher education may not be the same as in any other contexts in higher education in terms of pedagogy and instruction. Therefore, the Algerian context makes this study significant (See view of Belmekki and Kebiri, 2018 on page 15). The communication of the findings to Algerian higher education teachers and students will enrich their knowledge of collaborative learning.

As a conclusion to the above three literature sections, the previously mentioned theoretical assumptions about collaborative learning (social interdependence theory, social constructivist theory and transformative learning theory) provide a framework for understanding collaborative learning. That is, I argue that collaborative learning is about the process and the product of collaboration. When the promotive interaction embraces the use of helping behaviours and skills within the group, collaborative learning can be seen as a process. It is an outcome when the individual's contribution is only successful when everyone's contribution is successful too in order to achieve a particular aim (positive goal interdependence). The social constructivist theory embraces the construction of knowledge in groups. In the EFL context, this construction is done through projects realisation for achieving an intercultural understanding. However, though this theory helps to understand what collaboration means but it did not specify the age of students in the construction of knowledge. Therefore, the transformative learning theory is considered as a targeted theory

which underlies adults' learning. The students' collaboration, according to the transformative learning theory, is characterised by the critical discourse which denotes the engagement of students in 'problematizing' collaborative activities to boost their critical thinking.

However, though these theoretical assumptions brought a thorough understanding of collaborative learning, assessment is still an integral part of collaborative learning but how can the process and the product be evaluated and what factors might affect this assessment? By linking the above theoretical assumptions to the context of this study (EFL and the policy of higher education, namely the 'LMD system'), collaborative learning could be one of the aspects of learning in this context, however it is ambiguous in terms of what it reflects, i.e. does it serve EFL learning outcomes, or is it a skill development? In addition, the Algerian LMD system; since it has an effect on learning in higher education (Including the student-centred approach and the system of assessment), there might be some contextual factors affecting collaborative learning between EFL students.

As the above literature discusses that EFL teaching is not limited to one way of teaching and applying same modules regardless of the globalisation process and the idea of BANA, it is worth investigating how collaborative learning is a learning method in EFL where there is no individual way of teaching, particularly in the Algerian context. In addition, the process and product of collaboration might have its contextual concept depending on contextual factors, one of which is the assessment strategy and the policy of higher education. Thus, in this study, I argue that collaborative learning might not reflect the skills of collaboration when it is a means leading to achieve language related outcomes and when the 'I' rather than the 'we' is assessed. In the literature of EFL, less research investigates the aim of collaborative learning in learning the language and the aspects of assessing language collaborative practices. This will be addressed in the evidence in Chapters Four and Five. In the next chapter, the methodological approach that underlies the choice of methods and research instruments will be discussed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3. Introduction

To explore the teachers' and students' perspectives on collaborative learning, I decided to use qualitative methods in data collection and analysis based in the constructivist interpretivist approach. This chapter reveals the philosophical assumptions underlying research in education and how they inform the choice of methodology for different purposes. It also sheds light on the development of the methodological approach and methods that were used for the investigation of the research questions of this study. I also present the justification of the choice of methods applied in this study based on the philosophical assumptions that were stated to better serve the purpose of this research.

I started by presenting the research purpose and explaining and discussing the methodological framework that underlies the choice of methods. The research design is important for my study which is the case study selected for this research, this will be discussed in this chapter. Interviews are the most prominent tool for collecting data as compared to other used tools, these will be thoroughly dealt with in this chapter. My reflexivity and my position changed and shaped this research in a particular way, these will be discussed in this chapter in relation to underlying philosophical assumptions. The ethical consideration in qualitative research will be explained and the analysis process will be clearly described as far as the constructivist interpretivist approach is concerned.

3.1. Purpose of the study

The aim of this research is to explore the perspectives towards collaborative learning for EFL students in higher education from a case of higher education EFL teachers and students. Therefore, it is to find out the contextual and cultural factors that lead to understand collaborative learning. According to Babbie (1998), among the aims of an exploratory study is to satisfy the researcher's curiosity for achieving a better understanding. This confirms my aim to explore the perspectives of higher education EFL teachers and students towards collaborative learning which stems from my curiosity and motivation to

understand why do teachers and students decide to do what they are doing as far as students' collaboration is concerned.

While social research does not reveal an ultimate truth (Magolda, 2002) through the complexity of the research, it does help to make sense of our world through asking the question why do people act in a certain way (Babbie, 1998). This can help to identify certain elements of behaviors with their underlying contextual and cultural factors which means that certain factors can be predicted which might trigger some actions (Abdedeen, 2015). In this research, understanding collaborative learning cannot happen without understanding the people's perceptions towards the culture they work in, therefore EFL in higher education and the LMD system in Algeria would answer the questions why collaborative learning is practiced in a certain way. According to Abdedeen (2015), both the context and the people's activities are two sides of the same coin. In this research, understanding the reasons behind Algerian higher education EFL students' collaborative learning should take into consideration teachers' and students' behaviours and actions as well as the context where they practice.

In order to fulfill the objectives of this research, I designed research questions after a deep investigation of the literature to the area of collaborative learning and because I am following the constructivist interpretivist approach, this led to structure my questions accordingly. Therefore, I attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the perceptions of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students in relation to collaborative learning?
- 2- What are the experiences of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students with regard to collaborative learning?
- 3- How does the assessment strategy interact with collaborative learning in higher education in Algeria?
- 4- What are the factors that influence collaborative learning for higher education EFL students?

In order to verify the feasibility of these questions, there was an amendment in the third and fourth research questions after analysing the data. I found that the assessment had a great emphasis during the analysis, so there is an interaction between assessment and collaborative learning which was influenced by the pedagogy of the teacher and the system of higher education, so that was necessary to be mentioned.

The fourth research question changed from 'Does the LMD system affect collaborative learning?' and 'What are the limitations of collaborative learning?' to 'What are the factors that influence students' collaboration?' During the analysis phase, it was unexpectedly realised that it is not only the LMD system which is a factor but there are other underlying factors that have an influence on students' collaboration. In addition, those factors are not considered as limitations, they are factors which either encourage or discourage students' collaboration.

In answering these research questions, there was a need for a suitable methodological approach to be followed, thus the following section explains in detail the methodological approach of this study.

3.2. Why the constructivist interpretivist approach in qualitative research?

In qualitative research, the researcher follows constructivist interpretivist approach (Schwandt, 1994). In doing so, they should be investigating people's perceptions of and experiences regarding the studied issue. The researcher then uses those experiences to construct and to interpret his own understanding from the gathered data (Thanh and Thanh, 2015). However, though Schwandt (1994) considered constructivist and interpretivist as one entity because they share the same framework for human enquiry, they are still unique in which each answers these questions: What is the purpose and aim of human enquiry? (Interpretation) and how can we know about the world of human action (Constructivism). Therefore, constructivist approach emphasises that the truth is not discovered by the mind, it is rather created. This denotes 'the pluralistic character of reality' (Schwandt, 1994, p. 236). Though the interpretivist agrees for the uniqueness of human enquiry, it prioritises the subjective experience that is used for forming the grasping or the understanding of the

meaning of the social world (Schwandt, 1994). Constructivist interpretivist approach underlies this study as it is a unique framework for human enquiry (Schwandt, 1994).

The interpretivist researcher finds out the reality through people's perceptions, backgrounds and experiences, therefore people construct their version of 'the truth' (Creswell, 2013). The chief aim of this study is to understand collaborative learning for EFL students from the perceptions of both higher education EFL teachers and students and the extent to which collaborative learning reflects the LMD system (Policy). Therefore, in investigating the perceptions of different categories of people (higher education EFL teachers and students), a relation was made between them as well as with data from observation, documentary evidence and field notes. Moreover, the impact of the LMD system on collaborative learning was investigated from the perceptions of higher education EFL teachers and documentary evidence which are written by the ministry of higher education. Therefore, such variation of looking at the issue brought out the possible connection that became the interpretation of the researcher. Qualitative research is about making social relations between different aspects in the research, thus allowing for a reality or multiple realities to emerge (Flick, 2014). It focuses on the inductive way of data collection. It gives importance to local knowledge and practices which the researcher can study in depth, sometimes it may even allow for the results to be generalised and the bigger picture to be understood. Therefore, theories would emerge as a result of this thorough study (Geertz, 1983; Merriam et al., 2002). In this study, though there are previous mentioned theories and works on collaborative learning and particularly for learning a foreign language, yet the perceptions of both teachers and students in a new context, that is the Algerian context, makes this study significant. It therefore contributes to the theoretical underpinning of collaborative learning. Also, qualitative research informs the use of the interviews in this study which brought the depth of the data from the perceptions of both teachers and students. This what made this research different from three previous mentioned studies (Alahdal and Alahdal, 2019; Sun and Yuan, 2018; Le et al., 2018) which investigated the perceptions of both teachers and students yet with a difference in the case selected or the way how data was collected. Therefore, case study (Yin, 2014) and interviews gave the depth and detailed data which allows for the different elements and complexities to emerge in collaborative learning for Algerian EFL students.

In qualitative research, researchers usually deal with people's experiences and perceptions towards an investigated issue. Therefore, it seems difficult to start setting hypotheses because the researcher may have a limited knowledge about the background. However, through investigating people's perceptions, the researcher could figure out how the outer world is. Thus, qualitative methods are used to investigate the issue with the target group (Flick, 2014). In the current research, it was not relevant to write down possible answers to the questions of this research because of the nature of research questions of this study. Hence, the first, second and third research questions yielded a general picture about the participants' understanding of collaborative learning for EFL students and its practice in the context. Besides, the fourth research question is dedicated to explore the precedented factors that influence students' collaboration, therefore; the kind of questions that the researcher asks and intends to answer depict what kind of approach should be designed (Flick, 2014).

The interpretivist approach gives importance to the subjectivity of humans both as participants and as a researcher because the background and the values of the researcher influence the shaping of the research data (Snape and Spencer, 2003, p.8) Therefore, in this research I understood collaborative learning from the perceptions of both higher education EFL teachers and students who had their own perceptions about it. By following the constructivist interpretivist approach, I made double interpretations at once because the fact higher education EFL teachers and students constructed the meaning of collaborative learning according to their lived experiences was an interpretation itself that was followed by my own interpretation. My experience as an EFL student had also contributed to the interpretation of data, yet I was careful about my subjectivity in the interpretation of data. The participants' perspective is considered as an interpretation of the phenomenon or the issue studied, while the researcher's voice and explanation of those perspectives was the second interpretation of the research (Bryman, 2016).

In this research, the constructivist approach is the chosen ontological position for this study, this is through the nature of the questions of the research which can be dealt with mostly through interviews with participants and observations of students and teachers' behaviours in the field work. Though I considered the possible impact of the higher education system on collaborative learning, yet my flexibility enabled me to take into consideration

other factors according to people's perceptions. The reality of the researched issue is found out when the researcher is flexible about the social, cultural, historical and personal contexts of people's experiences and therefore by looking at these contextual factors and how they affect people's experiences, the researcher can then uncover people's version of the truth (Prasad, 2005, P. 14). The notion of the truth in qualitative research implies that there is a variation in reality, according to Magolda (2002), the truth is constructed from people's answers, those answers are the result of people's interpretation of the circumstances and the culture they are part of. Therefore, the meaning they construct depends on their current assumptions about their experiences.

In this research, the participant teachers and students belong to the same culture which is the Algerian EFL department, however; their perceptions are affected by their own individual experiences. According to Magolda (2002) in her study, adult students can share the same knowledge in their college when they follow the authority, so these are dependent, however; there are other adults who are independent about their knowing. So, this independent thinking can be two types, that is people believe whatever it is best for them or they have a contextual knowing in which they judge based on relevant evidence.

In this study, the teachers' perceptions emerged to have different perceptions with regard to collaborative learning and assessment. These differences reflected the higher education teacher's flexibility in pedagogy. However, there is a tension between the teacher's flexibility and the system of higher education which means that teachers find themselves following the system and at the same time practicing their pedagogic freedom. In this case, teachers in this study have both the dependent and independent knowing (Magolda, 2002). They are dependent because they find themselves obliged to give marks to students, but they are also independent when they assess students' collaboration differently, therefore both the group and the individual are assessed. The criteria of assessment also show that teachers take into consideration different criteria beyond the content which are not necessarily part of the objectives or shared between all teachers, therefore, this reveals the flexibility of the teacher. 'no longer having a syllabus to tell you what to do, led to the awareness of the need for self-authorship' (Magolda, 2002) Though teachers in this study have the list of content that they should teach to their students (See appendix 7) but they are not informed of what teaching methods this content should be taught through.

As for students, they have a dependent thinking (Magolda, 2002), students maybe in the dependent stage of thinking in the sense that they are dependent on the assignment of their teachers when they referred to collaborative learning. Their thinking is the result of the assessment strategy which focuses on assessing the individual, therefore; the notion of dominance was prominent among the students. Also, when students referred to 'criticism' as a negative aspect, they were in a competitive situation for achieving the best mark, however; I consider the students' perceptions as the result of pedagogy as their practices and their choices in collaborative learning were influenced by the teacher's pedagogy.

In the current research, the participants constructed a reality about collaborative learning through their own views and their experiences towards EFL collaborative learning. Though such construction of meaning was varied and sometimes contradictory to each other, yet this what brought the real meaning of this research. Reaching the complexity in this research made it significant and distinct as compared to other literature, such variation in the data could not happen without my flexibility towards the data collected. According to Mead (1934), interviews are not just a mere of collecting qualitative data, this brings the reflexivity of the researcher into existence, such as will the respondent have anything more important to say and how the questions are well received and how these can be altered? The findings of this study show that there is difference between the aspiration and the reality. The teachers think how they are practicing their teaching while the head of the department thinks how teaching should be. I had to interrogate the head of the department about the reason why he has got a contradictory view which was not among the intended questions. Thus, I would not be flexible about such question if I was following strictly a list of questions with my participants.

The aim of the interpretivist qualitative research is to develop an understanding of the phenomenon, it is characterised by understanding the meaning people have developed about their world. Therefore, *understanding* is a key word here because 'the analysis strives for the depth of understanding' (Merriam et al., 2002, p.5). This understanding is an end in itself because it does not predict what may happen in the future but it gives a thorough explanation of what it going on to the participants in that setting (Patton, 2002). The research questions asked in this research denote that this study is going to construct an understanding about how collaborative learning is happening in EFL classrooms and what are the contextual and

cultural factors of collaborative learning, however; building such understanding from the data should go through a systematic process in qualitative research in which my reflexivity and subjectivity are an integral part of it. According to Bumbuc (2016), people perceive the world in their own way, thus this leads to biases to emerge. The qualitative researcher should be open to any disagreements in the data which reflects the personal significance and the broader signification. The human is responsible for developing the *understanding* (Merriam et al., 2002), which means that the researcher is considered as the human instrument for data collection and data analysis. However, such human instrument has shortcomings and biases, therefore; instead of eliminating them, the researcher should monitor them as they might be shaping the data collection and interpretation (Merriam et al., 2002). Peshkin (1988, p. 18) said about subjectivities that 'can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected'. In this research, I was aware of any personal judgement because I experienced life as an EFL student in the Algerian department, so this had both strengths and weaknesses for me. It is a strength because it helped me to understand what people meant as coded data (for example when they referred to the TD mark in assessment). This might be difficult from the lenses of a stranger researcher in the context. Also, this made me creative towards the selected themes for this study (with being aware of the validity of the findings which will be discussed later). In the assessment section, I decided to keep the subsection in a form of questions which are affected by the teacher's flexibility and the system of higher education and which will raise the awareness of any teacher of what to do in collaborative learning assessment. This brought the difference from other research which were done in other contexts and disciplines and added to the richness of the literature.

3.3. Acting ethically in qualitative research

In this research, I was aware of the ethical issues that may arise. This is because of my relationship with my participants as most of the ethical considerations emphasised on the connection of the researcher to the participants. I also followed the CCCU ethical review process through which I got a certain knowledge about ethical considerations. I got ethical

approval about conducting such research from the ethic community through following the university ethical guidelines and process (See page 276 on ethical forms).

In this study, I had to access the gate keeper first before taking the permission of other participants, thus firstly I talked to the head of the EFL department, I gave him the consent form (See appendix 1) and the information sheet paper, he asked for more information about the topic of interest and about the teachers I want to interview. He was trying to give me some pieces of advice about the topic and the participants he thought will provide me with the 'right' information, he meant by that teachers who can give rich information for my research, probably he already had an experience with those teachers and know them very well (Accessing the head of the department before collecting data was necessary. Though he directed me to teachers I should interview yet this was not an obligation but just pieces of advice from him). After explaining to him what the participants are expected to do and how the data is going to be gathered, he signed the consent form and gave me an oral consent to conduct the study. The informed consent is one of the important ethical condition of conducting research (Diener and Crandall, 1978). The consent form should be informative and should be given by someone competent (Allmark, 2002). In this study, I accessed some teachers through emails that were sent before the first contact with them, I sent the consent form and the information sheet paper to them. Some of them answered the emails while others did not. Other higher education teachers were accessed face to face in the EFL department, I made it clear for them that their participation will be voluntarily, and they can withdraw it anytime they want, 'they must also understand their participation is completely voluntary' (Flynn and Goldsmith, 2013, p. 10). Concerning students, some of them were accessed through their teachers (The teachers that I interviewed) and others through other students, I had to explain for them the research of interest and what they are required to do.

Additionally, in this research I was careful of both anonymity and privacy of the data which was collected from my participants. I conducted a pilot study before the collection of data which gave me some insights about the nature of the questions that I intend to ask my participants and whether they might include some sort of privacy invasion. Besides, in conducting observation to EFL classrooms, I first took the permission from the teachers and talked to students before the class start (Presenting myself to students and what I am going to do because this was required by the teachers). Confidentiality/privacy is always an issue

that most researchers are faced with because whenever the methods used in collecting data are covert, there might be issues of the invasion of privacy (Bryman, 2016; Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). During the analysis phase, both the participants and some identifiable data such as the name of the institution and the area of research were kept confidential and anonymous. Confidentiality is not related only to the public outside the setting but also any reader who is reading the work cannot identify participants from the study (Allmark, 2002). Thus, in this study, all participant teachers and students were given other names rather than their real names. The data also (including the transcripts from interviews and observations) were stored on my own laptop which is not accessible by other parties. 'It is very important that you store your data in a safe and completely secure container' (Luders, 2004, p.15)

Further, thinking of why this research is going to be important is a way to act ethically in my research. Thus, the overall aims of my research are to understand collaborative learning from the perceptions of the case of higher education EFL teachers and students and to find out the possible impact of the contextual and cultural factors on students' collaboration. Thus, being aware of the complex relationship made in this study between different elements will help teachers to enhance their pedagogy and to be aware of the subtle factors that may influence students' behaviors. Ethically speaking, the researcher has to think whether this conducted research is for academic purposes solely, for instance to contribute to a particular theoretical knowledge, or whether this study is conducted in order to respond to a problem from the research community or the experiences of the population or to solve a particular problem and provide solutions for that to the population under study (Hennink et al., 2011).

3.4. My reflexivity and position in the research, in terms of strangeness and familiarity

The interpretivist approach acknowledges reflexivity in research as it is the basis through which the researcher can give his/her interpretation towards the issue tackled and the data gathered. Reflexivity is when the researcher uses his/her background, emotions and positions to process the data (Finlay and Gouch, 2003, p. 5). Reflexivity even implies the interaction of the researcher with participants including their reactions to each other and the

actions and roles of the researcher in the process of data collections. Therefore, determining your own position as a researcher in the field work with the participants is an integral part of the data collection process, this may affect the data processing later (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2011). In this research I see reflexivity as a continuous process through examining my thoughts, judgements and beliefs systems throughout the thesis.

3.4.1. My position

Before the data collection, the pilot study gave me a little insight about my position with my participants (EFL higher education teachers). I realised from the conducted interviews that I was an insider and an outsider in the context that I intend to work in and this depends on the way how my participants were considering me. I realised that those higher education teachers who used to be my teachers considered me as someone known, they even used jokes and casual communication with me, however; the other teachers kept a limit and they talked from the academic side only. Though the pilot study was just with 4 higher education EFL teachers, which means I could not generalise my judgment about them, yet this gave an insight about how other teachers may treat me later (either being my previous teachers or new ones). During the data collection, it was remarkable I was treated differently by the higher education EFL teachers, so those were already my teachers found it easy to get along with me, in terms of easiness of communication and being open to talk about other things apart from the data; for instance one of my previous teachers were talking with me about her family and her sister's family and how she is helping her sister by being a babysitter for her children, she even picked me by her car from the department to the bus station, another example is that some of my previous teachers did not sign and read the consent form but they understood it through the way I explained the process for them. The reason for them is because they already trusted me and know who I am. One of my teachers told me 'consider that form signed, i know my students'. Dula (1994)'s participants acknowledged the oral consent and they accepted to participate in his study. Thus, such examples show how familiarity with the person depicts the way how my position was. However, though some of my participants were my previous EFL teachers, I did keep high respect towards them and I put myself in a position of a student-teacher relationship. I believe that in conducting a social

qualitative research, the researcher should be ethically aware of his/her relationship to their participants but also to the cultural setting and background. Therefore, even though some of my participants were socially close to me, this did not mean I should break the social rules of respect when being in an academic context. So, any EFL teacher was labelled by 'Sir', 'Mrs', 'Mr' and 'Miss' according to the Algerian cultural background.

However, on the other hand, for other teachers (whom I was new to them), I sounded a bit strange at the beginning and they were quite hesitated and cautious, for example one of the teachers wanted to know my own definition of collaborative learning because he wanted to answer according to my perspective, he seemed hesitant at the beginning of the interview because he did not want to sound mistaken for me. He wanted to give me a definition to collaborative learning that I want to hear. Ultimately, I could convince him that this research is about perceptions and perceptions may differ from one teacher to another and that all answers will be confidential yet his participation is voluntarily and he can withdraw it if he wants. Such position affected the data such as thinking carefully of what to say from the participant and what kind of questions to ask from my stance as a researcher. In Nicolson (2003)' study, he was concerned about the way he will be perceived to the participants as the research causes some distress for some participants, therefore; this affected the way he questioned and listened to the participants and the way his participants were telling him and remembering. Thus, reflecting on my position helped me to figure out the impact that this may had on the data collected.

Concerning students, among 12 students, only one student was familiar to me and I was familiar to her because she was a neighbour, yet for the others I was totally a stranger. However, such an outsider position I had with students at the beginning drifted gradually to be an insider. This was through engaging in informal discussion on Facebook (which was for the sake of getting to know students and not collecting data), I realised then that students became closer to me and open to engage in discussion. As an example, one of the students asked me to help her with her essay, another student invited me to her house for having a cup of tea with her and her mother, other two students asked me to join a group with them and participate in a project they were doing and another student told me: 'I feel like you are a student like us'. 'The interview itself is the site of far more activity than simply the collection of verbal data. It is a reflexive process and one in which a relationship is established' (Nicolson,

2003, p. 138). I lately realised that such closeness had an effect in the data gathered because students had more self-confidence to talk to me, besides I still have contact with the majority of those students currently.

In this study, as I already was a full-time student in the EFL department where the data was gathered, I position myself as an insider to a certain extent. I shared some views as EFL student, as a result; this gave me some personal perspectives about collaborative learning to EFL students, thus I am aware that collaborative activities were not the case in all the modules that EFL students study in higher education though I was trying to be attentive to my own perceptions towards the phenomenon studied to avoid any impact on the data collection and analysis. In being an insider, the researcher should have an 'eye open' to what is happening in the context. In other words, they should know to a certain extent about the phenomenon studied. However, being part of the culture does not imply that you are fully aware about it because there are some subcultural elements which could be understood only through conducting research (Asselin, 2003). Rose (1985, p.102) concurred: 'There is no neutrality, there is only greater or less awareness of one's biases and if you do not appreciate the force of what you are leaving out, you are not fully in command of what you are doing'.

Being aware of the position of the researcher in terms of interpersonal relationships between the researcher and the participants is referred to as 'interpersonal reflexivity' which is defined as 'sensitivity of the researcher to the important situational dynamics between the researcher and the researched that can impact the creation of knowledge' (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2016, p. 146). However, Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) claimed that there should not be a clear cut between the researcher's positions in qualitative research as he cannot choose between being an insider or an outsider but to have both situations at once (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). On the other hand, other researchers viewed that qualitative research should require a total inclusion of the researcher in the field work, this is by building a close relationship with the participants and becoming an undistinguishable participant in the field. Therefore, in order that an understanding of the participants' viewpoints is achieved, the researcher should take the insider's perspective (Flick, 2014). In my case, I believe that different positions were present in the context, sometimes I was an insider and other times I was an outsider and sometimes there was a shift from being an outsider to an insider in the context, thus I reflected on how and to what extent this had an effect on the data gathered.

3.4.2. My reflexivity

Since I was a higher education EFL student in the Algerian EFL department (the context where I collect data), I was aware of the impact of previous experience which can be either negative, positive or both. Thus, I may have the same view about collaborative learning as any EFL student. In a study where a research team was the one who experienced the phenomenon they were investigating, the researchers were quite attentive to the outcomes of the study because of the potential impact of their emotions in the interviews. They tried to deal with that by conducting a pilot interview and doing a training (Hennink and Simkhada, 2004). However, I cannot deny the positive impact of my experience on understanding the sociocultural underpinnings that affected the perspectives of my participants. There were some implicit meanings which I could figure out during the interviews and classroom observations. As an example of that, during the interview and the observation, when teachers were assessing different aspects during students' presentations, I could figure out what were the aspects they assessed outside the curriculum and which were curriculum's objectives. This is because I was assessed the same way as an EFL student. In addition to that, when students mentioned 'criticism' and how this can have an impact on their work. I could understand that they have a negative attitude towards critical thinking in collaboration because they want to be the best in the group, however; I investigated this deeply with them in the interviews. Therefore, sharing the same sociocultural background with my participants helped me to a great extent to understand any sociocultural underpinnings. Beyond sharing the same studied phenomenon, the researcher can share the same sociocultural context by living or being part of that culture, the sociocultural setting can affect to a great extent the data resulted by the end (Green and Thorogood, 2004),

In addition, I reflected on the approach that underpins the design, the process, and the analysis of my data. I could be certain about which approach I am following in dealing with the data. The decision about the constructivist interpretivist approach was after a reflection on the research questions I am asking in this research. Remarkably, my questions depict that I want to construct an understanding of collaborative learning in EFL learning from the perceptions of the case of teachers and students, this is through the contextual and

cultural factors. So, the truth (Magolda, 2002) exists with people who are going to yield different perspectives which are affected by their personal judgment and cultural and contextual factors (Creswell, 2013; Merriam et al., 2002). This approach informs for me the methods that I should use to gather data which best achieve the aim of the study, this include interviews and observations. Reflexivity can also be implied in the awareness of the researcher about the theoretical foundations in his/her research. In the process of the research, the researcher has to reflect on the theories that must be fitting his/her research and this should be throughout the whole research including the design and data collection (Green and Thorogood, 2004, P. 195).

3.4.3. The researcher' stance (part of my reflexivity)

My stance in this research reflects my reflexivity towards the data analysis. Therefore, some research questions changed after writing the analysis chapters. According to Robson and McCartan (2016), the change in research does not come from the researcher's thinking about how the change should be but rather it should be through exchanging the reality of what should be through interaction with others concerned. Thus, after a reflection on the third and fourth research questions, I realised that both of them (What are the limitations of collaborative learning? and what is the impact of the LMD system?) should be addressed in one question: What are the factor that influence collaborative learning?, because there are more than one contextual factor which is the LMD system, there is also the pedagogy of the teacher which had a great impact in the findings. Also, there was a need to add another question that addresses the assessment strategies for collaboration: How does the assessment strategy interact with collaborative learning for higher education EFL students? This is because assessment appeared as a prominent aspect in the analysis which is the unexpected knowledge. According to Robson and McCartan (2016), the change happens when there is ambiguity and uncertainty about the meaning.

3.5. Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students as a case study (EFL teachers and undergraduate students)

I consider this research as a case study of particular two groups of people: higher education EFL teachers and undergraduate EFL students. Case study is a 'specific, complex, functioning thing' (Stake, 1995, P. 2). It is the in-depth description of a phenomenon or social unit such as individuals, group, institution or a community. It is characterised by the unit of analysis and not the topic of investigation. This unit of analysis should be narrowed down to include specific items to research (Merriam et al., 2002). In this research, I consider the higher education EFL teachers and students as my unit of analysis, these were selected based on some criteria. The teachers were selected based on their experience in teaching in the EFL department in Algeria, thus teachers who teach more than 4 years at the university were selected. This is because experienced teachers were expected to know more about the LMD system. This is what I found out from the head of the department and from an informal discussion with EFL teachers. That is, since there is no formal training of higher education EFL teachers about the LMD system, it is therefore a matter of their experience of teaching which depicts their knowledge about the system. The students, on the other hand, were selected according to their level, therefore only undergraduate students (including Licence and Master students) were selected. Any case study should start with the careful selection of a particular person, site, program, process, community, so this selected bounded system represents the interest to the researcher (Merriam and Associates, 2002).

In addition, the context (Algerian higher education EFL department) is also the case to research in this study. The scope of this research has been narrowed down to include a specific place for conducting research, this is the higher education EFL department in the west of Algeria. The reason for choosing this context is because I already have an experience of learning as an EFL student in that department which was five years in Bachelor and Master degree. Therefore, my experience was the inspirational point for me to choose this research and it helped me also for choosing carefully my case of participants to work with. It is then concluded that case study is less a methodological choice than a 'choice of what is to be studied' because the case is characterised by its limited quality either in terms of time, space and components comprising the case (number of participants, for example) (Stake, 2000, P. 435). In this research, both the higher education EFL context and the higher education EFL teachers and students are the case to be studied or in other words through whom I could understand collaborative learning. According to Yin (2014), the context is highly important if

we want to define what a case study is. The case study is an empirical enquiry that deals with contemporary phenomenon (The case) in depth in a real context. Therefore, the phenomenon is investigated in a bounded context. The fact that the boundaries between the context and the phenomenon are not clear, this calls for using a case study as a research design. My motivation for conducting this research started from my reflection on my studies as an EFL student and through reading deeply literature on collaborative learning. I started reflecting on how collaborative learning can be specifically related to EFL in higher education and what made it practiced in this way. According to Stake (2006), case study is what is to be studied more than a method of doing research, in this research I chose case study because it clearly defines for me what I am going to study in this research. In other words, what makes this research limited and bounded are two things: the context (Algerian EFL context which is run by the LMD system in higher education) and the EFL teachers and students.

The aim of this case study is to give a thorough understanding of collaborative learning in the Algerian higher education EFL context but also to explore certain contextual and cultural factors and how do they interact with collaborative learning. The aim of the case study is not the generalisability of the results but the selection depends on what the researcher wants to learn out of this case and the significance that knowledge might have for extending the theory or improving the practice (Merriam et al., 2002). In this study, I want to find out first what collaborative learning implies in the bounded case and then explore the cultural and contextual factors with regard to collaborative learning and in relation to the literature review. This was through reading extensive work on literature review and find out what area is under researched. Thus, I consider this case study as both descriptive and exploratory. Descriptive case study is used to describe natural phenomenon that are occurring within the data which means that the researcher should start with describing the theory which will support his description of the phenomenon or the study (Yin, 1984). In an exploratory case study, the researcher asks in depth questions which are meant to open up the door for future examination of the phenomenon (Yin, 1984). Thus, in this research; I want to explore how collaborative learning can be interacted with assessment which brought the contribution to the broad literature on collaborative learning, I also want to see how pedagogy and the system of higher education can be a factor leading to affect collaborative learning. According to Merriam (1998), there are several things that readers can learn from a

particular case. The researcher's own narrative description is rich enough to make readers knowledgeable about certain cases (Stake, 2000). For instance, the colorful description of a case can yield an excellent portrait of a particular teaching practice which can be relied on in teaching (Eisner, 1991, P. 1999).

Though this research does not aim to generalise the findings to other disciplines in higher education, it remains according to the reader of my thesis to see how and why my case can be generalised. Nevertheless, it is up to the reader to decide what can be applied to his/her own context (Erikson, 1986). Stake (2000, P.442) explained how this knowledge transfer works: 'Case research like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape-reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it more likely to be personally useful'. I believe that the findings of this study can be transferred to other similar contexts, I mean by that EFL departments in higher education but they can be transferred to other fields when the reader intends to transfer them.

3.6. Research instruments (interviews, observation and documentary evidence)

3.6.1. Semi-structured Interviews with higher education EFL teachers and students

Semi-structured interviews were the selected research method for this research to investigate the participants' perceptions and views. The questions of the interviews were piloted before the data collection took place. The objectives of this pilot study were to test the feasibility of the questions, to know to how much extent the selected participants are able to answer my research questions and to identify the possible weaknesses in the questions asked. The importance of any pilot study in research is to determine the feasibility of the study protocol by testing: the selected method for collecting data, the appropriateness of the intended questions, the eagerness of participants in answering questions and the time spent in collecting data (Abu Hassan et al., 2006). The pilot study for this research was done only to interviews because of the difficulty to access classes for observation.

In this research, interviews are the only possible way through which the perceptions of participants were investigated. This is for two main reasons, first is that my aim is to gain a rich and in-depth data about the perceptions of people and second interviews are not complicated and difficult to exchange ideas and opinions. 'It is all too easy to view conversation, within the qualitative interview situation, as an uncomplicated exchange of ideas and opinions' (King and Horrocks, 2010). Interviews are used mainly for investigating people's perceptions and experiences of something, that is if the researcher intends to construct an understanding of a topic, the targeted people's understanding of this topic will be crucial (Hennink et al., 2011) In this research, interviews were the most instrument that brought me rich data about the topic, this is due to the flexibility of the researcher as well as the participants during the interview. In addition, since this is a case of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students, therefore the unit of analysis is bounded to include purposive participants. Consequently, conducting interviews was efficient in this case because the interviewed participants should be the ones that are eager to give the interviewer accurate information because the researcher knows that accurate information is there to be discovered (Breakwell, 1990, P. 81). In depth interviews help for the construction of knowledge to emerge from the interaction between the researcher and the participants. These two ways of knowledge construction could be only achieved through in-depth interviews with the targeted participants. In this study, I considered interviews as a tool that makes the researcher analyses and interprets the data in depth. Unlike questionnaire, interviews helped me to be interpretivist towards the data gathered, therefore I could realise from my study that even my subjectivity and my analysis of the data was a way of shaping my understanding towards the data. This is because interviews are described as '*a meaning-making partnership* between interviewers and their respondents' and that it is '*a special kind of knowledge-producing conversation*' (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, P. 128).

The interviews of this research were collected with 9 higher education EFL teachers and 8 EFL students. A timetable was organised for meeting the teachers and students according to their and my free time, so I used my field notes to organise the timetable, meanwhile I was contacting teachers through email to ask about the appropriate time for them. The overall data collection took 3 months, so I started with interviews with higher education EFL teachers then I moved to students. Each interview took from 30 minutes to 1

hour according to the participant's ability and willingness to talk. For those it took 1 hour with them, I had to divide the interview into two parts, so during the interview we decided about the time for the second part. During the interview, I brought with me a sheet of questions (See appendix 2 and 4) and my field notes. I used the tape recorder on my phone and I took some notes on my field notes which seemed important and which I could not record.

The reason why a semi-structured interview type has been chosen is because this made me flexible towards the questions I asked my participants. Therefore, whenever the researcher picks up answers which they seem unclear or ambiguous then this should be followed by other questions (probes) to ask for more elaboration in the topic yet without being judgmental (Bryman, 2016). In this research, I could realise such flexibility through being open towards the answers of my participants, for instance one of my participants seemed to me she did not understand my question when she was talking about the teacher-students collaboration, yet I did not stop her nor correct her perspective because ultimately I realised that what she said was important, therefore I co-constructed (Braun and Clarke, 2019) knowledge with them. Since I am following the constructivist interpretivist approach which implies that the researcher should find out the reality through people's perceptions and experiences (Creswell, 2013), I believe that the version of the truth cannot be found out without interrogating the concerned people about their experience and without being flexible towards the questions I intend to ask, that is why it is difficult to set hypotheses for qualitative research questions (Flick, 2014).

The pilot study in this research helped me to a great extent to verify the questions of the interview with higher education EFL teachers and to check the participants' readiness and willingness to answer the questions. Thus, some questions were amended and others were rephrased so that to sound clearer for the participants. Though the researcher should be flexible and open towards the questions asked, yet they should have an interview guide beforehand to test the feasibility of all the questions intended to be asked (Flick, 2014). The interview guide could be through the piloting of the interview's questions with some of the participants yet they should not be the intended participants of the study; this is by checking out whether the participants understand the questions clearly and whether the questions are put in a logical order to answer the research questions (Hennink et al., 2011).

The interviews were done in different contexts including the teaching staff room, the classroom, the teachers' offices. I was faced with some issues like the noise as a result, some recordings were not audible appropriately. Interviews with students were mostly held in the computer room and sometimes at the library, but it was very noisy sometimes when it is full of students. The interviews were face to face and I used my field notes diary to write any important information from the interviews as well as the participants' body languages, interactions with me and facial expressions.

The data gathered from interviews was enough for me to be analysed and I did not need to do follow up interviews, except for some teachers: a teacher and the head of the department. However, those follow up interviews were by the final weeks of the data collection and unfortunately at that moment teachers were busy with exams and preparations. Therefore, I did one follow up interview with a teacher which was in the department's hall which took 10 minutes, another walking interview at the department's hall was with the head of department because he did not have time to sit and talk. So, though those follow up interviews were quick but it seemed that was the only solution. The reason why I decided to do a follow up interview is to clarify their perceptions during the interview.

3.6.2. Classroom observation

As far as this study is concerned, I did not limit the scope to some modules rather than others, yet I did observations in different modules including: Written Expression of 3rd year EFL students, Oral production for 1st year and 2nd year students, Study Skills for 1st year students and Didactics for Master students. The observation took place in classrooms with rows of tables that are in front of the blackboard and the teacher, other observations, especially in the module of Oral Production, were done in language laboratories that are formed in U shape and equipped with computers. I did not think about conducting a classroom observation until I got to the field work after the higher education EFL teachers proposed to me to observe the group work in the classrooms they were teaching. Therefore, though observation was not mentioned before in the ethic's form given to teachers and students, yet the participants gave me an oral consent to conduct the observation. Sometimes oral consent is the only solution when no written consent is possible as it was discussed in the ethics section. In a study that was done by Gordon (2003), the participants

of the study could not sign the written consent because they were patients with poor sight, thus the researcher had to give them a verbal description of the study.

The observation was focused, according to Flick (Spradley, 1980. P. 34), 'focused observation narrows your perspective on those processes and problems, which are most essential for your research questions'. It was not general to any EFL classroom but specific to only 5 EFL classrooms where collaborative activities were taking place. It was in January 2020. I prepared the observation's sheet (see appendix 3) which had elements that I was going to observe with additional space for other notes, according to Flick (2014); in this type of observation a structured protocol sheet should be present with the researcher for understanding clearly the relevant aspects tackled in the previous phase. However, the observed aspect on my observation sheet were not completely structured but they allowed for further aspects to emerge.

