

#### PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA CENTER UNIVERSITY OF BARIKA FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES ENGLISH DIVISION



### Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements For Master Degree in 'Didactics'.

# Interpersonal Skills in Collaborative Learning during COVID-19 Era The Case of Master I English Students at Barika University Center

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#### I dedicate this humble work to:

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#### **Abstract**

The present study aims at investigating the extent and nature of students' collaboration during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also seeks to investigate the interpersonal skills(IPS) that students use/have during their collaboration. The research follows a descriptive-analytical method to achieve the study's objectives. To collect the data, we relied on a questionnaire which was adapted and administered to 1<sup>st</sup>year EFL Master students at Barika university center, majored in didactics. The sample is thirty-seven (37) participants selected conveniently. In this research the statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 23,0 Version) was used to conduct data analysis, the statistics were calculated through entering mean score and standard deviation of the eight construct of IPS in CL. The results indicate that students, during the COVID-19 pandemic, collaborate through real and/or virtual groups. Although all the collaborative learning groups show almost high levels of IPS, the difference between real and virtual groups is as follows: real groups reveal a higher level in conflict management skills, while, virtual groups show higher levels in self-confidence, sense of cohesion, initiative in socialization, being positive, checking for understanding, equal participation and accountability, and acceptance and empathy.

**key words**: Collaborative learning, COVID19 pandemic, interpersonal skills, real group, virtual group.

#### تلخيص:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من مدى وطبيعة تعاون الطلاب خلال جائحة 19-COVID. كما يسعى إلى التحقيق في المهارات الشخصية ( IPS) التي يستخدمها / يمتلكها الطلاب أثناء تعاونهم. يتبع البحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة. لجمع البيانات، اعتمدنا على استبيان تم تكييفه وإدارته لطلاب السنة أولى ماستر للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المركز الجامعي بريكة، المتخصص في التدريس. العينة من سبعة وثلاثين ( 37) مشاركا تم اختيار هم بسهولة. في هذه الدراسة تم استخدام الحزمة الاحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية ( OVersion) لإجراء تحليل البيانات من خلال إدخال المتوسط الحسابي و الانحراف المعياري الخاص بالعناصر الثمانية للمهارات الشخصية في العمل الجماعي. تشير النتائج إلى أن الطلاب خلال جائحة ( COVID-19 ، يتعاونون من خلال مجموعات حقيقية و / أو افتراضية. على الرغم من أن جميع مجموعات التعلم التعاوني تظهر مستويات عالية تقريبًا من IPS، فإن الفرق بين المجموعات الحقيقية والافتراضية هو كما يلي: تكشف المجموعات الحقيقية عن مستوى أعلى في مهارات إدارة الصراع، بينما تظهر المجموعات الاقتراضية مستويات أعلى في الثقة بالنفس، والشعور بالتماسك، المبادرة في التنشئة الاجتماعية، التحلي بالإيجابية، التحقق من الفهم، المشاركة المتساوية والمساءلة،القبول والتعاطف.

الكلمات الرئيسية: التعلم التعاوني، جائحة COVID19 ، مهارات التعامل مع الآخرين، المجموعة الحقيقية، المجموعة الافتراضية

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#### **List of Abbreviations**

CL: Collaborative learning

EFL: English as Foreign Language

IPS: Interpersonal skills

SD: Standard deviation

#### Introduction

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, beliefs, and habits. Education can take place in a formal or informal setting, individually or in groups. Education in Algeria faces many challenges that require the need to develop educational mechanisms for preparing students.

One of the methods proposed is Collaborative Learning (CL), in which the learners are the center of the educational process, where small groups of students participate together to do a task or solve a specific problem. Zarei and Gilani (2012) mentioned that CL is "a situation in which two or more people trying to learn something together and solve a problem" or "mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve a problem together" (p.5). Collaboration is a philosophy of personal engagement where people are responsible for their behavior by respecting their peers' skills. CL is a teaching and learning method involving groups of learners to collaborate and solve problems.

Furthermore, There are many definitions of the term CL. Daniels and Walker (2001) defined CL as useful and complex challenges tasks for students. They face many obstacles that prevent them from achieving their goals. It is also defined by Lakkala (2007), in CL, students are active representative who share ideas and solve problems to create knowledge together, with each individual playing an important role in the success of the team so as to achieve a common learning objective. Webb and Palinscar (1996) stated that CL improves students' learning abilities and achievements in addition to the desire to complete their tasks, thus increasing confidence as well as developing teamwork skills.

In addition CL is important in developing and expanding the capabilities and experiences of students, during the participation of each other in a particular topic or task, as well as strengthening the team spirit, trust, communication and interaction to reach success.