During the observation, my position was, most of the time, a non-participant observer who just observes students' and teacher's interactions, yet in two conducted observations, I was a participant to a certain degree. The two teachers of those classes told me to stand up and see what is happening in the groups between students. I realised that each teacher was aiming to show me something. The first teacher wanted me to see whether students are motivated and the second one wanted me to play the role of a teacher and correct the group activity with students, her aim was to see how students will interact with the teacher by the end of the activity. Thus, in these two instances, I found myself a participant observer, according to Whyte and Whyte (1984); 'Participant observation opens up possibilities for encountering the completely unexpected phenomenon that maybe more significant than anything the field worker could have foreseen, suggesting important hypotheses worthy of further study'. Thus, I could figure out some important aspects of the research by taking action in the classroom with students, such as how students divided the work between them in the module of Study skills and the interaction between them in the group.

The rationale for conducting this research method is that there are elements in my research questions which they can be addressed better through observing and not just questioning, as a result this helps for the trustworthiness of the data (which will be discussed later). In this research I am dealing with both perceptions and experiences, therefore; observing people's experiences gave me more confidence about the interpretation I have

drawn. Assessment, for example, was important to be observed as I could figure out who is being assessed and how they are assessed. In addition, I could find out the practices/activities of collaborative learning through observation. Thus, I see observation as contributing to the triangulation with the interview. Most of observations took place after the interviews. This was to observe certain elements which were not dealt with in interviews. I conducted five classroom interviews. Three observations took place before the interviews in November 2019. The reason is to find out about the assessment strategy. Two observations took place after the interview with Ibrahim and Ahmed. The aim was to achieve triangulation and to confirm elements which emerged from interviews. As an example, Ahmed mentioned that he teaches through a teacher-centred approach through 'delivering and asking' questions. Therefore, this was a prompt for me to see how this is practised in classroom and how students react. Thus, observation with other research methods contributed to the triangulation of information.

3.6.3. Field notes

In this study, I used field notes as a tool for collecting my data. This was additional to the interviews and observations. I used my diary for collecting data from teachers whom I interviewed informally and from my informal observations to the context. This brought me a general understanding of the contexts especially the EFL modules. Field notes are used in qualitative research for enhancing the data and providing a rich context for analysis (Creswell, 2013). During the interview period in the EFL department in Algeria, I had the chance to talk informally with four EFL teachers whom I met in the teaching staff room. They were pleased to know what I am doing as a research project and to answer my questions. I asked them if it is possible to take notes on that conversation and they accepted that. This was an informal group conversation between the five of us. Such collected data brought lately the depth of the analysis and helped me for backing up my findings from the interviews about how teachers consider EFL modules and where collaborative learning should be according to how they see these modules. According to Valandra (2012), field notes make the reflective practice of the researcher useful in qualitative research because it helps for making meaning or an *understanding* (Merriam et al., 2002) of the data collected. Field notes, in this study, though

they brought less data as compared to interviews, but they did help for making a connection and a thick description to different aspects that emerged in this study. Among these aspects is the EFL modules and how teachers identify them. I could connect and contradict this finding with both teachers' formal interviews, students' interviews and observations. According to Mathison (1988), one of the principles of proving validity of the findings is the triangulation of the methods used, therefore; this can reveal the consistency, the contradiction and the complexity of the findings.

The rationale for using field notes is to back up the findings from interviews. This research method was used to achieve the triangulation of the data from different sources. Field notes brought elements which were uncovered by the interview. My field notes show that EFL modules can be categorised as practical and theoretical modules. This is in contradiction with other perceptions in this study which leads to a new constructed understanding. Field notes were collected simultaneously with interviews. Some field notes took place before starting the interviews. They revealed certain aspects which were not covered.

3.6.4. Documentary evidence

In this research I relied on some official documents that derive from the Algerian ministry of higher education, these documents talked about the LMD system in Algeria and its application and the laws that the LMD system came with. According to Bryman (2016), social researchers can consult the state as a source of information. Two documents which are official ministry published documents about the LMD system in higher education in Algeria.

One document is entitled 'An Overview of the Higher Education System'. It was published in 2017. This document was written by Saidani and Khecheni (the authorities of the country concerned). The use of this document is not for the evaluation of the LMD system, but for looking for the possible impact of the LMD system on collaborative learning, more particularly, the assessment section. After teachers mentioned that they are obliged to give marks to their students in every activity, so I thought about consulting an official paper which mentions how assessment should take place. Therefore, the use of this document is not for a linguistic analysis but for finding evidence which back up the teachers' perceptions.

The second document used is a national report which was written by the Mediterranean Network of National Information Centres (MERIC-Net) in 2019. Like the first document, this one was consulted for the purpose of getting evidence on the assessment section. According to Flick (2014), the use of documents in qualitative research can be complementary to other research methods such as interviews. In this research, I consider the evidence from these documents as perceptual as they are written by people in the authority. According to Wolff (2004), the researcher should consider the documents as dynamic rather than static because documents can be defined according to the field where actions happen. The documents I used were accessible to everyone as they were published. When documents are for the authorship, these can be either published and accessible to any party or they can be restricted (Scott, 1990). I also used the content of the documents for writing my literature review and for quoting from them for my participants to comment on, for example; what teachers think of students' engagement in the classroom which was mentioned in the ministry document. According to Atkinson and Coffey (2011), an official document can contain just the regulations about the function of an organisation, yet what happens in reality may depict something different. Thus, the main aim for consulting documents in this study is for backing up the teachers' perceptions. They are not for analysing the language but for finding evidence on assessment.

The rationale for using Ministry documents is to achieve triangulation of the research methods. Also, documents could back up my findings from the interview and reveal uncovered elements from the interview. Therefore, through documents I could confirm that teachers are obliged to give marks and that they follow certain types of assessment. Gathering data from documents took place after the interviews and observations. After an initial interpretation to the interviews with teachers, I consulted those two documents to back up the findings from interviews. Thus, the main aim is to triangulate the findings.

3.7. Sampling

The sample selected for this study was purposive because of the nature of this study which is a bounded and a particular case. According to Patton (2002): 'Here the field under study is disclosed from its extremities to arrive at an understanding of the field as a whole'.

Therefore, there are two cases that were studied in this research: higher education EFL teachers and students. As for teachers, they were selected first based on the field they teach, i.e., being EFL teachers and also based on their experience of teaching who have taught for at least 4 years at the university, that is only those teachers having a doctoral level or more were selected, the reason was they know about the LMD system. 'In the case of interviews in a study on changes in a professional field, for example you may sample interviewees with the longest experience in the field' (Patton, 2002). The total number of the selected teachers were 9 higher education EFL teachers among which were the head of the EFL department, the head of the national committee and the head of the English language who were interviewed as well and who have a teaching position too. These categories of teachers brought the depth of the data through the contradictory elements that emerged.

As for students, they were selected based first on the domain they study, i.e., they are current EFL students at the EFL department, therefore EFL students were regarded as one entity. All the selected participants were undergraduate EFL students, so 4 novice students who are at the beginning of their EFL learning were selected and 4 students who are at a more developed level in 3rd year were selected. It was a bit difficult to access students because I did not have any information about them before unlike teachers who, some of them, were my previous teachers, thus; I had to access them through their teachers and through some friends, Patton (2002) mentioned the criterion of convenience in purposive sampling, that is accessing participants whom the researcher sees easier to do in a limited resources of time of people. Concerning the number of the students, the decision about it was until after reaching a saturation in the answers given. The table below summarises the participants of this study and their characteristics. Each participant was given a pseudonym so that to make their identity anonymous for this study.

Participant teachers

Dr. Ahmed	Gender: Male. He is the head of the EFL department in one of the universities in Algeria. He has both leadership and teaching position. He has an experience of teaching of 25 years in higher education. Ahmed is
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	<p>considered as a prominent participant because he is mentioned several times during the analysis. Ahmed brought the depth of the analysis through the complexity that is raised from someone who thinks how teaching should be and someone who thinks how teaching actually is (The rest of teachers). Also, Ahmed is seen as someone who represents the system of higher education as he mentioned during the interview that he communicates the regularities of the system to the other teachers.</p>
Dr. Ibrahim	<p>Gender: male. He is the head of the national committee in the faculty of foreign languages and a higher education EFL teacher. He has an experience of teaching of 15 years. Ibrahim's perception was mentioned once as he was the only one who brought the 'peer-evaluation' notion which became important to be discussed.</p>
Dr. Anes	<p>Gender: male. He is the head of the English language. He has an experience of teaching of 8 years. He teaches the module of Written Expression in particular.</p>

Prof. Fatima	Gender: female. She is a professor. She has an experience of teaching of 30 years at the EFL department. She has taught different modules in higher education, she is currently teaching Academic writing to Licence and Master students. Likewise Ibrahim, Fatima's perception of collaborative learning and group work was important as she was the only one who mentioned such categorisation which was important to be discussed.
Dr. Sara	Gender: female. She has an experience of teaching in the EFL department of 20 years. She teaches different modules but she teaches in particular the module of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). She teaches Licence students.
Dr. Meriem	Gender: female. She has an experience of teaching of 8 years in the EFL department. She teaches Licence students.
Dr. Amir	Gender: Male. He has an experience of teaching of 10 years at the EFL department. He teaches specifically ESP module.
Dr. Selima	Gender: Female. She has an experience of 8 years at the EFL department. She teaches licence students.

Dr. Siham	Gender: Female. She has an experience of teaching of 4 years, she teaches License students.
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Participant students

Aya	Gender: female. Level: 3 rd year EFL student.
Nur	Gender: female. Level: 3 rd year EFL student. Nur's perception was important as she was the only one who contradict the perceptions which tell that students dislike 'criticism'. Nur on the other hand thinks that the subject does not make her think critically.
Maya	Gender: Female. Level: Master student
Imen	Gender: Female. Level: Master student
Layla	Gender: female. Level: 1 st year EFL student
Rima	Gender: female. Level: 1 st year student
Selim	Gender: male. Level: 3 rd year EFL student.
Amina	Gender: female. Level: 2 nd year EFL student

3.8. The process of data analysis

Due to the interpretive nature of this study, I decided to analyse the data manually. Since interviews were the prominent source from which most of my data derived, I applied my own systematic way of data analysis to the interviews while data from observations and other sources were used to back up my findings from interviews. Richard (2005) thinks that an interpretivist researcher should avoid the automated analysis of the data, rather the researcher should reflect on the data through going back and forth, that is through reading,

thinking about the data and coding. The repeatable way of reading transcripts makes the researcher reflect on 'not only to what has been explicitly said, but also the implicit information hidden' (Abedeen, 2015, p. 127).

The data analysis started by transcribing interviews (Appendix 4). I highlighted units of meaning (passages of important information). I then commented on those highlighted passages by describing what it says and interpreting it according to my understanding, those summaries were marginalised. After that, each summary was given a notion, for example I came to understand that there are differences in understanding collaborative learning through the notions: group work, community, product, process, cooperative learning, etc. Therefore, these became the initial codes that reflect the marginalised unit of meaning. After that, I used memos (Emerson et al., 1995; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) that helped me to organise the data and keep focused and attentive to emerging concepts. After reading and rereading the data, I realised that there are three broad concepts or titles that are prominent and repeated. These were definitions, practices and the system of higher education. More concepts and titles were added when I carried on with the process of reflection and reading of the transcripts, such as assessment and factors. Thus, I drew lines between them and I tried to organise codes according to these broad categories or titles. Then I sorted the data by cutting the units of meaning which belong to a particular code and put it in a document which was divided into sections and named according to the broad categories I already mentioned, this is for the easiness to access them. I wrote on the margin the name of the interviewee and the page number of the transcript. The same process was followed with observation and field notes. Then after, I tried to find the connection between the data, in other words; how different codes can be related to each other. Some concepts were contrasted and compared with other concepts. There was an overlap between different sections. Seidman (1998, p. 110) referred to the connection that is made between the data gathered as the 'connective threads'.

Analysing the connection between data gathered from different sources was important in this study in order to construct the *understanding* (Merriam et al., 2002) of the events. At the beginning I realised that teachers were conceptualising collaborative learning according to how they intend to teach it, I realised later that the assessment affects the teachers' perceptions about collaborative learning. Further, as a comparison between the teachers' and the students' understanding of collaborative learning, I could understand that

students have different thinking about collaborative learning from teachers. While teachers think of collaborative learning from a pedagogic point of view, students think about it relationally. Thus, the first section of the analysis was built based on these connections that were derived from the teachers' and the students' interviews and from observations to EFL classrooms. 'One of the purposes of analysis is to find explanations which 'fit' our understanding and therefore seem emotionally plausible' (Altricher et al., 1993, p. 120). I followed this systematic process to the remaining data, I tried to classify codes first, then find the relationship between them and then build the full picture of it. I also tried to be attentive to hidden messages and write analytical memos about them so that I could use them later. These hidden messages include the body language, facial expressions and reactions. Inferences are necessary to pay attention to because they can help to provide further understanding of the data (King and Horrocks, 2010). For example, I could understand why one of the teachers thinks collaborative assessment to be feedback giving while all the other teachers are obliged to give marks to their students. This is because from the beginning of the interview I saw that he hesitated and wanted to give me 'the right' answer, one that he thought I want to hear and not one which might reflect the reality.

As for observation, the data represented the practice of both teachers and students of collaborative learning. Thus, the information from observation was used to add to an understanding of the data from research interviews. Like interviews, observation passages were highlighted in the observation sheet (Appendix 3) which included observation categories and field notes. First, passages of meaning were highlighted and each passage was given a notion. Most passages were related to the most frequent conceptual ideas from interviews, thus I was then connecting passages and finding explanations to previous statements. As an example, the interviews show that there is a strategy of assessment of collaborative learning and this strategy might be better understood through who, what and how through my observation to students. This is how the theme of assessment was derived from both interviews and observations.

I used documentary evidence to support the data from interviews on assessment in higher education in Algeria (Saidani and Khecheni, 2017) (MERIC, 2019). Therefore, I highlighted passages on assessment and tried to connect it to what other teachers and the head of the department told me about the necessity of giving marks. The aim of consulting these documents was not for linguistic analysis but for finding evidence which support

teachers' perceptions. Three main sentences were selected and highlighted. These ministry documents' evidence show that teachers are obliged to give marks to students and that testing through giving grades is fundamental which explains why teachers said we have to give individual marks to students in their group activities. The documents were consulted after the interviews being done, thus my interaction with teachers was a prompt to consult these documents. The construction of meaning was between me and the participants. According to Braun and Clarke (2019), themes are not expected to emerge from the coding stage, but they are interpretive stories about the data which reflect the researcher's assumptions and analytical skills (Merriam et al., 2002), thus; I considered four sections which narrate the full story of collaborative learning for EFL students in higher education in Algeria. This begins by constructing the teacher's and students' thinking of collaborative learning which is the first section, and then this thinking is reflected on their practice which forms types of collaborative learning which is the second section. Such perceptions are affected by the assessment strategy, thus the third section tackles assessment. There are contextual and cultural factors which underlie the perceptual understanding of collaborative learning, thus the fourth section highlights these factors.

I arrived to form themes of this study through going back and forth to the data and the analysis and refining the themes each time to change the name of the theme and to include other sub themes. The iterative process of qualitative data analysis is not a repetitive mechanical task, but it is a reflexive process for sparking new meaning and developing the existing understanding (Strivastava and Hopwood, 2009). In this study, I came to name a subtheme 'Student-centred learning' according to different concepts that emerged in the data which were the codes that underlie the bigger concept, these included: student-centred notion, teacher' profile, innovation, autonomy. This was followed with other themes and subthemes which were being revised and redrafted continuously. Constructing themes happened simultaneously with my reflection and questioning the findings in relation to the literature that was already read on the domain. Therefore, this was the exploratory stage in my study. According to Altricher et al (1993), the critical ability of the researcher should go simultaneously with constructing a meaning, thus allowing for the conclusions to emerge. Though the analysis chapter may not reveal the themes of this study as it is a condensed representation of the findings, but I consider the discussion chapter as a presentation of the major themes (findings) which tell the constructed story of this research with the immersion

in critical literature in the field. 'The final analysis is the product of deep and prolonged data immersion, thoughtfulness and reflection, something that is active and generative' (Braun and Clarke, 2019). In this study, my major generated findings are: Collaborative learning is pedagogically perceived by teachers while it is relationally perceived by students, the unsystematic interaction between assessment and collaborative learning and finally the tension between the teacher's flexibility and policy's impact.

The last stage was to synthesize the data to ensure that all the aspects of the analysis were covered. The collection of coded data from interviews, observations, field notes and documentary evidence allowed me to find the complexities in the findings which then contributed to the knowledge of the literature. This triangulation of exploring the issue assisted me to prove the trustworthiness of the work.

3.9. Trustworthiness of the data

Before the data was gathered, I was concerned about the systematic process that the data collection should go through and which should bring a valid information and analysis. Therefore, I find the pilot study as mandatory for assisting me to select my participants, change my interview's questions and also getting a preliminary draft of the data. I could have the initial understanding of how some of the data is going to be unfolded. According to Koch (1994), before conducting a qualitative research, the researcher should try out the matrix of data collection and should have a self-awareness to the sample of data collected from the trial. Thus, the researcher has to put a lot of thought into how to collect a set of data because ensuring trustworthiness starts with choosing the right methods of data collection that best answer the research questions (Elo and Kyngas, 2008; Neuendorf, 2002). In this research, I could understand that teachers have different understanding of the module according to four main categories: practical/theoretical and subject and content modules. In addition, piloting the interviews with 4 mainly experienced and novice teachers help me to define the case of the study and to limit it to experienced teachers of at least four years of teaching experience. This is because novice teachers may not have great knowledge about the LMD system in higher education (As it was also an advice from the head of the department to select experienced teachers). According to Creswell (2013), the sampling must be appropriate and must incorporate the participants who best represent the topic of investigation. So, this

systematic plan before the data came into existence helped me for preparing the ground for a reliable data. The pilot study helped also to decide about observing some classrooms where collaborative work was taking place (to know where to go exactly depending on the modules the teachers appointed for me).

At the level of analysis, though I used my own way of analysis which shows that I was flexible about following an automated way of data analysis, this was systematic throughout the whole data analysis. Thus, I highlighted the units of meaning which were coded, then I moved to the classification of these codes according to what they represent as overall titles, different themes and subthemes emerged from this classification through connecting different codes together and through going back and forth between the analysis and the data. Being consistent and systematic in the data analysis process is part of achieving validity of the analysis. According to Schreier (2012), qualitative analysis should be systematic because the researcher follows a sequence of steps which should be thoroughly described. No analysis method is without drawbacks, but each may be good for a certain purpose. So, the researcher should delineate the approach they are going to use to perform a certain analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

Winter (2000) stated that validity is achieved when the researcher is honest and achieves the depth of the data through the triangulation applied in the process of research. In this research, I can define triangulation in terms of the data collection and analysis. I used the different research instruments to collect the data, this helped me to crosscheck and back up the findings. Though some contradictions emerged but this led to a deep discussion of those complexities. I see triangulation also in terms of the participants of the study, therefore; these are categorised in terms of teachers, students and the head of the department. There were differences in the perceptions between the three categories as each one's perception is influenced by cultural and contextual factors. Thus, the understanding would be different if it is built from the perceptions of only one category of participants. Triangulation in terms of the analysis was in achieving thick descriptions by taking into consideration data from different participants as well as different sources. I achieved the *understanding* (Merriam et al., 2002) of the data through those triangulations. According to Guion (2002), the validity of the findings is established when there is a data and a methodological triangulation. This leads to achieve the convergence of information from different sources (Carter et al., 2014).

However, according to Maxwell (1992), validity should be assessed in relation to the purpose and the conditions of the study and not in terms of the context. In qualitative research, 'understanding' is more a convenient word than 'validity'. As it was mentioned earlier that the researcher is considered as the human instrument of analysis (Meriam et al., 2002), according to Maxwell (1992), it is not possible to be totally objective. Maxwell described the notion of understanding as the interpretive validity which denotes the ability of the researcher to grasp the meaning, interpretations and intentions of the data and construct his theoretical understanding. This study tried to establish an interpretive validity by making sense of collaborative learning from the perceptions of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students and explore the extent to which contextual and cultural factors shape this understanding. Moreover, the pilot study and the triangulation were used to ensure the authenticity and accuracy of the findings.

All in all, the methodological approach and the methods that I used for this research are summarised in the constructivist interpretivist qualitative approach which informed the use of case study as a research design and the reliance on interviews and observation as the main instruments to gain a qualitative data. Therefore, interviews were to investigate the perceptions and observation to investigate more the experiences, in addition to the documentary evidence and my field notes. The data obtained from these were crosschecked and connected through my own interpretation of it. Such connection ensures to me that the data can be valid.

Chapter 4: EFL collaborative learning understanding

4. Introduction

This analysis chapter analyses and discusses the perceptions of Algerian EFL teachers and students towards collaborative learning. In the first section of the analysis chapter, I explored the teachers' perceptions of the term collaborative learning and the students' understanding of it. This section is divided into two detailed sub-headings, the first heading 'collaborative learning is pedagogically perceived'. Most of data under this sub-heading has to do with teachers' used concepts to define collaborative learning. The second sub-heading is: 'collaborative learning is relationally perceived'; this has to do particularly with the students' main focus on collaboration as an activity which reveals their relationship with each other. So, this first section represents the division of perceptions and thinking about collaborative learning by teachers and students. It is concluded by stating my own argument and summary of the main evidence. Thus, from the teacher's point of view, it is concluded that collaborative learning is the method of learning where the process and product are discussed. For students, it is all about the relationship of the members of the group where 'criticism' and issues like dominance are discussed. This answers the first research question of this study.

The second section focuses on an exploration of the practice of collaborative learning that both Algerian EFL teachers and students have experienced. Four different types are understood from the data collected. Therefore, this section is divided into four subsections which are: peer evaluation in the writing module, teacher-students collaboration, group projects and presentations and virtual collaboration. In this section I moved to a more practical understanding of collaborative learning through revealing what practices of this collaborative learning are resulting from the teachers' and students' thoughts, thus this answers the second research question.

4.1. Section one: Understanding collaborative learning from Algerian higher education EFL teachers' and students' perceptions

In this research, some EFL teachers were trying to give their understanding of collaborative learning as concepts and nuances, however; these are considered as

perceptions rather than conceptions because of the discussion raised below on perception and conception. Among those teachers who gave such nuances are Ahmed, Fatima and Samir. Each section below represents how each of those teachers views collaborative learning conceptually and what may make it slightly different from other teachers' perceptions. This represents their thinking that comes out from their experience of collaborative learning.

Secondly, students perceived collaborative learning from a relational point of view. That is, most of the focus of the participant EFL students on collaborative learning was on their friendship when working in groups. Thus, the students' concern was on the extent of familiarity that exists between the members of the group which in turn affects negatively or positively collaborative learning through which they referred to as 'criticism'. Therefore, the multiple construction of perceptions in this section is realised between teachers when defining students' collaboration pedagogically and between students when revealing their purposeful relationship with other students in the group. This chapter will discuss these two themes through considering the analysis which is data driven.

4.1.1. Collaborative learning is pedagogically perceived by teachers

There is often a difference between a perceptual and a conceptual knowledge. While the former may imply the individual's views which derives from senses and past experiences which means that a perception has a more sociocultural influence (McDonald, 2012), the conception often includes the abstract knowledge (Goldstone and Barsalou, 1998). However, there is often a conflict that is raised in the literature between the two concepts and they were found to represent a continuum, so sometimes a conception can become a perception according to how much the sensory input can be transformed (Goldstone and Barsalou, 1998). So, in this study, some teachers were trying to define abstract concepts, sometimes without relying on any senses. Among these teachers are Fatima when she defined collaborative learning and Samir when he defined a community of practice. Fatima said she knows the term from her reading of her student's work and Samir thinks that a community is not what is practised at the university, it is what he knows about it as knowledge. However, they both linked those concepts to their current experience in the EFL department when they carried on their interviews which affected their thinking about them. Thus, in this research; I decided to consider them as perceptions as there is an overlap between their conceptions

and their perceptions which indicates the effect of the sociocultural factors (Goldstone and Barsalou, 1998).

Teachers provided three dichotomies which are related to other teachers' perceptions, these are: group work vs collaborative learning, cooperative learning and collaborative learning, community of learners vs group work. In this regard, collaborative learning is different from a group work as the two of them are often used interchangeably. In the EFL department, teachers should talk more about a group work rather than collaborative learning because teachers do not focus on the process and what should be assessed is the product. This was perceived by Fatima who is an EFL teacher who made such categorisation. Also, when we talk about collaborative learning, we should also consider cooperative learning as both go hand in hand in the students' collaboration, this is what Ahmed who is the head of the department explained further as there should not be an overlap between them. Additionally, when we refer to collaborative learning, we mean a process that takes a long time unlike group work which represents a mere of activities in a short period of time, this was the perception of Amir who is an EFL teacher whose distinction between the two will be discussed in this section.

4.1.1.1. Collaborative learning and group work

Some higher education EFL teachers are encouraging group work with their students according to the demands of each lesson in order to achieve the aim of the lesson, yet they are not actually encouraging collaborative learning and it is not necessary to be encouraged, this was the thinking of Fatima. Therefore, she believes that collaborative learning is different from group work which represent the difference in the practice. Fatima seemed assertive about her views and perceptions as she kept saying 'Okay?' each time during the interview with her. This was an indication that she wants to convince me about what she is saying. Such confidence of Fatima in talking about collaborative learning is the result of her knowledge. She thinks that her perceptions come from her knowledge about the topic because she is supervising a PhD student who is working on collaborative learning in addition to her long experience in teaching. She said:

Group work is to give a work to group and then they work, okay? But collaborative learning that is, the final objective is learning and then this learning does not happen individually but it happens in groups. Now are you speaking about group work or collaborative learning? If you are speaking about group work, it depends to the course itself, okay? If the course for example is a writing course, as I told you some activities may have collaboration...For example there are some tasks for example when it comes to revision, some kind of collaborative learning may happen in the process of learning in the step of revision...Now group work is an activity which is completed by a group of students but an activity. Collaborative learning, this is a learning which happens thanks to groups. This learning may happen after several activities, may include several activities which are not necessarily given by the teacher. A group work is to realise the assignment given by the teacher, Okay? Now collaborative learning, this happens as a result of teacher's assignments, as a result of interaction, as a result of student-student's assignment, clarification, explanation and whatever, so all these may lead to collaborative learning, Okay? (Interview with Fatima, EFL teacher, November, 2019).

Fatima is trying to differentiate between collaborative learning and group work. She obviously sees them as two different concepts which represent different things. By the beginning, Fatima mentioned two important key points to identify both group work and collaborative learning. She referred to group work as 'a group work is to realise the assignment given by the teacher'. That is, Group work represents a product for her, it means it involves the completed assignment that is given to students which is done in groups. However, she referred to collaborative learning as: 'collaborative learning that is, the final objective is learning and then this learning does not happen individually but it happens in groups'. This indicates that collaborative learning is both process (when she denied the individual work) and product (when the achieved learning is collaborative). Fatima insisted on the word 'collaborative' in collaborative learning and denied the individual which means that in collaborative learning there is no separation of efforts as everything is done in collaboration. She related groupwork to the nature of the course (or the module). She gave an example of the Writing module which she is in charge of teaching it. In this module, though

she does not see the writing skill to be taught entirely through collaborative learning because writing is an individual skill; yet, there are some activities where students can work together, in other words; they achieve collaborative learning.

Fatima gave an example where collaborative learning can be probably happening such as when students revise their lectures together. She is associating group work with the assignments initiated by the EFL teacher in a formal way while collaborative learning is the informal product which both higher education EFL teachers and students may not be aware of. Collaborative learning can happen in an informal way, that is with no consciousness from the teacher and the students, through the students' explanation and interaction with each other. Therefore, collaborative learning is an informal aspect through students' interaction, clarification and assignments' achievements.

In sum, group work can lead to collaborative learning when both the process and the product of collaboration are achieved, yet group work can be considered as product achieving when the teacher is not targeted to achieve collaborative learning. Thus, collaborative learning can be about process and product achieving.

Though Fatima was the only participant teacher who mentioned the difference between the two dichotomies, I understood from other participant teachers that they were referring to collaborative learning as achieving a language-related product because students should achieve the shared work individually. According to Ahmed:

The concept of collaborative learning is actually deeply rooted in constructivism, so social constructivism and when you say collaborative learning, I understand that students work together, teamwork, like when students do projects together, when they collaborate toward achieving an objective, alright? It could be pair work or group work, 3, 4 students together, 5 students together... Whenever there is a collaboration towards reaching an objective, students collaborate, each one on his side work on a task so that to have a whole, so they collaborate to achieve a goal, so most of the time it is when you give them a homework, like a project realisation. Project realisation is a collaborative activity or a task, so students do collaborate in these kind of learning tasks.

Though there is no separation between an activity and a learning for Ahmed, he thinks that collaborative learning is a group work where students work together to achieve an objective. Ahmed is prioritising the product more than the process because the work should be processed individually for him, yet what is important is the outcome they come up with. So, It is inferred that the process is neglected in collaborative learning because this is characterised by the individual work of the students to achieve a shared product.

In contrast to Ahmed, Meriem said:

I like collaborative learning and whenever I have the occasion, I try to introduce it in my classroom, for example, I tried to give assignments to students to be done outside the classroom. It was about research methodology... It means i am terribly with collaborative work and not only group work, pair work also has a significance especially for students who are all the time sitting next to each other...Sometimes I can't decide from home, once I entered: group yourselves!. You have an assignment to be done in groups. It means it is also an occasion for students to acquaint themselves with each other and to help and support each other... By the end I was shocked by the results. It was, it means done in a very good way. It means it was done in 35 mn, we arrived to correct the work, we arrived to group the ideas, even to illustrate and it was something that was done in a good way compared to the assignments that were done individually (Interview with Meriem, December, 2019).

In this account, Meriem is using the word group work to refer to collaborative learning, she thinks that it is the activity itself which she designs in the classroom in a formal way. Meriem, in her example, described the process and the product of a collaborative activity that she gave to her students, so both the process and the product were present in her perception of collaborative learning. In her example, the process is done together rather than separately because Meriem is interested on the interaction in the group as well as the final product. It is inferred that collaborative learning can be a process and product achieving when students do their tasks together and when the teacher is interested on the interaction of students. However, it can be product achieving when the aim is having a language-related outcome achieved.

It is significant, then, to ask the question what is the purpose of collaborative learning?
According to Fatima:

...That is the purpose of collaboration (She means collaborative learning) is learning not completing a task like a group work. That is a group (She means group work) has as a final objective the completion of an assignment but collaborative learning is the achievement of a learning point, that's the difference and it may take different ways and different aspects (Interview with Fatima, EFL teacher, November, 2019).

Fatima thinks that both group work and collaborative learning are different according to the purposes they achieve. When the teacher gives students group work, the aim is to complete the assignment given to them. However, she thinks that collaborative learning is achieving a learning point; therefore, if the teacher aims to encourage collaborative learning, the focus should be on the learning achieved which should be collaborative more than the achievement of the task which can result either in a collaborative or individual learning.

So, it is understood that (1) collaborative learning can be a means that helps teachers to achieve the desired EFL learning of the individual student or the EFL product. It can be characterised by the individual work of the student. (2) However, collaborative learning is not only product achieving, but collaborative learning is also about the processed interaction which leads to achieve a shared learning.

The former explanation can be understood through the way of assessment designed for students, that is; it is targeted to assess the individual in the group. Sara who is a higher education EFL teacher said: 'I explain to them, I inform them before the activities starting the assessment and the evaluation you'll be evaluated individually even if it is a group work, just to had them engage more within the conversation' (Interview with Sara, EFL teacher, December, 2019). Sara is talking about the module of Oral Production. One of the specificities of this module is to encourage the oral skill of the students; therefore, she wants to make sure that every single student is able to achieve the aim of each lesson in the Oral Production which is related to developing the oral skill. However, even though it is a group work, she is

going to follow an individual assessment to the members (this will be discussed later in the section of assessment). Anes also mentioned that he cannot evaluate the students collectively, he claimed: 'You (He means any teacher) are going to assess in a good way if you really control the activity itself in a good way, now sometimes you can give a mark or a grade for one group, okay? But that group was dominated by the work or the activity was dominated by one student!' (Interview with Anes, EFL teacher, December, 2019). Anes mentioned the word 'dominance' to indicate that some students have a dominant role in the group activity; therefore, they are the only ones who are active in the group while the rest might not contribute. This is why Anes thinks that every single student should be evaluated on his individual skills and achievement so that to be clear about their roles within the group and their exact achievement.

Henceforth, the subject of assessment will be examined in more depth in section 3. In this section; the way of assessment shows why collaborative learning represents an activity that can be used to achieve the aim of the content, yet the process of collaboration, or in other words the skills of collaboration are neglected, this is because the teacher assesses each student individually.

4.1.1.2. Collaborative learning vs cooperative learning

Both collaborative learning and cooperative learning represent slightly different things according to their application in education. In this regard, Ahmed defined the two as:

Projects and workshops for instance are tasks right?, in fact they are situations where collaboration takes place. Not only collaboration but cooperation too... Cooperation takes place in collaboration, when we collaborate, we cooperate. So we collaborate to reach an objective, a point, right? a group objective, but when we are collaborating, we may need the cooperation of others, I mean cooperation is instant. It means one can help the other within the group one can help his mate, right? for a moment, this is cooperation and then he stands back, when he stands back, it's ok. He helps him so that the whole can reach the final

objective (Interview with Ahmed, The head of the EFL department, interview, November, 2019).

Ahmed thinks that collaboration is when students work in groups in a task, but that work is divided between them so that each student has a part to work on. The work is done in groups with the division of roles and parts within the group. Cooperation, then, is the help that a student may give to another student in the group work. Thus; the fact that other students may guide and help others is referred to as 'cooperation'. He mentioned the phrase 'for a moment' in cooperative work which indicates that cooperation is instant and temporary which takes place in students' collaboration.

So, it is inferred that though this distinction was clear yet much of individual work is taking place during students' collaboration because of the strategy of assessment of the teacher, that is each student is evaluated on his individual efforts and also because of the beliefs the teachers have about their students. Ahmed added further examples to explain the difference between collaboration and cooperation. He said:

Yes of course, when students want to build a project, to realise a project, every student has to do a task within the project individually and they have to meet from time to time to see what each other is doing, to see what each other's group is doing and when they meet, each other's group has to present what they are doing and the other may ask him questions about what he is doing and may also correct what he has done and may also help, may cooperate with him to overcome the difficulties he's facing while working on his part of the project (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, November, 2019)

It seems clear from Ahmed's explanation that in project realisation, both collaboration and cooperation take place. It can be inferred that the individual work is important though there is sometimes some collaboration between members (the help to each other which he referred to as cooperation) but Ahmed is not interested about it as much as students should achieve a product upon which they need to be assessed individually.

To recapitulate what has been discussed above, collaborative learning can be considered a means used to realise a language learning aim or a product where the process is not important. This understanding is shaped through the assessment strategy where the 'I' rather than the 'we' is considered. However, collaborative learning can mean the process where the collaborative behaviours (process) as well as language learning outcomes (product) are achieved. According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), collaborative learning is set of teaching and learning strategies that encourage students' collaboration in small groups of more than two persons. In order this to be achieved, teachers should design a variety of collaborative activities to their students, however, according to Johnson and Johnson, in the social interdependence theory, the individual contribution should contribute to collaborative results through the promotive interaction (collaborative skills), therefore it is about achieving both the individual accountability and the positive interdependence.

4.1.1.3. Students' learning community and group work

Another identification is the community of learners, or in other words as Samir referred to, the team of learners. Samir who is a higher education EFL teacher referred to collaborative learning as the learning that takes a long time for a long term, unlike group work which refers to activities done by students in a short period of time. Therefore, it is 'time' which indicates what students are actually doing is collaborative learning or a group work. Samir said in this regard:

So, students' learning communities seem different from students' groups. Students' learning communities is about working together the whole year and maybe in the future. It creates a motivational feeling within and through the community, a real cohesion within a safe environment. However, working in a group is temporary even if the group is working together the whole year. It is related to a specific topic to search or to a job to be done (Interview with Samir, EFL teacher, January, 2020)

In this regard, collaborative learning has to do with a 'learning community' of students. It implies the continuous process of the engagement of students in activities which takes a

long time. The characteristics of this learning community is that it boosts the motivation of the students and therefore EFL students become motivated to do different tasks in groups. Thus, a learning community of students seems an important factor which affects the motivation of the students. Among the characteristics is also 'a real cohesion within a safe environment'. This indicates that a learning community of students creates a kind of acceptance and tolerance of the students' different skills and abilities; therefore, the members of the group use their collaborative skills. Cohesion is about the completion of the members of the community to each other due to the diversity of skills and tasks. It means, a learning community is composed of members who know each other, understand each other and reasonably criticise each other.

It seems that Samir's thought is inspired from the group dynamic theory (1993) which was developed later to 'a social interdependence theory'. Samir's thought lies under the positive interdependence element where the actions of individuals promote the achievements of joint goals (Johnson and Johnson, 2005).

While Samir thinks that the students should be with different characteristics for helping each other in the group, Fatima on the other hand is against the different competencies that may exist inside the group, she said:

When students are at the same proficiency level, they can realise an interesting work. Do you know when we opt for collaborative work, when we consider weak students as average or advanced student but this depends on the willingness of the student, Ok?. There are students who are weak, who know that they are weak and they would like to improve their performance, ok? This could be beneficial (Interview with Fatima, December, 2019).

In this account, Fatima thinks that there should not be any differences at the level of students' performance in the group otherwise this will lead to some issues inside the groups. So, for Fatima, building a cohesive community is not her interest but rather students should be identical enough to achieve a good work. However, on the other hand, Sara appreciates the fact students have different competencies and styles in the group. She said in this regard that:

For always group work is important since you always find in large class size different levels, either in speaking, either in listening, either in writing. So, when we try to group students together, we try to select students from different perspectives, one can help the other. We don't try to not select students from the same level and then put them together and they will not know how to overcome their difficulties. But if you find in the group one is better in listening, the other in speaking, the other is more creative, the other have a rich vocabulary, so you put them together to give a very interesting and fruitful work, so this is the aim of a group work (Interview with Sara, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

She raises the benefit of having EFL students with different skills in the same group (Speaking, listening, writing, creative skills, a rich vocabulary repertoire). Such variation will yield fruitful results and production because each one will help the other and each one will scaffold the other in what is missing for the other part. So, trying to apply the ideas of a community by having different members in the group is significant sometimes but one should think about to how much extent these members are different so that to avoid any issues. In addition, having different skills means students interact, this can only be taken into consideration when the teacher aims to observe their interactions, however; when the teacher wants only to assess their final product, different skills may not be a significant characteristic.

Competition between students can be something positive. According to Samir, competition is an important component of collaboration. Any collaboration of students, he means by that the community of learners, should have with it the positive competition. He said:

Positive competition (thinking) tends to be awarded by obtaining the best result not by fighting to have it, but more by helping each other to be the best. For me, the real competition is the collaboration by creating a community, not just a group, and yes compete and collaborate. Competition and collaboration can exist at the same time if the teacher plays his role effectively (Interview with Samir, January, 2020).

According to Samir, one of the characteristics of collaboration is competition but this competition should be positive. Therefore, if we want to define what a community of learning is, it is the collaboration of students for a long recognisable period of time which involves that students positively compete with each other to achieve certain objectives. This means that each individual student can work hard to be the best but at the same time helping others inside the community. Therefore, it is not just about the academic achievement but also the relationship between the students.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2007), the positive interaction is achieved when the students know that they are responsible for their own achievement and the others' achievements. Negative interdependence, on the other hand, is when the students know that they are competitively obtaining learning goals, so they have to be better rather than equal (Johnson and Johnson, 2007). However, when there is an award that students are given from their teachers, it is doubtful that this positive interdependence revives. Samir mentioned the award that should be given to such positive competition when some students achieve the best mark, but with the condition that students 'help' each other rather than 'fight' against each other. He said: 'It depends on the type of awards either material like adding points or giving them objects, but students tend to forget, or just something intangible to be temporary or not, and this is what motivates and competition should revive' (Interview with Samir, EFL teacher, January, 2020). Awarding students is necessary during their positive competition because it revives their motivation; however, there are two types of award which Samir gave reference to: tangible or intangible. The former takes the form of a physical object such as a present or extra points while the latter is moral such as compliments and positive feedback and remarks. Sometimes the reward should be intrinsic when the students are not obliged to work for any kind of reward but just for the pleasure and the love they have towards working in groups. In this regard, Meriem said:

The first main objective is to make them work together, it means to make them know the principle of teamwork, this is the first because after being a citizen, they will find themselves into groups, either in work, either in their families, either in societies, so it is a preparation for them to know and understand what

does it mean to be integrated in a group work, this is the first (Interview with Meriem, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

The social skills for Meriem are important to be encouraged for the students as these are going to be transmitted into the social environment including families and workplace, the students need to learn how to act collaboratively. However, though Samir and Meriem are aware of the social skills the students should develop in order to revive their positive interdependence, this seems difficult to achieve in a context where it is guided by the assessment system and the language outcomes that are needed to be achieved.

Though avoiding grading students can lead to positive interaction to achieve collaborative learning, sometimes teachers are obliged to give grades. Fatima claimed: 'normally not any task is done for the sake of grading, ok? However, grading is something that is needed by the administration so it must happen, ok?' (Interview with Fatima, EFL teacher, December, 2019). This indicates that the policy of the university requires grades and marks which may create a conflict between achieving formative and summative assessment, that is between feedback and marks giving. (This will be discussed in depth in section 3).

Sometimes students come to the university demotivated to work in groups. So, it is still important to give an extrinsic reward. In this regard, Selima said:

The majority will say we don't work together, we don't need collaborative learning, I prefer individual work because at the beginning of this semester I asked them this question, for this reason I am answering you now. I asked them what do you prefer?, individual work or group work what do you think if you have something and you will need collaborative learning...They said 'We prefer individual work, I want to work individually' (Interview with Selima, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

This shows that some students do not come with the intrinsic motivation that makes them enjoy collaboration. In this regard, a reward should be needed from the teacher if it is necessary to design collaborative activities to students. No matter what type of reward is given (among those Samir mentioned earlier), it is still necessary for its presence to motivate the students. There are some students who build their own desire to learn and have

enthusiasm, so they are intrinsically motivated, while there are some students who need external reward to be motivated because they are not enthusiastic about their learning (Serin, 2018). In collaborative learning, the teacher should consider the motivation at the level of the individual (psychological) and social processes. In the social context, the motivation is ongoing, constantly shaped and reshaped as the activity unfolds (Jarvela et al., 2010). Thus, it is important if the students are intrinsically motivated to work in groups, that is coming to classroom with enough enthusiasm to work with each other, however; sometimes teachers are obliged to decide about the reward according to the type of motivation for the individual and the group.

In short, there are two types of reward for collaborative learning: grades or feedback. However, sometimes students come to the classroom with less motivation to work in groups, so grading them could be a way to motivate them, in addition to that it is a requirement from the policy, so teachers have no choice.

Hence, in this section; the community concept was explored. Several related concepts were identified such as the diversity of members, positive competition, reward and motivation. Teachers had similar and sometimes different perceptions about these which indicates their understanding of collaborative learning.

To conclude, there are some concepts explored in this chapter: collaborative learning, cooperative learning, group work and learning community. After these being discussed, it is understood that collaborative learning can be understood as a collaborative activity (groupwork) that leads to achieve an individual learning of the student, collaborative learning can be different from a groupwork in the sense that collaborative learning is achieving learning through the collaborative process and product, while group work is an activity to achieve the aim of the activity. Collaborative learning is both the process and the product to achieve both students' interaction and the aim of the activity. Collaboration is different from cooperation in the sense that collaboration is done separately unlike cooperation which involves the help of the members to each other. Collaboration involves the community of students working in a cohesive way, though cohesion was criticised for not achieving learning outcomes because of the difference of students' skills. Also, collaborative learning is a positive interaction which should be evaluated through feedback, however; feedback cannot boost

the students' motivation sometimes to work in groups, so grades should be given to motivate students and also because they are a requirement.

Therefore, after the above discussion on the case of Algerian higher education EFL teachers; I argue that collaborative learning for EFL students can neglect the process of interaction (collaborative behaviours) and can be used as a means that leads to achieve language-related outcomes. This is because the individual is prioritised for assessment. In addition, the students have to be given marks which represent their fair individual efforts.

4.1.2. Collaborative learning is relationally perceived by students

The case of EFL students tend to refer always to the members they should work with inside the group. Therefore, their thinking about collaborative learning depends on the relationship they have built, or they should build during the group work. Therefore, 'friendship' inside the group is an import condition for the successful work of students. Students select the members of the group on purpose because they think they cannot reach a consensus and a shared understanding between the members of the group when others apart from their friends criticise them.

4.1.2.1. Students' relationships and 'criticism': 'Even though he criticises me, that's normal because he is my friend'

Some participant EFL students think that collaborative learning is something positive when the members of the groups are friends or familiar to each other. This was discovered from the interviews of the EFL students as well as from some observations to some EFL classes. EFL students believe that collaborative learning is the practice through which they engage together with the members who should select them carefully. However, this might have created some segregation between students such as losing confidence on each other. Maya who is a Licence third year EFL student said in this regard:

So what is good in group work is depending on the members of the group, how they are comprehensive to each other, so when you choose someone you have to choose them rightly in order to know how to convince them, like me and this

my friend (Pointing to her friend). We know each other very well so if he (the teacher) put me with another one (another student), I will be confused, but since I was with this (her friend), we created such an idea immediately as if we are sisters and we are going sightseeing and we included some of reality for instance she loves active holidays whereas I prefer something calm (Interview with Maya, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019).

In this account, the main and only concern for Maya in order that collaborative work is successful is the way of choosing the members of the group. She considers 'friendship' on the top of the scale for a successful collaborative activity. Therefore, the more familiarity with the members is in the group, the more productive and comprehensive the members are. Maya mentioned the word 'convince them', this indicates that there is more tolerance and acceptance when the members of the group are friends. It also means there is communication going on without any issues or problems from the members. She thinks that if she is put in a group with members she does not know or who simply are not her friends, this will create for her issues in the collaborative work. She by the end gave the example of the group work where she and her best friend had to make a dialogue. So according to her, they both were imaginative and creative and they could understand each other. It is understood from her thinking that she keeps working on collaboration as long as it is on her comfort zone as she is afraid of changing her usual way of working in groups.

Additionally, students are familiar to each other as long as they belong to the same classroom, in this regard; Selim said that:

For this year we changed the class, so I don't know the students. I know my friend since the middle school so I can't just do it without him, we are best friends. I think if others accept us we can work with them why not but I prefer my friend because we can contact, we can understand each other. I mean even though he criticise me, that's normal because he is my friend but others may be no, maybe they won't accept it to be criticised. Maybe they won't accept to give you the whole information but he gives me the full information and I am sure about it. I have never tried to work with someone I don't know before especially while in presentations, may be in the classroom. If the teacher gave us any activity to do

in the classroom, maybe I will work with the students I don't know, but it's just an activity it means it's short but the presentation never (Interview with Selim, third year EFL student, December, 2019).

In this account, Selim seems to have a positive view towards working in groups in case the members are so known for him. Selim mentioned at the beginning that he has changed the classroom for this year, thus all the students were unfamiliar to him. Thus, it was difficult conducting a group activity with someone he does not know. The activity is initiated by the teacher, so students find themselves obliged to do it.

However, for Selim, when the activity is not teacher-initiated, he can still choose with whom to work even if it is a kind of revision of lessons. He said:

By the way, we did not work a lot in groups at the university except when we were revising last year, we were with so many students, but we were understanding and we were comprehensive to each other. Each one was giving all what he/she has. For this year, I don't know (laughing). When the class is new for you, new students it's so difficult to revise together (Interview with Selim, third year EFL student, December, 2019).

In this account, students think that they revise their courses for the exam in groups, thus they think that even in the revision, they need to understand each other. In this regard, Selim thinks that he can understand students in the same class, therefore he can sit and revise with anyone in his classroom. However, he cannot do it without his classmates. It is inferred that sometimes students are afraid when they are put in a challenging situation in groups, therefore, they prefer someone they already know.

Sometimes it is in the same classroom, yet students are still preferring to select members of the group on purpose. In one of the classroom's observations that I did, the teacher of the Study Skills module gave students a collaborative activity to do in the classroom:

... She said this should be written on a paper with the names of the members of the group. She told them to form a group of at least 6 students. Students started

moving around and choosing the members with whom they want to work. The teacher asked a group of three students to split and join other groups because they need more students, yet those students did not accept to split because they said they work better the three of them. (Classroom observation, 1st year Licence students, January, 2020).

This excerpt from a classroom observation shows that students are given the freedom to choose the members of the groups (though it might not be the case for all the EFL teachers). In addition, It seems this is a student-centred classroom because the teacher is giving freedom to students to decide. This observation also shows how students are selective when it comes to a shared work. This is aligned with what Selim thinks about group work and how he finds it easy working with a familiar student rather than someone stranger. In the same line of thought, a Master student (Imen) said: ‘...they are close to me. This is better because you understand their perspective and way of thinking...I like this group because they understand themselves more’ which evidently reveal the selection of students to the group members they should work with.

In short, the case of EFL students prefer someone familiar to work with inside the group. Even though students are sometimes obliged to follow the teacher’s instructions yet they would prefer someone they know in the group. This could be to avoid challenging situations inside the group.

Challenging situations can mean ‘criticism’, this word was used by some EFL participant students. According to Selim: ‘I mean even though he criticise me, that’s normal because he is my friend but others may be no, maybe they won’t accept it to be criticised’. When Selim is using the word ‘criticism’, he is thinking about it negatively. ‘Criticism’ is not a positive aspect that should be present inside the group work between EFL students. This can indicate the nature of the collaborative activities that students are engaged in. The English collaborative tasks may not lead the students to think critically about their tasks. This rather creates conflicts and discomfort for the members of the group. In this regard, Rima said: ‘When you work in group, you will be all the time confused. Maybe someone is not going to share the same idea with you, he will disagree with you, he won’t accept your idea though

you are right you know, and this is going to cause conflicts between members!’ Both Rima and Selim are thinking of ‘criticism’ as a negative aspect that may affect the success of the collaborative work between them.

Critical thinking might be something that is not important in tasks for learning English as a foreign language which is not the case in other subjects or the nature of the collaborative task does not require from students to use their critical thinking towards each other, in this regard; Nur who is a 3rd year EFL student said: ‘we are not doing something that is going to make your brain work. There are answers in the internet, we are not giving something that represent us, that represent me, my answers. We just pick it from the internet and we rewrite them and that’s it! We are not really doing efforts’. Nur is talking about the presentation of lessons that is done in groups. She thinks that during the preparation with other students, she does not feel she is embracing any efforts by giving her critical thinking and her own ideas. This can show the structure of the English language collaborative tasks, and more specifically the group presentations of students. Thus, the purposeful selection of students to their friends can be done to avoid any challenging situations in groups.

However, on the contrary to Nur, Aya thinks that her working in group is rather debatable and she is open to accept others’ ideas:

We were debating, for example why you have chosen this answer, why you didn’t choose this one. Though you have the right to answer but there are suggestions. If you have the right to answer, doesn’t mean there are not other answers since literature is not an exact science. You know you will have different perspectives, different points of views, we were giving suggestions. I accept others’ ideas but if they are right and adequate to my perspective (Interview with Aya, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019).

Evidently, there is the notion of critical discourse in Aya’s voice. Though ‘criticism’ is seen as a negative aspect in some EFL modules (Selim and Nur), according to Aya; students debate and give suggestions, yet this is depending on the module they are dealing with such as literature which can be debatable and criticised. It is inferred that the module itself can raise a critical discourse as it cannot. This confirms the transformative learning theory which explained the social learning as the engagement in critical discourse in the classroom which

lead students to change their beliefs, behaviours and way of thinking, this is often referred to as constructing a social meaning which needs problematising situations (Mezirow, 1981).

To conclude, students' selection and 'criticism' are two concepts which may contrast each other when it comes to group working, however; critical thinking is needed to engage students in different tasks for solving issues (Problem-based learning). So, it is not something negative as the findings show.

All in all, the relationship of the members of the group to each other is one of the parameters that the EFL students think about first before anything when handling a group work. That is, EFL students always think that when the EFL members are friends or familiar to each other, the work would be successful, thus no or less 'criticism' would take place. 'Criticism' for EFL students takes a different shape as it is considered as a negative aspect that should be avoided during the group work. On the contrary, critical thinking is an important condition for the work to be successful.

To conclude, this section discussed the multiple constructions of collaborative learning between teachers and between students. As for teachers, the perceptions were about collaborative learning and other related elements. Collaborative learning is considered as product achieving when the aim of the teacher is not to achieve the process of collaboration and when the assessment does not cover the collaborative skills. Both collaborative and cooperative learning were used to mean separate things. While cooperation involves the interaction of the students through helping each other, yet this is not what should be assessed because students still need to be evaluated on their (individual) product. Also, and more importantly, collaborative learning represents a community with cohesive members who positively compete with each other, however; positive interdependence is doubtful in a context where students should be given an individual mark. These complexities and contradicted elements will be further discussed in the discussion chapter.

As for participant students, in order for collaborative learning is successful, the first thing to think about is their relationship with whom they are going to work. Familiarity of the members to each other will help to decrease the 'criticism' between students. 'Criticism' as it

was used by students depict its negative aspect for them, while critical thinking should be part of learning which will be discussed in the discussion chapter.

Evidently, from the two above subsections, I build the argument that the process of collaboration can be neglected when students are assessed on their individual language related products and when EFL students should be given marks on their tasks. Grading students through marks can explain why critical thinking is avoided by students.

In the next section, I will move to the practical side inside the classroom, that is to the teachers' and students' perceptions towards the practical collaborative activities.

4.2. Section two: The practice of collaborative learning

According to the teachers' and the students' perceptions, collaborative learning includes different types that are going to be described in this section. Most EFL teachers and students referred to collaborative learning as the activities that the teacher assigns for the students. That is why collaborative learning is pedagogically perceived as a formal way of learning. These activities take different shapes and different names according to their constructed perceptions about it. The variation of types which both EFL teachers and students mentioned are about the 'activity' that is collaborative and not the 'learning' that is collaborative which indicates the individual characteristics in these types. Therefore, students can evaluate each other's papers (peer-evaluation) in the writing task which represents one type of collaborative activities for Ibrahim who was the only participant teacher referring to it. When there is much more tolerance and innovation from the teacher, we can then consider another type of collaboration that engages both teacher and the students, that is: teacher-students collaboration which was cited only by one participant teacher Sara whose perception will be discussed in this section. However, though those two types of collaborative activities were the exceptions by only two participant teachers, there is the activity that is the norm by the majority of the case of teachers and students, that is 'the group projects/presentations'. Finally, virtual learning spaces can have some aspects of collaboration between students. Hence, the aim of such virtual collaboration will be discussed in this section.

4.2.1. Peer evaluation in the writing task

One of the participant EFL teachers (Ibrahim) thinks that collaborative learning is about the evaluation of the students of each other. He used the word 'assessment' and 'peer evaluation' during the interview with him. He thinks that collaboration involves the critical abilities of two pairs of students through evaluating each other. That is, he thinks that students at that level (he is targeting 3rd year EFL students) have a critical ability that allows them to evaluate each other's writing. Since Ibrahim is teaching the Academic writing skill, peer evaluation for him would work better for assessing the abilities of each individual student in the writing tasks. This was the applied method for him in teaching the writing skill because he thinks that the teacher should be creative enough in the way of teaching to vary on the methods he is using. He said in this regard that:

Each time I try to vary as I told you. In order not to have the same lecture each time, so I try to provide something new. Of course, assessing others' papers maybe I will do it today and maybe I will repeat again four sessions later, so not the same in order not to have a boring lecture (Interview with Ibrahim, EFL teacher, November, 2019).

Ibrahim thinks that the teacher should vary in the way of teaching inside the classroom in order not to be boring for his students. This reflects the creativity and the innovation of the EFL teacher inside the classroom. In other words, it reflects the profile that the EFL teacher has which Sara (EFL teacher) mentioned (This will be discussed in the next type of collaborative learning). Ibrahim seems to be an updated teacher who accepted to update his teaching practice in the LMD system.

Though this part does not concern the innovation in teaching the foreign language, but rather it explores one type of collaborative learning that is practised in the EFL department, yet it is obvious that the factor of teacher's innovation underlies the use peer-evaluation. Ibrahim further said in this regard that:

We have some activities that can be performed individually and some activities in groups in order to vary our classroom management, well we have to manage in order not to have the same method, to avoid boring sessions and I try to make change in organising it, sometimes individually, sometimes peer work and

sometimes group work, I vary. (Interview with Ibrahim, EFL teacher, November, 2019)

In this account, Ibrahim's aim is clear that he assigns different activities to his students because he wants to vary in the way of teaching. Boring sessions can be sometimes the reason of the teacher's same way of teaching by using the same methods constantly in teaching the module. Therefore, the change should break such routine in teaching which comes out from the teacher's ability to change. Ibrahim thinks he is an updated teacher who could change his own way of teaching due to the LMD system.

Peer evaluation is one of the types of collaborative learning that Ibrahim is following with his EFL students in the writing module. In the interview with Ibrahim, I realised that he kept using the word 'assessment' to refer to the way the students evaluate each other's writing through assessing their grasp of the task. He mentioned the aim why he encourages peer evaluation or 'assessment' of the students in the writing module.

Well, you know in Algeria as we are dealing with third year students in Licence degree, what does it mean? That is next year they will be teachers in secondary school, so the word assessment is very important. *How they will assess others, their pupils, so my aim is to make them aware about how to assess.* That they will be asked to assess in the nearest future all those papers, before that, they never assessed papers. They were assessed, but they never assessed others and I tell them each time 'How you will assess you pupils' papers, they don't know! So I tell them that you have to do this and this and this and by sharing and by exchanging their papers, *they will at the same time reading others' opinions related to the content and see writing problems they have noticed.* It is a kind of a training in order to be future teachers, ok? This is the main purpose (Interview with Ibrahim, November, 2019).

In this account, Ibrahim mentioned two main aims that he wants to achieve when encouraging the peer assessment of the students to each other. He thought that since he is teaching third year students, this means they are nearly to get their diploma and become

teachers. In Algeria, getting a Licence degree can allow the students to teach at the secondary school. This is after a competitive exam and a short-term training (Saidani and Khechni, 2017). Thus, encouraging them to evaluate each other's writing at this level will achieve two aims at the same time: students will be trained as future teachers on how to assess (evaluate) their students, also the evaluation of the students to each other's writing is a kind of achieving the language-related outcomes through which the students can accomplish the task.

4.2.1.1. Peer evaluation as a training

According to Ibrahim, EFL students are future EFL teachers, therefore showing them the way of assessment is his responsibility. He said in this regard:

It is a kind of training to help them assess their pupils' papers. So I tell them you know what to do and when you know what to avoid, you will be good assessors of others' papers. You are not required to do this and that and that (Stylistic errors). (Interview with Ibrahim, EFL teacher, November, 2019).

In this regard, he focuses on two major aims 'assessment as a skill and assessment as a language content learning'. Highlighted excerpts such as 'it is a kind of training', 'assess their pupils' papers', 'be good assessors' indicate the intention of Ibrahim when he encourages students' peer evaluation. That is, Ibrahim has an aim that is more than achieving language outcomes, he is targeting to prepare students as future teachers to get used to the way of assessment which they will need it later.

The students who are supposed to assess should be knowledgeable about the strategies of a particular writing. Since the syllabus is about the academic writing, students should know the exact parameters for evaluating the content. Ibrahim mentioned the different stylistic errors which are related to a particular lesson in the academic writing. Thus, the students should learn what these stylistic errors are in order to see whether their peers have/have not avoided them in their piece of writing. However, there still be the engagement of teacher with the students in the process of evaluation. In my observation to Ibrahim's classroom of peer evaluation of the students to each other's essays, I realised that:

He said: what about linking words she used, we don't use only 'and' but there are other linking words you can use... He stopped another student and told her to criticise her friend's paper objectively by following the strategies of writing without saying this is nice and this is good. He asked another student: Is your friend's paragraph balanced in terms of length and content? Sometimes he was asking the rest of students to comment. (Classroom observation, 3rd year EFL students, December, 2019)

Those instances about the teacher's interference reflect both the teacher's intention to teach students both the content (the strategies of writing) and the skill of assessment. In instances where he was correcting the students' way of giving feedback, he wanted her to avoid biases when giving feedback. His aim is to show them the process of assessment as he said that those EFL students are 'future teachers'. He is aiming also to make the students understand the content of the task by focusing on the points of the academic writing he wants his students to grasp. Therefore, this reveals the varied aims that Ibrahim wants to achieve for his students.

4.2.1.2. Peer evaluation for achieving learning purposes

Ibrahim also appreciates the fact that students evaluate each other because this is a successful method for achieving the learning outcomes of the writing module. He said in this regard:

I tried to give the opportunity to students to interact and to share ideas but at the same time to learn from others' mistakes, this is very important. If the teacher here gives a comment to one of the students, I think that the others will take it into consideration and vice versa. It is an effective way to gain time and to avoid repetitions. (Ibrahim, interview, November, 2019).

In this account, Ibrahim is referring to the aspects of learning and how he can achieve them. He thinks that when the students evaluate each other's writing, they are first interacting and sharing ideas, that is there is more student-student communication inside the

classroom. Second, this way of learning also helps the students to learn from each other's mistakes. It is rather a mutual learning from the feedback the students give each other. Third, this way of learning helps the teacher to gain time and avoid repetition when explaining to a pair of students rather than explain individually. This indicates that his position as a teacher did not change because he is still there to explain. This is because, as it was mentioned before, he is teaching the academic writing which requires students to learn the exact strategies related to writing. Ibrahim further said in this regard:

As I told you, we cannot ignore that we are speaking about developing different writing strategies as I told you we have requirements, we should do this and this, we have what we call a plan., i ask whether or not they have noticed that the first point is the same as the second one, what is the length, etc. Of course, we can ask different questions but at the same time as I told you to give them the opportunity to know what is lacking, what to avoid, what do they have to do if they are asked to be teachers and this is very important! (Interview with Ibrahim, November, 2019).

That is, the teacher should be attentive when teaching the writing task as compared to other tasks. In the writing module, the teacher should have a plan to follow, that is students should go through steps and requirements that the students should accomplish. What is understood from Ibrahim is that there is no flexibility in such module as it deals with the academic writing, therefore; the students should achieve for example the balance between the paragraphs, they should be aware of the length of the paragraph, etc.

All in all, peer evaluation as a type of collaborative learning is specifically encouraged by Ibrahim in teaching the Academic Writing module. Such type of collaboration aims to achieve both the skill of assessment and writing related outcomes (different outcomes); however, what can be broadly understood from Ibrahim's thought is that teaching should be innovative and varied, that is the main factor that either encourage or discourage collaborative learning for EFL students.

4.2.2. Teacher-students collaboration

This type of collaboration involves the participation of both the teacher and the students in achieving the learning purposes. Though in other types of collaborative activities there was no or less interference of the teacher, in teacher-students collaboration, the work is rather divided equally between the teacher and the students. Therefore, the student is playing the role of the teacher who collaborate with his/her teacher to present a lesson. This was the aim of Sara who stated her reason for that:

...because we noticed as ESP teachers that if students feel bored within the lecture they cannot follow you, they will follow you for certain period of time then they fed up. So what we decided to do is... I give them the outline of the first semester and they select the title that interests them and then they do research at home, they prepare their own presentation...and of course they collaborate with me during the session to prepare something in combination with what they have already done' (Interview with Sara, EFL teacher, December, 2010).

This reveals the aim of Sara why she would prefer to encourage this type of collaboration. She realised that some students feel bored at the session which was purely theoretical as she said, so she just decided to make the environment active and motivating inside the classroom by engaging students to work on their projects and then collaborate with their teacher to present it in the classroom.

Therefore, students were feeling bored because of the 'one way' the teacher was using to present the lecture. That is, the lecture was presented only by the teacher without the contribution of the students. Sara explained how her method of delivering the lesson changed through time, she said:

Most of the handouts were too long ...then what makes the course more interesting, i realised when I ask students to present their own parts of the lecture with me, that they give something different, something more accessible

to their classmates because they are thinking as students and I am thinking as a teacher (interview with Sara, EFL teacher, December, 2020).

This reveals how the method of delivering the lecture changed for Sara. So, at first she was delivering her lecture using the handout. She brought the lecture in a long handout and just read through to the students. She then realised how students were demotivated about such way of teaching, therefore, she empowered her students to collaborate with her to bring and present lectures together which raised the level of understanding of the whole class.

Thus, it seems that the teacher-students collaboration raises the motivation of the students and captured their attention. Sara sees collaboration as an aspect of learning and teaching that exists between the teacher and the students. She follows this method on a purpose, that is, according to her, students understand better from each other. They use simplified styles and can understand their lectures when being facilitated by students like them or at the same level.

In an observation that I did in Sara's classroom when she was teaching ESP module to 3rd year EFL students, I realised that:

The teacher appointed three students with their names and she said they are going collaborate with her today in presenting the lesson. The student started explaining part of the lecture of today which was about 'the development of ESP'. After she finished, the teacher completed her presentation by presenting another part of the lesson which was about 'phases of ESP'. The students are listening and sometimes they are interacting with her. After she finished, she asked the students how was your friend's presentation as compared to her (Classroom observation, 3rd year EFL students, January, 2020).

The presentation of the students is organised to be between the teacher and the students according to the time spent in presentation and the content that both students and teachers presented. Such organisation occurred before the session takes place through email contact between the teacher and the students, this is what Sara told me in an informal discussion with her (Informal discussion with Sara, EFL teacher, December, 2019). It is also realised that the student's voice is encouraged by Sara in order to achieve a satisfactory

environment of learning for her students. Hence, this can be achieved when students from the same level explain to each other.

This is a challenging situation for Sara because she is in control of two learning aspects: teaching the curriculum content and the engagement of students through their presentations, however; the specific learning outcome is students' grasp of the knowledge because she keeps checking this, so Sara has a certain flexibility of teaching.

All in all, Sara is giving freedom to students to take actions in the classroom in order to achieve learning purposes which means that Sara is working in a student-centred classroom. She gave up on her position as the controller of the classroom to a collaborator with the students and an advisor. I can understand that Sara is empowering the students to become teachers, yet this is not the case of any EFL teacher as she thinks she personally gained experience to teaching from different sources.

Thus, what can be learnt from this section is that students present and explain the lessons to their classmates through their collaboration with their teacher, this method of teaching is inspired from the flipped learning idea (Bergmann and Sams, 2013; Kostari et al., 2017) which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

However, what can be broadly argued from Ibrahim's and Sara's discussion of their unique perceptions of two different types of collaborative learning is that teachers should be innovative (It is about an 'innovative profile' which Sara mentioned) and their teaching should be varied. Collaborative learning is about changing in the way of teaching so that to engage students in the learning process and capture their motivation and attention.

4.2.3. Group projects and presentations

This category of collaborative activities involves that EFL students accomplish projects together in group which are done outside the classroom setting and then they come to the classroom and elaborate on those projects orally. Thus, this kind of activities have a process and a product, so working on the project is the process of it and presenting such project in the classroom is the product. Some teachers, when they were asked of their perceptions towards collaborative learning, they referred directly to projects. One of them is the head of the EFL department who said in this regard that:

whenever there is a collaboration towards reaching an objective, students collaborate, each one on his side work on a task so that to have a whole, so they collaborate to achieve a goal, so most of the time it is when you give them a homework, like a project realisation. Project realisation is a collaborative activity or a task, so students do collaborate in these kind of learning tasks (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, December, 2019).

I can understand that group projects are initiated by the teacher for achieving a learning goal of the task. Though it is not mentioned by Ahmed whether the achieved learning should be individual or collective, however; he mentioned the individuality of the process. This informs the process that is taken by students, therefore; he might design the appropriate assessment for it.

This feature of individuality that characterises the group project between the students was common also among other teachers. According to Meriem who is an EFL teacher:

We work collaboratively to prepare projects in civilisation and literature which were done outside the classroom. They don't have the occasion even to meet. It means everyone works individually, then one of them will collect all the work and try to join them, but it's not really a collaborative work. Because they need to meet and discuss and speak around a table, so it's 'fabricated' let's say collaborative work (Interview with Meriem, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

It seems that the notion of individuality is common among EFL students even though they are working in groups to realise a project. Meriem encourages group projects for her students in teaching the two modules: Civilisation and Literature. However, she realised that the students do their projects individually and meet after finishing the project to collect all the findings. Meriem seems against this way of doing group projects but she is accepting it because she is certain that this is the way EFL students work which means that she might have to decide about the right assessment for them (this will be discussed in next section).

However, Meriem mentioned that the group projects were done outside the classroom setting, this means without the teacher's supervision and control, that is why she

thinks the work was more individual rather than collaborative. According to Meriem, a group project is the one that is done between students either inside or outside the classroom setting, yet students should work all together at the same time on the project but this is not what the reality indicates for her.

In one hand, this can indicate that there is individuality in group realisation of a project, but in another hand, it could also mean that teachers like Meriem do not trust the students to work in collaboration outside the classroom setting. Meriem was satisfied about the collaborative work inside the classroom:

I asked them to classify types of research...So I made groups and because we got 6 types of research, I got 6 groups and because of time allowance, we have 1 hour and a half to do assignments, I was obliged to divide them into groups which were bit overcrowded, they were made of 7 elements...so I couldn't manage in another way. Each group was given a type of research to work on. We had to reorder the ideas and to collaborate. By the end I was shocked by the results. It was done in a very good way. We arrived to correct the work, we arrived to group the ideas, even to illustrate and it was something that was done in a good way compared to the assignments that were done individually at home (interview with Meriem, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

This is a real situation where students realised their research inside the classroom setting. However, on the contrary to what Meriem said before about the realisation of project outside the classroom setting, here she is more satisfied that the research was done in a good way because it was collaborative between the students. This indicates how Meriem thinks that her presence as a teacher will affect the group work between the students. This is fair enough to indicate why she does not put her trust on the students when they realise their research/projects outside the classroom setting. Features of collaboration are arising for her when she was observing their work in the classroom, thus she confessed that the work was really successful which would not be if it was done individually.

All in all, group project is one of the types of collaborative learning. It is characterised by the individual work of students. However, when the work is monitored, students, then, work collaboratively.

Like Meriem, Amir is also unconfident about the students working outside the classroom setting, he said:

...Though you give the assignment and how to organise the work, how to go in the ESP situation, how to collect data...but when they come to present, you find needless things...they just reword what has been said previously though they do it practically...I can't say that they didn't do well or they didn't go to the ESP situation but it seems that they don't. They just predict because the problem is known (Interview with Amir, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

Amir does not have confidence on the work of the students that is done outside the classroom setting, but he still has his own way of dealing with it. His students have to conduct a research in ESP by the mid of the third year. Therefore, they should go in groups to the department of ESP, collect data and then analyse it. Amir is certain that all the conclusions his students ended up with are just repetitions of previous conducted research. Though Amir does not require the work to be original, but to use their critical thinking in dealing with the findings (Informal discussion with Amir, December, 2019). However, because this is a common point among students, Amir has adapted the way of assessment to fit the actual situation which is marking each student individually.

Henceforth, both Meriem and Amir are lacking in confidence about their students' work inside the group because they are doubtful that the work was done in collaboration. This could be because of the unequal efforts of students in group. Rima who is an EFL student said:

I always prepare everything. They can't do anything without me...So I sent my friend that Pdf. She told me this is so long, we can't memorise it... So what I did is to take every part needs analysis, teaching and learning models, effective factors, methodology. All these, I looked for all their definitions of ESP in google

and got the parts and modified it and put in on my own style. I was so tired...I just gave it to her to memorise it. So I presented, even her, I told her just don't feel shy because I did it. So the teacher liked our presentation and she said she will send it to our classmates. (Interview with Rima, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019)

In this account, Rima is narrating her experience in one of the group project work in the ESP module. Rima is not satisfied about the project when it is in group because she is all the time the one who does everything. Rima is mentioning two parts in group realisation; the work process and the followed presentation. She is finding difficulties in the process because she is continually doing the work for the group, yet for the product; the teacher evaluates according to the presentation of each. However, Rima can be also understood as a dominant student in a situation where the individual efforts are prioritised by the teacher. When students compete rather than collaborate, they would race to be the best. In this regard, Siham who is an EFL teacher said:

In each group there is always one who is maybe leading the group, you will always find someone who is doing the work and someone who is just standing there, so no they don't get the same mark. Though there was a time when I felt that someone was just standing there and depending on his friends and I don't remember what was the remark I had made and his answer was very interesting about the topic he was presenting and said interesting things about the topic, the only problem is that he did not know how to express it and that's why he was keeping silent and keeping shy and seemed passive. So I felt like I was kind harsh on him that is when I thought that he was depending on the others while actually he was not depending in the others, he was just facing troubles in expressing himself (Interview with Siham, EFL teacher, January, 2020).

In this regard, Siham is giving an example of her student whom she was mistaken about by thinking that he is lazy while he was being unable to express himself because of the 'dominance' issue she witnessed during the group work. It is therefore a matter of lack of collaborative skills for the EFL students which led to such kind of issues to emerge. Some

students are marginalised in the group work because they are encountered with a very talkative/dominant student who sometimes do most of the work which should be shared.

Therefore, there seems to be some issues arising in group project realisation between the EFL members which will be discussed in section 4. Teachers and students referred to the issues arising from project realisation. That is students do not work seriously (collaboratively) when being unmonitored and some students are dominant/ dependent on each other. However, the question worth asking here is that when students are assessed individually, what collaborative behaviours students are going to adopt? It is doubtful that students will be collaborative when they know that they are marked individually and when they lack the collaborative skills. This will be thoroughly discussed in the discussion chapter. In the next section, people's perceptions of virtual collaboration will be considered.

4.2.4. Virtual collaboration

This type of collaboration was constructed from the interviews with some EFL students and teachers. This shows that collaboration between the EFL students does have a virtual context but in a limited way. The virtual collaboration that both EFL teachers and students referred to is the participation of the students in a virtual programme so that to have communication with other students from different universities in the world. The aim of such programme is cultural more than academic so that to help students to get to know other's cultures and build a cultural communication. The head of the department said about this kind of collaboration that:

We have the GVC (Global Virtual Classroom) where students collaborate virtually. It's a good thing! Yes, it's an intercultural exchange. It helps students to interact... The benefits could be cultural, educational, social and even political, right? Cultural is that students get in touch with other students from other countries with other cultures, origins, traditions...It is very beneficial to both sides of students...so knowing others may brighten the person... and may help him break the taboos and the stereotypes...Educational, I mean students can learn, can have the chance to get in touch with a native speaker (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, November, 2019).

In this regard, Global virtual classroom at the EFL department seems relevant for the intercultural exchange between students. Therefore, this is another aspect of collaboration for EFL students at the EFL department which seems to serve different purposes.

The collaboration of some EFL students with other students from different parts in the world develop different capacities but most importantly it develops the cultural aspect. Students get to know cultures around the world through such oral/ face to face communication. So the aim is to break the stereotypes and taboos that EFL students may have towards other cultures and vice versa. Therefore, we can say that the aim of such kind of collaboration, though it is not accessible for all EFL students, is to build a cultural understanding and tolerance.

However, this programme at the EFL department may have a limitation as not all students have access to it and also because of the shortage of materials. Sara said in this regard that:

Yes, we have the chance to have it here at the department, but of course we cannot take in charge all the students to a great number, we select them through a test and then the most adapted profile of students for that program will be selected (Interview with Sara, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

This reveals that the contribution of the EFL students in this programme is very competitive, as Sara mentioned, it is according to the most updated profile of the student. This includes their proficiency and fluency in the language. Layla who is a Master student confessed that she did not pass the GVC test because it was highly competitive, she said: 'I had the chance to participate but I did not pass the test and then I wasn't accepted. For sure there is a test, but the test is based on many criteria, fluency, cultural background, communication skills, etc' (Interview with Layla, Master student, December, 2019).

The competitive test is the result of the limited placement. Ahmed said in this regard that: '...as far as I know we have got two sessions: winter and spring session and for each session we have a limited number of students something like 11 students' (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, December, 2019). This indicates why the participation in such programme is highly competitive because of the limited number of students selected per each semester in the year. However, the limitation for that is the lack of the necessary technological materials, as Ahmed perceived that: 'Well, it will be helpful

certainly if we spread it in all over the departments in the university but neither the materials nor the teachers...are sufficient to do it'. It seems that the EFL department witnesses a shortage of technology and professional teachers who are able to run collaborative virtual classrooms, yet this remains a type of virtual collaboration between students which is on its way of development.

Since the data was collected in Algeria before the Covid 19 (between November 2019 and January 2020), I did not have a chance to investigate how collaboration was taking place during the Covid 19 period. However, I could approach the head of the EFL department (Ahmed) and a teacher (Meriem) through email (For their consent, they already confirmed to me that I can send them email for further information) and I asked two students online whom I still have contact with, yet the data was a bit limited to be analysed. Online teaching starts officially in August 2020 in the EFL department in Algeria, this is what Meriem said: 'Online learning became officially accepted under a policy printed and distributed to higher education institutions'.

It seems from few data collected that online collaboration of the students was taking place 'Both collaborative and individual activities were assigned to students in Teams' (Email interview with Ahmed, September, 2020). However, online collaboration seems the same as physical collaboration in terms of the features. Students still do their parts individually and assessed on certain criteria individually. Meriem narrated an activity which was in group:

I set groups of 4, they worked on a topic for presentations on Zoom. Each student talks about a part of the topic with demo. I assessed in this regard word choice pronunciation, sentence meaning. I also assess communication skills including the visuals used. In addition to content (Email interview with Meriem, September, 2020).

This leads to understand two major ideas: that is, students are assessed individually in their online collaboration and teachers are taking other criteria to assess the students. These criteria are achieving the content's objectives and other decided criteria by the teacher. This will be discussed thoroughly in the next section.

Therefore, online collaboration, though it was limited before the pandemic, but it became officially practised when online teaching took place in Algeria. However, the features

of individuality and the assessment system remains the same as face-to-face collaboration. Nevertheless, the limited data on online collaboration would open the door for future research to investigate the three elements of interaction: EFL, online collaborative learning and assessment as according to Cochrane in an online conference (2020): 'Online collaborative learning is a problematic and challenging'.

To conclude, this section discussed the practical side of the perceptions of both teachers and students. That is, in the first section, I discussed the teachers' beliefs and thinking while in this section, I discussed a more practical feature of collaboration which represents the activities. Thus, the construction of perceptions, in this section, came from the teachers' and students' experiences in the classroom setting. In this regard, two main collaborative activities that represented the novelty in the way of teaching and learning because it was cited by two main participant teachers, these are: the peer evaluation in the writing task and the teacher-students collaboration. The use of these two types of collaboration was related to the teacher's use of new approach to teaching and learning. So, in this study, the teacher's innovation is apparent through the two types of collaboration: peer-evaluation and teacher-students collaboration. Moreover, group projects are a type of collaborative learning, but what can be learned from it is the factors that emerged including the individuality of the work and the dominance issue between students which will be discussed in the discussion chapter. Therefore, what can be argued from this section is that collaborative learning is affected by the teacher's approach of teaching. Moreover, the students lack the collaborative behaviours when issues such as dominance and dependency are prominent, however; this could be the result of the assessment when the 'I' rather than the 'we' is prioritised.