Furthermore, it is also necessary to train students to use this strategy effectively to be able to interact and cooperate with their peers and develop their personal and social skills for their success in their educational and professional lives. Educational strategies can be considered the most important factor in the school curricula, which are used to achieve a common goal.

Moreover, Klein et al., (2006) define interpersonal skills as "goal-directed behaviors, including communication and relationship-building competencies, were used in interaction episodes characterized by complex perceptual and cognitive processes. Dynamic verbal and non- verbal interaction exchange, different roles, motivations, and expectancies" (p.81). IPS in CL are defined according to Dishon and O'Leary (1998), as "those specific behaviors performed by all group members that help the group complete the task and appreciate each other when the task is finished" (p.93).In addition, interpersonal skills have great importance in a collaboration environment. According to Goyale (2013), IPS develop a good environment for the teaching and learning process and increase productivity.

#### **Statement of The Problem**

Collaboration is the most important strategy used to improve the abilities and social interaction between students, by working together and discussing their problems to obtain knowledge and understand each other, by correcting their mistakes and achieve their goals. And students, without strong IPS, cannot achieve their goals which lead to failure of their collaboration.

The recent emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has hampered the academic path, and imposed on educational institutions the transition to distance education and adopting modern CL strategies, which form a major obstacle in various fields, especially in education, which forced teachers to meet these challenges and complete their work virtually.

Because of the security conditions that the world has experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a sudden transition to alternative educational methods to complete education by relying on a more effective and adaptable educational model to all circumstances, especially emergency cases.

#### **Research Questions**

This research seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1- Do students work collaboratively during COVID-19 pandemic?
- 2- How do students accomplish their group work during COVID-19 pandemic?
- 3- What interpersonal skills do students have/use during their collaboration in COVID-19 pandemic?

#### **Research Hypotheses**

From the previous questions, we conclude to the following hypotheses:

RH1: English students at Barika University Center collaborate in COVID-19 pandemic.

RH2: English students at Barika university center exhibit better interpersonal skills in real collaborative groups.

RH3: English students at Barika university center exhibit better interpersonal skills in virtual collaborative groups.

#### **Aims and Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to determine student's feelings, attitudes, and behaviors during CL, especially in light of the current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic at the university level. In addition to other objectives which are to determine the benefits of teamwork in learning and achieving interaction between learners as well as having IPS that will strengthen the links between the members of the team members to achieve common goals.

This study aims to find out whether students have the ability and competence to work in groups and investigate their IPS during group work, especially in the current situation.

#### **Significance of the study**

The results of the study were expected to give:

#### For students:

This study aims to introduce the CL strategy and ways to work with it, because of its role in consolidating positive social relations between students. Learning based on collaboration plays an important role in improving the IPS of the student, besides collaboration helps to improve the ability of students to work in groups.

- 1. Improving their academic level and addressing weakness better than individual education, and ways to develop it and benefit from its positives through the exchange of experiences.
- **2.** The ability to solve problems, decision-making for creativity, innovation, and skill development.

#### As for teachers:

This study aims to show teachers the importance of this active learning strategy, in addition, to stimulate many concepts, societal values, and group work. As well as moving away from traditional education to the modern method.

#### As for the institution:

CL helps students as well as teachers in the school to understand the benefits of teaching using the discussion method and CL. It also results in an important experience that other learning structures cannot do, as many skills are developed through effective and regular CL, thus improving the academic level in that institution.

Finally, the research highlights some of the student's IPS in CL and these put at least one brick in the way to achieve the desired goal of the research.

#### Research Methodology Design

To compile further data and gain better understanding of the issue under study, we will use the survey design, which is useful for gathering information about the research. The most important instrument used is a questionnaire. This tool will allow us to collect a range of data to find responses to the research questions.

#### **Research Outline**

The current study is divided into two main chapters. After a general introduction, the first chapter consists of an overview of what other researchers have previously studied on this topic from different definitions to different strategies and ways to develop IPS, and the benefits of working collaboratively. The second chapter deals with methodology, data collection, and analysis. It aims at reporting students' feelings and behaviors, while working collaboratively with their peers, especially during the current situation. In the end, A general conclusion is reached without generalization, in which research purposes and results are combined together and a summary of the entire study.

#### **Limitations of The Study**

Although the research has reached its aims, there are some limitations that the researcher encounters during the process. In this research can cite the following:

- The main obstacle was the difficulty of finding available participants because of the situation of the pandemic. The study was limited to the student majored in didactics at University Center of Barika.
- The lack of sources about the subject matter (CL during COVID19).
- Because the most students were absent, we couldn't collect more respondents for the questionnaire.