4.3. Conclusion

In this analysis chapter, two main sections were analysed, these include: multiple constructions of collaborative learning according to the teachers' and students' perceptions and the practice of collaborative learning.

In the first section, it is recognised that there is conflicting understanding of collaborative learning by teachers and students. Collaborative learning can be pedagogically perceived by teachers, therefore; it is a means leading to achieve a language related outcome.

Also, the co-construction of collaborative learning between me and the students reveal that collaborative learning is relationally perceived, thus; the extent to which students know each other can either increase or decrease the 'criticism' in group which is regarded as a negative learning aspect. While 'criticism' is different from critical thinking which is an integral part of collaboration.

In the second section, different activities of collaboration were explored, these include: the peer-evaluation of students and the teacher-students collaboration. These two types of collaboration represent the teacher's innovation and way of varying in the teaching methods. Another type includes the group projects which is characterised by the individual working of the members and the control and monitoring by the teacher sometimes. Virtual collaboration does appear as a type to collaboration due to the pandemic. Though it was not fully investigated because of the difficulty to do follow-up interviews, but few data could show that this has the same characteristics as face to face collaboration, meaning that students are still assessed the same as they were in face to face collaboration. It is, however; advised for further research to deepen their understanding of it from both teachers' and students' perceptions.

In sum, the major finding that can be understood from this study is the conflicting understanding of collaborative learning. This finding will be further discussed in the next chapter. I argue, in this thesis, that the process of EFL collaborative learning is neglected (Collaborative learning is a means leading to achieve language-related outcomes) because of the unsystematic way of assessment and pedagogy (which will be discussed in chapter 5).

Chapter 5: The contextual influences of collaborative learning: Assessment strategy, pedagogy and policy.

5. Introduction

This chapter analyses and discusses the contextual influences of EFL collaborative learning. This chapter is composed of two sections. The first section explores the assessment policy of collaborative learning and the second section is about the contextual factors including the teacher's pedagogy and policy. The assessment policy is analysed separately from other factors because it is not just a factor but it is explored as a strategy that is unsystematically linked to collaborative learning.

The first section explores how both collaborative learning and assessment interact in EFL learning. Thus, this interaction is understood through: 'who is being assessed?', 'what is being assessed?' and 'how is it assessed?'. As 'assessment is the dark side in collaborative learning', this section discusses the complexity that is raised in the interaction between collaborative learning and assessment. Such interaction is significant for any higher education teacher to think of when encouraging collaborative learning. The knowledge in this section was unexpected which leads to the emergence of a new aspect of this research. Thus, this is an answer to the third research question.

The second section represents the factors that can impact the EFL students' collaboration. These contextual factors are understood as the EFL module, the pedagogy and the policy of higher education. These contextual factors inform the finding in chapter 4, that is the teachers' and students' understanding of collaborative learning which is shaped by certain contextual and cultural factors. The way teachers think of their choice of the pedagogic approach can explain how collaborative learning is process/product achieving which is an answer to the fourth research question.

5.1. Section one: The unsystematic interaction between assessment and collaborative learning

This section describes the assessment that EFL teachers are designing for their students to assess their achievements in collaborative learning. The interaction between

assessment and collaborative learning was understood as ‘who is being assessed?’, ‘what is being assessed?’ and ‘how is it assessed?’. The who, the what and the how are considered as the pillars for EFL collaborative learning assessment which EFL higher education teachers should consider before designing assessment and before thinking of collaborative learning as a learning method for their students. The interaction between assessment and EFL collaborative learning is mitigated by the teacher’s flexibility and the higher education system in Algeria, therefore; in other contexts the factors could be different.

5.1.1. Who is being assessed?

It is often confusing whether group work should be assessed individually or should be considered as a shared achievement. Most of the case of EFL teachers I interviewed agreed that they have to know the achievement of the individual student in order to be fair in their assessment. According to Ahmed: ‘everyone takes his part. They present the whole thing in the group during the session of 1 h and a half. Questions were asked from students and evaluation at the end’ (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, December, 2019). In this regard, Ahmed is talking about group research which is prepared outside the classroom setting and presented in the classroom. Ahmed requires from the students to divide the work between them, this is because everyone is going to discuss his part with the students and the teacher is going to evaluate them individually. In my observation in Master students’ classroom, I realised that:

Four male students are going to present...They are presenting their lesson on social collectivity theory. One student started presenting and he is drawing on the blackboard to explain. The teacher is sitting on the back of the class with his notebook and pen on his hand. He is writing from time to time. The teacher asks questions to clarify. The second student started explaining, he played a video and then he started explaining it. The teacher keeps focusing on the presenter and noting down... The teacher is asking questions and explaining, he is at the same time asking the rest of students questions (Observation in EFL Master students’ classroom, January, 2020).

In this account, Master students had to present a project in groups which was prepared before the class takes place. It is a group work but presented individually. This is requirement of the teacher who kept questioning each student about their individual presentation. The way the teacher was continuously asking questions and checking whether the other students have understood what their peers presented indicates that the teacher wants (1) to test the group (each individual student), also (2) he aims to achieve learning for the other students as the presented lesson was part of the syllabus and they will be examined about it during the final exam. The teacher is adopting the interventionist approach to do two different works at once (assessing and explaining). The teacher seems to scaffold the knowledge of the other students who have to learn from the presentation as well. According to Aslam et al (2018), The scaffold teaching methods can include several activities as it can refer to the discussion that is raised in the classroom between the teacher and the students through open ended questions and answers. This reveals the teacher's flexibility on doing two tasks at once.

So, it was found from the above example that students are given an individual mark in the group, however; sometimes the students are given two marks, one for the individual achievement and the other one is for the shared work. Ahmed said in this regard that: '...they will do by the end of the semester a shared report. I'll read it and see the information on it and how it is organised, whether it is referenced or not. Then they will have a shared mark. That mark will be added to the individual mark and then they will have the final mark'. In this regard, it is both the individual and the group who are assessed. In the same line of thought, Anes believes that both the individual and the group should be evaluated, he said:

They have to write a report, a written version and with the presentation. For the written version, you can say that all of them will have the same mark. Two marks, the first one is for the written version and the second one is for the presentation, so here the difference. If we have for example a group of four students, they present the four of them. It means we give them tips to present, say that normally each one should speak about a part, the part should be in a chronological development, but in the presentation you can see the level in terms of pronunciation, in terms of vocabulary used, in terms of the language

fluency, so we have what we call the grade of evaluation, we focus on pronunciation, focus on vocabulary, focus on the grammar and spelling mistakes, eye contact, the audience interaction, questions-answering, so many criteria (Interview with Anes, December, 2019).

In this account, Anes thinks that a group of research is composed of two parts: the written part that is done outside the classroom setting and the presentation part that is inside the classroom with the teacher and the students. Therefore, the students should be assessed on this research twice. According to Anes, different criteria are set by him in order to assess the presentation (This will be discussed further in the sub-section of what is being assessed?).

Although Anes took into consideration the group and the individual, sometimes the assessment is purely about the individual's efforts because of some reasons which Amir mentioned: '...they don't have the same mark of course though it was a shared work...It means the dominance of one or two members because you find them always speaking, knowing what they were dealing with, the others no, it means they don't have the same mark' (Interview with Amir, EFL teacher, December, 2019). In this regard, students should not be assessed equally because some members are 'dominant' in the group and they do most of the work in the group. Hence, the unequal work of the students inside the group led Amir to follow an individual assessment. However, though it seems that Amir wants to achieve a fair assessment, he is not aware about the students' thinking. Evidently, the findings show that students think of their relationship and selection in the group to avoid engaging in any problematising situations.

Henceforth, 'who is being assessed?' reflects the teacher's flexibility on whom to assess. However, it is argued that an individual assessment to the product is achieved for giving a fair assessment.

However, if students are fairly assessed individually, it is doubtful that collaborative behaviours will revive between students. Aya who is a 3rd year EFL student told me that:

I had the best mark in my group since she (Teacher) asked me other questions and I answered correctly. However, there are some who just brought the answers and apply it on the lecture but when she asked them, they are blocked!... This is what the teacher wants from the student not to be dependent

on papers, not just taking from the internet and then going to the classroom and recite it (Interview with Aya, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019).

Aya thinks that she is the most deserving student for the best mark in the group, this is because she could answer all the teacher's questions during her presentation while the other students could not. Aya is acknowledging her efforts during the preparation for the work, that is why she thinks she deserves the best mark, however; it seems that this is a perspective from a high achieving student. Though Aya is showing her incredible efforts inside the group work, she did not mention anything about the 'collaboration' that is happening inside the group or in other words, the collaborative skills. She is in a competitive situation, the reason that made her 'dominant' inside the group.

Some teachers take the differences between students in the group into consideration when evaluating them. In this regard, Layla who is an EFL student claimed:

She (the teacher) assess us individually, I mean each one on his oral defence. She doesn't judge us as a group. Sometimes some students are stressful when presenting, the others feel comfortable, some of them are self-confident enough so, she took all of that into consideration. She gave the mark when we were presenting (Interview with Layla, EFL Master student, December, 2019).

In this account, Layla thinks that there are some differences among students such as lack of confidence, so It would be important if the teacher considers these factors when evaluating the students. Thus, the dominance of students explains why there are some less confident students in the group. Having different students inside the group may drive some students to embrace their strong opinions or to be marginalised and accept the strong opinions. Siham who is an EFL teacher told me how her shy students kept shy even when she tried to make them work with each other. She said: 'Sometimes it's the other way round, they are too shy to speak to each other, so even if I put them into groups they are silent and I tell them you can speak to each other in Arabic just forget that I am here' (Interview with Siham, EFL teacher, December, 2019). Therefore, these inequalities can lead to have different work outcomes of the students inside the group which teachers have to be aware of before assessing the individual student.

In sum, it is argued that individual assessment, though it gives the teacher a fair assessment for each individual student, it can lead to issues inside the group such as 'having students dominating others', in other words; because of the unequal efforts of the students, students can compete rather than collaborate for being the best.

Some teachers think that students have to be monitored to observe their fair work in the group. According to Meriem:

Assessment is let's say the dark point in collaborative learning. When I give them the work to be done in class, I won't assess the student one by one. I assess the group because they will give one answer. I divide the board like I did last time into 4 or 5 parts depending on the number of the groups, then I ask the group to choose one to present and come and write the answer on the blackboard. But if it's a kind of a project work that should be done outside, here it's not only the written form. I give them the work, time to be written and time to come and present. I will tell them in advance that I will evaluate everyone individually but the work should be done collaboratively (Interview with Meriem, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

Meriem mentioned that both the group and the individual are the targets for her assessment, yet this depends on the level of her control to the groups. So, when students are monitored, she assesses the group and a shared mark is given. This is because she thinks that students will embrace equal efforts. However, when students are outside the classroom setting for project-realisation, thus an individual and a shared mark would be fair.

Henceforth, it is about the level of control that the teacher has on students which then indicates whether an individual or a shared mark should be given.

In contrast to Meriem, Selima thinks that students should be assessed individually. In my observation to her classroom, I realised that Selima was fully monitoring her students during their groupwork, so when she was asked after the observation in an informal discussion about the way of assessment, she said: 'I assess them individually. It is part of the TD mark, so when I go home, I will add to each student extra half a point or a point depending

on the way how they presented, whether they used expressions about memory and their creativity. So I mark each student depending on how they presented’.

In this account, it seems that even though students are being monitored, the teacher has to evaluate them individually because teachers are obliged to give an individual mark. The TD mark represents the mark of the individual student in the practice.

So, the question worth asking is what is the purpose of collaborative learning since students are assessed individually? In this regard, Ahmed who is the head of the EFL department said when he was asked about collaborative learning in relation to the system of the university: ‘Of course we all want our students to be collaborative so that to shift this competency outside the university and outside the school, but this is not the aim of the university, this is my aim as a teacher. It is the approach with which I believe learning should happen’. So, I then asked him why some of the teachers design collaborative activities, he replied:

To develop on students that way of collaboration, also to work on things collaboratively. If I give an individual work to all these students, I require two years to finish the programme! It saves time that’s it. Listen to me, in higher education, we don’t have a precise curriculum. In secondary education, in middle school and in primary school, there is a curriculum, but in the university; we have the objectives, we have the content of the modules, etc. At the university we’ve got the system, which is the LMD system and in the LMD system, you should try all the ways of teaching, alright; teacher fronted lectures, collaborative works, individual works, pair works. All these types of teaching styles normally are supposed to be achieved at the university (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, January, 2020).

It is understood that there is freedom of the teacher in higher education as far as the pedagogy is concerned. By using the word curriculum, Ahmed meant the methods of teaching. Thus, the teacher can develop the collaborative skills of the students through the collaborative activities designed but this remains the teacher’s choice, while the university does not aim to achieve those skills.

To sum up, though a group assessment is achieved by Meriem when the students are fully monitored by their teachers, an individual assessment is prioritised for a fair assessment to each individual EFL student. However, when the I's rather than the We's efforts are evaluated through marks, students can race to be the best rather than be one entity.

5.1.2. What is being assessed?

The criteria for assessing students vary from one teacher to another depending on the aim of the EFL lesson and the aim of the EFL module as a whole. The criteria for assessing group activities which both teachers and students mentioned do not show any parameters for collaborative skills or in other words the process, it rather considers the product. The criteria of assessment achieve language related outcomes but there are other criteria set by every individual teacher so that to demarcate the individual student in the group. According to Sara who is an EFL teacher when she was asked about the parameters that she takes into consideration when evaluating the group work of the students, she said:

Most of the time in oral production module I do assess different aspects: fluency, grammar mistakes, the spelling, punctuation also and of course you have intonations when it comes speaking, pronunciation. So, there are different parameters depends on the activity. Either for speaking or listening so things are going to be different.... I inform them before the activities starting the assessment and the evaluation you'll be evaluated individually even if it is a group work, just to have them engaged more within the conversation ... I mark *the content* but I take into consideration also *those parameters* (Interview with Sara, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

In this regard, Sara is listing the different criteria she takes into consideration when evaluating the individual student in the group, but these criteria depend on the activity whether it is for achieving the listening or the speaking skills of the language. What is typical about those parameters is that they are applied on the individual student and not the whole group. So in this regard, Sara would evaluate the student in an Oral Production activity according to how fluent he is, whether he used grammar mistakes and how he spells the

letters and the words. These parameters are in addition to the content of the activity. Sara meant that these criteria are separate from the content (The syllabus).

In the same line of thought, Ahmed thinks that each individual student should be evaluated according to the content he is presenting and also according to some parameters he follows. Our discussion went as follows:

Ahmed: Every student is evaluated on some criteria.

Me: Can you tell me what are these criteria?

Ahmed: Yes, mainly how he presents, how he stands in front of his friends, the way he explains. Of course they are not going to have the same mark in terms of fluency, they are not going to have the same mark in the presentation... Of course, we cannot give them a single mark for the whole group... First, the teacher already knows that the work has been done individually outside the classroom setting, further, the teacher takes into consideration the way they have decided to present through using technological devices, using the blackboard (Interview with Ahmed, head of the EFL department, December, 2019).

Ahmed has got certain criteria through which he evaluates his students individually. That is, he should take into consideration the fluency of each student in the language and the way the students decided to present, whether through using technological devices or the blackboard. So, these parameters are beyond the knowledge of the students towards the content they are presenting which is the desired achieved outcome. In my observation to Ahmed's classroom, I realised that:

Four male students started presenting. One student started presenting his part... He is drawing on the blackboard to explain...Another student started presenting different figures in the social development...He keeps looking at his paper. The teacher is asking this student many questions...The third student brought a video about the development of the social theory and he is explaining (Observation to Master students classroom in the module of Educational Psychology, January, 2020).

Based on this observation, there are subtle differences between the members in the way they were presenting their lessons. These differences represent the parameters for Ahmed upon which his students were evaluated. The desired outcome was the content (The knowledge about social development theory), so some students seem in command of what they are presenting as knowledge according to the way they were answering the students' and the teacher's questions about this lesson. Also, differences are in the way of presentation that is; some students preferred to read from the paper while presenting, however; others preferred to write on the blackboard and some of them preferred to use videos during their presentations. However, these presentation skills are not among the language outcomes of that module of Educational Psychology (See appendix 7: Educational Psychology module's learning outcomes). This indicates that EFL teachers are flexible when setting the criteria of assessment in relation to the learning outcomes so that to teach students relevant aspects in addition to the language-related outcomes. This will be discussed in next chapter.

It is concluded and argued that though EFL teachers are flexible in setting criteria for assessing the collaborative activities of the students, that is EFL students are assessed in other criteria which do not necessarily meet the language-related outcomes, teachers are still not clear why to put students in groups while those criteria do not reflect the process of their collaboration but rather their individual product.

It is significant to understand why there is a non-outcome-based collaboration of EFL students, that is to understand the purpose of designing collaborative activities. In this regard, Amir mentioned different criteria upon which his students are evaluated, so I then asked him about his aim of achieving collaboration. Our discussion went as follows:

Amir: Each one should speak about a part, the part should be in a chronological development... but...we focus on pronunciation...on vocabulary...on the grammar and spelling mistakes, eye contact, the audience interaction, questions-answering...and of course, they have to know about what they are dealing with (content).

Me: What is your aim when you gave this practical collaborative task?

Amir: The aim as I said to ensure the notion of learner-centred approach (Interview with Amir, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

Amir is talking about the differences between students during their presentations which he cannot just ignore them while grading his students. According to Amir, what he should remind his students of is the division of parts and the chronological organisation of ideas, but the way of the presentation remains student' specificity. Therefore, some students are better in explanation than others, some students whose presentations maybe full of grammar mistakes and pronunciation problems may affect their way of presenting, some other students may attract the audience through their questions and through the eye contact they keep with the teacher and the students, yet 'of course they have to know about what they are dealing with', it means the knowledge towards the content.

The curriculum of ESP which Amir is in charge of teaching includes several objectives which students should achieve in the ESP module (See appendix 7: ESP module's learning outcomes), however; the criteria mentioned above by Amir are not part of the language-related outcomes which indicates that Amir is flexible about meeting the learning objectives. In addition, the list of content and objectives does not show any reference to collaborative skills or in other words the process of collaboration. However, Amir thinks that collaborative activities should be designed so that to achieve the learner-centred approach.

It is inferred that the link between the collaborative activity, the assessment and the EFL learning outcomes is not systematic as EFL teachers are flexible about their teaching. In addition, the approach of the teacher can be a factor that affects collaborative learning.

Participant students seem aware that their teachers take different parameters for assessment, however; some parameters are beyond the content of the curriculum. Selim who is a 3rd year EFL student said: 'In other groups like Oral Production, they assess the pronunciation, it means they evaluate us on our pronunciation, vocabulary and the content of the presentation' (Interview with Selim, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019). Similarly, Aya mentioned that:

...this group is going to talk about the theme, the characters, the plot...The one who has chosen the plot is going to speak, so they should know about it. She also evaluates the way of speaking, if you are confident of what you are saying, if you are sure, she will know from your way of speaking that you have looked for the answer, that you have read the story, that what she evaluates. (Interview with Aya, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019).

In both Selim's and Aya's perceptions, teachers take into consideration the way the students pronounce the words and their competence in the fluency, the vocabulary used to deliver the content and the confidence of the students when speaking, in addition to that; the teachers check the students' understanding through questions asked to them. Henceforth, the criteria for assessment remain the teacher's choice and selection in order to judge about the individual student, however; they reveal the unsystematic way of linking the collaborative activity to the learning outcomes.

To recapitulate, the assessment of the students in the group can be individual which is done through some criteria that the teacher sets and which are applied to every individual student in the group. These parameters reflect the content, it means the achievement of each individual student in the content, so this is evaluated through the teacher-students' questions and answers, students-students questions and answers and the way of explanation. However, other times the parameters are beyond the content, that is; teachers take into consideration other criteria which can include the fluency and accuracy during presentations, the way of presentation through the eye contact, the way of explanation, the use of other techniques when presenting, the vocabulary used, confidence when speaking. So, all these lead the teacher to evaluate the student individually in the group. However; such criteria do not seem to be set in a systematic way. According to Forslund Frykedal and Hammar Chiriak (2017), it is often confused for teachers whether to assess the knowledge content or the skills. Therefore, reflecting on the 'what' question would help EFL teachers to decide beforehand whether they are going to assess theoretical knowledge, collaborative abilities or combination of the alternatives.

It is therefore argued that there is an unsystematic way of linking the collaborative activity to the assessment and the learning outcomes. This can reflect the EFL teacher's flexibility in teaching in higher education through using their chosen approach, 'you should try all the ways of teaching...teacher fronted lectures, collaborative works, individual works, pair works' (Ahmed). The 'who' and the 'what' are key elements of the interaction between collaborative learning and assessment which are influenced by the EFL teacher's flexibility. However, there is another complementary part of the interaction of the 'who', the 'what' and that is the 'how'.

5.1.3. How is it assessed?

It is significant to consider the different and contradicted views of EFL teachers towards assessment and how they believe assessment should be in general. According to Ahmed:

They will have a shared mark. That mark will be added to the individual mark and then they will have the final mark. Actually, this module which is Educational Psychology, they have only one mark which is the final mark. You choose either to do a summative assessment, an exam...or a continuous evaluation or whatever way you do it. I chose to do it in this way, group presentations (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, December, 2019).

In this account, it seems that group work to students has to do with how the teacher thinks assessment is. Since Ahmed intends to follow a continuous assessment rather than a summative assessment (Final term exam), he then encouraged students to present the lecture in groups. A collection of the assessment of different activities would result in giving the final mark, this is what he referred to 'continuous evaluation'. He said further about continuous assessment that: '...group presentation, plus the report plus the quiz. All these marks together which is continuous evaluation'. Thus, in following a continuous assessment, the teacher should design a collection of activities upon which the students are going to be graded. Collaborative activities can be assessed formatively when the mark is added to other marks to have the final mark, however; Ahmed mentioned that the teacher has freedom in choosing the type of assessment.

Though Ahmed is encouraging continuous evaluation, but he still gives marks. Whereas Anes thinks that in continuous evaluation; the teacher should give feedback rather than marks, he claimed:

I evaluate them for the purpose of learning, it is not summative but it is formative. I give them feedback; this is right, this wrong, we do it like that, this is the most important. I see the mistakes, I interpret the mistakes and give them feedbacks, they learn from the feedbacks...Assessment is not only giving a mark from 1 to 20 or giving a grade from A, B, C, D. Saying good is an assessment. It can be positive feedback, it can be negative feedback, it can be at the same time positive and negative (Interview with Anes, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

In this account, Anes is following a formative assessment to his students. His explanation was that he does not give marks all the time to students because he wants them to learn, that is the first aim is achieving learning and not giving marks. The first objective of formative assessment is achieving learning in students without necessarily giving marks which is a way of assessment as well. According to Wingate (2010), the formative assessment has an enormous effect on the progress of students' writing at the university because it keeps students moving on their process without being worried of achieving marks.

However, though Anes thinks that not every activity should be marked, sometimes some participant teachers are obliged to give grades, as Salima who is an EFL teacher said that:

For the second semester, they have group presentations, it's out of 10 as the first part of TD mark, that's all and the second part we have participations, we have behaviours, we have disciplines, we have also maybe a short test out of 5 or 4 points, that's all. All this will include in one mark which is the final mark which is TD mark (Interview with Selima, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

The TD mark is the mark of the continuous activities that the students are engaged in during their learning process. Therefore, some activities should be assessed in order that the student is given the mark of the TD. The TD is an abbreviation used by the EFL teachers to

refer to the mark of the collection of activities the students are engaged in during the semester. It stands for Travaux dirigés which are French words that mean 'Directed work'. This means that any activity for students should be evaluated. Sara who is an EFL teacher explained the 'TD' further:

So that's why in the practical course as we call them TD courses, the teacher in that course can use collaborative teamwork... For some modules you have 50% for the TD mark and 50% for the exam, so teachers know that they need to have two marks, some others know that they have 100% concerning the module. This means they need to give just one mark at the end, even if they test their students the whole semester, at the end of the semester, the administration staff need to have only one mark (Interview with Sara, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

Thus, the TD mark is a mark of the collection of activities given to students during their learning. This TD mark exists in some modules while other modules have just the mark of the final term exam. Sara referred to those activities as 'practical', this means that they refer to modules which have the students' engagement. Thus, if a module requires a TD mark, each activity the teacher gives to students should be marked and evaluated. To illustrate this with what Salima said before, she has to give the students the mark of the group presentations that is out of 10, this mark in addition to other marks will be the mark of the TD in the Oral Production modules.

To sum up, though the previous elements of the interaction including the 'who' and the 'what' were influenced by the flexibility of the teacher, this element 'how' rather reflects the systematic way of how it is processed. That is, though teachers were independent thinkers (Magolda, 2002) in the first and second elements, in this element they are more less dependent on the system of marking. It is argued that there is a misunderstanding of formative assessment because of the obligation of marking students on their collaborative activities.

Therefore, this section discussed the three elements of the interaction of assessment with collaborative learning. These elements include the 'who', the 'what' and the 'how'. This interaction is influenced by the unsystematic way of teaching including the flexibility of the

teacher on who to assess and what to assess, as well as the systematic way of marking the students' efforts in collaboration. It is concluded and argued from this section that there is an unsystematic way of assessing collaborative learning for EFL students. This can explain the first and second sections which revealed that the process is neglected by teachers because assessment is targeted for language related outcomes (Section1) and there are captured issues such as the dominance between students (Section 2).

It was understood from the three sections that there were certain factors that seem to affect collaborative learning among which is the context (such as the TD mark and the approach of the teacher), thus; the next section will reveal these contextual factors.

5.2. Section two: Factors affecting collaborative learning

This section discusses the underpinning factors that influence the use of collaborative learning for EFL students. So, collaborative learning, according to the EFL teachers' perceptions, is module specific. According to higher education EFL teachers, the use of collaborative learning is according to the structure and content of modules, and in particular the difference between content and skill modules, therefore; the module as a factor will be dealt with in this section. However, it is not only about the syllabus that the students deal with which affect the existence of collaboration between the students, sometimes it is rather about the teacher's choice. The way the EFL teachers teach their modules may differ according to their 'profile' and to how much they are updated in the current system. Therefore, there are some teachers' related factors which will be thoroughly considered in this section. Regardless how much the teacher is innovative and is open to students' collaboration, there still be some factors related to the students, however; these factors are resulted from the teacher's own way of teaching which will be discussed in this section.

5.2.1. The module

Any type of module would tell whether they have collaborative activities or not. In this regard, Fatima who is an EFL teacher identified modules as practical and theoretical. So, she believes that collaborative activities would be encouraged by the EFL teacher whenever the

module concerns teaching the language skills, in this regard she identified two types of modules which are skills and content modules.

Content module such as civilisation, linguistics, Literature, because they teach content, not skills...unlike skills modules like writing, speaking, reading, etc, these teach language skills. For these content modules, collaborative learning may be very helpful in linguistics when they come to learn a concept, probably for one student may report the definition of the concept in his own words which are more understandable by the other students than the teachers' words so here collaborative learning becomes very interesting. So this is why I tell you that the extent to which collaborative learning happens depends on the course itself. (Interview with Fatima, EFL teacher, Interview, November, 2020).

In this account, two types of modules are identified by Fatima: skills and content modules. She thinks that content modules are modules which teach students subjects through the English language as a medium such as literature and Civilisation. On the other hand, a skill module is a module which teaches language skills like speaking, writing and reading, therefore; the syllabus of these modules would include lessons about the language skills. If we want to measure the extent to which collaborative activities take place in each of the modules, students would collaborate more in content modules as compared to skills modules. Fatima thinks that content modules are difficult for students to understand the content, therefore; it is significant for her if students are grouped together in these modules and explain to each other. Thus, students can achieve learning which might be difficult to be achieved by the teacher.

Sara also agreed on this point by arguing that 'when I ask students to do their own research and to present their own parts of the lecture, I realised that they give something different, something more accessible to their classmates' (Interview with Sara, EFL teacher, 2019). In this regard, Sara is explaining how the students can be teachers to their classmates in the ESP module (which is a content module) because they use words that every student at their level can understand. Therefore, it seems that in content modules, collaboration of students would be more helpful when explaining subjects to each other because of the difficulty of their contents.

Skills modules, on the other hand, according to Fatima should not have any collaborative activities.

Most of the activities are individual because we need that everyone self-possesses his achievement and his competence to do the something. It depends on the specificity of each course. In writing, we should know the writing skills of each student, each student can perform in a particular situation. So, it is not really a group work that is going to promote the skill (Interview with Fatima, EFL teacher, December, 2019).

In this account, Fatima is referring to the Academic Writing module where the students should achieve an individual learning. She should know the competencies of each student in the skill so that to assess them and to design the following activities accordingly. She said: ‘...in writing, we need to know the weaknesses of each, the achievement of each. This is the only way to help writers develop their writing’. However, this is not the case for all the participant EFL teachers. On the contrary, EFL students can still develop their writing skills through collaboration. It was found that writing in groups can develop the students’ motivation and the students’ collaborative skills (Khodabakhshzadeh and Samadi, 2017). So, students can still work in collaboration in the writing skill when the teacher aims to develop both the individual writing skill and the collaborative skills of the students.

On the contrary to Fatima, Ahmed thinks that content modules should be taught in a teacher-centred classroom with less students’ interaction while students can still collaborate in skills modules. He said in this regard:

If you teach writing which is a skill module, they collaborate to write something, but in content modules, most of the time i find myself delivering the lecture, explaining, demonstrating...and retrieving information from students. I encourage collaboration in writing, oral expression, work debate, in study skills where students can work together about something...In Didactics (Content module) we cannot do it, i ask questions and answers (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, December, 2019).

Unlike Fatima, Ahmed thinks that students can collaborate in different skills modules which he listed among which is the Academic Writing module. Ahmed gave a teaching strategy which he follows and which reflects the way he is teaching in content modules, he said: 'i find myself delivering the lecture, explaining, demonstrating... I ask questions and answers'. The continuous use of 'I' by Ahmed informs that he takes actions in the classroom with students and he imposes himself as a teacher to a certain extent. He is following a teacher-centred classroom in teaching content modules. According to McKay and Tom (1999), in a teacher-centred classroom, students have less chance to collaborate this is because this pedagogical way hinders the students' talk in the classroom.

Henceforth, identifying modules as content and skills can be an indicator to collaborative learning, however; there seems to be contradicted perceptions about which EFL module can engage students. It is also understood there is another alternative categorisation of modules which is practical and theoretical modules. This category is also viewed as modules which teach just theory and modules which engage the students in different activities.

In an informal discussion with participants, i met four EFL teachers who were advising me to observe practical modules rather than theoretical modules... They said that a practical module is a module which teaches the skills to students such as the Oral Production module and the Study Skills module... Students practise different activities...Oral Production module is the most module where EFL students work collaboratively because the general aim of this module is to develop the oral and communicative skills among students and this can be done only through making students talk with each other. Activities like peer work, group work, role plays. However, they said about theoretical modules that the teacher teaches just theory like Linguistics and Sociolinguistics. There is less practice of the students but the teacher delivers the different theoretical lectures (Excerpt from fieldwork diary, November, 2019).

In this account, practical modules include the skills that the EFL students acquire at the university, therefore I can say that any skill module is considered as a practical module by

the participant teachers. On the other hand, content modules are modules which teach theoretical subjects such as Linguistics and Didactics. In the same line of thought with what Ahmed mentioned earlier that he uses his strategy in teaching content modules which is a teacher-centred teaching strategy, this informal discussion reveals that the teacher is prominent in the classroom. Moreover, according to these teachers, language skill modules are modules where different skills are developed for the student including Oral Production, Written Expression and Study Skills modules. In Oral Production module; most of the activities are done in pairs or groups between students, this reveals the need for group work in oral and communicative tasks. However, as for the Academic writing module, though Fatima earlier thought that: 'In writing, that is we should know the writing skills of each student', these teachers think that there are collaborative activities in the Academic Writing module. Thus, though this may raise contradiction of thoughts but at the same time it shows the multiple constructions that are derived from understanding the EFL teachers' perceptions towards the modules they teach. The constructivist approach reveals that the interaction of people with their own world can be affected by their experiences and the culture that surrounds them, hence multiple realities would result out of this interaction (Creswell, 2013). The identification of the modules as theoretical and practical by the four EFL teachers came from their experience in teaching and how they are used to calling modules and teaching the syllabus.

However, such identification of modules as practical and theoretical is critical to the extent that no module can be purely theoretical. In this regard, Ahmed who is an EFL teacher refused to name some modules as theoretical. So, my discussion with him went as follows:

Me: Some teachers told me about practical and theoretical modules.

Ahmed: I actually refuse using this categorisation practical and theoretical. Nothing is theoretical. All modules can be practical if the teacher wants to include practice and activities, and since we are working with the LMD system, there should be practice in the classroom like 80%. So, I prefer to call the modules as subject and skills modules rather than theoretical and practical. I call it according to the system (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, December, 2019).

In this regard, there seems to be contradictory perceptions in identifying modules. So according to Ahmed, the current system of the university, that is the LMD system encourages practice of students inside the classroom which represents 80%. Thus, if this is the fact, students would have activities in almost all the modules. Therefore, it would be unfair if some modules are identified as purely theoretical. The modules can be rather content which teaches subjects through the English language, or skills which teaches language skills and strategies. In short, this contradiction reveals how the truth about the EFL modules is unveiled. According to Magolda (2002). The notion of truth implies that there is variation in reality, this reality is constructed from people's interpretation of the circumstances and the culture they are part of.

Therefore, the discussion above shows the difference between the case of EFL teachers and the head of the EFL department. Though the learning for EFL students has changed to engage students more in the practice, this remains the general aims of the university that are stated in official papers and said by the head of the department, however; when it comes to practice, things may not go the way the head of the department wants to. Thus, it is argued that there is a difference between the reality and the inspiration of EFL pedagogy.

The reality can denote that students do not engage in practice in all of the EFL modules. In this regard, some participant students still think that some content modules do not encourage students' practice inside the classroom. Nur who is an EFL student said about Sociology that:

If you like it depends to the module, sometimes the module is just boring, I mean content modules, I just I don't like it. I don't feel I am really studying Sociology because it was really annoying. The teacher was just criticising us how we are... She gives us no practice and activities to do. She just talk and talk and that's all. We just have to sit for the exam by the end of the semester (Interview with Nur, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019).

Nur does not seem enjoying studying this module, first it is because of the teacher's practice and second it is because this module does not have any kind of active engagement

of the students. She sees the teacher as the only controller and knowledge holder. Therefore, though Nur is critical to the way of teaching in this module, but this indicates that there are non-practical modules when she said at the beginning that it depends to the module where collaborative activities are encouraged and she specified content modules.

Some participant students think that content modules are favoured because they find it easy talking to a friend rather than talking to a teacher, In this regard, Layla who is an EFL student was comparing to me the module of Oral Production with the module of Phonetics. She said in this regard:

When you speak with your friend, it's not the same thing when you speak with a professor. You feel like, you take it easy just to speak and make mistakes but you do it just in the oral lecture. In other modules it's impossible, in Phonetics you must follow, just listen to the professor and keep calm, but in Oral, you know we must speak, so they make us in groups and let us speak. (Layla, first year EFL student, interview, December, 2019).

Layla thinks that the module of Phonetics is a module where there is no engagement from the students unlike the Oral Production module. Students in Oral production module have to speak with each other because the syllabus aims to achieve the oral skills of the EFL students. Therefore, students do not speak/ work in groups in the Phonetics module as she mentioned that students should only listen and keep calm in the classroom. Though Layla did not mention the nature of the Phonetics module whether content or skill module but she thinks there is no engagement of students in activities and especially collaborative activities.

In both Nur's and Layla's interviews, it seems that there are specific modules where teachers barely engage the students. The example of the Sociology and the Phonetics modules show that these are kind of modules where their EFL teachers have to be prominent in the classroom. That is, the classroom should be a teacher-centred rather than a student-centred. This can refute Ahmed's thinking of content and skills modules as being mostly practical. This is because Ahmed is thinking according to 'how teaching should be' while participant teachers and students are categorising the modules according to 'how teaching actually is'. This will be thoroughly discussed in the next chapter.

To conclude, the structure of the module can tell something about collaborative learning and to how much extent it is encouraged/discouraged. However, due to the complexity raised in this categorisation, it is argued that there is a difference between aspiration and reality in EFL pedagogy as there is an EFL teacher flexibility in thinking about the nature of the EFL module. I mean by flexibility, the teacher's choice of the teaching approach and methods and not the choice of the content, as it is a unified content but taught according to the teacher's own way of teaching. 'In the LMD system, you should try all the ways of teaching, alright; teacher fronted lectures, collaborative works, individual works, pair works' (Ahmed). This flexibility in teaching methods denotes the impact of the teacher on collaborative learning for EFL students, hence; the next section will tackle this.

5.2.2. Teacher-related factors

In addition to the module that I consider as a factor which affects collaborative activities between the students, the teacher is also recognised as a factor that either encourages or discourages collaboration because of many reasons.

I found out that some participant students are studying the same module but they are taught differently in that module by two different teachers. Therefore, unlike Layla who mentioned before that the module of Phonetics is a non-practical module, Imen who is also an EFL student thinks that the Phonetics module is the most practical module for her, as she said:

I think that Phonetics module is very practical as you know we use articulators in the way of speech...We can't present in the session of Dr Amir without speaking, impossible. We make mistakes but just speak. This module is the most practical module and I liked it the most (Imen, 1st year EFL student, Interview, December, 2019).

The complexity lies in the obvious contradiction that arose from Layla's and Imen's perceptions towards the Phonetics module. I infer that since both of the students dealt with the same curriculum yet they ended up having different perspectives, this means that the teacher's way of teaching has an impact on the students' perceptions towards the module.

Though there are regularities from the system such as including the practice in each module (80%) (Ahmed), yet this will occur according to the teacher's decision. When Ahmed was asked in the interview whether the LMD system obliges teachers to teach through a specific method(s), he said: 'The LMD system did not specify whether the activities should be individual or collaborative, it depends on the module and the teacher's freedom of teaching' (Interview with Ahmed, The head of the department, December, 2019). Evidently, this indicates that the teacher does have an impact on the way the module is taught, therefore; each teacher may have their own way of teaching according to how they believe teaching should be.

According to Ahmed: 'Some teachers who belong to the old generation still stick to the way they used to teach in the past and therefore they are still stick to the way they used to evaluate students in the past and therefore the consequences are different ways students learn the same module'. In this view, Ahmed thinks that teaching in the EFL department would remain the teacher's choice. Thus, he realised that though there was a change in the higher education system which encourages the teachers to be updated in their teaching, this remains not obligatory for teachers. Some teachers, though they are working under the LMD system, they are still following their traditional methods of teaching.

I can infer that the teacher can affect collaboration between students through either encouraging or discouraging students' collaboration which means that there is EFL teacher's flexibility in teaching.

EFL teachers who are innovative and updated in their teaching can be recognised through the students' perceptions, Amina who is an EFL student said about her teacher that:

...He makes the atmosphere of interaction between students and he stands alone like you do don't feel even the teacher is there. For me I think he is competent in doing his job because most of students feel excited when his session comes (Interview with Amina, EFL student, November, 2019).