#### 1. **Introduction**

In the twentieth century educators began to search for the latest strategies and methods to achieve the best results for the student's success. The focus was on activities where the student is the center of the educational process rather than focusing on how teachers present lessons, such as problem-solving, discussions, as well as CL, which is the subject of this study. In which, we will learn about this strategy and methods of application, development, and the extent of the interaction of students during group work, especially during the recent circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the IPS of students and ways to improve them to reach success.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of one of the most important strategies of active learning. The different definitions, forms, and characteristics, as well as their benefits and advantages. In addition to the various types of IPS needed by the student, to the success of teamwork and ways to improve them.

#### 1.1. What is CL

CL is one of the active learning strategies, in which the educational process is transformed from the traditional method which relies on the teacher to deliver the lesson and provide information to focus on students and motivate them to be creative and innovative. The concept of CL refers to the various educational activities of small groups of students, where students work with each other to implement common activities and tasks to develop themselves and help their teammates in learning, and it also facilitates the achievement of educational activities. Many researchers went to define CL as follows:

According to Lakkala (2007), In CL, students are active representatives who share ideas, solve problems, use various information sources and create knowledge together. In collaborative activities, each individual play a significant role in the team's success. Group members work together to achieve a common learning goal. In otherwords, during CL

students work in an integrative way to achieve innovative outcomes, improve the relationship between them, increase experiences faster, learn about new cultures and exchange them with each other, and each member of the group plays an important role in the success of work and the creation of knowledge.

Other views of Daniels and Walker (2001) indicate that the learning approach is useful in these difficult and complex tasks for students. As this learning approach also emphasizes "talking to» instead of "talking with". That means learners discuss with each other about the tasks given to them and thus arrive at solutions to the problem. Active listening, questions arguments, evidence, and all the various views present during the discussion. This means that students face many challenges in their careers and education that prevent them from solving problems and achieving a specific goal to be achieved. Here lies the CL where active listening, discussions, arguments, and opinions of mutual interest among students to facilitate those obstacles.

CL improves students' learning abilities and achievements in addition to the desire to complete their tasks, thus increasing confidence as well as developing teamwork skills. (Webb &Palinscar,1996).

Furthermore, Zarei and Gilani (2012)mentioned that CL is "the position of learning in which two or more people trying to learn something together and solve a problem" which means mutual participation among learners is necessary to find a solution to the problem given to them. (p.5)

The Greenwood Dictionary of Education defines it as "CL is a method of teaching and learning in which students work together to explore a considerable question or create a meaningful project. Basically, it is the umbrella term covering many forms of learning from small group projects to the more particular forms of group work. A group of students discussing a lecture or a shared assignment is the example of CL".(p.63)

Mason and Watts (2012) also stated that the purpose of the collaborative work is the participation of all team members in the topic provided for them, questions, and exchange of views, with the need for the participation of each member of the work to be completed, and thus achieve the common goal.

From all the above-mentioned definitions and studies of various experts that went to define CL, we can say that it is one of the effective learning strategies or teaching methods in which students with different levels are distributed into small groups. The teacher assigns them a specific task to do, so that they share work and various opinions to achieve their common goal, and here the role of the teacher is merely to guide and give various instructions and advice. By following this strategy, the spirit of cooperation and friendship among the group members is strengthened, in addition, to developing the ability to solve problems resulting from misunderstanding, as well as learning to accept criticism and enhance the spirit of responsibility.

#### 1.1.1. The Difference between Collaborative and Cooperative Learning

Learning becomes more effective when working in groups (whether collaborative or cooperative), expressing different ideas and opinions to solve a problem together. (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Smith et al., 2013). This approach also improves self-confidence and critical thinking skills (Brindley et al., 2009). Rocky Rockwood (1995) described their differences as being parallel in that they are both in groups, setting tasks, comparing with other groups during class sessions. While the main difference is that cooperative learning is in traditional knowledge, while CL lies in the social ties between students. Generally, both terms can be seen as synonyms and often used to explain the same concept of learning in groups.

However there is a slight difference between them.

The first distinction between collaborative and cooperative learning lies in the different origins. Bruffee (1995) confirmed that the distinctions are in the different age groups because

both approaches were designed according to nature and authority of knowledge. According to him, cooperative learning was developed for children in primary and secondary school whereas CL is for more mature learners.

In cooperative strategies, the teacher has the full authority in designing and organizing the different activities. In contrast, Bruffee (1998) stated that collaboration gives a great deal of authority to build knowledge for the group members which means that the responsibility for learning moves from teacher to student and the less structured design of the group's activities reflects this shift.

But the main difference between the two approaches lies in the interaction, as Bruffee (1995) stated that understanding these differences is crucial because CL pedagogy recommends teachers to undermine goals that cooperative learning hopes to achieve, and vice versa. Assisting learners to each other during the educational activity is the primary goal of cooperative learning and the responsibility of the instructor is to ensure their success (Emerson & Mosteller, 2004). while cooperative learning focuses on the transfer of learning to the learners' responsibility for considering that they have the skills and abilities needed to manage their works. (Millis & Cottell, 1998).

The purpose of cooperative learning is to provide learners with specific tasks to participate in and find solutions to the problem, while the purpose of CL is to develop learners' skills and competencies, regardless of the different views that discussions may lead among them, and thus achieve the final results. (Dillenbourg et al., 1996; Matthews, 1996).

In the end, we can say that these two approaches are among the most important effective learning strategies that benefit the learners as well as the teachers at the same time. Despite the difference between them in some assumptions, however, the purposes are still the same, which is to facilitate the work of the learners to find solutions to their tasks. Where, both approaches are similar in the division of learners into small groups to work and the role

of the teacher only as facilitator in addition to the participation of all group members and each one his role and responsibility and thus developing the social skills through consensus (Barkley et al., 2005; Kirchner, 2001).

#### 1.1.2. Characteristics of Collaborative Learning

Highlighting the interaction between students and teachers is one of the benefits of CL.

It includes many of the properties where it is implemented through one strategy which is as follows:

- 1) Create positive links between the team members and setting the goal: this can facilitate the task to be performed. Because the individual effort is the success of the group as a whole. (Johnson et al., 1999; Ortiz et al.,2019). In other words, any CL promotes harmony between members of the same group, regardless of cognitive differences we can find all of the members working together to achieve their common goals.
- Achieving face-to-face interaction: to strengthen the commitment that results from the interaction and verbal exchange between the members of the group. The groups must consist of four members at the most, in order to enable them to implement the various tasks, and thus gain experience high. (Reyes & Reyes, 2017), dividing learners into groups, where they have mutual dialogue and discussion between them in order to implement the tasks entrusted to them and thus reaching greater cognitive attainment.
- Individual responsibility and personal evaluation: The main objective of the team is to achieve a common goal. Taking into account the division of tasks, each individual is responsible for part of it, and members can help each other to complete the task, as a result, the spirit of collaboration between the team increases. (Garrote et al., 2019; Ortiz et al., 2019). In other words, CL is a social

- attitude, where students are divided into groups to work together and each of them has his role and effort in achieving this goal and thus enhancing the team spirit.
- 4) Interpersonal skills: Luna (2021) pointed out that the practice of IPS such as effective communication, active listening, and others is essential to enhance participation and trust between the team members, as well as conflict resolution. Therefore, skills are a prerequisite for the success of teamwork to get high results; that means social and IPS have a greater role in the strategy of CL because of its impact on the relationship development of the group members and their ability to solve problems as well as finding the desired solutions.
- Treatment or self-assessment: Bermejo et al.,(2020) suggested that students must assess and identify their weaknesses, as well as measuring their achievements and behaviors through collective work is necessary, and therefore proposes changes to achieve the desired goals. In other words, teachers can identify their student's abilities through their achievements and thus recognizing their weaknesses and working to improve them, as well as propose changes and thus achieve the goal better. Further view for Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1990), divided the learning approach into five basic components:
  - a) Clear and positive interdependence among students, which is based on each member of the group recognizing the importance of the team and working towards a common goal.
  - b) Directly evaluating group projects and encouraging students to evaluate their work by themselves. (self-evaluation).
  - c) Personality behaviors that enhance their education where the conscious or informed individual builds his self-knowledge in his mind based on his experience.

- d) Individual accountability and personal responsibility, individual accountability, meaning that each member is responsible for what he presents to his teamwork and that he must work on the success of the team away from selfishness and bias.
- e) IPS and their use in addition to all of the above elements that will enhance CL and thus become more effective. There is also face-to-face reinforcement interaction; Which would create a collaborative environment and develop friendship. This type of collaboration is based on assistance and joint cooperation in order to achieve a common goal. It is also desirable to have group treatment so that team members monitor each other's performance and make suggestions that will improve the learning process.

#### 1.1.3. Collaborative learning techniques

Those interested in the field of education began to develop teaching methods due to the development that occurred in various fields, so the search for new strategies in teaching began to enable the learner to benefit more. As stated by Rose (2002): "there are more than 100 CL styles, it is, therefore, the responsibility of teachers to select one or more of these techniques for use in the classroom" (p.17). Haenen and Tuith (2008) also stress the importance of CL techniques as a powerful tool for learning. It is mainly focused on the student.

There may be different kinds of collaborative techniques, according to Barkley et al.(2005), techniques for discussion like: Buzz Groups, techniques for reciprocal teaching like: Fishbowl, techniques for problem- solving like: Analytic Teams, and techniques for using graphic information organizers like: Word Webbing, and techniques for focusing on writing like the Round Table.