In this regard, Amina thinks that the teacher has an impact in engaging students to talk with each other. Her teacher seems driving students to a certain level by asking questions

and initiating discussions in order to create contradictory points of views, he then leaves the students alone to discuss with each other. I infer that there is a relationship between collaborative learning and the teacher's pedagogy. Thus, in addition to the nature of the module and the curriculum that the students are dealing with, the teacher also has an impact in encouraging students' collaboration. The teacher can either lead students to be free in the classroom by working with each other therefore creating a student-centred classroom or limit students' interaction with each other on the basis that he is the source of information.

The latter might have to do with trusting the abilities of students to give them freedom to work with each other. In a teacher-centred classroom, students have to follow the teacher and respond to him. I observed 3rd year EFL classroom where students were having lecture with Selima who was teaching them the module of Didactics.

There was interaction between the teacher and the students which was questions answers. The lesson was about the Direct Method in teaching. She started reading passages separately and asking students questions about each passage and she was explaining after that (Classroom observation, 3rd year EFL students, module of Didactics, December, 2019).

This excerpt from classroom observation depicts how teaching can be a teacher-centred sometimes which may not lead to collaborative learning between students to occur. Students are guided by the teacher's instructions who is the only information giver in this context.

However, when teachers stagnate to give up on their roles in the classroom as a controller and knowledge holder to become a facilitator or a guide can be explained through the trust they have on their students. According to Ahmed, the teacher cannot give the total freedom to students to present their lectures because he/she cannot trust their competence, he explained:

You have to control everything, I mean when they prepare something in Linguistics or in Literature or in Civilisation or in Didactics or whatever, you can give them the syllabus, you can set tasks to different groups of students but they may not bring the necessary information we are seeking for. So this is the

problem whether or not we are confident to give the student the choice to work collaboratively in the syllabus (Interview with Ahmed, the head of the EFL department, December, 2019).

Ahmed believes that the teacher should still be a controller to students even though they work collaboratively. He gave example of content modules where students can prepare the lessons by themselves in groups and present them. However, the teacher should be knowledgeable about the whole module. This is because students are playing the role of the teacher, thus they have to bring something accurate to classroom to be taught to the other students. So this is allocated to the teachers' confidence on their students to give them freedom to bring the necessary information the teacher is looking for.

Therefore, though teachers stagnate to change their pedagogy because of their confidence on students when being engaged in the learning process, other teachers allocated the students' engagement in activities with the teacher's innovative 'profile. Some teachers explained the teacher's innovation in the classroom by the teacher's profile. Sara who is a higher education EFL teacher explained to me what she means by the teacher's profile, she said:

This is what I mean by profile. Sometimes teachers push the learners to have this critical way of thinking, this creativity, this awareness about what they need to develop during the lectures, developing a certain way of autonomy. All these push the learners to be more collaborative, but if you bring a handout and be strict and write things, I promise that no one will participate, they will just ask questions if they have time at the end of the lectures and that's all. So that's why you asked me a very good question, not something strict and limited, but it's a matter of profile and a matter of creativity (Interview with Sara, EFL teacher, December, 2019)

Sara believes that some teachers, in the EFL department, are still following the old methods of teaching of the classical system. Teachers now should have a more updated teaching, it means they should have a profile. She mentioned the characteristics of such

profile which represents an updated teacher. A teacher with a profile is a teacher who can develop the student's autonomy which pushes learners to be critical about their thinking. Therefore, she is allocating collaborative learning to students' autonomy.

Henceforth, the major factor that was understood from this section is the higher education teacher's freedom in using different teaching methods to teach the same module which indicates that teachers practise different pedagogic approaches. The main key points are that teachers have innovative profile vs teachers follow the traditional methods of teaching because they do not trust the students' abilities. It is argued from this section that the teaching approach can have an impact on EFL collaborative learning in a context where there is a teacher flexibility in the methods of teaching.

5.2.3. Students-related factors

Though the teacher is considered responsible for designing the assignments for students which means pedagogy is a factor, students also have an impact on that through their perceptions towards the issues that they think they hinder their collaboration. There are two main students-related factors that students think they are related to the collaborative learning. The first factor is the self-confidence of the students. This is a positive factor that leads students to get rid of their shyness when being in groups rather than being alone. The second is the dominance of some students inside the group.

5.2.3.1. Dominance and confidence

When the members are different in terms of their achievement; this may create issues if they ignore how to process the work. In an observation that I did to first year EFL students, the teacher asked me to turn around the groups and observe how the work is going on. Thus:

In a group of five students, two students were searching in the net, these two are dominating the group by telling students what to write...One student designed the paper and drew flags and maps and the other two did not do anything. They said they did not have the internet access which was their excuse (Classroom observation, 1st year EFL students, January 2020).

In this account, I realised that in this group, two students were the dominant ones because they had the internet access. So, students did not discuss the information because those dominant students were ordering the other students what to write. On the other hand, some students kept silent by doing nothing in the group. This explains how the effect of the dominant students is on less achieving students. Therefore, sometimes group work can lead students to be less confident. If it is from a high achieving student's perspective, then students might be considered as 'less productive'. According to Rima who seems a high achieving student among her group:

...I always prepare everything and they can't do anything without me. This week I meant to tell them to prepare something because they were expecting me to come and prepare another presentation in literature... I am the only one who answered her...I saved the situation and I was answering her and I saved myself from the bad presentation I did (Interview with Rima, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019).

Rima thinks that other students in the group have to prepare equally their share of the work as hers. This is the belief that every student may have towards collaborative learning, that is students should embrace equal efforts in the group, yet they tend to forget that there are differences among students. Also, teachers think that students should be evaluated individually because they are expecting the individual achievement of students in terms of the product. 'You are going to assess the work which has been done by two students but you do not know to what extent each student has participated in this work...probably one student has worked more (Interview with Fatima, EFL teacher, December, 2019). So, the way of assessment reveals that the process of the work is neglected as there is an individual assessment of the product which in turn may create some issues in the group such as competition and dominance.

It was found that students often report issues that are faced with someone 'talent' in the group, that is 'talents are reluctant to listen to others with full attention, since they can solve the problem with self-attempt' (Ferdous and Karim, 2019, p. 15). It seems that other

students are marginalised when a high achieving student dominates. It is argued from this section that students lack the collaborative skills because the process of collaboration is neglected, besides the assessment which is targeted to assess the individual in the group can create the two categories of students: 'dominant and talent' and 'less achieving or less confident ones'.

Sometimes it is difficult to tell whether the student is dominant or whether other students are just lacking their confidence to contribute because of the difference in achievements. This can be explained through Siham's perception towards her student:

There was a time when I felt that someone was just standing there and depending on his friends. His answer was very interesting about the topic he was presenting, the only problem is that he did not know how to express it and that's why he was keeping silent and shy and seemed passive. So I felt like I was kind of harsh on him that is when I thought that he was depending on the others while actually he was not depending in the others (Interview with Siham, EFL teacher, January, 2020).

Siham was mistaken about her student who was less productive in the group while in fact he was less confident to collaborate. This means that the teacher focuses on the individual product of the collaborative activity though the work is being processed together, therefore; Siham is comparing the amount of work that was done by this less confident students and others. Students are different when they are working together and different reasons can affect their collaboration among which is the dominance of some high achieving students which results in lack of confidence to other students. According to Ferdous and Karim (2019), some students feel shy even though they are working in groups, so they keep silent because of their shyness. It is the academic weakness which lead students to be shy in the group (Connery, 1988), and thus the superiority of other students may result out of that (Iqbal et al., 2016).

Dominance can be an issue that is witnessed in every group, but there can be many reasons that can trigger this phenomenon, among which is the lack of the collaborative skills and the competition. In this regard, Aya said:

If you enter a group you will have to obey their rules because they know more than you...This year we had an ESP task to do, we have to do many pieces... So, from the beginning she started to give me the rule! so I have changed the group because of her attitude (Interview with Aya, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019).

Aya is disagreeing with being ordered, she could not have the right to propose her ideas as she just have to follow the dominant student's instructions. This fact creates issues inside the group, one of which is quitting the group. This can be explained by the ignorance of some students to the collaborative skills among which is tolerance and acceptance of ideas and views. The element of respect is imperative to collaboration, it is the respect of one another's knowledge and skills (Iqbal et al., 2016). However, the competition system can also yield the dominance of some students to be the best. There can be several reasons for dominance among which is the competitive strategy (Iqbal et al., 2016).

The system of assessment that teachers design can lead students to look for being the best, in this regard:

She was ordering us and giving us roles to play. She gave me the role of a dead person but I refused to act it because a dead person does not talk. She selected for herself the role of a judge because she is talking more than anyone in the play. She selected that role on purpose just to get the best mark in the group. I can't perform a dead person because the teacher doesn't give me mark if I don't talk (Interview with Maya, 3rd year EFL student, December, 2019).

I can understand that the dominance inside the group can lead to conflicts. In addition, the way of assessment that her teacher applies indicates that every student should talk in the role play as she was comparing her role to the role of the judge. So according to Maya, the more you talk, the better mark you get. If competition is spread among the members of the group, this means that students would strive to do 'more work' as compared to their friends and be reluctant to share knowledge (Cewinska and Krasnova, 2017). In this

study, the dominance of some students is resulted because of the way of assessment which indirectly encourages the competition of students.

To conclude, students can raise their confidence when being in groups, however; confidence can be lowered when issues such as 'competition' and 'dominance' spread throughout the group. If teachers are aware of these issues, they would know that the first source is the assessment policy and the lack of students to the collaborative behaviours. Hence, it is argued that students EFL students lack their collaborative skills because of the superiority of the 'I' rather than the 'we'.

In this section, I explored the three factors that affect collaborative learning for EFL students, these include the module, the teacher and the students. In the module and the teacher as factors, I have found that there is higher education teacher's freedom in teaching different modules, so there is often a difference between an aspiration and a teaching practice. While the aspiration tells that students should practise in every module, the reality shows that it is up to the teacher to teach. This results in having teachers believe in different approaches to teaching. Moreover, the lack of students to the collaborative behaviours is the consequence of the assessment system, hence issues such as dominance and competition are witnessed.

5.3. Conclusion

In this analysis chapter, two main sections were analysed, these include: the unsystematic interaction between assessment and collaborative learning and factors affecting students' collaboration.

In the first section, the strategy of assessment was explored. Understanding the interaction between collaborative learning and assessment reveal three key questions (Who, What and How) which can be a guide for higher education EFL teacher for assessing their students' collaboration. It is understood that the individual student is assessed for a fair assessment, however; this can lead to students' issues in the group. Additionally, there is a flexibility of the assessment criteria which are not necessarily in conformity with the language related outcomes, but they still do not reflect the process of collaboration and the

collaborative skills, therefore; this reflects the teacher flexibility. On the other hand, the how key question depicts the necessity of teachers for marking their students' efforts. This section gives the importance of this study through highlighting the interaction between assessment and collaboration which is shaped by the teacher's pedagogy and policy of higher education, i.e., by contextual and cultural factors. Thus, it is concluded that there is an unsystematic way of assessing collaborative learning.

The second section reveals three contextual and cultural factors which affect students' collaboration: the module, the teacher's pedagogy and the students. While the aspiration says all modules should be practical, the reality denotes the teacher's freedom of teaching different modules. Such flexibility explains further why EFL teachers have different teaching approaches. In addition, when students lack their collaborative skills and teachers assess the individual student in the group, several issues can be resulted out of that.

To conclude, there are two major findings that can be understood from this chapter: the unsystematic interaction between collaborative activities and assessment strategies and factors that influence students' collaboration. These findings will be further discussed in next chapter. Therefore, I consider this section as a collection of the pieces of the puzzle, however; the full picture that links the findings together will be explored explicitly in the next chapter. I argue, in this thesis, that the process of EFL collaborative learning is neglected (Collaborative learning is a means leading to achieve language-related outcomes) because of the unsystematic way of assessment and pedagogy (There is no exact way of teaching EFL modules).

Chapter 6: Discussion: From data mining to constructed meaning

6. Introduction

This chapter discusses the most important elements that are constructed from the data. These are the major themes of the data analysis. They include understanding collaborative learning from teachers' and students' perceptions, the unsystematic interaction between collaborative learning and assessment and factors that influence students' collaboration. In qualitative research, there are social, cultural, historical and personal factors which affect people's construction of their understanding of the world (Prasad, 2005, p.14). In this research, I explored the varied understanding of EFL teachers' and students' perceptions to understand the nuanced, complex and in-depth collaboration. According to Honebein (1996), people construct their knowledge through experience and a reflection on those experiences. This construction of meaning is their version of the truth (Magolda, 2002) that can be dependent on contextual factors or independent. In this study, both dependent and independent thinking was understood from the teachers', head of the EFL department and students' meaning. While the head of the department's thinking is dependent on the authority which is the LMD system, teachers are flexible about their teaching which involves the independent thinking (Magolda, 2002). Students on the other hand are dependent thinkers as collaborative learning should be designed by their teachers first but they are also considered as independent thinkers in thinking about their 'relationship' in groups.

The division of teachers' and students' perceptions came from their different understanding of students' collaboration which lies under two categories. That is, broadly speaking; while teachers think that collaborative learning is pedagogically perceived, students perceive it from a relational aspect. Both views depend on their experiences in the EFL department in higher education. The constructivist interpretivist approach is the one that shaped my understanding of the data. So, the EFL teachers and students co-constructed with me their varied/ similar and sometimes contradicted understanding of collaborative learning, so here it lies the construction of meaning according to how they experienced collaborative learning. My interpretation was not through listing what those differences are but it was through finding the complexity that is raised from these varied thinking and experiences and making this complexity understandable for the reader. According to Creswell (2013), the constructivist researchers address the processes of interaction among people, that is finding

the link between possible interpretations. They also focus on the context where people live in order to understand the cultural and historical underlying factors. The analysis chapter looks into the details that led to the emergence of different aspects. This discussion chapter makes clear the findings of the study through the emerged themes by stepping back from the details and discussing the major themes of the study in relation to the broad literature in chapter 2.

6.1. Understanding collaborative learning

The findings of this research show that there are varied understandings of what collaborative learning means by EFL teachers and students. While teachers think that collaborative learning is pedagogically perceived and contrasted with other nuanced aspects, that is; it is a pedagogical approach that they design for their students, students on the other hand think of collaborative learning according to the relationship they build in the group (friendship and strangeness in relation to ‘criticism’)

6.1.1. Teachers’ understanding

6.1.1.1. Collaborative learning process-product: ‘each one on his side work on a task...to achieve a goal’

This understanding is based on ‘process’ and ‘product’ and ‘individual’ and ‘collaborative work’. These key words shape the contested understanding of collaborative learning. Therefore, collaborative learning was found to be different from group work by only one participant yet most of participants used the two terms interchangeably. While collaborative learning means the process and the product of the work in order to achieve a learning that is collaborative, group work is achieving or completing the activity, that is achieving a product. *‘...the purpose of collaboration is learning not completing a task...This learning does not happen individually but it happens in groups’*. Therefore, collaborative learning is about both the process and the product achieving. In EFL learning, collaborative learning should be about the interaction that happens in groups (the process) and the completion of the language task (the product). In being a process, collaborative learning should hold with it the interaction and the communication of the students to each other in groups which results in their shared language objective. *‘interaction, clarification,*

explanation...help and support to each other' are the behavioural skills which form the process of collaborative learning. These are not part of learning the language but rather collaborative behaviours for achieving a collaborative learning.

However, this is what collaborative learning should be, yet when teachers are unaware of what collaborative learning is or they just think of it the way they are used to practise it in their academic milieu, the consequence could be: *'students collaborate, each one on his side work on a task...to achieve a goal'*. I deduce that collaborative learning can be a means that assist teachers to achieve the language related product/ outcome while the process of collaboration is neglected because students have to process the collaborative work individually. This finding contradicts the social interdependence theory which indicates that there are two outcomes that should be in collaborative learning, the individual and the group outcomes. So, the individual outcomes are affected by their own's and others' actions (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). This means that both the individual and collaborative efforts are encouraged in the social interdependence theory, however the individual efforts are there to contribute to the collaborative efforts. Among the principals of the social interdependence theory are the joint goals and the social processing of the members through the discussion and evaluation that is happening in the group (Johnson and Johnson, 2002), so this means that collaborative learning is both the process through which students work together and the joint product. According to Frykedal and Hammar (2017), group work has collaborative processes. These processes can be in the form of analytical discussions between students and feedback from the teacher. The promotive interaction, according to Webb et al (2002), reflects the helping behaviours in the group which promote the interaction in and outside the group. This requires the use of the appropriate social skills and regular group processing (Johnson and Johnson, 2003).

However, those helping behaviours could be conditions targeted to be evaluated, in other words, where they are part of the programme to be taught to students. The findings rather show that the individual rather than the collaborative work and the product rather than process of the work can be the result of the assessment strategy which focuses on the individual efforts and on the language product. *'I inform them...you'll be evaluated individually even if it is a group work'*. I argue in this sense that collaborative learning is a means to facilitate the learning of the language rather than the learning of collaboration. Therefore, this finding does not reveal the positive interdependence which is one element of

the social interdependence theory (which is explained in chapter 2) where the individual student should contribute to the achievement of the joint goal, that is the individual efforts cannot be achieved unless the joint efforts are realised (Johnson and Johnson, 2003). Though the individual accountability element depicts that students should be responsible for their individual share of the work (Johnson and Johnson, 2003) as my finding shows, yet the individual work should be there to lead to a collaborative work (Gillies, 2006). According to Klemm (1994), there is often a misunderstanding of what collaborative learning is, collaborative learning occurs in small groups of students where they help each other, it is not having students to do the task individually and then those who finish first will help the rest, and it is not having only one or two students to achieve the work. However, it is important to understand the functionality of collaborative learning in the context where it is practised. Thus, the contextual understanding of collaborative learning in this research shows that collaborative learning can be conceived as individual working for the sake of achieving an individual or shared product, this depends on the assessment strategy that is required.

All in all, my evidence does not fully demonstrate the elements of social interdependence theory, yet this explains the contextual and cultural factors which gives an understanding of collaborative learning. This is aligned with the methodological framework used for this study (the constructivist interpretivist approach) which first helps to find out the multiple and contested answers and understandings of collaborative learning and second, tries to understand the meaning behind this multiplicity.

6.1.1.2. Collaborative learning relationships and community

The findings show that collaborative learning should be about the community of students where students should spend a long time together in groups at the university rather than grouping them just for one or two activities. The members of the groups are different but they still help and interact with each other. This was the perspective of only one participant teacher (Samir), yet the characteristics of such community (Which are key for this discussion) were common with other participant teachers' views and sometimes contrasted (Finding in page 115). These characteristics include 'the members of the group being different/ same' and 'the reward given'. Therefore, students with different skills and abilities can achieve a good work together. *'We try to select students from different perspectives, one*

can help the other'. Thus, different members of the group are necessary for achieving students' help. This shows the awareness of the teacher about the collaborative behaviour which is in conformity with the promotive interaction element of the social interdependence theory (Archer-Kath et al., 1994; Johnson and Johnson, 2003; Gillis, 2006., Kristiansen et al., 2019). Students should have helping behaviours to promote the process of the work (Webb et al., 2002). The promotive interaction requires the use of the appropriate social skills (Johnson and Johnson, 2003) however; though Johnson said that the promotive interaction helps to develop high and low achieving students yet it does not emphasis that students should be different in order for the behavioural help is achieved. My findings show contradictions concerning the members of the group. Though it was agreed by some teachers (Samir and Sara) that students should be different, it was disagreed by others (Fatima): *'When students are at the same proficiency level, they can realise an interesting work'*.

The differences in the skills, competencies and achievements of the students can either lead students to help and lift each other but it can also lead to the free riding of the members to each other in a learning environment which is considered as rather competitive. It was found in a study that the differences of EFL students can lead one student to dominate the rest, students who are less achieving prefer to keep silent in the group (Taqi et al., 2014). However, Liao and Wang (2016) found that the application of heterogenous cluster grouping to reflective English writing can make students develop their critical thinking and empathy when writing. Therefore, students who are capable in certain competency can initiate discussions and stimulate other students' participation (Kagan and Kagan, 2009). Thus, heterogenous grouping can lead students to use different skills to achieve their collaborative learning. However, contexts are different and students may not be aware of their collaborative skills in other contexts. Therefore, I conclude that the unawareness of some teachers about the heterogeneity of grouping students for achieving their interaction behaviours can be the result of the learning outcomes that they are required to achieve.

Further, the findings show that rewarding students is a characteristic of community of students which is necessary for achieving collaborative learning (Samir), this reward was referred to as: *'material like adding points... or just something intangible'*. However, this is how collaboration should be but the majority of teachers in this study are inclined to the first type of rewards which is marking students. Linking this finding to the positive interdependence theory that was discussed in relation to my argument in chapter 2, positive

reward interdependence is when the members of the group work collaboratively only when they gain joint rewards (Slavin, 1991). However, according to Cohen (1994), a reward is considered as an external incentive to interact, so it should be supported only when needed and that positive goal interdependence is what matters when students really need to interact. This positive interdependence results in the individual members of the group to be responsible of his/her own and others' success (Johnson and Johnson, 2003). Though the findings show that intangible reward and achieving collaborative behaviours can be more important for some participants (Samir and Meriem's perceptions in page 117 and 118), on the contrary; EFL teachers are required to give marks to their students. The way how EFL collaborative learning assessment is unfolded is key for understanding students' collaboration (Finding in page 146). Teachers are required to give marks which reflects the policy's requirement, thus some teachers assess students individually in groups, this what the assessment strategy shows in page 146.

Therefore, this finding does not demonstrate fully the positive interdependence element because when students are assessed individually and when it is necessary to give them marks, then individual actions would be stronger than collaborative actions and competition would be prominent among the group members to reach the desired goal.

Competition between students can lead to the issue of dominance in the process of collaboration, but this is the possible expected result when students are assessed individually, *'She selected for herself the role of a judge...just to get the best mark in the group'*. Thus, the findings reveal that the assessment method can result in EFL students' free riding, hence being the best in the group to get the best mark. This finding contradicts the psychological process of substitutability of the positive interdependence theory which was described by Johnson and Johnson (2007) as when the actions of one person substitutes for the actions of another person, however in case there is a negative interdependence; there is a non-substitutability of actions. According to Deutsch (1949) it is not just because people work in groups so all of them will have good interest for each other.

The findings show that the issue of dominance is the result of the assessment where there is less substitutability among the students. However, there is also no interdependence between students when they work separately in the group, *'each one on his side to achieve*

the whole'. Some EFL students work on separate tasks in the group because they are going to be evaluated individually on those tasks and they are responsible only about their part (page 146). The basic premise in the social interdependence theory is how goals are structured which determines the way of interaction between students (Deutsch, 1949). For the case studied, the majority of participants think that goals are to achieve an individual outcome though they are working in groups, this means that students cannot be psychologically tolerant to substitute their own share of the work with each other. (absence of substitutability). Substitutability is a psychological adjustment in the social interdependence theory (Deutsch, 1962). It is not discussed in depth in this section because this research does not aim to look into the psychology of the individual students in group processing but rather it considers the external relationships between them, however; I recommend it for further research on collaborative learning for EFL students (See limitations and recommendations in chapter 6).

To sum up, collaborative learning is defined as a community of students with the characteristics of different members. These characteristics are discussed here in relation to a body of literature which reveal the importance of having students with different competencies for the sake of developing their interaction skills. I infer that this cannot be realised when the teachers do not have the intention to teach and assess students' skills in parallel with the language content. Additionally, I argue that though feedback can boost the students' collaborative motivation which teachers might be aware of, they can be at the same time required to follow a contextual marking system.

6.1.1.3. Collaborative learning or cooperative learning?

The finding of the two nuances were constructed from one participant teacher (Ahmed) who is the head of the EFL department. Therefore, collaborative learning can be different from cooperative learning to a certain extent. While collaborative learning is the individual work of the members inside the group, cooperative learning is the help and interaction of the members. So, both collaborative learning and cooperative learning occur at the same time in the activity. This means that while students collaborate, they are working individually in their task to reach an individual/common goal, yet they need sometimes the

help and the guidance of each other which is the cooperation of each other. However, in both cases, students should reach an individual product and though there is kind of interaction which is the helping behaviours, students are not assessed on their process, that is their behaviours and skills (Finding in page 113). However, this evidence is contradicted with Sawyer's and Obeid's definition of both concepts (2017), according to them; in collaborative learning, goals and objectives are more open-ended and tasks and ways of collaboration are decided upon by the students, so it is self-managed, however; in cooperative learning, students are still being scaffolded by the teacher who design the activities to the students. The teacher also intends to teach the students the interaction skills through reflecting on them. In the same line of thought, Davidson and Major (2014) claimed that collaborative learning is an unstructured approach to learning which includes open ended questions and cooperative learning is the most structured approach which includes group investigation. So cooperative learning has the intention of learning the skills while in collaborative learning students work together because they have already developed their skills. The findings do not show the importance of the skills when students collaborate. Even when students achieve tasks together, it is still the product which is assessed (Finding in page 146).

According to Jacobs (2015), both terminologies should be treated as a student-centred equivalent and any difference between the two is a teacher's and students' choice to describe their teaching and learning strategies, so whatever name is used, either collaborative or cooperative learning; they are targeting to achieve a student-centred pedagogy, 'collaborative learning or cooperative learning? The name is not important, flexibility is' (Jacobs, 2015, P. 32). According to Sawyer and Obeid (2017), it is not about giving specific names to both nuances but it is about getting the best of both words in a student-centred teaching, hence Sawyer and Obeid constructed a collaborative-cooperative hybrid that composed different group tasks for achieving the learning of psychology for higher education students. In this research, I decided to go for both authors' theorisations of both nuances. That is, the aim of this research is not to find out the difference between the two terminologies but to understand the purpose and the factors that underly the students' interaction and the teachers' practice. According to Strijbos in a recent online conference (2021): 'The distinction doesn't really help, but we need to focus on the interaction'. I believe that teaching the English language can include several techniques and strategies that facilitate learning the foreign language for students in a learner-centred approach, however; when

collaborative/cooperative learning is fostered through different group activities, does this mean it is a technique which facilitates learning the language or is it an embedded learning outcome in itself? Thus, it is about understanding the aim of such learning in English language learning and the interaction patterns. Hence collaborative learning as a term is used consistently through the research which also reflects the contextual use of this term in higher education in Algeria.

6.1.1.4. Is it about teaching collaboration or teaching the language through collaboration?

This section is to summarise and conclude the above discussion on the teachers' pedagogic understanding of collaborative learning. It is concluded that collaborative learning is about the process and the product for achieving social interdependence. It is about the promotive interaction that is developed through the interaction skills and the sharing of the joint goal. However, the findings of this study reveal that the process of collaborative learning is neglected because it is the language related outcomes which should be assessed though teachers can be aware of the interaction of students in group. This evidence does not demonstrate the social interdependence theory whose elements give importance to both the process and the product of learning.

The differences of students to each other in the group are important for achieving the help and support to each other and for developing the critical thinking and empathy in learning the language, but the findings reveal that the heterogenous cluster grouping can be neglected when the individual efforts are the target for assessment unless the teacher is aware of the effectiveness of this on students' achievements in group.

In addition, though intangible rewards such as feedback can foster the students' positive interdependence but the findings evidently reveal that giving marks for students working in groups is a contextual systematic requirement. The individual processing of collaborative learning can lead to competition and dominance between students which means the element of positive interdependence is absent.

Henceforth, my argument in this research is that the process of collaborative learning can be neglected because of the unsystematic way of assessment and pedagogy. That is, it is concluded that the EFL teachers' use of collaborative learning is a means to achieve a

language-related outcome. This shows the contribution of this research to the literature on collaborative learning for EFL students in higher education.

Several researchers attempted to investigate the application of the social interdependence theory for the sake of fostering learning English as a foreign language. According to Ning (2010), the application of the social interdependence theory can be an effective method for teaching English at tertiary level, this is through the design of text-book based team task and large class instructions. In more recent studies, Alrayah (2018) found that the collaborative skills could help Saudi higher education EFL students to develop the oral fluency of speaking in EFL, thus activities such as three step interviews, think pair share and Jigsaw methods should be designed. Similarly, Liao et al (2019) claimed that the grouping techniques are effective methods for developing the listening, reading and writing competencies for learning English. In writing collaboratively, EFL students could develop their self-confidence in expressing themselves in English writing (Anggraini et al., 2020).

However, this body of literature reveals that collaborative learning is the use of the collaborative methods to achieve the language related skills and content. However, what is unclear in EFL learning is whether the collaborative skills are separate from the language content, thus they are part of the learning outcomes with their specific assessment strategy, or it is about collaborative working rather than collaborative learning which is a means leading to achieve a language related outcome. Liao and Wang (2016) found that the application of the heterogeneous cluster grouping could not only enhance the students' reflective writing of the English language but it also developed their critical thinking and empathy. Ali Abulhassan and Eltayeb Hamid (2021) said that if teachers are trained to teach collaborative skills syllabus, practical outcomes would be achieved. However, though their study is for teaching English in secondary school in Saudi Arabia, but it does provide an insight to higher education for teaching not only the language content but also preparing students for their future career.

EFL teachers do not look at 'collaboration' itself, they rather consider the result of it. That is, the students' collaboration is a vehicle conducing to achieve a desired product. This conclusion derives from the aim of the university in general, that is collaborative learning is not the aim of the Algerian higher education EFL university but it is up to the teacher either to encourage it or not (Finding in page 168). The policy in higher education does not show that EFL students should collaborate in some tasks. It is an option for the teacher to opt for whenever it is needed. In UK, graduate attributes are higher education policy across all

universities, according to Canterbury Christ Church university programme for undergraduate students, there is what is called the graduate attributes. 'Graduate attributes aim to articulate what a student who engages with the opportunities available, will develop during their time in CCCU' (CCCU portal, graduate attributes, 2021). Among these attributes that the student should achieve is working effectively in collaboration with others in order to be an effective communicator, developing rapport and respect towards others, understanding and expressing ideas and thoughts with confidence (CCCU portal, graduate attributes, 2021). This one attribute has to do with the student's collaboration which means that collaborative learning is one of the aims of the university that should be achieved. However, though they are mapped against curricula but they are not directly assessed. According to Little and McMillan (2014), at the university there are learning outcomes which should be achieved, but there are also graduate attributes which the students need to develop now and beyond the university.

Thus, it is concluded that teaching EFL in higher education does not aim to achieve collaborative learning because it is not the aim of the university. Rather, the existing collaborative working is a means to achieve language related outcomes.

6.1.2. Students' understanding

6.1.2.1. Students' relationships: 'Even though he criticises me, that's normal! because he is my friend'

The findings of this research show that students think of collaborative learning relationally in terms of who they should collaborate with. Thus, when students are friends, they can collaborate successfully on their work '*when you choose someone you have to choose them rightly*'. Not only friendship but even students who have the same skills and competencies. Therefore, students who think they are competent prefer to work with someone competent like them. '*I haven't faced students that are really motivated so that's why I prefer learning by myself*'. In short, the difference between students is in their relationship and in the intellectual level, that is whether they are friends and whether they have the same proficiency level. However, the students' selection to each other is a way to avoid 'criticism' as it was used by EFL students and which will be discussed in the next section.

6.1.2.2. Criticism or critical thinking

The selection of students to each other is to avoid 'criticism' between them. Participant students think of criticism as a negative aspect which should be avoided in collaborative learning. That is, students want to avoid challenging and debatable situations in groups. However, this raised a contradiction as two EFL students think that the EFL task does not encourage critical questions, '*we are not doing something that is going to make your brain work*'. While the other thinks that: '*You know you will have different perspectives...I accept others' ideas but if they are right*'. It is inferred that it is about the awareness of students to the skills needed for processing the collaborative work but it is also about the task itself which either encourages students to exchange and co-construct critically their knowledge. The transformative learning theory explained the social learning as the engagement in critical reflections in the classroom which lead students to change their beliefs, behaviours and way of thinking, this is often referred to as constructing a social meaning (Merriam et al., 2007; Mezirow, 1981). Practically, the activities should be supported in higher education by any lecturer by engaging structurally the students with communities and groups inside or outside the classroom setting through raising a problematic (Taylor et al., 2012, P. 391) and engaging students in problem-based learning (Chan et al., 2018). The findings show that 'criticism' can be a negative aspect for learning for students when there are differences between them. According to Amena (2020), the critical thinking of the students is triggered through the problem-based learning approach. The latter should be carefully implemented in the EFL curriculum by the teacher who should be knowledgeable of the ways of how to boost students' critical thinking. However, though the participant students used the word 'criticism' which denoted a negative aspect for them in collaborative learning, EFL participant teachers on the other hand think that critical thinking is part of the students' collaborative work (Finding in page 125). This also was realised through their practice. One of the examples was that students engage in peer evaluation in the writing task. They correct each other's papers through providing constructive feedback to each other concerning the strategies of writing (Finding in page 131).

In the current research, though there were aspects of engaging students in critical thinking such as peer-evaluation (Finding in page 131) and students' engagement in projects, *'We don't oblige them to bring something original but to think critically about their ideas they bring from ESP situations'*, some participant EFL students are still not in favor of critical thinking, this is because they did not want their friends to 'criticise' them while working in collaboration. However, on the other hand, it was reported by other students that the task does not make them think critically, they just copy and paste the information from reliable sources (Finding in page 123). Henceforth, it is concluded that while EFL students do not know the difference between 'criticism' and critical thinking, some EFL tasks on the other hand do not encourage students' critical thinking. The lack of students to inducibility (Johnson and Johnson, 2007) as a psychological process of the social interdependence theory can explain why some students in this research hesitate to engage in critical situations and problematising tasks. The inducibility is when the members of the group are open to being influenced by others and they influence others, therefore a lack of inducibility will lead to resistance to accept others' ideas (Johnson and Johnson, 2007). Inducibility reflects the psychological aspect of collaborative learning, it is not in depth discussed in this section because I am not looking into the psychology of the individual but rather the relationship between the members.

Besides, while the findings of this research reveal that some EFL subjects do not boost the critical thinking of the students, Tosuncuoglu (2018) claimed that in language activities, students should not just listen, do the assignment and give the answers. The teacher should rather encourage the content that is created by the imagination of the student. That is, the student should interpret, analyse, synthesise and evaluate information. However, when students ignore the critical thinking skills and how these can be applied to classroom, students can end up having a negative attitude towards being criticised by each other as the findings of this study reveal. As compared to other mentioned studies on critical thinking for EFL students, this study indicates that though teachers want students to use their critical thinking, students can ignore how to use them appropriately, as a result they try to select the members of the group carefully.

It is argued that since collaborative learning is not one of the learning outcomes of learning the language, teachers and students could be unaware of the needed skills in group working.

To conclude, the theme investigated here concerns the varied understanding of collaborative learning by EFL teachers and students. This understanding of teachers to collaborative learning lies in considering collaborative learning as a method of learning with a process and product, individual and/or collaborative work. The assessment strategy (the reward) shapes this understanding through giving importance to the product of collaboration. The students' understanding to collaborative learning lies in the relationship of students in groups and the intellectual level. Students avoid 'criticism' in groups which indicates their ignorance to the critical thinking skills.

Henceforth, teachers think of collaborative learning pedagogically, it is a deliberately designed method by the teacher. It serves the language related outcomes concerning different modules, hence different group working according to those modules. However, the result of such pedagogy is reflected in the students' thinking. Students think of collaborative learning from a relational point of view in terms of familiarity to each other and intellectual level and in terms of 'criticism' that should be avoided. Thus, teachers should work hard to encourage students to use their critical thinking in EFL activities through explaining critical thinking as a positive aspect for learning first and through teaching the critical thinking skills (Tosuncuoglu, 2018; Liao and Wang, 2016). I argue in this section that the process of collaborative learning is neglected, as a result; EFL students could lack the required behaviours and skills.

6.2. The interaction between assessment and collaborative learning: 'Assessment is the dark side in collaborative learning'

The findings of this research reveal the way how collaborative learning for EFL students is assessed. It also shows the complexity that is reached in understanding collaborative learning for EFL students, 'Assessment is the dark side in collaborative learning' (Meriem, EFL teacher). This is because assessment is not a stable and clear process for all the case of EFL teachers as there were different and random processes of assessment. The co-constructed theme between me and the participants indicates that the interaction between EFL collaborative learning and assessment is about the 'who', the 'what' and the 'how'. This constructed model can be a thought-provoking for any EFL teacher to consider. The

significance of collaboration is on 'who' is going to be assessed, therefore; several factors can explain this. In addition, the criteria for assessment are sceptical to whether they reflect the language or the skills ('what'). Further, the 'how' can denote the strategy of this assessment.

6.2.1. Who is being assessed? 'I had the best mark in my group'

The findings reveal that most of the time, the individual student is assessed because first teachers want to mark students on the activity and second the teachers know that there are unequal efforts. *'She (the teacher) assess us individually, I mean each one on his oral defence'*. However, the findings also show that both the individual and the group are given a mark, but this mark represents the product rather than the process and the interaction between students, *'Two marks, the first one is for the written version and the second one is for the presentation, so here the difference'*. It was found that students should be assessed individually because their behavioural aspects differ in the group and so do their efforts (Pitt, 2000; Van Aalst, 2013; Meijer et al., 2020). This partly confirms the findings of this study which shows that students are different which is the reason why teachers assess students individually in the group. *'Sometimes some students are stressful when presenting, the others they feel comfortable, some of them are self-confident enough so, she took all of that into consideration'*. Though on the other hand, it was found that the variance among students can lead students to learn from each other's strength and weaknesses (Roberts and McInerney, 2007). Liao and Wang (2016) claimed that the application of the heterogenous cluster grouping could help EFL students to enhance their reflective writing as each student can lift the other student on the needed competency. However, the findings of this study reveal that the reason why students should be assessed individually is because the teacher should know the abilities of each students because they must be given marks which are represented in their records. *'...grading is something that is needed by the administration so it must happen'*. Therefore, for a represented fair mark in the records of students, students should be assessed individually.

However, an individual assessment results in students freely riding each other. The findings reveal that individual assessment led some students to think of the mark, therefore, they think of being the best, *'I had the best mark in the group'*. Thus, students compare themselves to others in the group in terms of the mark obtained. According to Strijbos (2011),

individual assessment decreases knowledge sharing and social support of group members. It increases the free riding behaviours and devalue the need to collaborate (Strijbos, 2016).

However, there could be a group assessment when a single mark is given to the group, as the findings show, yet this is only possible when the teacher is monitoring and controlling the work. *'When I give them the work to be done in class, I won't assess the students one by one, it's the group'*. Group assessment is applied when the teacher is monitoring the work of individuals in the group. Some participant teachers show that they do not trust the work of students to be collaborative outside the classroom setting, therefore they ensure that the work is collaborative when it is monitored by the teacher in order for a group assessment is fairly given. According to Meijer et al (2020), construct validity is achieved when collaborative learning assessment is successful, that is giving a fair assessment however, it is difficult to achieve it because there is a tension between either to achieve individual or group assessment. Indeed, when the teacher gives a group mark, he can achieve positive interdependence between students (Dijkstra et al., 2016; Forsell et al., 2020), however; it is still ambiguous whether the group mark should reflect the skill or the language content (This will be discussed in the next section). According to Meijer et al (2020), assessing the group and giving each student the same mark can be threatening as the score will appear on the record of students while it does not reflect the student's individual domain specific abilities.