Durkee (2014) has identified these sixteen CL techniques; Group Discussion, Threestep Interview, Jigsaw, Note-taking Pairs, Fishbowl, Learning Cell, Critical Debates, Round Robin, Buzz Groups, Assigned Discussion, Leader, Individual Presentation, Write/Pair/Share, Think/Pair/Share, Turn to Your Partner, Group Survey, Clusters.

#### 1.1.4. Benefits of collaborative learning

Education has a great role in the progress and renaissance of nations; so we find that it follows various educational methods. One of the most prominent of these methods is CL. CL is important for the individual as well as the institution; both of them benefit from collaboration especially students for its usefulness in solving problems through the exchange of ideas and points of view, which increases their scientific knowledge as well as reduces dependence on the teacher and also building relationships between students. Guerra, Rodrígue, and Artiles (2019) stated that the benefit of CL lies in the achievement of common goals between individuals. It is considered one of the active methodologies that help to solve problems. At the university, for example, students are allowed during collaborative work to achieve their common and professional goals through communication, which is the most important for creating and improving learning communities. So you cannot pass judgment on the advantages of CL unless after the understanding of the use of this strategy to our advantage. (Annette, 1997).

CL has become a promising style of engagement between individuals and a trend in the 21st century. Where they increased the need to think and work together on difficult issues. (Austin, 2000; Welch, 1998). So the transition from individual attempts to teamwork and from independence to the community.(Leonard & Leonard, 2001).

In order to achieve greater benefit from this strategy and to become more productive than other methods, whether individual or competitive, Woods and Chen (2010) and Johnson (1994) mentioned that five conditions must be met which are as follows:

- There must be positive interdependence between individuals.
- The need for great interaction to support each other.

- Individual accountability and personal responsibility for achieving the common goals of the group.
- Use of interpersonal and small group skills.
- Addressing a frequent and regular set of current performances to improve the group's future effectiveness. Furthermore, Johnson (1989) and Panitz (1999), organized the benefits through categories. The list contains more than 50 benefits for the CL and they conclude them in four categories (Social, Psychological, Academic, Assessment) as follows:
- Social benefits: CL helps to improve and develop the system of social support for learners that leads to building an understanding of diversity among students. In addition to the positive atmosphere that spreads and the spirit of cooperation between individuals and thus the evolution of CL communities.
- **Psychological benefits**: CL helps to increase the self-confidence of the students and the spirit of cooperation also reduces anxiety. Another view Brown and Thomson (2000) contend that "there are two main purposes of CL are: develop the interpersonal skills and make individuals become more competent and face anything with confidence and work well together and with the team".(p14)
- Academic Benefits: CL promotes critical thinking as well as the participation of students in the educational process and thus improves the results of the classroom they have this strategy also uses a variety of assessments methods.

Another benefit of CL is to present individuals to each other during their group work for a period sufficient to expand the scope of their learning outside the classroom and also for various aid to find solutions to problems they face later (Bean, 1996). In other words, allowing the student to participate in the educational process helps to enhance the spirit of collaboration and positive interaction between the students and the teacher, as well as

getting rid of negative habits such as selfishness. In addition, Tanaka (2013) stated that CL develops and improves relationships between students that facilitates their involvements in the school community.

Furthermore, Mason and Watts (2012) stated that in CL, participation and the ability to communicate ideas, points of view clearly and persuasively to others. This results in more positive interaction and increases the ability to process, and present observations and ideas.

CL helps students to find differences in a friendly way, including solutions must therefore teach them how to accept criticism and opinions of each other, and defend their positions in a civilized manner. (Johnson et al., 1984)

Laal and Ghodsi (2012) stated that CL helps students accept criticism and advice and thus the ability to understand topics from different points of view. Through collaboration, obstacles can be overcome and solutions can be found, including strengthening relationships between team members. In other words, CL gives students the opportunities to learn how to share their opinions, as well as accept the opinions and criticisms of others, to avoid falling into conflicts between team members.

CL develops students' oral communication skills (Yager et al., 1985). The acquisition of new skills and abilities that raise the level of students is one of the benefits because members of one group include students with different abilities and skills, and the integration and cooperation of group members allow them to learn something new from each other.

CL gives the teacher a lot of opportunities to observe his students during their work in groups where their interaction notes and the performance of their different views. (Cooper et al., 1984). This may be the way as an assessment of their performance instead of the written examinations (Cross & Angelo,1993; Johnson,1990). Also McBrien (2005) highlighted that Collaborative work facilitates problem-solving, saves efforts, and teaches students to depend on and collaborate on each other in whatever group work they do together.