All in all, the findings from the studied case of Algerian EFL teachers and students show differences in 'who is being assessed' question either the individual, the group or both the individual and the group. Though a minority of teachers who agreed about assessing the group (Meriem), but this denotes that the teacher has a flexibility in considering this question and they have their reasons which is monitoring and controlling the students. Such pedagogical flexibility was highlighted by the head of the EFL department as: *'In higher education, we don't have a precise curriculum... you should try all the ways of teaching'* Thus, the question of the assessment strategy 'whom to assess' has the flexibility of the teacher in the Algerian higher education context which shows that it is difficult to achieve a construct validity (Meijer et al., 2020) though it is the individual who was found to be mostly assessed.

It is argued from this section that EFL collaborative learning assessment is unsystematically practised, therefore; reflecting on the 'who' is being assessed as a key question on the interaction between assessment and EFL collaborative learning can optimally enhance EFL collaborative learning assessment.

6.2.2. What is being assessed? ‘There are many aspects to focus on when grading them’

The findings reveal that there are criteria of assessment. These parameters reflect the content, it means the achievement of each individual student in the language content, so this is evaluated through the teacher-students questions and answers, students-students questions and answers and the way of explanation, *‘I mark the content’*. In comparison with what some teachers said about the assessment parameters and the learning outcomes and objectives of two modules: ESP and Educational Psychology (See appendix 7), teachers do meet the objectives mentioned in the syllabus, however; their content do not mention anything related to teaching the social skills in practice. In addition, teachers assess other parameters beyond the language. Thus, this reflects the flexibility of the teacher in designing the assessment criteria.

The findings show that in group presentations, the assessment parameters are beyond the content, that is; teachers take into consideration other criteria which are not the learning objectives. These criteria include: the fluency and accuracy during presentations, the way of presentation through the eye contact, the way of explanation, the use of other techniques when presenting, the vocabulary used, confidence when speaking. These criteria differ from one teacher to another, but they are summarised under that list. *‘Every student is evaluated on some criteria...mainly how he presents, how he stands in front of his friends, the way he explains’*. The reason why these criteria are made is to demarcate the individual student from others in the group so that every individual student is given a fair mark but also to teach students other criteria which are not related to the syllabus.

It is argued that there is an unsystematic link between the assessment and the language outcomes as the case of EFL teachers and students reveal that teachers do not link systematically the assessment parameters to the objectives of the syllabus in group presentations. This evidence contradicts Forsuland Frykedal’s and Hammar Chiriac’s (2017) evidence who said that: *‘Even though teachers commonly use group work as a teaching method, they are nevertheless expected to assess students’ knowledge development in relation to criteria expressed in the curriculum’*. According to Biggs and Tang (2011), the universities nowadays are requiring the teaching to be outcomes based, that is teaching

should be oriented to meet the learning outcomes of the students. There are three major components in the 'constructive alignment' by Biggs and Tang (2007) which include: what are the activities that teachers should use to engage students in their learning, what evidence teachers require to know that learning has occurred (Assessment's criteria) and what teachers want students to learn. So, these three elements go in a cycle and if any issue happens at one of the elements, the other elements will be affected. However, Biggs and Tang's study targeted learning in general and did not specify what type of learning. This study is rather different through focusing on collaborative learning and how this can be related to assessment. It shows that other assessment criteria are taken into account in group presentations, however; though they are there for giving a fair assessment to students and to teach students other aspects, they represent the unsystematic link between the criteria and the learning outcomes.

Though the findings of this study reveal that there is a misalignment between the assessment and the outcomes in group presentations as the example of Amir (See page 154) where he talked about the criteria (Knowledge of students about ESP+ other criteria related to the individual student) and where he listed the content of the syllabus (Appendix 7), these criteria are there to judge about the individual students. *'Each one should speak about a part'* (Amir). This raises the question why then collaborative learning is encouraged? The findings show that the purpose to achieve collaborative learning is to change the way of teaching to sound innovative and to engage learners, *'to ensure the notion of learner-centred approach'* and to achieve the language-related outcomes. However, according to Gibbs (2009), the effectiveness of the group work lies first in understanding why the group work is being used and the assessment system which is about acquiring sophisticated group work skills.

Though the findings reveal that in group presentations, the teacher focuses on the student's knowledge as well as other skills which he thinks they are important for students to be assessed on, however; the case explored does not show that the teachers are aware of the collaborative skills and that they are part of their assessment parameters (See page 154). Collaborative learning assessment can be challenging because different domains can have different ways of assessment and there is often a misunderstanding of whether to assess the skills or the knowledge (Van Aalst, 2013; Meijer et al., 2020). According to Wallace (2001), the teacher should select the activity according to some criteria which are: the nature of the topic to be taught, the preferred learning styles of the students, the proposed learning outcomes,

the preferred teaching style of the teacher, the requirements for assessment, the level of the students' motivation, whether or not students have the required skills and the restraints and the availability of resources. Though Wallace considered that in any kind of learning, there should be a clear cut between the activity and the aim it serves, this study specifically highlights the nature of the link between EFL collaborative learning, assessment and the language outcomes.

Thus, it is argued that EFL teachers are practising their flexible pedagogy in setting their assessment criteria which denotes their intention to teach students other aspects beyond the achieved learning outcomes. According to Brady (2006), the outcome-based education is limited to the extent that there is an over reliance on teaching small segments of the content which makes it an end to itself. 'The argument is considerably weakened if the outcomes are centrally stated and teachers have no say in their determination' (Brady, 2006, p. 11). This limits the creative expression of teachers, thus; it is better if we avoid using the word outcome and substitute it with objectives (Brady, 2006). According to Scott (2011, p.4), if we start to believe that learning is something that is planned, designed and articulated in higher education, then 'we are divorcing ourselves from the process and outcomes of real learning'. Teaching in higher education is about achieving quality, so it is impossible while relying on simplistic lists of contents. Learning is wider than that and it includes the rich repertoire of the students' varied experiences.

The findings of this study show that teachers do consider other aspects which they think they are relevant for the students such as the confidence of the students. *'Sometimes some students are stressful when presenting, the others they feel comfortable, some of them are self-confident enough so, she took all of that into consideration'*. In assessing students, teachers should have more variables to give opportunity to disadvantage students to achieve their success. Unfortunately, this is not the aim of a well-structured outcome-based learning. So, it is unfair to use the same achievement test for all students (Eldeeb, 2013). According to Brady (2006), outcome-based assessment can facilitate the process of assessment through avoiding assessing vague and non-behavioural statements, however; this is not a valid argument because curriculum designers may list only outcomes which can be measured so this may lead to a 'trivial outcome of learning', teachers should rather be ready to teach more wanted aspects. Therefore, this means that teachers should have more freedom in teaching and assessing because 'education should be an open-ended and should not be constrained

by outcomes and that education should be valued on its sake, not because it leads to some outcomes' (Eldeeb, 2013, p. 10).

All in all, the above studies tackled the interaction between learning in general and assessment in higher education, thus they considered a variety of activities, however; this study explores the interaction between collaborative learning and the assessment parameters. Therefore, I argue that there is an unsystematic link (Constructive alignment) between assessment, collaborative learning and language related outcomes but the interaction also shows the lack of teaching the process of collaborative learning to EFL students. Assessment in collaborative learning is an under researched area which needs further investigation by future researchers (Forsell et al., 2019; Meijer et al., 2020). Thus, this study looked at the different aspects that characterise collaborative learning assessment for higher education EFL students in a new context.

6.2.3. How is it assessed? 'The feedback itself is an assessment' but 'the administration staff need to have the mark'

The findings show that the case of EFL teachers think that when they are designing collaborative activities, they are doing continuous assessment, '*I chose to do it in this way (continuous evaluation), group presentations*'. Achieving continuous assessment is through engaging students in a collection of activities, among which are group activities. According to an official Algerian ministry published document: 'The assessment system is a mixed system combining continuous assessment (research work, oral or written questions, presentations, etc) and final end of semester exams' (Saidani and Khecheni, 2017, p. 16). However, though the findings reveal that students should be given a formative assessment, students have to be evaluated through marks. According to Shepherd's study (2008), formative assessment is the evaluation of students through making observations and asking appropriate questions, these are the qualitative insights in the students' learning which is different from giving grades. Formative assessment is a diagnostic one while summative assessment is evaluative (Bhat and Bhat, 2019). The findings of this study reveal that a minority of teachers (Anes) think that students should be given feedback instead of marks (See page 158) because this is what continuous assessment is about while the majority of teachers are obliged to mark the activities because the LMD system in higher education requires marks. In an official Algerian

ministry published document, it was stated that: Credits (marks) are accounting units that allow for measuring the students' work during the semester (course, homework, practical work, internship, long study, personal work, etc)' (MERIC, 2019, p. 12). Thus, teachers are obliged to mark any activity given to students. According to Fatima: '*...grading is something that is needed by the administration so it must happen*'. Meijer et al (2020) found that a summative group assessment can lead to students' dependency on each other in order to succeed in collaborative assignments but it can also lead to free-riding and social loafing of the members, however; this is when the mark is collective while on the other hand the findings show that it is the individual student who is prioritised in collaborative learning assessment, thus free riding can still exist when the individuals are working separately in the group as the findings show that some students tend to take the biggest share of the work. In a virtual meeting which I attended on Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Higher Education by the Centre of Research and Improvement of Education (CIME), Strijbos (2021) claimed that a summative assessment to the students' efforts in group can lead to the free riding of some students in group, but applying a summative individual assessment is not also an effective method, thus it is not about which one is the best but it is about taking the best from each type of assessment because it should be a 'balancing act' for achieving validity.

Thus, collaborative learning is assessed through giving marks which are necessary for the case investigated, however; collaborative learning is considered as part of formative assessment. Though the LMD system did not specify collaborative learning in particular in the EFL discipline, it rather covered learning in higher education in Algeria. Therefore, it would be important for the policy makers to consider this question in the LMD system so that to clarify when the formative assessment should happen and when should teachers give marks to students. More specifically, it would be important to clarify a strategy to collaborative learning assessment for EFL students through considering the interaction between collaborative learning, assessment and learning outcomes that are discussed in this study through the constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2007).

So, this section represents the interaction between assessment and collaborative learning. It reveals the contribution of this research as collaborative learning assessment is an under researched area in the literature (Ahern, 2007; Gillies, 2007; Brookhart, 2013; Strijbos, 2016; Forsell et al., 2020; Meijer et al., 2020). Forsell et al (2020) investigated the challenges that teachers face in collaborative learning assessment, among these challenges are the

individual performance which is prerequisite for ensuring a valid assessment, it is fairer since the assessment of the group is untrustworthy. Also, the teacher's time constraints and the students' silence can lead the teacher to be biased and it can affect the reliability and the validity of the assessment. One of the focus of collaborative learning assessment was on who to assess, therefore; assessing the individual is important because the members differ (Pitt, 2000; Van Aalst, 2013; Meijer et al., 2020). However, assessing the group is also crucial as individual assessment increases free riding (Strijbos, 2016). There was also a focus in the literature on how to assess collaborative learning. It was found by Meijer et al. (2020) that summative assessment can lead students to the dependency on each other as well as to free riding to get the best mark. However, formative assessment, as part of the findings (Amir) show, is about giving feedback rather than marks, it is about developing the students' learning through constructive feedback from the teacher. According to Strijbos in his recent talk in virtual platform (2021), teachers should understand first the purpose of assessment whether it is 'of' or 'for' learning. The latter has to do more about developing and keeping the learning sustainable for students unlike evaluating the final learning of them. Overall, there is a lack of research on collaborative assessment and more particularly the interaction between assessment and collaborative learning for EFL students in higher education. The case investigated for this research explored this interaction which is represented through reflecting on three key questions: 'who', 'what' and 'how'. This gives a model that EFL teachers can reflect on when designing their assessment, however; as Strijbos (2021) claimed in a recent seminar that: 'assessment in itself is not important but it should be thought of in relation to other aspects'. This research reveals the unsystematic link between assessment, collaborative learning and the language outcomes. Therefore, it is significant if teachers consider the constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2007) when linking those three aspects.

Additionally, this study specifies EFL as a discipline in higher education, the above-mentioned studies on assessment were tackled in other disciplines in higher education. Thus, the interaction between EFL collaborative learning and assessment is not systematic because it is not definite who is being assessed exactly though the individual student is given more importance. In addition to that, the findings show that the LMD system influences the how is it assessed question through the marking system but there is a misunderstanding of the teachers to the assessment of either being formative or summative. It is therefore

recommended that policy makers think of reinterpreting the assessment strategy for teachers through considering the aspects of this research.

To conclude, though this study shows that there is no systematic way of linking between collaborative activities, collaborative assessment and the desired language objectives in group presentations, however; it shows that there is EFL teachers' flexibility of designing activities and assessing students without rigidly following the learning outcomes. It could mean that the case of EFL higher education teachers have 'objectives' rather than 'outcomes' (Bradly, 2006) which shows that teachers have certain freedom in higher education.

6.3. Factors influencing students' collaboration: pedagogy and policy

The findings of this research show that there are some factors which affect collaborative learning for EFL students, these factors are related to the pedagogic choice of the teacher, the module's constraints and the LMD system (policy in higher education).

6.3.1. The pedagogic approach of the EFL teacher

The chosen pedagogic approaches of the teacher depict to what extent collaborative learning can be designed for EFL students. These include: the use of peer-evaluation to students as a way to vary in the teaching methods, the teacher's 'profile' which includes the teacher's ability to empower students' voice in the classroom and to achieve flipped classroom and students' centred learning choice, and finally the traditional methods of teaching.

6.3.1.1. Peer-evaluation in the Academic writing module

The findings show that peer evaluation is one of the teaching methods that is used by the teacher in the writing module for the sake of 'varying' in the teaching methods. This critical evaluation of EFL students to each other's written work gives assurance to the teacher that first, students are learning both content and skills of evaluation and second, students are not feeling bored about the same methods of teaching (Finding in page 127). Showing

students how to assess each other's papers in the writing module will prepare them as future EFL teachers about the strategy of assessment. According to Careless and Boud (2018), we want our students to acquire the necessary skills for giving an 'evaluative judgement' on each other's work. Sambell et al (2019) stressed that when students use the assessment criteria to make evaluative judgments, they can construct such criteria in their mind even better than when the teacher designs for them the criteria. The assessment criteria could be appreciating feedback, making judgments, managing effects and taking actions.

Additionally, the findings reveal that the academic writing task, unlike other tasks, requires students to learn a set of well-defined writing strategies which they will use later in writing their theses and formal papers, thus assessing each other requires a careful grasp of these strategies. *'We cannot ignore that we are speaking about developing different writing strategies'*. According to Brew et al (2009), students become reflective, independent and confident when they use peer and self-evaluation. However, according to Boud et al (1999), for peer assessment to be successful, it should be accompanied with peer learning, thus; linking the objectives to pedagogy and to curriculum. The case studied in this research shows that peer-evaluation appeared with only one participant teacher. This peer-evaluation is the result of an individual learning of the students in the writing module because the writing skill is considered as an individual skill by two participant teachers. Additionally, peer assessment was introduced to achieve two aims, that is achieving the learning outcomes and learning the skills of assessment as future teachers. According to Strijbos' talk (2021) in his recent online seminar on collaborative learning assessment, peer-assessment should be taken with a careful consideration from the teacher because it is difficult to appoint who should be the assessor and the assessee.

To conclude, this section discussed the peer-assessment subtheme which can be used to serve two aims: content and skills. However, though this was a perception of only one teacher, it reveals the aim of the teacher to apply innovative ways of teaching in order to vary in their pedagogy. This will be discussed in depth in the next section.

6.3.1.2. The teacher's profile and the learner-centred approach

Collaborative learning can be affected by the teacher's profile and to how much extent this profile is updated. The findings of this research show that when the teacher has an

updated profile, he can encourage students' autonomy in the classroom. *'This is what I mean by profile. Sometimes teachers push the learners to have this critical way of thinking, this creativity, this awareness about what they need to develop during the lectures, developing a certain way of autonomous, autonomy'*. From the case investigated, it was revealed that students are given freedom in some modules to present lectures in groups, to collaborate with the teacher and to comment on the teacher's way of teaching. According to Chen (2017), students will have their freedom in the classroom when the teacher gives up on his role as a controller and become a feedback provider.

One of the results of this profile is that students have their voice empowered in the classroom. The findings reveal that in one of the EFL classrooms, students can comment on their teachers' way of presenting the lectures. *'She asked the students how was your friend's presentation as compared to her, they said that was much more clearer'* (Classroom observation). Though this was the case of one EFL teacher from the case investigated, but it depicts how the students' voice is encouraged in the lecture. According to Keddie's study (2015), students can be a reliable resource for improving the pedagogy and learning, this is through the connectedness to the learners and the teacher-students relationship. The findings show that EFL students had their voice heard from their teacher because the teacher contributes in the activity with them, So, teacher-students collaboration in presenting lectures is a reliable way for the teacher to ensure that students have grasped the lecture, it is rather a better way for getting the whole class to understand the lecture as the level of the teacher can be higher than the students' level to understand, *'because they are thinking as students and I am thinking as a teacher'*. The study of Zalyaeva and Solodkova (2014) shows that the teacher is the participant among the groups of students, therefore; the teacher is changing the role of him/her as a teacher and become a student to participate in different activities in EFL learning.

The findings reveal that students' collaboration is a hint for having an innovative teaching profile and following the learner-centred approach, *'it's a matter of profile'* (Sara), *'the aim...to ensure the notion of learner-centred approach'* (Amir). Thus, when students present the lectures in groups, the role of the teacher changes from being a controller of the lecture to a listener and a guide to the students' presentation, *'they (students) are presenting their lesson...The teacher is sitting on the back of the class with his notebook and pen'*. According to Kim et al (2014), when the students are given the incentives to prepare for class,

they will have the opportunity to gain the first exposure prior to class and this happens in flipped classroom. According to Simpson and Richards' study (2015), the difference between flipped learning methods and the traditional learning methods is that flipped learning gives students greater flexibility and the ability to control the pace of learning, it makes them feel more responsible of their learning. This confirms the findings of this study for some EFL teachers in higher education.

In short, the teacher changes the way of teaching in the classroom to achieve the learner-centred approach in order to bring new methods of leaning for students, among which are the students' presentations in EFL lectures and teacher-students collaboration, however; the reason behind this flexibility is as the head of the department said: '*At the university...you should try all the ways of teaching...teacher-fronted lecture, collaborative work, individual work, pair works*'. This explains also why traditional methods of teaching are being applied which limit the EFL students' collaboration.

It is argued that collaborative learning for EFL students is affected by the chosen pedagogical approach of the teacher, however; being innovative does not mean students should necessarily work in collaboration. When teachers adopt flexibility in their teaching, they could risk losing the alignment between the activity, the assessment and the language outcomes.

6.3.1.3. The traditional methods of teaching

The findings of this research show that some participant teachers opt for traditional methods of teaching in the classroom, therefore; they find themselves the controller of the students with less students' interaction. Thus, collaborative learning cannot be achieved when they use these methods of teaching.

'The delivery, the demonstration and the explanation of the lecture' is one of the traditional methods that is used by the EFL teacher when the module is considered as content module, that is a module which has less students' interaction, '*in content modules...most of the time i find myself delivering the lecture, explaining, demonstrating*'. This transmissible way of teaching limits the interaction of students to teacher-students questions and answers, '*The*

interaction was questions answers. She started reading passages separately and asking students questions and explaining after that' (Classroom observation).

This method of teaching was described by some participant EFL teachers as 'boring' because it affects the students' attention in the classroom, *'if you bring a handout and be strict and write things, I promise that no one will participate'*. However, there are three constructed reasons which lead the teacher to either change to the traditional methods of teaching or to be traditionally teaching EFL lectures. First is that teachers' way of thinking about the module drives them to select a suitable method of teaching, *'Phonetics module is very practical'*. Therefore, some modules are considered as theoretical where there should be less students' interaction (This will be discussed in next section). Second, EFL teachers are stagnated to change their way of teaching. Though the LMD system encouraged teachers to be updated in their teaching, *'some teachers who belong to the old generation still stick to the way they used to teach in the past'*. The third reason has to do with the teacher's trust on students, *'They can work on it collaboratively but you have to control everything...otherwise will be teaching unknown knowledge to our students'*. The teacher thinks he still should be a controller to students even though they are given freedom to work collaboratively. According to Baron and Corbin (2012), the engagement of students is based on encouraging the students' learning through experience, so this is a challenging task to be done unless the 'whole of university' approach is maintained, yet the latter may not be achieved because there are always different perceptions of key pedagogic approaches by teaching staff and managers in higher education, thus a range of pedagogic approaches can be found within one institution. According to Strijbos (2021) in his talk about collaborative learning in an online seminar, when teachers work with the constructive alignment in linking successfully the activity to the learning aspects, they can prepare students beforehand and prepare the environment of learning. He summarised these elements into interaction, learning objectives, assessment, task characteristics, structuring, guidance, group constellation and facilities. Thus, it is not about the engagement of students in their learning which can be untrustful, but it is about the clearly planned environment and goals which can successfully realise students' engagement.

Therefore, three major teaching approaches are found to affect students' collaboration. These represent the peer-evaluation of the students as a way to vary in the

teaching, the teacher's profile and learner-centred approach that result in students' presentations, students' empowered voice and flipped classroom learning and finally the traditional methods of teaching. This indicates that there can be various pedagogic approaches to teaching EFL in higher education from the case investigated ranging from modern and innovative to classical. However, it is argued that teachers can be unaware of the purpose of collaborative learning when they think they should be 'innovative' rather than suitably being innovative.

6.3.2. The EFL subject

The findings of this research show that collaborative learning is designed according to the structure of the module. So, there are two categorisations of modules: Skills and content modules. That is, participant teachers and students provided their perceptions of different collaborative workings that serve the aim of the language syllabus.

6.3.2.1. Skills modules

These are modules which teach the language skills to EFL students, so there are writing, speaking, reading and study skills modules. The findings show that there are contradictory views about the writing module and collaborative learning. Some teachers think that writing cannot be taught through collaboration because students should achieve an individual skill and the teacher should know the abilities of each individual student, this means monitoring the development of each individual in the skill, *'In writing, that is we should know the writing skills of each student, each student can perform in a particular situation. So, it is not really a group work that is going to promote the skill'* (Fatima), Other teachers think that writing can be taught in collaboration between students through making students evaluating each other's writing (peer-evaluation) yet the work is still done individually. This makes them reflect on their mistakes and each other's mistakes (See page 131). Though the findings show that writing is an individual skill, McDonough (2004) found in group work in Thai EFL context that the result was that students' interaction was necessary for promoting and helping each other to learn vocabulary and grammar in writing, it is also good for practising the English language and for explaining what the teacher already presented in the lecture. According to

Alfares (2017), collaborative learning encourages the interaction between students which leads students to be aware of their mistakes through the feedback provided to each other. So, students become aware of their grammatical mistakes which they can avoid later to write accurate texts. However, when the students achieve the writing skill activities collaboratively, the teacher cannot know the development of the writing skill of each student as each student needs to use their writing skill in their individual academic writing. According to Liao and Wang (2016), students can develop critical thinking and empathy towards each other in their reflective writing of the English language. However, when critical thinking is seen as a negative aspect between students which should be avoided as the findings reveal, students cannot develop acceptance and tolerance to each other's opinions in writing, therefore, writing would be processed more individually in this case.

The findings of this research also show that the oral production module achieves the oral skills of the students, so collaborative activities (role plays and group work in the classroom) are designed to achieve the oral skill of the student. Thus, the collaboration of students in the speaking skill is more needed as compared to the writing skill because it is an interactive module between students. However, the case investigated show that the aim collaborative activities in the Oral production module is to achieve the aims of the content with no awareness about the collaborative skills, in other words; it is to achieve the oral skills rather than collaborative ones, *'students collaborate, each one on his side work on a task so that to have a whole, so they collaborate to achieve a goal'*. According to SRINIVAS Rao (2019), group work in teaching foreign language can help students promote the speaking and the listening skills. When it is intended to teach students specific vocabulary use such as agreeing and disagreeing opinions, then students can engage together in different discussions and competitive games, so students talk equally which is more significant than waiting their individual turn to talk in front of the teacher and students. The findings reveal that some students feel confident talking to a friend rather than a teacher, *'When you speak with your friend, it's not the same thing when you speak with a professor. You feel like, you take it easy just to speak and make mistakes but you do it just in the oral lecture'*. However, the assessment shows that the process (the interaction between students) is not important as the individual product itself when students collaborate in the Oral production activities, this is because, during the interaction, each individual should be assessed based on the

requirements of the assessment (See page 146), *'She (the teacher) assess us individually, I mean each one on his oral defence, I mean she doesn't judge us as a group'*. Though students engage in different oral activities, their collaborative skills are not taken into consideration. However, though the findings agreed with SRINIVAS Rao's (2019), what can be understood is that it is the group working which can facilitate the transmission of learning to students in order to learn a set of oral skills, such as the accurate use of agreeing and disagreeing elements when speaking. According to Liao et al (2019), group techniques can effectively develop the listening, reading and writing competencies for students learning the English language. Nevertheless, it is still important to enquire about the process of collaboration and the interaction itself. Ali Abulhassan and Eltayeb Hamid (2021) advised secondary school teachers to embed skills curriculum in addition to content curriculum. Though their study is in secondary school, but it can be also a reliable way in higher education for teaching the English language, so that students will learn and will be evaluated on the different needed skills which they can use them for learning the content and for beyond the university life.

Thus, students were found to work collaboratively in skills modules, more particularly in the Oral production module, however; the writing skill is an individual skill which needs the teacher's control to every individual student. Though students work collaboratively in the Oral Production module, they have to be assessed on their individual oral aspects. It is therefore argued that the teachers are unaware about teaching the students the process of collaboration because of the unsystematic way of assessment.

6.3.2.2. Content modules

The findings show that these modules teach content such as the ESP module and Didactics. There were contradictory views on how these modules are taught. While some teachers think that they teach them through exposition by *'delivering the lecture, explaining and demonstrating'* and through giving handouts, and asking questions to students, *'I find myself most of the time delivering the lecture, explaining and demonstrating'*, other teachers think that students can collaborate in these modules through presenting lectures in groups in a flipped classroom (See page 132).

The findings show that there are other alternatives to skills and content modules. Modules can be also called practical and theoretical. In this sense it means practical modules are ones which encourage students' engagement in different activities among which are collaborative activities, these are skills modules. Theoretical modules are modules which teach theoretical lectures, so students do not collaborate in these modules, '*...There is less practice of the students, but the teacher delivers different theoretical lectures*'. This means that not any module in EFL can include students' collaboration.

Though the above-mentioned studies (Mc Donough, 2004; Alfares, 2017; SRINIVAS Rao, 2019) show the importance of collaborative learning for EFL students by referring mainly to the spoken and the written aspect of learning English as a foreign language, however; they lack to consider the extent to which the varied subjects of EFL can encourage/discourage students' collaboration. Collaborative working is not always a reliable learning method. It was found that students who practise the collaborative learner-centred mode have not always a high achievement in ESL (English as a second language) learning. So, in teaching literature for instance, students work better through collaboration, however; in preparing students for the General Educational Development test, the teacher-centred was the most effective (Conti, 1985).

The findings of this study reveal a deep understanding of the EFL modules by showing how some EFL modules' content can either encourage or discourage collaboration (Showing the contradictions of teachers and the complexities). However, the complexity is in the teacher's aspiration and reality. The findings reveal that every module should include the students' active engagement in the classroom which is the aspiration of the head of the EFL department, while the reality (teachers' perceptions towards their approaches) shows the differences in teaching content/skills modules (See page 165). While the head of the EFL department refused to call any module as theoretical because no module is theoretical and all modules should include part of practice, '*All modules can be practical if the teacher wants to include practice and activities...I prefer to call the modules as subject and skills modules...I call it according to the system*', other teachers think that in reality they teach some modules theoretically without or with less students' engagement as their above perceptions show.

Thus, the structure of the module (theoretical/practical, skills/content) can tell whether collaborative learning is encouraged or not, however; thinking of how the module is structured is not a static view. There are contradictions between teachers' views about how

the same module can be taught which results in two main conclusions: (1) Higher education EFL teachers have a certain flexibility in the methods of teaching because at the Algerian higher education EFL department there is no curriculum for methods of teaching. (2) The head of the department conceptualises EFL modules according to the LMD system (See page 165) while EFL teachers think of them according to how they experience them in reality. According to Holliday (2005), teachers of TESOL (Teaching English as Second Language) were found to design group work to their students as the major solution to the learner-centredness, so he concluded that learner-centredness is something that teachers think they can *do* in some parts of the lessons. Similarly, this research found that collaborative learning was encouraged by Amir as a learning method for achieving the 'learner-centredness notion'. This research also reveals that the head of the department thinks that every module should include a part of practice which engages the students, however; Anderson (2003) found that teachers have to achieve the communicative aspect of the language in teaching EFL yet, this communicative aspect was not characterised by the teachers as 'an approach' but as 'a type of oral fluency', so some activities which are communicative were encouraged. According to Holliday (2005), this specification of the purpose that is needed to be achieved to teach a foreign language made the 'learner-centredness' and 'communicative' terms limited to mere of activities proposed by the teacher. So, he concluded that there was an emphasis on designing collaborative activities even in those tasks which can be achieved individually just for the sake of realising learner-centredness.

It is concluded that teaching disciplines in higher education can differ, but differences can occur even inside one discipline. Therefore, from the lenses of the case of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students, teaching EFL through collaborative working cannot be the norm for all EFL modules, it can be for teaching some language skills, but it is debatable for other theoretical/ content subjects. Thus, this study, as compared to other studies, looked deeply into some modules of the EFL discipline in higher education in Algeria from the case selected but it is still beneficial for further research to consider collaborative learning in all the EFL modules.

It is therefore argued from this section that there is flexibility of pedagogy in higher education which bridges the gap between the aspiration and the reality, however; though some collaborative workings achieve the module's objectives, collaborative learning is neither achieved nor assessed.

6.3.3. The system of higher education (LMD system)

The findings of this study show that the policy of higher education (The LMD system) affects students' collaboration through the principles of assessment as explained in page 157. So, any group activity should be evaluated summatively, it means any group activity given to students should be given a mark (See page 157). In a formal document about the Algerian LMD system, it was stated that teaching in higher education consists of seminars face to face with teacher and students and practical work to students which should be assessed and graded (Saidani and khecheni, 2017). So, the continuous assessment is based on giving marks to students by the end of any activity. Whereas, according to Forsuland Frykedal and Hammar Chiriac (2017), formative assessment aims to support the students' continuous learning, so it is designed for the purpose of observing the students' development so that to design the following lecture/activities accordingly. It gives a critical feedback for students that helps develop the next piece of writing (Ferris et al., 2015).

The Algerian higher education relies on the 'credit system' which is a form of calculating grades of students. 'Credits are the accounting units that allow for measuring the students' work during the semester (course, homework, practical work, internship, long study, personal work, etc.)' (MERIC, 2019, p.11). The word 'measuring' indicates that students should be given marks on their activities even though they are said to be continuously evaluated. Saidani and Khecheni (2017) said: 'Under the B/M/D system, assessment takes place on a semester basis. Each semester is assessed through final examination and a number of continuous assessments, including in-class-tests, homework assignments, practical tests, reports and presentations'. The findings of this research show that teachers' understanding of a continuous assessment is the evaluation of students on activities through giving marks, while their understanding of summative assessment is the evaluation of students on tests and exams through giving marks, *'it is included in TD mark... As I said for the second semester, they have group presentations, it's out of 10 as the first part of TD mark'*. So, marks are important whatever method of learning students are engaged in. It is inferred that there is a misunderstanding of the difference between formative and summative assessment.

While teachers are advised to design formative assessment to their students, they are at the same time required to mark any activity. This shows the indirect influence of the LMD

system on students' collaboration through the marking system. According to Strijbos (2021) in his talk in an online seminar, teachers should understand the purpose of assessment before designing their collaborative learning assessment strategy, that is there is a difference between assessment of the learning of students and assessment for the learning of students. While the former includes a summative assessment at the end of the learning through giving marks and grades, the latter is an ongoing assessment during the learning through feedback giving. According to Forsuland Frykedal and Hammar Chiriac (2017), a summative assessment is done for the purpose of providing grades by the end of the learning process. It is to determine whether students have achieved specific competencies (Muhammed et al., 2018).

The marking system, in the case of EFL teachers and students, was found to result on competition and dominance, *'She selected for herself the role of a judge...just to get the best mark in the group'*. Such competitive view of students towards each other in the group is the result of the assessment system, it is about 'being the best' to 'get the best mark'. If competition is spread among the members of the group, this means that students would strive to do 'more work' as compared to their friends and be reluctant to share knowledge (Cewinska and Krasnova, 2017). Evidently, this competition is the result of the teacher's way of assessment which prioritises the individual product and compares the amount of the individual work in the group to others by some participant teachers, *'You are going to assess the work which has been done by two students but you do not know to what extent each student has participated in this work'*.

Teachers have to give marks to their students in order to achieve the TD mark which is a requirement, and which shows the influence of the LMD system. Ball (1990) said that some people think that when there is a 'deficit model of teaching', students' motivation and achievement will be lowered, however; sometimes the policy which is based on the market principles drives lecturers and students to focus blindly on competition. According to Reeves (1995), the influence of the work-related qualification system has made the curriculum a less stimulating and enjoyable for the students. That is, the students' efforts are rewarded by tangible awards and not by the enjoyment of the learning. This policy may affect the quality of the teacher-students contact and 'may well affect also the quality of the students' learning experience and consequently their level of motivation and engagement with their learning' (Wallace, 2001). This means that the system of higher education can affect the students' learning in many ways. In this study, EFL students collaborate with the condition of marking

their efforts in collaboration, *'Grading is something that is needed by the administration so it must happen'*. This emphasis on the obligation of grades is what shapes the assessment of activities in higher education among which are collaborative activities though there was found flexibility in other teaching aspects.

This finding also indicates that the policy of higher education in Algeria does not intend to teach collaborative learning, *'The LMD system did not specify whether the activities should be individual or collaborative, it depends on the module and the teacher's freedom of teaching'*. It is all about the practice of teachers to their flexibility in choosing the methods they think it informs the language outcomes. According to Rivza et al (2015), the higher education system of Latvia defines the requirements for students and the grading system including the evaluation of knowledge, skills, competences and when feedback providing is paramount. However, the findings of this research show that the Algerian LMD system does not give a specification to the assessment of skills, content and competencies; that is the assessment does not set clearly how the skills can be assessed differently from knowledge and how the latter can be evaluated differently from a competence. Also, feedback giving is not the aim of the assessment that is mentioned in the official document about the LMD system. Rather, both the ministry document (MERIC, 2019) and the head of the department mentioned the importance of marks for measuring the students' work in activities and in exams. In an official published document about the LMD system in Algeria: *'Personal work is also an important component of the student's training and is assessed and graded'* (Saidani and Kechni, 2017). This indicates that the mark is necessary even if the teacher wants to evaluate the students on their continuous training/learning. So, the Algerian LMD system affects students' collaboration through the way of assessment. The influence is not on *'what is being assessed'* which reflect the criteria of assessment that are set freely by the teacher but it is on *'how is it assessed'* which means formatively or summatively (See page 157). This raises a confusion for teachers on whether to apply a summative or formative evaluation.

Therefore, this section intends to help Algerian policy makers to reconsider the assessment in the LMD system and to clarify the assessment of the different skills and/or knowledge of the students as well as refining the clear cut between formative and summative assessment. It is therefore argued there is a misunderstanding of formative and summative assessment because of the confusion that is raised in the statement of the policy of higher education on assessment.

To conclude, this section considers the three factors that influence EFL students' collaboration. These include (1) the pedagogic approach of the teacher (peer-evaluation to students, the teacher's profile and the learner-centred approach, and the traditional methods of teaching), (2) the EFL subject and (3) the Algerian policy of higher education (LMD system). These factors represent the tension that exists between the teacher's flexibility and the policy.

6.4. Conclusion

As a conclusion, this chapter discussed the three key themes of this study; understanding collaborative learning, the interaction between assessment and collaborative learning and factors influencing students' collaboration. Hence, through following the constructivist interpretivist approach, in the first theme 'Understanding collaborative learning', collaborative learning is understood as a process and product achieving, however; what is worth considering for EFL students is the product because this what should be assessed. In addition, collaborative learning includes the individual and/or the collaborative efforts. These two aspects are the case of the social interdependence theory which reflect the individual accountability and positive interdependence. This leads to understand that either the process (assessing positive interdependence) or the product (assessing individual accountability) is taken for assessment. Though positive interdependence is lacking in the EFL context as most of the time it is the individual efforts which are prioritised rather than the collaborative ones, this is concluded by the aim of the Algerian EFL department in general which does not require students to achieve collaborative skills, thus collaborative working, rather than collaborative learning is a mean conducting to achieve a language product. On the other hand, EFL students think of collaborative learning relationally, thus; they think with whom they work in the group in order to avoid criticism. There is a misunderstanding from students about critical thinking and criticism. While criticism was used as a negative aspect in collaboration, critical thinking is a positive aspect which should be well explained by the teacher (Tosuncuoglu, 2018). Thus, there is a negative interdependence between students which means there is a lack of promotive interaction (collaborative behaviours). In addition, it disconfirms the transformative learning theory's principle on students' collaborative working through disorienting dilemmas and critical reflection on each other. Therefore, this

section answers the first and second research questions which are: What are the perceptions of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students in relation to collaborative learning? and what are the experiences of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students with regard to collaborative learning? It is therefore argued that the process of collaborative learning is ignored because of the unsystematic way of assessment (assessing the individual on the language product), as a result students ignore their social skills including their critical contribution in groups and the importance of heterogeneity of the members of the group.

The second theme is the assessment strategy of EFL collaborative learning, this was the unexpected knowledge from this study which was co-constructed between me and the participants. This reveals the interaction between assessment and EFL collaborative learning. This interaction is constructed through three key questions or a model which teachers can reflect on: who is being assessed, what is being assessed and how is it assessed, thus, the individual and/or the group who are assessed. The 'what' indicates the criteria of assessment. These criteria reflect the content, but they reflect other criteria beyond the content. The 'how' implies the summative or formative way of assessment, thus collaborative learning is considered as formatively assessed but teachers still give marks to students because it is a requirement from the LMD system. This raises a misunderstanding of what formative and summative assessment is because of the unclear statement of policy. Therefore, it is a formative assessment contributing to summative assessment. The three questions (who, what and how to assess) unfold the interaction between collaborative learning and assessment which is influenced by the higher education teacher's flexibility and the system of higher education. This interaction contributes to the broad literature on collaborative learning in the EFL discipline in higher education through helping teachers designing the assessment of their students and being aware of the nuanced aspects of collaborative learning assessment. Thus, this section answers the third research question: How does the assessment strategy interact with collaborative learning in EFL higher education in Algeria? I argue that there is an unsystematic way of assessment of EFL collaborative learning because of the teacher's flexibility and the system of higher education.

The third theme, 'Factors influencing students' collaboration', discussed three main factors: the pedagogic approach of the teacher, the EFL subject and the Algerian system of higher education. These factors shape an understanding of EFL students' collaboration, so understanding these factors means understanding when, where and how students'

collaboration is encouraged. So, first the pedagogic way of the teacher can either encourage or limit students' collaboration. These pedagogic approaches can include peer evaluation of the students to each other, innovative teacher's profile and the learner centred approach. Discouraging pedagogic approach to collaborative learning includes the traditional methods of teaching. Second, the EFL subject is a factor which either encourage or discourage collaborative learning. This is through how do EFL teachers think the subject is structured in terms of content. Therefore, there are skills and content modules, and theoretical and practical modules, yet the aspiration and the reality in teaching shows some contradictions in classifying these modules. This explains the difference in thinking between the aspiration of the head of the EFL department and the reality of the teachers. Thus, this brought the contribution on the literature of collaborative learning through looking deeply into the EFL discipline in higher education and considering the different modules from the perceptions of different categories of people in that context rather than focusing only on one module or considering the EFL discipline as teaching just language skills. This section answers the fourth research question which is What are the factors that influence collaborative learning for higher education EFL students? Therefore, I argue that there is EFL teacher's pedagogy flexibility, however; there is also a policy influence about the assessment type.

Henceforth, the importance of this research is on the theoretical contribution to collaborative learning in higher education for EFL students. The main contribution gives an understanding to collaborative learning through linking between cultural and contextual aspects including pedagogy, higher education system and assessment. Therefore, it helps to explain the contested meaning of collaborative learning in EFL learning in the literature. There is a clear cut between learning the language and learning collaboration. In EFL learning, there could be collaborative working which can be used to achieve language related outcomes but there could be also an embedded collaborative learning curriculum which teaches collaboration as an end with its systematic assessment rather than as medium. In addition, policy makers can make the assessment strategy clear and well communicated to teachers.

Chapter 7: Conclusion, implications, limitations, suggestions and contribution

7. Introduction

This chapter includes the implications of this study, the original contribution, the limitations, and the researcher's reflection. The implications will be relevant for EFL higher education teachers and policy makers in higher education. Although the study was set within the Algerian context, namely EFL, the implications might be relevant for other contexts. These implications represent: the application of the social interdependence theory in the EFL classrooms, pedagogy, EFL collaborative learning assessment, and the policy of higher education. This chapter also considers the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research, as well as the researcher's reflection on the PhD journey.

7.1. Implications

7.1.1. The application of social interdependence theory in foreign language education

This study represents how EFL higher education teachers and students view and practise collaborative learning in terms of process/product and in terms of individual and collaborative skills. Focusing only on the product can lead to losing the essence of collaboration and the development of collaborative skills for students. The findings reveal that collaborative learning can be a means that achieves the aim of the lesson/ activity rather than collaboration itself, Ahmed said: 'Each one on his side work on a task so that to have a whole'. However, social interdependence theory focuses on both aspects of collaborative learning, that is the individual and the collaborative aspects, the process (which is about the promotive interaction where certain collaborative behaviours are practised) and the product (which is the outcome learned) (Johnson and Johnson, 1996; Johnson and Johnson, 2003). The findings show that focusing on the individual student more than collaborative efforts results in free riding and competition in the group. In a competitive situation, one of the students (Maya) said: '... she selected for herself the role of a judge... just to get the best mark in the group.' This suggests students exhibit competitive behaviour in groups, but this is the result of the pedagogy and an assessment system that focuses on assessing the individual

student. However, when teachers think about how social interdependence theory is constructed, this can lead to an enhancement of collaborative learning in the Algerian higher education, that is, 'The transformation from self-interest to mutual interest is one of the most important aspects of social interdependence' (Shimizu et al., 2020) which teachers should achieve among students. Social interdependence shifts group members' interests from the individual to the group. When students recognise that they are one entity, this decreases competition and increases collaboration. It is, therefore, suggested that teachers should apply social interdependence theory into classroom. The following points represent the application of social interdependence theory into classroom by Johnson and Johnson (2007) which are connected with my findings in the thesis:

- The teacher would make a set of decisions before designing any collaborative activity, for example he might make the objective of the lesson clear and assign students to the group. He might also assign the tasks of students in the group and the materials needed for the activity. As the findings of this research reveal that there is an unsystematic way of linking activity to assessment and learning outcomes, teachers might think of the suitability of the activity to the language outcomes and assessment criteria they set in order to achieve constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011).
- If positive interdependence meaning is explained to students and how the individual accountability and positive interdependence is achieved, students would know how to use their social skills appropriately. As the findings of this research show that students avoid 'criticism' because they misunderstand critical thinking in language collaborative tasks, this would be better solved when the teacher explains the positive aspect of critical thinking in EFL and teach critical thinking skills (Tosuncuoglu, 2018). Transformative learning theory emphasises critical discourse in adults' social construction of meaning. Educators would help learners to become aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions. Critical discourse is when educators create a situation where students can challenge and defend their beliefs, explain and assess evidence, and judge arguments with an empathetic and tolerant view of others' opinions (Mezirow, 1997).
- It would be better if students have their process and product evaluated regularly by helping students to process their work in collaboration.
- The findings of this research show that one of the teachers (Samir) thinks of collaborative learning as building a long-term community where students regularly collaborate. The

members of this community are heterogenous who help each other in their weaknesses. Johnson and Johnson (2007) think that the cooperative based group is encouraged for a long-term. This is an informal type of collaboration through sympathetically encouraging and supporting each other, checking each member's homework, providing guidance in writing papers. This can help to develop graduate attributes which students will need after university (Little and McMillan, 2014).

However, if all of these principles are applied without giving proper consideration to how collaborative learning can be assessed, students might still have competitive rather than collaborative behaviour. According to Meijer et al. (2020), if collaborative learning is assessed summatively, students may adopt a performance-oriented approach rather than a learning-oriented approach. That is, students focus more on their individual final achievements rather than collective ones and strive to get the best mark. Unlike Meijer et al's study (2020), which was a reflection on assessment methods in higher education, this study focuses on EFL collaborative learning assessment, and particularly on the interaction between EFL collaborative learning and assessment which was constructed through the 'who', the 'what' and the 'how'. These constructed key questions can be a model to EFL collaborative learning assessment that teachers can reflect on.

Additionally, the heterogenous cluster grouping of students can lead to achieve the helping behaviours in the group (Liao and Wang, 2016). The findings reveal that some EFL teachers and students were against differences in competencies in groups on the basis that lower achieving students would not pull their weight in the task. However, Liao and Wang (2016) found that heterogeneously organised interaction can develop better communication and social skills and can enhance productivity in group discussions, as students who are stronger in one competency can stimulate others through empathetic and helping behaviours. Thus, it is a matter of raising awareness of the benefits of grouping students with different competencies.

7.1.2. Implications for EFL collaborative learning assessment

This study shows the interaction of three key questions (the who, the what and the how), which I consider as a model which EFL teachers can reflect on and shows that assessment is affected by the teacher's flexibility and the higher education system. While the

'who is being assessed' and the 'what is being assessed' are set freely by the EFL teacher, the 'how is it assessed' is controlled indirectly by the LMD system which requires marks. It is therefore advised that higher education teachers think carefully about the extent to which they are flexible about collaborative learning assessment. Assessing students individually in the group is not always effective, according to Johnson and Johnson (2004), collectively produced assignments are not assessed individually because this leads to competition between students, on the contrary students can achieve interdependence which can be done through collective assessment. Moreover, the findings reveal that giving the mark to students can lead to free riding towards each other because they purposefully work towards achieving the desired mark, therefore; they have a performance approach rather than a learning approach. It is crucial that teachers make a clear distinction between formative and summative assessment. According to Strijbos in his recent online talk (2021), we should first define the purpose of collaborative working, whether it is for assessing the learning or assessing of the learning. According to De Hei et al (2015), a combined approach of assessment can help teachers to provide a sound assessment through grades and feedback.

Collaborative learning assessment can be undertaken with the help of the students through peer and self-assessment. Students are confident, independent and become reflective when they use peer and self-evaluation (Brew et al., 2009). Frykedal and Chiriac (2011) describe self and peer assessment as inside group assessment. This is through using a logbook as a strategy to assess the students' own activity level and contribution and their peers' activity levels and contributions. The intra-group assessment is a kind of assessment where an individual assesses the group members (Onyia, 2014; Strijbos, 2016). However, though modern thinking introduced students' agency and students' assessment (Sambell, 2013), there should be a balance between inside and outside group assessment, that is between teachers' assessments and students' self and peer assessment. According to Mutwarasibo (2013), some students think that peer assessment is positive and believe they should play a part in assessment, but other students think they lack the skills to assess each other and find it intimidating and uncomfortable. However, students can have a positive attitude towards peer assessment when they have the opportunity to discuss the assessment criteria with each other (Stanier, 2007).

The findings of this study show that peer assessment has a dual aim: (1) EFL students are assessing each other's papers in academic writing which is part of learning the strategies

of writing; (2) EFL students are learning strategies of assessment which they will apply later in their professional life. According to Carless and Boud (2018), by involving students in the process of assessment, they develop skills for making constructive and evaluative judgment. In this way, they can learn the assessment (Race, 2014) and not just apply it, as the findings of this research reveal that *'It is a kind of training, a training to help them assess their pupils' papers'*. Therefore, peer assessment helps EFL learners to maintain their writing strategies through assessing and being assessed and gives them a grounding in assessment techniques that they will use as future English language teachers. Carless and Boud (2018) explained how teachers can examine and help students understand feedback literacy through initiating feedback, making judgements, managing effects, and taking actions. It is also crucial for future research to consider the question 'who' should assess because according to Strijbos (2021) in his recent talk in an online seminar, this remains problematic. Thus, peer-assessment, though it was found to be effective, the teacher should know who is going to be the assessor and the assessee.

Additionally, the findings show that collaborative learning is assessed in terms of product rather than process, which means that the EFL teacher is taking individual student's knowledge of language into consideration more than the skills applied to generate such knowledge. This was explained further by the aim of the Algerian university which does not encourage students' collaboration. Ahmed said: *'This is not the aim of the university, this is my aim as a teacher, it is the approach with which I believe learning should happen.'* This indicates the teachers' flexibility in applying the approach they think is necessary. It is therefore advisable for the higher education teacher to consider the skills of collaboration which promote the knowledge that should be assessed. According to Forsell et al (2020, p.15): *'Groupwork assessment functions as a means of structuring the learning of group work skills and not as an objective for assessing knowledge'*, thus it would be effective if teachers think of promoting collaboration and make sure that every member is participating and contributing. Some learning objectives are based on goals that are specified in terms of individual knowledge (Lundahl, 2016). The findings of this study show that most of the time students are assessed individually. According to Sara: *'I inform them before the activities starting the assessment and the evaluation you'll be evaluated individually even if it is a group work.'* This denotes the importance of the product.

This research shows that teachers have some flexibility in designing the criteria for assessment. Though teachers are flexible in meeting other criteria beyond the learning outcomes of the curriculum (see Appendix 7: Learning outcomes), collaborative skills are not among the aims of the teacher or the curriculum. According to Forsell et al (2020), in addition to the intellectual contribution there are certain group interaction skills that teachers should design for the assessment of group work. These cooperative activities can include attendance of regular meetings and teamwork (Forsuland Frykedal and Hammar Chiriac, 2011), ability to communicate well with others through politeness (Tadjer et al., 2018), providing help to other group members (Wu et al., 2013; Tadjer et al., 2018), the contribution with positive behaviours (Onyia and Allen, 2012), being adaptable (Lejk and Wyvill, 2010), being sociable (De Wever et al., 2017), taking responsibility (Johnson and Johnson, 2003) and sharing information (Storm and Storm, 2011). These kinds of collaborative skills are relevant if they are part of the teacher's intended list of criteria especially in a context where the teacher has flexibility in assessing other relevant criteria.

Though the findings show that the assessment criteria do not match specifically the objectives, this has to do with the agency of the teachers in a context where teaching methods are not clearly dictated to them. According to Brady (2006), teachers need to incorporate elements that are important for students because sometimes the curriculum does not encompass all the necessary learning outcomes apart from those that can be measured. In the investigated case of Algerian EFL teachers and students, collaborative learning is not the aim of the university to be achieved, it is rather a teaching method that is chosen by the EFL teacher to achieve a particular learning outcome. Therefore, as there is flexibility being applied in the 'what is being assessed', teachers can still consider the importance of assessing the collaborative skills and the interaction of the students. It is helpful to support teachers in this by including collaborative learning skills in the learning outcomes. According to Ali Abulhassan and Eltayeb Hamid (2021), education programmes designed for EFL students should compulsorily include collaborative learning as a learning outcome, this is through hiring teachers from other departments who have the ability for teaching 'syllabus making skills'. Though this is recommended for secondary school, but it would be a reliable strategy for higher education students, that is making a difference between learning the language and learning collaboration. The latter when being explicitly grasped, it can be used to enhance learning English when necessary.

7.1.3. Implications for pedagogy

This study revealed how pedagogy can have an influence on the EFL students' collaboration through the pedagogic approach that teachers believe in and apply. It was concluded that student collaboration can be encouraged when there is an innovative 'profile' which makes teachers use different methods of teaching in order to achieve the learner-centred notion. 'This is what I mean by profile...teachers push the learners to have this critical way of thinking, this creativity, this awareness about what they need to develop during the lectures, developing... autonomy... push the learners to be more collaborative'. However, encouraging student collaboration can be a leading method just to achieve students-centredness, 'The aim as I said to ensure the notion of learner-centred approach' and sometimes the module does not require collaborative learning (collaborative learning is used here according to the participants' perceptions) because some tasks can be done better individually. In this regard, it is advisable for EFL higher education teachers to develop a certain 'profile,' but this should not be a systematic way of teaching all modules.

According to Only et al (2020), there are active teaching methods like group work, but teachers are not always comfortable trying them, especially when learning space is limited. Therefore, group work might be discouraged in large classes. The findings reveal that there is a continuum of pedagogy ranging from student-centred to traditional methods of teaching different EFL modules. Collaborative learning was the case in skills modules while other teachers thought that skills modules should be practised individually for a better understanding to the individual language skills (Section 4 in analysis chapter). Collaborative learning could not be encouraged just for the sake of being 'innovative' or achieving the notion of student-centred learning. Higher education teachers should think of the objective of any collaborative activity, why should it be designed, how and where. According to Stevenson et al (2014), teaching should meet the students' needs no matter what approach is applied, and this can range from modern to classical ways of teaching. Considering teaching as a continuum of approaches will help teachers to design an appropriate learning method for each course/activity. Additionally, having teachers regularly write reflective journals about their students' needs and issues regarding collaborative learning would help them understand when, where and how to encourage it (Kwon, 2014). This study revealed that the

thinking of Algerian EFL students towards collaborative learning is centred on their relationship with each other in order to avoid 'criticism', so if teachers think of this situation; they can communicate with the students the aim of collaboration and how critical thinking can be positive while collaborating. According to Tosuncuoglu (2018), in language activities, students should be encouraged to produce their own content through their interpretation, analysis and critical thinking. Students should not just listen, do the assignment, and give the answers. In short, it would be helpful if teachers are aware of teaching as a collection of methods. It is better to not limit teaching to either classical or modern ways of teaching, rather to teach in a way that achieves students' learning.

According to the teacher participants in this study, collaborative learning describes collaborative activities which can achieve a particular aim related to learning the foreign language. It is important to make teachers aware of the process of collaboration and how this can be significant in teaching students different skills they will need at university and afterwards, whilst also achieving language outcomes. It is advised that teachers are aware of the significance of critical thinking in collaboration and the heterogenous cluster grouping of students which were discussed in this study in order to promote the students' work in group not only in terms of content but also in terms of skills achievements. This study shows that the university does not intend to achieve collaborative learning, it is rather the aim of the teacher. However, whilst learning a particular subject, undergraduate students need to develop graduate attributes, such as respect and rapport towards each other, and understanding and expressing ideas with confidence (CCCU portal, graduate attributes, 2021). The learning outcomes, assessment strategy (the interaction of 'who, what and how') and the designed activity (constructive alignment) can make a clear distinction between subject learning and skills learning. It is significant if EFL teachers, regardless of their flexibility, apply the constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011) in meeting the three elements when designing their collaborative activities, but first to clarify the aim of students' collaboration, whether is it a means or an end in itself or both.

7.1.4. Implications for higher education policy (LMD)

This study reveals that there is an influence from the LMD system on EFL collaborative learning in terms of the assessment strategy, thus; any collaborative activities like other

activities are given marks. The word 'measurement' was stated in an official Algerian ministry document as '*measuring the students' work during the semester (course, homework, practical work, internship, long study, personal work, etc)*' (MERIC, 2019, p.12) which explains the necessity for giving marks to students. However, this creates a complexity and misunderstanding of the teachers to the difference between formative and summative assessment in their practice. This is because first measurement of the efforts of students in different activities is necessary and second, formative assessment is explicitly stated to be encouraged. '*The assessment system is a mixed system combining continuous assessment (research work, oral or written questions, presentations, etc) and final end of semester exams*' (Saidani and Khecheni, 2017, p.16). This model of assessment indicates that formative assessment contributes directly to summative assessment because the efforts of students should be measured. Therefore, it is significant if policy makers in higher education take the assessment process with a careful consideration and reinterpret what has been already constructed.

Setting a clear strategy for assessment and specifically for assessing EFL collaborative learning in higher education is crucial. The 'how is it assessed' element of the interaction between EFL collaborative learning and assessment can indicate the influence of policy in higher education, so considering this question by the policy makers in higher education would draw a clear line between formative and summative assessment and would give the ground for the EFL assessment strategy in higher education. Rethinking about the assessment strategy and how it is structured as far as different activities are concerned would achieve more awareness about the appropriate assessment strategy. In their study, Graham et al. (2018) advised policy makers to make clear what student participation means and how and where it can occur through using the suggested typology in their research. In this research, reflecting on the 'who, what and how' could help policy makers establish a strong collaborative learning assessment strategy. This study is not intended to change or evaluate the whole LMD system, but to raise awareness of the assessment of activities section through making it clear when both formative and summative assessment should be achieved. The findings show that collaborative activities are part of formative assessment, but teachers should give marks when doing such formative assessment; '*grading is something that is needed by the administration so it must happen*' (Fatima). However, when the marks of the activities contribute to the overall mark, the assessment becomes summative and evaluative

(Bhat and Bhat, 2019). If the aim of any designed collaborative activity is the evaluation for the students' learning and not of their learning (Strijbos, 2021), higher education teachers might then think of adapting the LMD system's statement about assessment through encouraging the assessment of collaborative learning through feedback. Giving feedback can mitigate students' competitive behaviours in groups and can make them think positively towards critical thinking in collaboration. According to Al Bashir (2016), lecturers should think of the importance of giving feedback to their students to improve their learning. This could become one of the strategies for improving the LMD system in the Algerian university since it witnessed several adaptations since its application in higher education (Sarnou et al., 2012).

By clearly articulating how assessment should work, the authorities could mitigate some of the teachers' struggle in their practice. In this section, four main implications are discussed which reflect the possible applicable results of this study. EFL teachers and Algerian policy makers are the highlighted category of people to whom these implications can be beneficial. Though students were part of this study, they are seen as the consequences of the teachers' practice and policy's enactment. Students could complain about the different issues raised in group, however; this could be the expected result when they ignore their social interdependence, promotive interaction and behaviours and most importantly their expectation from the teacher's assessment.

7.2. Contribution

The current study contributes to collaborative learning from theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. It contributes to collaborative learning in EFL teaching in particular, and to pedagogic and policy matters in higher education in general.

7.2.1. Theoretical contribution

This study fills a gap in the literature regarding collaborative learning understanding as a practice in the EFL context in higher education. Collaborative learning has gained momentum in literature but according to Johnson (2022) in his recent online conference on Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Higher Education, 'It is an area that has, comparatively, received the least attention'. Collaborative learning is still in its infancy according to both

teachers' and students' perceptions in higher education. According to Le et al (2018), the obstacles that are faced on collaborative learning are conducted from either teachers' or students' points of views but they are still lacking from an integrated understanding of both teachers and students. In the Algerian context, collaborative learning in higher education needs a thorough investigation as it is significantly needed (See quote of Belmekki and Kebiri, 2018 on page 15).

This study not only explores collaborative learning in Algeria, but also adds to the general knowledge that is needed to better understand collaborative learning's complex and nuanced aspects and elements. The original contribution of this study lies in constructing an understanding of collaborative learning in foreign language education. Unlike previous studies which focused mainly on collaborative practices that led to learning the language, this study tries to understand the aim of collaborative learning in language education and the assessment strategies for collaborative learning in EFL activities which are widely overlooked in the literature. The findings show that collaborative learning is a means to achieving language related outcomes and is about the individual assessment of the language product. Collaborative learning is affected by the teacher's pedagogy and the system of higher education. This overriding finding contradicts social interdependence theory which focuses on process, that is interaction skills, as well as individual and collaborative processes.

This understanding will help higher education teachers to develop and enhance their practice when designing and delivering collaborative learning for their students. Students may benefit from this study through widening their understanding of social interdependence notion (Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Johnson and Johnson, 1996; Johnson and Johnson, 2002) in collaboration but it remains the teacher's role to develop the students' awareness through the complex relationship in this study between product and process, individual or group and how these are related to assessment.

A collection of research investigated the effect of collaborative learning and social interdependence theory on EFL learning in higher education. Ning (2010) found that the design of textbook-based team tasks and large class instruction through groups helped Chinese students learning English at tertiary level; fluency in the English language was improved for higher education students in Sudan through three step interview, think-pair-share, Jigsaw, numbered heads together and other activities which enhanced students' communication in English (Alrayah, 2018), and self-confidence in writing skills could be

developed through students' writing collaboratively in Indonesia (Anggraini et al., 2020). This set of research indicates that collaborative learning is considered as a means to achieve language related aspects or to learn the language.

However, other research studies show that collaborative activities could develop other skills for students as well as language. According to Liao et al (2019), grouping techniques could develop the listening, reading and writing competencies of medical students learning the English language and, most importantly, develop their communication with patients. EFL students' collaboration could also enhance student empathy and critical thinking through reflective writing (Liao and Wang, 2016). These two examples hint that student collaboration goes beyond language learning and helps to develop other skills. This raises the complexity in the literature to understand first what is collaborative learning in the EFL context (regardless of the different contested meanings and names in the literature) and what are its aims. Is it about learning the language through collaboration or learning the language in parallel with collaboration? Understanding the aim of collaborative learning in teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language is overlooked in the literature. This research adds to the literature of collaborative learning for learning English in higher education through exploring the aim of collaborative learning. The findings show that collaborative activities can lead EFL students to an individual learning of the language because teachers assess students individually on the aspects of the language. There are contextual factors which affect collaborative learning and these are the teacher's pedagogy and the system of higher education.

This study explores the interaction between EFL collaborative learning and assessment in higher education. This interaction is understood through 'who', 'what' and 'how' which I believe to be a reliable model for EFL teachers when designing collaborative activities. The first element (who) shows that the individual can be prioritised in assessment for giving a fair satisfactory assessment. The second element (what) represents that the criteria do not reflect the collaborative skills but cover other elements beyond the intended objectives. These two elements reflect the EFL higher education teacher's flexibility to deal with them. Therefore, teachers can decide which strategy works better for them and their students. The third element (how) rather raises the contradiction because teachers should give marks to their students while they think they are following a continuous assessment. Thus, the interaction between assessment and EFL collaborative learning is not systematic

because it is influenced by the teacher's flexibility and the policy's enactment. This can be thought-provoking for teachers in terms of reflecting critically on their current practice. In addition, it can limit their scope on the assessment strategy through following constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011) by linking the activity to learning outcomes and assessment. Therefore, this study offers new insight into the literature of EFL collaborative learning in higher education through understanding collaborative learning and the assessment strategy in this context. I then argue that collaborative learning can be a means of achieving a particular language product rather than an end in itself because of the unsystematic way of assessment. The teacher's pedagogy and the policy of higher education have affected collaborative learning in EFL learning.

This research was undertaken in the EFL department in higher education and is a small case study of teachers and students but some of the findings can be generalised to other disciplines in higher education. The aim of case study is to deal with a definite group of people in a particular context (Yin, 2014), but there can be a certain generalisability of the findings. Stake (2000, p. 442) explained how this knowledge transfer works: 'Case research like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape – reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it more likely to be personally useful'. In line with this research, teachers can reconstruct their pedagogy by looking into the pedagogic approach as a continuum of methods of teaching, thus collaborative learning should not happen just to achieve learner-centred approach as there are cases where the teacher should opt for transmissible method of teaching. This research shows that collaborative learning is affected by the approach of the teacher and the system of higher education.

This study also demonstrated the importance of qualitative research and the constructivist interpretivist approach of enquiry in understanding teachers' and students' thoughts and actions. As discussed previously, EFL teachers and students have different understandings of collaborative learning and teachers and students among themselves have different/ contradicted understanding of collaborative learning as concept and as a practice depending on their experience of it. This multiplicity of the truth (Magolda, 2002) yielded the 'understanding' needed to achieve a full picture of collaborative learning. In this study, the analysis chapter connects data from different sources, including targeted interviews and EFL

classroom observations, thus revealing how the constructivist approach was conducted through the varied contextual and cultural knowledge about collaborative learning.

The co-construction of knowledge between the researcher and the participants is understood through the human instrument (Merriam et al., 2002). I decided to divide the analysis into two chapters. The fourth chapter constructs an understanding of collaborative learning from teachers' and students' perceptions and practices. It is composed of two sections: understanding collaborative learning and the practice of collaborative learning. The fifth chapter highlights the contextual factors of collaborative learning including the assessment strategy, pedagogy and policy.

The two analysis chapters provide a thick description to the data where triangulation is an important aspect which proves the validity of knowledge. According to Creswell (2013), people construct their own version of the truth through their perceptions, backgrounds, and experiences. Multiple reality is the key, and it is found out through making social relations (Flick, 2014). First collaborative learning was tackled as a practice and how it is understood by teachers and students, then it was found out that the meaning constructed from teachers and students leads to understand assessment in a specific way, thus; assessment was a key aspect. Finally, the general understanding of collaborative learning and assessment had some underpinning factors; thus there is a significance of those factors from the meaning that was constructed by teachers and students.

An exploration of the arguments of this study with their evidence in relation to the broad literature came in the next discussion chapter. This chapter provides the understanding that lies under the interpretivist approach. In the interpretivist approach, there are two kinds of interpretation: the participants' interpretations and the researcher's voices (Bryman, 2016). '*Understanding*' is a key word in the interpretivist approach and refers to the understanding of the meaning people have developed about their world (Merriam et al., 2002). In this study, my interpretation came as the second phase to the co-construction of meaning between me and the participants. The discussion chapter is exploratory as it gives meaning to the data through exploring the related literature and considering how the findings are related to or different from the literature. The constructivist interpretivist approach (Schwandt, 1994) is what made the whole understanding of my research starting from the questions I ask, the kind of questions depict which approach the researcher should go for (Flick, 2014), to the theorisation I came with about EFL collaborative learning.

This study uses case study which brought a thorough understanding of the research as compared to three major studies in collaborative learning in higher education. A definite case of Algerian higher education EFL teachers and students was selected. This gave an in-depth understanding to collaborative learning in the selected case. This study uses interviews and observations as qualitative research methods to elicit reliable data about collaborative learning. This is different to previous studies on collaborative learning in higher education which selected both teachers and students. Alahdal and Alahdal's (2019) study investigated the perceptions of Saudi teachers and students in higher education using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods which investigated students' perceptions through surveys, whereas this study is purely qualitative with a defined number of teachers and students. In qualitative research, the researcher has openness and flexibility when listening to people's perceptions which can lead unexpected findings to emerge (Hennink et al., 2011). Using a qualitative method allowed a depth and variation of data to emerge in this study. My interaction with students was mandatory and important because I had to ask and confirm with students what unexpectedly emerged as data. In both Sun and Yuan's (2018) and Le et al.'s (2018) studies, both teachers and students were interviewed about collaborative learning in higher education, but the difference between this study and theirs lies in the case selected for research. Sun and Yuan selected students from three language departments, whereas Le et al.'s participant students came from three distinct disciplines in higher education. By interviewing both teachers and students, the case study in this research enables me to deepen the understanding of collaborative learning in EFL learning.

This section provides the theoretical contribution of this research to the general literature on collaborative learning and methodology. It also highlights the original contribution through the complexity that is raised in EFL collaborative learning. Therefore, I consider this piece of work to be thought-provoking in terms of understanding the meaning of collaborative learning in EFL. Its significance lies also in its applicable facets to enhance higher education learning which is aligned with the demands of the profession and future careers which requires students to not only be equipped with knowledge but also with the needed skills.

7.2.2. Pedagogical contribution

The study sheds light on the possible impact of teacher's pedagogy on students' collaborative learning. It reveals the flexibility of teaching of either encouraging students' collaboration or not depending on the methods of teaching and the EFL module. The findings show that there is a range of teaching approaches through which collaborative learning can be encouraged or discouraged which include peer-evaluation, the teacher's profile and the student-centred approach and finally the traditional methods to teaching. However, it is not a question of when collaborative learning should or should not be encouraged but it is about the conclusion that is drawn from this which reflects a continuum of teaching approaches in higher education. Several things can lead teachers to teach in one way rather than another. According to Baron and Corbin (2012), engaging students should achieve students' learning through experience; however, this cannot be achieved until the whole of the university is maintaining a particular teaching approach, thus possible variations can be found to exist among teachers. The findings show that there is no university-wide drive to encourage collaborative learning. *'In higher education, we don't have a precise curriculum... you should try all the ways of teaching; teacher-fronted lectures, collaborative works, individual works, pair works'* (Ahmed). Therefore, this study advises higher education teachers to consider the approach they are using and the extent to which they can be flexible about following different approaches in the classroom. Teachers should think whether collaborative learning is the result of their followed teaching approach, *'it is the approach with which I believe learning should happen'* (Ahmed) and when collaborative learning does not achieve learning objectives, they should switch to a different teaching approach. According to Lubke et al (2021), teacher's flexibility had an indirect effect on student behaviour by increasing opportunities to make friends and socially integrate and this was particularly so for students with emotional or behavioural disabilities. Gayon and Abao Tan (2021) claimed that teachers need more training about how students are doing and should be served through communicating and brainstorming teaching strategies in the teaching community. Thus, flexibility and change can be a bliss when it is managed but also when it answers the needs of students.

Moreover, the EFL module can have teachers teaching differently. This is not connected to how the content of each module is structured or what teaching methods are required for each module, it is about how teachers think the module should be taught. In other words, the same module can be taught differently by different teachers. According to Gayon and Abao Tan (2021), differentiated instruction can be used as a strategy to cater for students' needs; they concluded that teaching can be varied even though the same subject is being taught. This reflects, in this study, the teacher's flexibility and reality which is contradicted with the aspiration of the higher education institution. Therefore, if the teacher thinks it is practical, rather than applying the transmissible model of teaching, students can then interact with each other. Following the university's aspiration that '*every module should be practical*' (Ahmed) can lead teachers to design activities which do not necessarily reflect the objectives of the module or lesson. This research shows that there can be a misalignment between collaborative learning and EFL learning objectives, as in the ESP module where other criteria are assessed (see Appendix 7). Though this has to do with the teacher's flexibility to teach different aspects which the module does not reflect, the teacher should be aware about the extent to which collaborative learning can be linked to the learning objectives of the module. According to Senaratne and Gunarathne (2019), an objective-based approach at tertiary level helps teachers organise activities for students that teach them professional skills and capacities. Therefore, flexibility can be good for teaching new aspects but alignment can make teaching more organised and purposeful.

To conclude, EFL higher education teachers should consider why students need to collaborate and whether collaboration achieves the required aim. If assessing the individual within a group is prioritised because the students' records require individual marks, teachers should think of the EFL activity design and ensure it reflects the learning objectives and assessment requirements.

7.3. Limitations and suggestions for further studies

No research is without limitations and here I consider the limitations of this study in terms of theoretical findings, methodological approach, and data collection procedures.

Though this study informs the reader of the interaction between assessment and collaborative learning through 'who is being assessed', 'what is being assessed' and 'how it should be assessed' (these were not the starting questions of my research but they are co-constructed knowledge between me and the participants), which I consider as a model that EFL teachers can follow, it is still important to know 'who should assess', i.e. the teacher, the students or both. Because of the limited data on this particular aspect (peer-evaluation), I would recommend future researchers to consider the three questions as starting points, alongside the question of 'who should assess'. This would make the interaction between assessment and collaborative learning clearer as it could be explored more deeply. Also, since this study found that the interaction between collaborative learning and assessment is defined by the teacher's flexibility and the system of higher education, exploring this additional aspect in assessment, 'who should assess', may lead to other factors emerging.

In this study, I looked at contextual and cultural factors that may affect Algerian higher education EFL students' collaboration, one of which was the LMD system of higher education. However, these factors are within the Algerian institution of EFL. Exploring other factors which are outside the EFL institution would contribute to the literature of EFL collaborative learning. Future researchers could, for example, explore how Algerian society is built in terms of family, friends, workplace, etc and how this might impact on students' collaboration at university. The findings show that students' collaboration is affected by the pedagogy of the teacher, with aspects such as 'criticism', competition and free riding emerging but it is still not clear how collaboration of these students look like outside the educational setting which might have an effect on their personality.

Future research could also investigate the psychological collaborative aspect of the EFL students. The focus of this research was on visible and observed interaction between students. Social interdependence theory focuses on the external relationship of group members (positive interdependence, individual accountability and promotive interaction) (Johnson and Johnson, 2007), but the theory also covers three psychological processes: substitutability, cathexis and inducibility (Deutsch, 1949) which are under researched in the literature. Therefore, it would be significant for future research to enquire whether students are psychologically collaborative, and they have the personal intention to engage with each other through investigating the three above elements.

Virtual collaboration was not found to be a learning method for the case of Algerian higher education EFL students but started to gain ground during the pandemic period. This was not fully covered in this research due to the difficulty of accessing participants, apart from a few who were contactable through email. It was understood from the data that virtual collaboration is designed by the teacher but it takes the same way as face to face collaboration. It would be highly significant for future research to explore virtual collaboration in this context as it is a new way of learning and the researcher could learn about and contribute to the literature through investigating different factors, such as assessment in collaborative learning during the pandemic period. According to Cochrane, in an online conference on Teaching, Learning and Assessment in higher education (2021), designing an authentic online collaboration is problematic and challenging.

This research is bounded in terms of the case selected for the study and, as such, it aims to *understand* (Meriam et al., 2002) collaborative learning for this particular case. However, exploring the issue using a larger number of participants may give another understanding of collaborative learning, as this may lead to other aspects emerging. The students selected were undergraduate EFL students; future research could look at collaborative learning for postgraduate students in EFL higher education in Algeria. According to the findings of this study, collaborative learning is teacher's initiated when it is a formal way of students' collaboration, so to what extent is this also the fact for postgraduate students where there is less teacher interaction and contribution, and what does collaborative learning for EFL postgraduate students look like? This study shows the similarities as well as the contradictions between the perceptions of the head of the EFL department and the rest of the teachers. While the head of department thinks of the EFL modules in terms of the LMD system, the teachers think of them in terms of how they should be taught. It would be useful for future research to explore this point and look for the factors that lead to the aspiration of someone with authority at the university being different from the reality of teachers. Although this study looked deeply into the EFL discipline and various modules, due to the low number of participants and few focused classroom observations, it did not cover all EFL modules. A larger scale study would give more description and characteristics of other EFL modules, yielding a greater understanding of how collaborative learning would work in different EFL modules.

The period spent in the field collecting data was three months which was sufficient for me to obtain information from a particular pre-defined case of people in order to establish an understanding about collaborative learning. My position ranges from being an outsider to an insider in the field (as already discussed in Chapter 3). However, becoming a totally an insider undistinguishable member from people in the field would lead to the researcher building a strong rapport with the participants (Mead, 1934) and may lead to participants feeling more comfortable sharing personal experiences. In this study, the data from teachers was gathered mainly through interviews, but owing to their time constraints and the exam period in January 2020, it was difficult to do follow-up interviews, although I was able to do a short follow-up interview with one of the teachers and the head of department. A longer period in the field would allow more data to emerge. An ethnographic study would give a holistic understanding of the context through observing real situations of collaboration and outside collaboration and how different contextual factors may have an influence on students' collaboration.

7.4. My personal research journey

Being the driver of this research journey has been empowering, both academically and personally. Engaging in research and reading helped me to make sense of this study.

Reading about the approach that informs my interpretations and meanings helped me to realise not only what sense I am making of the world but also how to make sense of it. This means I am now able to understand why I think the way I do and how this thinking reflects my decisions, not only in my academic journey but in my life as a whole. I picture this research journey as series of stages encompassing reading, accessing and talking to people, thinking ethically, observing, interviewing, analysing, redrafting and evaluating. These were the stages that developed my reflective, evaluative and analytical skills.

I was continuously reflecting on the new insights that were emerging and the knowledge that was developing as a result of my supervisor's provocative questions, which forced me to think deeply. The discussions we had about the topic drew my attention to the misunderstandings, complexities and flaws that emerged from my thinking and kept me focused on the main thread of the topic.

I learned how to be aware of my own subjectivity, especially in a context which I had already experienced as an EFL student, and to avoid being judgemental of the different views that emerged from teachers' and students' perceptions. I let the data emerge as it did, giving room for unexpected knowledge to emerge, in other words the multiple truth (Magolda, 2002) that derives from the data. I call this the co-construction of knowledge between me and the participants because it is not just about questions and answers but is also about the unexpected, which occurred through my flexibility and prompts (King and Horrocks, 2010). I found myself eager to understand why people react and act in the ways they do, using the human instrument (Merriam et al., 2002) to build this *understanding*. I realised that making sense of an issue cannot happen without understanding contextual and cultural factors. This is important in countries like Algeria. Being aware of external influences will also assist me when conducting further research.

Through reflecting on the process, I can understand the distinctions between how I conducted research as a Masters student in Algeria and how I was conducting research as a PhD researcher. My Masters thesis had to use a mixed method approach using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. My supervisor insisted on this, saying no research can be conducted with a single approach. Also, one of my participants in the field told me that 'research seems easy in UK since you are following just one approach' which indicates a lack of awareness about qualitative research. After engaging with qualitative research through reading, applying, and reflecting on the complexities and nuances in my PhD, I understood why we used to think of research in that way. As a Master student, there was a shortage of 'how to conduct research' books as all the students relied on a book written by two EFL teachers in the department which aimed at imparting the basics of conducting research. As a Master researcher, I had to read this book alongside previous Masters theses to see how research was conducted. As a PhD researcher, I see a development in thinking about the process of qualitative research through being aware of theoretical assumptions, underlying methods and research tools, and analysis procedures. This understanding will help me to start any research in the context of Algeria by being aware of the systematic process of qualitative research. As a future teacher in the Algerian university, I will propose my knowledge and background on qualitative research be taught in the methodology module, which will benefit students and researchers.

On a personal basis, this study helped me reflect on collaborative learning and develop my own understanding of it. My thinking radically changed between the start of the research and the findings. My thinking had been influenced by contextual factors and my experience as an Algerian higher education EFL student. As an undergraduate student, I was always thinking about the product of the work and the mark I would achieve more than the process itself. This study helped me realise what was going on in my mind and what are the influences that leads the behaviour to be in a particular way. This is the motive for conducting such research and for understanding the complexity in the literature. Thus, this humble study enlightens the reader about EFL collaborative learning. It brings a new insight that is understanding the aim of collaborative learning in learning English language. This study shows that collaborative learning is considered as a product because EFL students should be assessed on their language individual product. This contributes to the social interdependence theory which rather emphasised the process in collaboration which is represented through the interaction and the group skills. This study reveals that in EFL, the process is neglected because of the unsystematic way of assessment. Hence, EFL collaborative learning, in this study, is affected by the assessment policy, the pedagogy of the teacher and the Algerian policy in higher education.