In sum. We can conclude that through the process of learning, collaboration helps to achieve multiple and diverse ranges of benefits that will benefit students in terms of raising their level at the school, as well as to build positive social relationships with their peers, which is necessary to create an educational society that values diversity. On the other hand, it helps the cooperative learning abilities and skills of students through their work to achieve a common goal, resulting in strong links among students and the spirit of cooperation in cooperative groups, and thus mastering of different materials and improving their performance in the tests.

#### 1.1.5. Collaborative learning challenges and opportunities

Adopting a CL strategy is an opportunity for students as well as teachers to learn and benefit, but it is also full of challenges and difficulties that both parties may face. Moving from relying on the teacher to provide lessons to focusing on students in the educational process may be difficult at first.

Teamwork design requires a revision of the syllabus first in terms of content and time, as well as how to design the rest of the time of lectures, homework, exams ... etc. In addition to how to develop the skills and main ideas. As we dive deeper into this strategy, we learn more about its uses and discover the root questions that result from it. Where CL goes into many assumptions about teaching and learning. So that both the role and responsibility of the teacher and the student change. (Finkel & Monk, 1983; MacGregor, 1990).

#### 1.1.6. Collaborative Learning in Virtual / Real environments

Williams et al. (2006), define CL as giving learners an opportunity to play a major role in teamwork as the primary source of knowledge, after that the results are delivered to the trainer. Tseng (2008) stated that the existence of collaboration is so necessary, because of its great role in enhancing interaction between individuals, as it facilitates their ability to acquire knowledge and thus achieve the desired goals. Similarly, Sangin et al. (2010) assert that the

greater the interaction between individuals, the more effective CL is, so that all members of the group should be equal in doing the work. Salomon & Globerson (1989).

The collaborative environment flourishes where open communication takes a place, which means giving each individual a chance to speak and express his opinion, as well as asking questions to each other, which means opening the door for a group discussion. This requires verifying the existence of effective communication between members to achieve a common goal, as well as choosing solutions that are in the interest of the group. Because this increases people's enjoyment of their time, and reducing conflicts, developing a spirit of collaboration, increasing self-confidence. This is confirmed by Tseng (2008) claiming that collaboration within groups results in building knowledge and interaction between individuals, provided that they respect, understand, participate with each other for successful teamwork.

Because of the sudden change in education and the emergence of the pandemic. Higher education has undergone a transition to distance education instead of classrooms, so different teaching methods have been relied upon as a strategy for developing competencies. As Nakova and Romero (2019) define online collaborative learning as progressive, interactive learning and the mutual process between students. This means that the students' goal in forming collaborative groups is to collaborate and develop their knowledge better.

#### 1.1.7. Strategies for Online Collaborative Learning

CL in times of pandemic is a strategy that requires using the following to achieve the purposes:

Forum: Where questions are answered on a specific topic and the record remains where students follow and exchange and then read comments including the teacher.(Basogain& Olmedo, 2020, as cited in Amparo et al.,2021).

- Video conferences: Is a virtual room in which the teacher and his students communicate through audio, and videos and a large number of students can enter at the same time. (Cabero-Almenara et al., 2020, as cited in Amparo et al., 2021).
- Sending assignments: Is a process in which learning and self-assessment, student assessments are recorded by the teacher to records and corrects their comments and suggests improvements for collaborative work. (Ortiz et al., 2019, as cited in Amparo et al., 2021).
- A wiki: Is a collaborative work that allows students to easily and simultaneously create and add content. (García-Quismondo& Cruz-Palacios, 2018, as cited in Amparo et al.,2021).
- Workshop: Students present their work to be reviewed and evaluated among their peers under the guidance of their teacher to improve it to develop collaborative work. (Navarro et al.,2019,as cited in Amparo et al.,2021).
- Chat: It is a virtual space created by the teacher at a specific time, in which the students answer their questions collectively, where the interaction takes a place between them, and the contributions are not recorded when they are left. (Cabero-Almenara et al., 2020; Ortiz et al., 2019).
- ➤ Google Meet, Zoom: These are resources where students use audio, camera, photos, files, etc. That creates a collaborative atmosphere and enhances their independence. (Fernàndez, 2020).

➤ Other resources: Are the various social networks such as: WhatsApp,
Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, as their use is necessary to facilitate
communication and cooperation between students.

In virtual collaboration the utilization of the above- mentioned tools are important, an atmosphere of trust and harmony must be created among the students to reduce making mistakes and training them on its various uses and they can make changes to improve them positively. (Varona-Fernández & Hermosa-Peña, 2020; Reyes-Garcés et al., 2018).

Therefore, the use of these tools and resources is of great importance for students to train them to work in teams and organize themselves. As for the teacher, he should plan his projects, units, and activities using a methodology in which the students are active and cooperate with each other. (De Espinoza et al., 2019).

Furthermore, to improve this strategy it is suggested that: (a) learn to cooperate i.e. the teacher should divide students into teams and perform collaborative actions, (b) learn how to cooperate means the teacher looks for new ways to develop his students' cooperative skills. (C) comprehension and understanding. Students must be aware of the importance of this type of cooperation and the tasks that they must perform. (De Espinoza et al., 2019).

In other words, the virtual classroom has a great role in the digital improvement of teachers and students by using active methodologies in the application of educational activities. (Romero-Garcia et al., 2020).

Nowadays, there is an increased need to train students to develop their active experiences that will enhance the spirit of collaboration among them, and make them more interested in their learning and ways of solving their problems, in addition to positivity and mutual respect among team members and awareness that one's success is the success of all.(Pinto-Llorente et al., 2019).

#### 1.1.8. Online Collaborative Learning during COVID 19 pandemic

Due to the circumstances that the world has experienced recently due to the COVID 19 pandemic, most institutions were forced to move from the traditional educational system to distance education to limit the spread of this virus. Where online learning and collaboration between students has become one of the modern ways that facilitate the process of exchange and work between team members via the Internet and it also facilitates work, shortens distances, and saves time and effort and individuals working on the same work at the same time. Therefore, communication and interaction between them can improve their skills and abilities, in addition to carrying out tasks more accurately and faster.

Technology has played an important and effective role in improving the educational system through the use of modern educational devices. Which has a great role in expanding the circle of learning outside the classroom, as well as creating a study atmosphere with those who live at great distances and also strengthening the bonds between them. On the other hand, it provides students and their teachers with a way to interact and collaborate that has not existed before, so technology must be well integrated and seamlessly to support the needs of the learners (Good et al., 2004).

As Chen et al., (2004) explained that "Technological collaboration aims to create real-world environments that use context-related learning and focus on real-world methods for solving real-world problems" (p. 47). This means that school education that has benefited from modern technology intentional use in the field of education leads to positive outcomes for students as well as facilitating the task of the teacher.

#### 1.1.9. There are four main benefits of online collaborative learning:

- First, successful positive communication is essential to the success of the educational process which enables students to get to know other people to help them with their tasks as well as benefit from the experiences of their colleagues and teachers.(Harris, 1999).
- Second, facilitating access to and use of asynchronous communication at any time as well as shortening the effort and time to search the library shelves to provide a huge amount of information in a faster time.(Harris, 1999)
- Third, developing the skills of dealing with others and promoting positive behavior and a spirit of cooperation and teamwork among learners.(Harris, 1999)
- Fourth, facilitating the teacher's task by providing ways of explaining and communicating information and making all options available to him so that he can choose the best from his point of view to achieve his goal, taking into account the individual differences between students. (Harris, 1999). Besides, Riel (1996), who stated that online collaboration is considered that the interaction between teammates who defines the community not its digital technology

#### 1.2. IPS

IPS is a sociological term that represents the personal traits and social behaviors that an individual possesses to express himself and facilitate his communication and interaction with others. To get a closer and broader view of the meaning of this term, it is useful to examine exactly what is meant by the term "interpersonal skills". To achieve the goal of this study we cannot rely on one definition to understand this term but we will discuss the definitions

developed by experts in this field through which we will reach a better understanding of "Interpersonal Skills" and their benefits for students when working in groups.

This term was defined by a group of researchers in this field. As DeRouin and Salas (2006) are defining IPS as "goal-directed behaviors, including communication and relationship-building competencies, were used in interaction episodes characterized by complex perceptual and cognitive processes. Dynamic verbal and non-verbal interaction exchange, different roles, motivations, and expectancies" (p. 81).

IPS can be defined as "those skills which one needs in to communicate effectively with another person or a group of people" (Rungapadiachy, 1999, p.193). Klein et al.,(2006) described IPS as "an umbrella term that refers to a wide variety of concepts and associated terms, such as social skills, social competence, people skills, face-to-face skills, human skills, and soft skills" (p. 81). Bedwell et al. (2014) mentioned that it is the collaboration of skills in human interaction. That is, building relationships with others depends on those IPS. (Sunindijo & Zou, 2013).

There is also research done by Utomo (2012) which found that IPS encompass many abilities including "interpersonal intelligence" which is the ability to understand and be sensitive to the feelings, intentions, motivations, characters, and temperaments of others. Sensitivity of showing expression, voices, and gestures of other people, and the ability to establish relationships and communication with various other people". (p.97).

We can say that IPS are the individual's ability to communicate and interact with the people around him whether family members, friends, or others. It is also considered the basis for the success of individuals in their work or studies .So people with strong IPS are able to interact better with others.