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List of appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical forms



<Perspectives on Collaborative Learning: A case study of teachers and students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within an Algerian higher education institution>

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by *Amel Boughari*

Background

Interaction between students either inside or outside the classroom might be a way of learning through which students can achieve success, therefore, this PhD research examines the Algerian EFL HE teachers' and students' perceptions about collaborative learning. First, it is going to construct an understanding of collaborative learning from the perceptions of both HE EFL teachers and students, that is; what they think of it as far as EFL learning in higher education is concerned and what are the aspects and practices of collaborative learning (according to their own views) that take place inside or outside the classroom. In addition, it investigates the main factor that may encourage or discourage the interaction (collaboration) of students between each other. By taking into consideration the nature of the syllabus that EFL students are studying, collaboration between students might/might not be a suitable learning method in this context, yet HE EFL teachers might still have their own understanding of the interaction (collaboration) between students.

Second, this research aims at understanding to how much extent the LMD system might have an impact on EFL learning to students, that is to say; to understand whether the LMD system has brought changes to learning practices in the classroom and what kind of practices these would be. These depend on the HE EFL teachers' views and perspectives towards the system and also how learning is actually happening now under the LMD system.

This PhD research is funded by the Algerian ministry of Higher Education for three years to be completed.

What will you be required to do?

Participants in this study will be required to give their perceptions about EFL students' collaboration as it might be actually happening in the EFL department. That is by understanding to how much extent EFL students interact with each other inside/outside the classroom? How this interaction is practised? How do HE EFL teachers refer to it and what might encourage or discourage it?

Therefore, collaborative learning between EFL students might have different aspects depending on how HE EFL teachers and students view it and depending on the nature of lectures/seminar which may encourage or discourage students' collaboration or interaction

with each other. The participants (HE EFL teachers only) will further give their understanding of the LMD system in relation to EFL practices in the classroom and what impact this might have had (If there is any impact).

To participate in this research you must:

For higher education teachers, they should be:

-Higher education teachers in the EFL department.

- Teaching English (Modules that are in English)

-They should not be practionners.

-Experienced and novice teachers

For students, they should be:

-EFL students (Studying modules in English)

-Undergraduate students (From Bachelor and Master level)

Procedures

Participants will be asked to take part in the interview which will last for about 30 mn as a maximum (It can be less or more according to the interviewee). The interview will take place according to the arranged time and place that is decided between the researcher and the participant. Concerning observation, the researcher will not be a participant with students but she will do field notes observation.

Feedback

The participants will be thanked for their volunteering participation in the study. After the observation take place, the researcher might discuss briefly the collected field notes with the teacher (For clarification).

Confidentiality and Data Protection

On the legal basis of *the consent*, all data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's own data protection policies. No unrelated or unnecessary personal data will be collected or stored. The following categories of personal data will be processed: *The perceptions and views of both HE EFL teachers and students and the data gathered from classroom observation concerning students' and teachers' behaviors.* Personal data will be used for the analysis, any personal data will be treated confidentially and securely. No participant will be identified by name and the data will be stored in the CCCU system. Data can only be accessed by the researcher, the supervisor and the chair of studies. Data may be transferred outside of the European Economic Area (EEA) since it is collected in Algeria, so the researcher will send the research findings to her supervisor and this will be done through the CCCU system.

After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed) and held for a period of *5 years*.

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Perspectives on Collaborative Learning: A case study of teachers and students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) within an Algerian higher education institution.

Name of Researcher: Amel Boughari

Contact details:

Address:

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07493785769

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a.boughari1196@canterbury.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researcher will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.
5. I agree to be recorded in the interview.

Name of Participant:	Date:	Signature:
Name of person taking consent (<i>if different from researcher</i>)	Date:	Signature:
Researcher: Amel Boughari	Date:	Signature: Amel Boughari

Copies: 1 for participant
 1 for researcher

Dissemination of results

The results of this study will be published in the CCCU library and it will be accessed online.

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. You will be free to (i) withdraw consent at any time without having to give a reason, (ii) request to see all your personal data held in association with this project, (iii) request that the processing of your personal data is restricted, (iv) request that your personal data is erased and no longer used for processing.

Process for withdrawing consent

You are free to withdraw the consent at any time without having to give a reason. To do this, you can send the researcher an email and state that you want to withdraw your participation.

Any questions?

Please contact *Dr Liz Hryniewicz* (lizhryniewicz@canterbury.ac.uk) and *Dr Judy Durrant* (judy.durrant@canterbury.ac.uk) or you can contact the faculty of Education in CCCU (education@canterbury.ac.uk).

Appendix 2: Interview's questions

Teachers' interviews

Understanding of collaborative learning

- 1- What are the modules you are teaching?
- 2- How do you see those modules?
- 3- What do you understand by collaborative learning for students?
- 4- Do you see collaborative learning as the process of learning or the outcome or both?
And why?
- 5- What is the difference between collaborative and group work? (Question asked not to all the participants but only to those who mentioned such connotations).

Instruction of collaborative learning

(These questions are asked as a guide to my interview, however; since it is a semi-structured interview, more positive and prompt questions were being asked during the interview).

- 1- Can you remember a collaborative activity you gave to students either inside or outside the classroom?
- 2- Can you describe the task that students had to do in groups?
- 3- Can you describe the complexity and the relevance of that task to students?
- 4- What is the relationship between that activity and the learning outcomes that are mentioned in the syllabus you are teaching?
- 5- How many members were in the groups and how they were chosen?
- 6- If the activity was outside the classroom, how students were working on it?
- 7- If the activity was inside the classroom, how students were interacting with each other and working with each other?
- 8- What was your position in the classroom?
- 9- What do you think of critical thinking in groups? (The answer to this question could be derived from the overall interview. I mentioned the question here as a guide to the interview).

- 10- What was the aim of such activity?
- 11- What about the aims (learning outcomes) of other collaborative activities you give to your students?
- 12- How did you manage to assess this collaborative activity?
- 13- What about the way of assessment of other collaborative activities to your students?
- 14- Are there aspects of learning from such activities? what are these aspects?
- 15- What do you think of collaborative learning between EFL students in virtual classrooms?
- 16- Beyond the assigned classroom activities, what do you think of students' collaboration outside the university?

Contextual factors of collaborative learning (This broad title can include advantages and limitations)

- 1- Are there cases when do you think that collaborative learning should not be encouraged? (Or should be encouraged)
- 2- What are the obstacles that you think you are faced with when giving collaborative activities to students? (This question came as a reaction to the previous question. So depending on whether teachers favour or do not favour students' collaboration, what are the advantages or the obstacles)
- 3- Do you face issues related to students when they work in groups, if yes, what are these issues?
- 4- What do you think of the aim of collaborative learning in the EFL department in general?
- 5- According to an official ministry published document on the Algerian reform in higher education which is entitled 'Overview of the Higher Education System' in 2017, ' Practical work to students should be part of learning in classroom likewise lecturing through seminars, therefore higher education teachers should include from 20% to 50% of practical activities in their curriculum', so what do you think of this?
- 6- Is there an impact from the LMD system on collaborative learning between EFL students? If yes, how? (Question asked to the head of the EFL department).

Students' interviews

Understanding collaborative learning

- 1- What do you think of students learning together?
- 2- In which modules you see that EFL students can have collaborative tasks with each other?
- 3- What kind of collaborative activities you are engaged in?

Instruction of collaborative learning

- 1- Can you remember a collaborative activity which you have done in one of the modules you are studying?
- 2- What was the nature of such activity?
- 3- Was it inside or outside the classroom setting?
- 4- What do you think of the relevance of this task as compared to the objective of the lesson?
- 5- How many members were there in the groups? And how did you decide about the members?
- 6- If the activity was outside the classroom, what was the position of the teacher?
- 7- How were you working on the task?
- 8- If the activity was outside the classroom, how did you manage to meet and work on the task?
- 9- Did you decide about the roles of the members?
- 10- Were there disagreements in the group and how was your reaction to that? (This question is a guiding question to the students' perceptions, thus; originally I asked how students were treating each other in the group?).
- 11- What is the aim of this activity?
- 12- What do you think the aim is of any collaborative activity in the EFL module?
- 13- How did the teacher manage to assess that collaborative activity?
- 14- How are you usually assessed in any collaborative activity you do?

- 15- What are the learning outcomes (aims) of that collaborative activity?
- 16- According to you, are there any general aspects of learning from collaborative tasks?
if yes, what are these aspects?
- 17- What do you think of virtual collaborative learning?
- 18- Have you been part of such virtual classrooms? if yes, can you tell me bit about them?

Contextual factors of collaborative learning

- 1- What are the issues that you face when you work in groups with other students?
(This is a guide question for my interview, however; I asked beforehand how do students feel when being in groups, hence some issues are encountered).
- 2- Why do you think some teachers may resist giving collaborative tasks? (It is a follow up question to how do teachers react to collaborative learning?).
- 3- Do you prefer doing tasks in groups or individually? Why?
- 4- Outside the university, do you socialise with people such as friends?
- 5- Beside the required classroom activities, do you think that students collaborate with each other?

Appendix 3: Observation sheet

Teacher: Dr Selima Date : 27th November 2019 Class : L1 (Licence 1) Module: Oral Production. Classroom design: A U shape in the EFL laboratory.

Nature of the session A practical session, students did activities and presented them in pairs/groups.

Nature of the collaborative activity

students were working in pairs and others in groups but most of them in pairs. The activities were oral, so they were mainly discussing with each other after doing the activity written. There were 3 activities: First activity was a group work between students, a discussion of a previous prepared activity between students in pairs which was about discussing a topic of interest, yet the aim of the teacher was to see whether students use the expression of agreement and disagreement and how to conclude. The second activity was a listening activity where students had to listen to a recording twice and answer the questions displayed in the data show. The third activity is a role play where students should make an advertisement about something they choose, they were mainly working in pairs and they were playing roles to make advertisements, such as: making university clubs, movies, a country... The activity of listening seemed helpful for the students to do the following activity as it gave some information about how to advertise and what expressions to be used.

Time spent

There was a time given to each activity, the first activity did not take a long time as it seemed that not all students did the work they were required to do at home. The second activity took quite a long time, about 30mn and the last activity (Making advertisement in pairs) was the longest one which took more than 30 mn.

The teacher's position

The teacher was active and interactive during students' work with each other. She was moving around and checking. She told me during the observation that she has to check many things including whether they need help in ideas, checking if they used grammar correctly, idiomatic expressions and also fluency and knowledge about the topic, sometimes students find it difficult in selecting words, so the teacher helps.

Interaction between students

The students seemed interacting yet it was a large classroom of students. The students were using Arabic language also. Some students seemed laughing, probably they were not interested. The work was in groups yet I have realized that some students were doing the task individually in papers and then they discuss all together.

Assessment

There was no clear way of assessment of the activities during the class, yet this question was asked to the teacher after the class and she said that she does not do the assessment during the class time but when she comes back home, she adds each student points (+1, +2...) he/she deserves. She said that she does not take the production of students as a group but rather she evaluates each student individually because some students deserve a better mark than the other though they work in groups! And there are many criteria for that that she had checked during the class, such as achieving what was required from the them in the group like the use of idioms, pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, knowledge about the topic, the way they present, using agreement and disagreement sentences. She added that in order to do that she has to have at least a long experience with students and she has to learn her students' names and faces. During the observation, all what I have realized about the teacher is that she was giving feedback at the end of each collaborative activity.

The final product

Students presented their work which was an oral advertisement. The work has already been done on papers yet it seems that some students could not get rid of papers and they were

reading from it, other students could present the work orally without relying on papers. By the end of the session, the teacher told me that she achieved the aim of the activity which is students learn some expressions, idioms related to the lesson and it is always good to present in front of the teacher so that students do not make mistakes.

Other observations

I have realized these students were working with each other in 2 different activities yet since they are first year students, there were some issues like large classrooms, it seemed difficult for the teacher to turn around all the groups and see, in addition the way the classroom is designed in a U shape, it was difficult for students to move and form groups. Students seemed do not know how the work in group should be done. Most of students were working individually on their papers and then they talk together, it seemed also that there were a lack of tolerance between students, as some students did not agree to work on one topic and they were like fighting with each other about the topic and they just split into individual work. Some students' presentations were great because the teacher was amazed by their final work in terms of the topic, the use of the required expressions, the presentation, the creativity they had, for instance some students turned the work into an interview and they have been interviewing each other about the advertisement.

Appendix 4: Interview's transcript

Interview with Prof. Fatima (November 2019): An Algerian higher education teacher of Written expression and ESP modules. The interview took 1 hour, it was divided into two sections, it was done in the teaching staff room, yet there was some noise and some interactions during the interview.

Me: Can you tell me about the modules you are teaching?

F: am teaching in fact writing in the first year, writing to third year students and dissertation writing to Master students.

Me: So generally they are all about academic writing?

F: Yes, the three modules are concerned with Academic writing?

Me: did you teach in previous years other modules?

F: yes in previous years I used to teach many modules but I am more specialised in writing. I taught oral expression, I taught civilization, I taught doctoral seminars in different disciplines related to linguistics, emm, I taught (thinking) phonetics, linguistics.

Me: ok, how do you see the modules you are teaching currently?

F: Well, they are practical modules, they are mostly practical (Emphasis). That is we bring just some theories but the most important in the course is they practice. Ah regarding dissertation writing, it is more theoretical. We can bring some practice from time to time but it is mostly theoretical (She smiles and looks at me whenever she finishes her talk).

Me: Talking about practice, I have actually a quote from an official document published about the LMD system. According to an official ministry published document on the Algerian reform in higher education which is entitled: 'An Overview of the Algerian System in Algeria' in 2017. It says that 'Practical work to students should be part of learning in classroom likewise lecturing through seminars. Therefore higher education teachers should include from 20% to 50% of practical activities in their curriculum' So what do you think of this?

F: I totally agree! (Emphasis). I totally agree because if you teach just the theory it will remain theoretical!. that is mainly the teaching skills! That is students should have some kind of practice, ok? Anyway, most of the modules we teach at the department share or have a big part of practice. That is we don't have lectures as other disciplines may have.

That is lectures hold in amphitheatres. That is most lectures are rather kind of practice in groups.

Me: What kind of practice students are involved in in your classroom?

F: yes, first in the classroom of writing, they are supposed to write, yes?. So that is we deal with a type of writing which answers their needs, Ok?. (she started talking to other teachers, they seem new teachers she knows. Noise was at the teaching staff room). So, hmm (she is thinking). Yes, practice in writing. As I told you we introduce them to a type of writing ok?, then they see how it works in authentic materials, then of course they put this knowledge into practice. That is we try to make them compose and write individually according to this type of writing. Sometimes bit by bit, sometimes step by step and until we achieve the final type where targeting at the beginning. This is the kind of practice they have and most importantly the type of writing they are introduced to serve their purposes Ok?. That is to say, for example in the third year each individual is required to answer essay questions in the exam, to keep his research papers, emm (remembering) to do some kind of research and summarize articles. So, we try to introduce them to this kind of writing. This is the purpose of the course. The purpose of the course is to prepare them in their academic career and probably why not professional career. Ok?.

Me: And in giving them these practical activities, how they are supposed to do these activities?

F: How do they react to the activities given to them? (She seems she did not understand the question well)

Me: Not reaction but are they required to do the activity in any particular way?

F: Ah Yes of course yes. This is very important . Most of the activities are individual. There are some activities are done in pair, in pairs, mainly in pairs but this is at the level of the first year. At an advanced level, most of the activities are individual because we need to know emm (Thinking) we need that everyone possesses or self-possesses his achievement, his competence to do the something, ect...you know. So this is why, (changed of structure) so at the beginning it may be some kind of pair, pair work, individual work; but at an advanced level it's purely (interruption) purely individual work. It depends on the specificity of each course. In writing, that is we should know the writing skills of each student, each student can perform in a particular situation. So it is not really a group work that is going to promote the skill, alright?

Me: And why do you see in first year they might work in pairs?

F: Yes, that's a good question!; because in first year I mean their language ability is lower than at an advanced level therefore they need some kind of help ok?; to achieve let's say ...emm (Thinking) an acceptable piece of writing. So, this is why more collaboration is allowed at beginners level or at intermediate level but when it comes to an advanced level no!, Ok?; but now collaboration can be seen in something else. They may collaborate to realise a research work, oK?. They may collaborate for data collection, collaborate in emm (Thinking) I don't know in the realization of project, but not in the practice of writing. (Interruption).

Me: You've just mentioned that group work can work better for data collection.

F: Emm, we do it also for Master's dissertation writing, emm generally a pair work, generally a pair work and I will tell you, I will tell you something, this is not so much to encourage students to do the work collaboratively but it is because of the number of students ok? And the lack of supervision power. This is the reason for that. It's not because we do encourage collaborative learning at the university but because of lack of supervisors. We encourage students to do a pair work.

Me: What do you prefer as a teacher?

F: Emm, if it is collaborative, we cannot really assess the ability of each student, Ok?, Alright?. (interruption)

Me: (I reminded her of what she said). So you cannot assess the abilities of each student.

F: yes, because students will have to work. I will have the ready-made work. That is, you are going to assess the work which has been done by two students but you do not know to what extent each student has participated in this work, ok?. So what you need to evaluate is the work itself. Now, probably one student has been emm, has worked more, I don't know so you see what I mean?

Me: What about the module you are teaching that is writing?

F: Yes, the same reason, in practice, we do not emm we cannot evaluate, because in writing we need to know the weaknesses of each, the achievement of each...etc. this is the only way to help writers develop their writing. I worked with many students in my teaching experience. Many of them, mainly brilliant students like to work alone, Yes! They like to work alone why?, because they prefer working on their own way and sometimes they complain about the laziness of others or let's say about the weak work of others. That is they tell you when I work with X and Y, X does not provide any work. Y provides a work but it is a weak work that I should correct again and see again, so I prefer to work alone. Now, when students are let's say are emm at the same proficiency level, they can realize an

interesting work in collaboration. Do you know when we opt for collaborative work, when we try to bring weak students to the standard of let's say average or advanced student but this depends on the willingness of the student, Ok?. There are students who are weak, who know that they are weak and they would like to improve their performance, ok? This could be beneficial. But there are other students who know that they are weak but they do not want to wake up any effort. So those, I don't think that collaborative work will work for them.

Me: Can you explain to me this point more, like what do you mean by students' similarities?

F: yes, the teacher should be aware of the learning styles of each, he should be aware of the level of each, he should be aware of the motivation of each in order to put them in groups. Students who are similar in their level can achieve a good work. Sincerely sincerely as a teacher, I don't believe so much on collaborative work to bring fruitful result unless unless (Emphasis) tight by certain conditions, ok?

Me: Conditions like what?

F: like for example you should know who did what, emm. You should exactly know who did what to assess them and I can't know! because giving free space to students to sit collaboratively according to what I heard from my students most of the time, for a group of four it, it's two who do their best than the others and the other two do not do anything. They do the printing for the others (laughing!), Ok?.

Me: So you think that group work doesn't help you because it is difficult to know the work of each individual student and to give a fair mark to each one.

F: Aha aha.

Me: And do you think that every group work should be marked?

F: Well the task can be given just to assess the competencies of each student, but grading is something that is needed by the administration. That is grading is something that is needed by the administration so it must happen, ok?. Though the objective of the course is not really final mark, then we are obliged to give the administration the mark of the exam or the TD mark, ok? I will tell you, probably collaborative writing will be the solution when there is a large number of students and it might be easier for me to assess or evaluate, but once again I am going to assess a group of students not individual students, while writing is an individual skill ok?. It is not a group skill. Therefore, though collaborative writing might be easier for the teacher to grade, to mark and to do such, to complete the activity in a limited time, but it will not be very, well according to me, very beneficial for the students, individual students, ok?

Me: I see, thank you very much and thank you for your time.

(The interview took 30mn. I asked her for the possibility of having a second interview for like 15 mn to finish my interview with her).

2nd part

Me: So last time we talked about collaborative learning and your perceptions about it. I have realised that you do not encourage students to work collaboratively in Written expression module.

F: Yes, initially I do not use too much collaborative learning. At the beginning as I told you this is not one of my teaching strategies, ok?

Me: Last time you mentioned to me collaborative learning and that the university does not encourage this kind of learning but you talked also about group work.

F: Are you speaking about collaborative learning or group work?

Me: Can you see a difference between them?

F: There is yes! Group work is to give a work to group and then they work, ok? But collaborative learning that is, the final objective is learning and then this learning does not happen individually but it happens in groups. Now are you speaking about group work or collaborative learning? If you are speaking about group work, it depends to the course itself, ok? If the course for example is a writing course, as I told you some activities may have (Interruption) collaborative learning. For example there are some tasks for example when it comes to revision, some kind of collaborative learning may happen in the process of learning in the step of revision. Collaborative learning may be fruitful, may be students helping each other to improve one's writing. So, at this step, collaborative learning may be helpful. For example, in oral Expression, generally when we give group work, students start speaking in Arabic and this does not serve the purpose of the course. Now in other modules for example content modules.

Me: What do you mean by content module?

F: Content module such as civilisation, linguistics, Literature, because they teach content, not skills, Ok? There are skills modules and content modules because they teach content unlike skills like writing, speaking, reading, etc These teach skills, language skills. Now for these content modules, sometimes for example collaborative learning may be very helpful in linguistics when they come to learn a concept, probably for one student may report the definition of the concept in his own words which are more understandable by the other students than the teachers' words so here collaborative learning becomes very interesting!

So this is why I tell you that the extent to which collaborative learning happens depends on the course itself, Ok?

Me: Ok, I think you were about to give me the difference between collaborative learning and group work.

F: Yes, now group work is an activity which is completed by a group of students but an activity. Collaborative learning, this is a learning which happens thanks to group work. This learning may happen after several activities, may include several activities which are not necessarily given by the teacher. A group work is to realize the assignment given by the teacher, Ok? Now collaborative learning, this happens as a result of teacher's assignments, as a result of interaction, as a result of student-student's assignment, clarification, explanation and whatever, so all these may lead to collaborative learning, Ok?

Me: Do you think that collaborative learning is a process or an outcome?

F: Yes, for me it is both because the purpose of collaboration is learning not completing a task like a group work. That is a group has as a final objective the completion of an assignment but collaborative learning is the achievement of a learning point, that's the difference and it may take different ways and different aspects. So group work is one aspect of collaborative learning.

Me: Are there factors you think can affect collaborative learning?

F: Probably as I explained last time, that is you know that you better remember something when you work towards this thing, it means that I am reading and I find a difficult word, Ok? Now if I go and look for this word, I will better remember it because I have produced some efforts to achieve it, you understand? Now if for example I am reading, I found a difficult word, I ask my friend what's its meaning? She will give me its meaning, look no efforts has been done, so that is scientifically has been proved that when you produce efforts to achieve a goal, ok, you better remember it then when this goal is achieved without effort, can you see? ok? Collaborative learning will probably help lazy students develop their laziness and dependency, can you see what I mean? And therefore their learning will be let's say not an efficient learning as it will serve their purpose for that time, that moment, and then it will not be an efficient learning. So I see this as an obstacle to collaborative learning. If students understand how to do efforts in the group without depending on others, I think collaborative learning will really happen, OK?

Me: Do you think that there is an impact from the LMD system on collaborative learning?

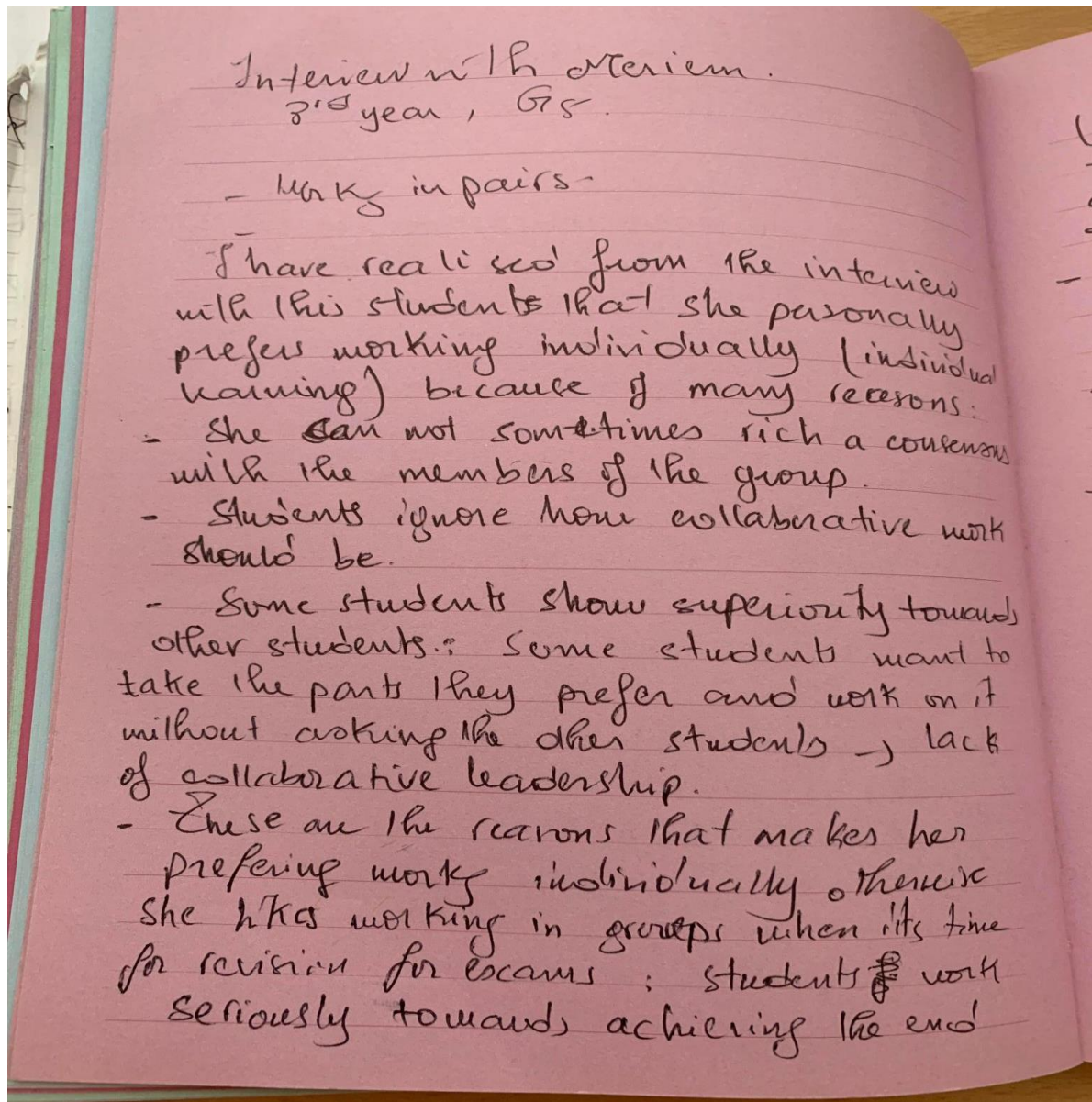
F: Actually though the LMD system allows you to give practical courses, we still keep to theory, giving theoretical matters and that's one thing, this is not respected here. There is

also the system of calculating grades and marks. The system of calculating means, scores, etc ok? So, the lectures are still teachers centred and those the lectures which are students centred, they are not so many. So it depends on the teacher. As I told you, the LMD system i mean all teachers have adapted to this system so that they brought their old methods to the classroom with them, the classical methods, so I don't think that so many things have changed except probably for the fact that for many courses, we have imposed a test mark, ok? This probably may have given the teacher the opportunity to give or to evaluate, to assess students, that is during the course but except from this there is no big change in the delivery of lectures or something like that, you know?

Me: ok, I think this is all for the interview. Thank you very much for your participation and for your time.

F: you're welcome!

Appendix 5: Field notes



(objective) because there are exams.
→ always you find there should be
a stimulus that makes students work
together.

- Most of the time she works in pairs
and not in groups. She sees that friendship
can help to work seriously.

- ~~not~~ all modules encourage collaborate
between students. (why?) Some
modules are lectures for her where the
teacher delivers knowledge; while others
such as civilization, literature, oral
expression → she sees that in these modules
students can interact with each other and
even interact with the teacher.

When independent learning / individual
learning happens → this means there
is no collaborative learning → it does not
mean there is no transformative learning.

Remember: TL → individual learning
there shall be → collaborative learning.

TL

Appendix 6: An example of data analysis process (Marginalised units of meaning and codes)

Me: And how do you assess the students when working in groups?

Mery: Assessment is let's say the dark point in collaborative learning. It's let's say, what to say about assessment (she seems thinking for a while), concerning collaborative work, when I give them the work to be done in class, I won't assess the student one by one, it's the group. I assess the group because they will give one answer to be given by all members, if they are 6, it means all members. I ask one to come and to read if we have time and to write in the black board. I divide the board like I did last time into 4 or 5 parts depending on the number of the groups, then each, I ask the group to choose one to present and come and write the answer on the blackboard, then correct it all together. It means it is the assessment of all the elements being one. But if the work, it's a kind of a project work that needs time and should be done outside, here it's not only the written form, I give them the work, it means time to be written and time to come and present the work. It's thanks to the presentation that I will know the student. They come, they present the work, ok? Everyone presents his part, it depends on what they will present, I will evaluate and I will tell them in advance that I will evaluate everyone individually, but the work should be done collaboratively.

Commented [BA(1): the notion of assessment and individuality.

Mery: yes, it's part of the practice. What I teach in theory, I make students apply in group work, it means the assignment or the exercise about the theoretical part that will be done in groups instead of being individually or in pairs, so in groups. It depends on the type of the assignment, there are assignments which cannot be done in groups, I need to assess each student apart, but certain things which are time consuming if we deal with them individually, I prefer to group students and it will be an occasion for them to work collaboratively.

Commented [BA(2): It seems that group work is a solution when the teacher feels that certain activities might be time consuming if they are dealt with individually. Again, collaborative learning is the tool to achieve a certain aim. It is not planned before and even if it is planned, it is not the aim of the teacher, it rather facilitates for him doing certain tasks.

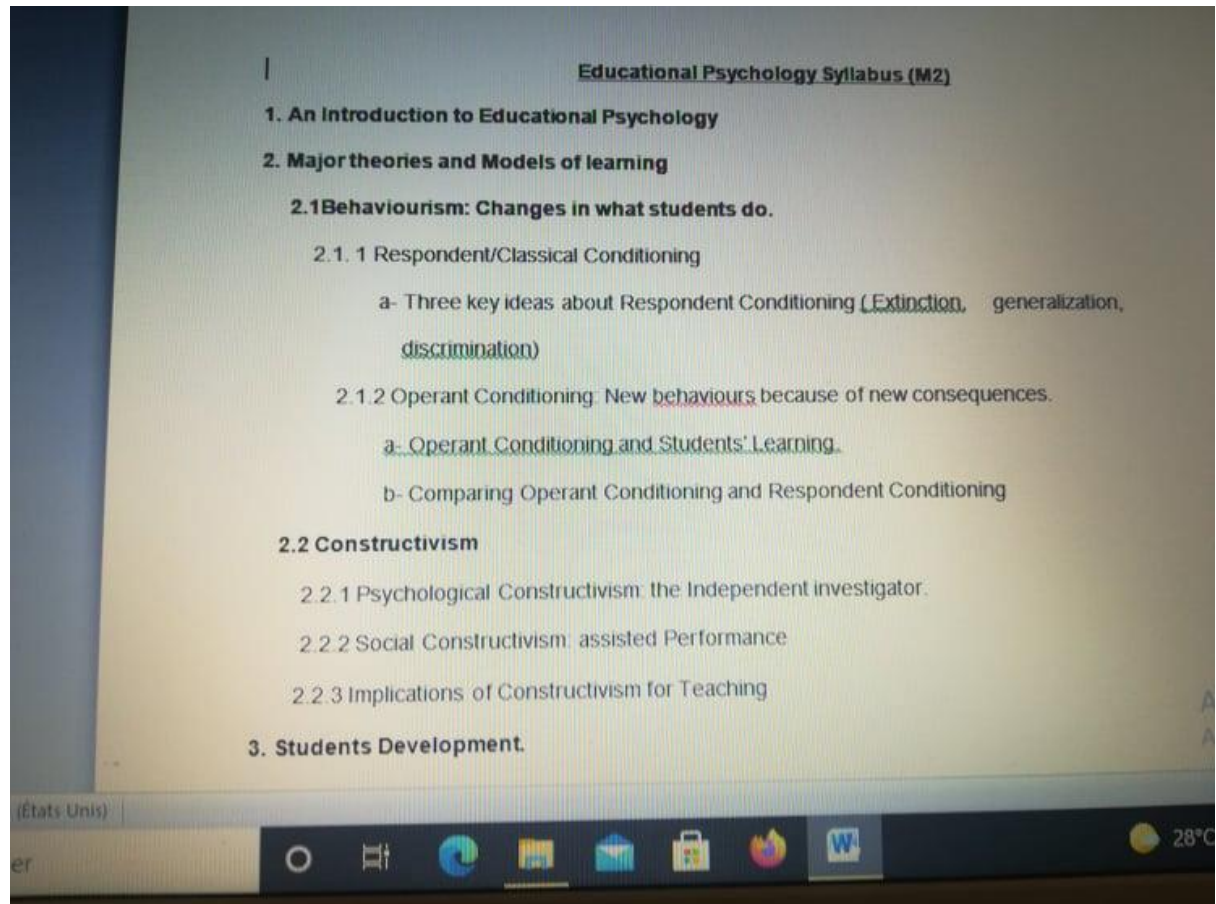
Sara: Yes definitely, so for example I can give you two examples. One I used it for first year level and the other for third year level. For always groupwork is important since you always find in large class size different levels, either in speaking, either in listening, either in writing. So when we try to group students together, we try to select students from different perspectives, one can help the other. We don't try to not select students from the same level and then put them together and they will not know how to overcome their difficulties. But if you find in the group one is better in listening, the other in speaking, the other is more creative, the other have a rich vocabulary, so you put them together to give a very interesting and fruitful work, so this is the aim of a group work.

Commented [BA(3): She raises the benefit of having EFL students with different skills in the same group (Speaking, listening, writing, creative skills, a rich vocabulary repertoire). Such variation will yield fruitful results and production because each one will help the other and each one will scaffold the other in what is missing for the other part.

The notion of: Variation of language skills in the same group.

Appendix 7: Learning outcomes

Educational psychology module's learning outcomes (A screenshot of Ahmed's document)



3. Students Development.

3.1 Why Development Matters

3.2 Physical Development during the school years

3.2.1 Trends in Height and Weight

3.2.2 Puberty and its effects on Students (Adapt content, please!)

3.2.3 Development of Motor Skills

3.3 Cognitive Development: The Theory of John Piaget

3.3.1 The Preoperational Stage

3.3.2 The Concrete Operational Stage

3.3.3 The Formal Operational Stage

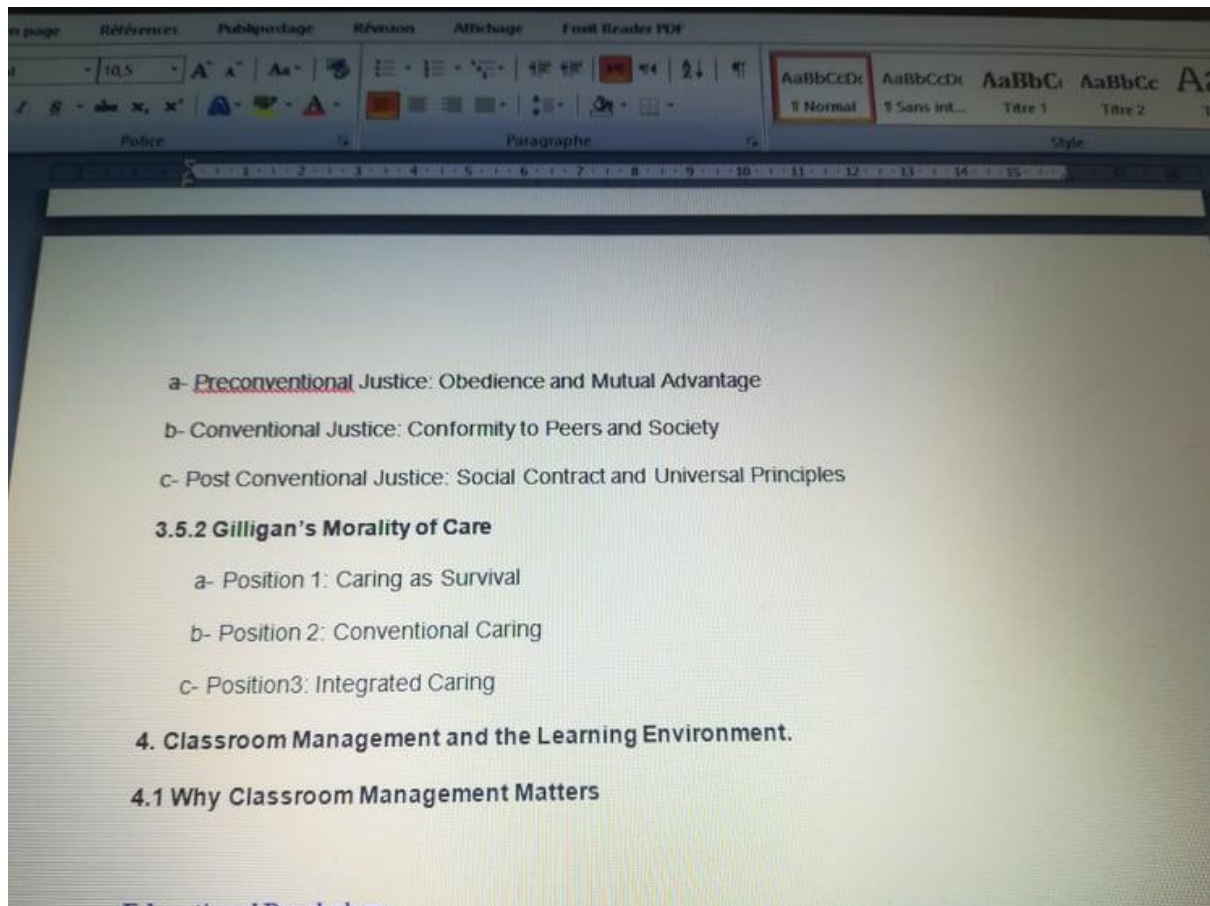
3.4 Social Development

3.4.1 Crises of Infants and Preschoolers: Trust, autonomy, and initiative

3.4.2 The Crises of Adolescence: Identity and Role Confusion

3.5 Moral Development: forming a Sense of Rights and Responsibilities

3.5.1 Kohlberg's Morality of Justice



ESP module's learning outcomes: Excerpt from email

10:51



< Re: Follow-up interview question A... AA



To Amel Boughari
14 Mar at 23:28



Hi Amel,

I hope you are doing well far from home.
Concerning the different titles for ESP L3:

The Origin of ESP

Development of ESP

Definitions of ESP

Types of ESP

ESP vs EGP

Needs Analysis

Course Design

Course Design vs Syllabus Design

This program has been set for different reasons: since it's the first time for students to meet this new approach, we have to move through Origin, development and how scholars define ESP through history (from 1960's till recent years) and how this approach differs from General English . The second part is dedicated to the backbone of ESP as Learners-centred- approach (Needs Analysis) and to understand how we can benefit from this process to design an appropriate course adapted to their needs. The last step but not least, is to let them know how course design differs from the process of Syllabus design, to make a clear distinction between the two.

The second semester is dedicated to the practical part, students are supposed to work in groups as a team and to investigate in different faculties to know how English is taught in different fields. The aim first is to connect theory to practice and second is how ESP is being learnt and taught in specific situations.

I hope it's clear enough

Best



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