#### 1.2.1. Types of Interpersonal Skills

Some researchers divided IPS into many types including two main types: Communication skill and relationship-building skill (Bedwell et al., 2014). Each type is divided into several subtypes.

- Communication skill: it is divided into four sub types, including: active listening, oral communication, non-verbal communication and assertive communication.
  - a) Active listening: is the most important for an effective communication, it requires a full attention to the speaker's speech. It is completely different from hearing. As Eunson (2012) mentioned first the term 'listening' requires the full attention to receive the information from the speaker, and attention of the listener is on the speaker to a full understanding by asking questions. so both of them have the opportunity to exchange the information. An example given for active listening is that when the students are in a group discussion they give a complete notice to listen to the new data provided by the speaker, where they listen first and then respond by asking a question.
  - b) **Oral communication**: In the definition of oral communication we can say it is the production of sentences in a spoken form by the mouth (Bedwell et al., 2014). It was also defined as the ability to communicate oral messages and ideas to the listener clearly and understandable, where the information is easy to understand. (Bowden et al., 2003; Huffcutt et al., 2001; Klein et al., 2006).

From the previous definitions, we conclude that oral communication is the process of verbal communication between individuals through the use of

sounds and vocabulary using the mouth to express various thoughts and feelings or how messages are transmitted from the sender to the receiver through the use of words in order to ensure that the receiver understands the meaning of the message directly and clear.

- Non-verbal Communication: is defined as encoding and decoding body language and all the non verbal signals to change or improve verbal messages for interpersonal communication (Bowden et al., 2003; Dyche, 2007; Greene & Burleson, 2003; Klein et al., 2006; Klinzing & Gerada-Aloisio, 2004; O'Keeffe, 2001; Rosenthal et al., 2009).Non-verbal communication is divided into two types, body language, and gestures (Bedwell et al., 2014). The purpose of non-verbal communication is to help the audience understand the discussion by seeing it visually.
- d) Assertive communication: It is the communication skill and the ability to express feelings, ideas, or needs directly and positively, in which the individual enjoys self-confidence and without hostility during social interaction with the other person (Fye & Staton, 1981;Hoffman, 1999; Jones, 2009; Klein et al., 2006; Shatz, 1984). The latter takes place when learners express their feelings and thoughts directly. (Bedwell et al., 2014). For example, when working in groups learners feel confident to express their opinions in front of their peers.
- 2. **Relationship-building skills**: Interpersonal interaction between people and meeting their physical and emotional needs is the purpose of relationship building skills (Cavazos, 2013). As Bedwell et al.,(2014) illustrated human

interaction is the mutual influence between IPS that facilitate the building of relationships. In other words, IPS are one of the different tools that we use to interact and communicate with others in our daily life. People with strong skills have the ability to interact and also build good social relationships with them. There are four subtypes of relationship-building skills in interpersonal learning taxonomy. The detailed information is explained as follows:

- a) Cooperation and coordination: One of the most important elements that contribute to building positive relationships between students especially during group learning, is cooperation and coordination.

  According to Christie (2012) cooperation and coordination are parts of teamwork, because learners have the same tasks they have to work together interdependently (Forsyth, 2014). Learning in groups results in more advantages than individually to complete the tasks as a team.
- b) Intercultural sensibility: It means being aware about the differences between cultures, but without judging them, whether they are (better or worse, right or wrong). It is represented in understanding, appreciation and fair exchanges between civilizations, cultures and people on the basis of mutual respect, thus achieving social cohesion. Intercultural sensibility includes appreciating diversity and others 'feelings also the attention of caring, acceptance of other's opinions and interest. (Avkiran, 2000; Doo, 2005; Duffy et al., 2004; Dyche, 2007; O'Keefe, 2001). One of the biggest benefit of diversity is that it creates social relationships and helps to interact with people in different cultures and have a better understanding of the different insights and avoid judgments, and it builds

- bridges of respect, trust, and enhance cooperation, tolerance, and acceptance of the other.
- c) Social influence: Social influence is the ability to appeal and manage others by influencing and directing them. By adopting certain behaviors and ideas or attitudes by others within the social interaction to achieve personal goals (Carpenter & Wiscarver, 2004; Green, 2010; Huffcutt et al., 2001; Klein et al., 2006; Montgomery, 2007; Phelps, 2009),the ways in which individuals change their behavior to meet the requirements of the social environment. Social influence usually results from a particular action or request, but people also change their attitudes and behaviors in response to what they think others might do or think.
- have different views and both sides refuse to agree on each other's views and this may lead to a debate between them. For further explanation, Christie (2012) mentioned that conflict takes a place when there is a divergence of views. And therefore negotiation is necessary to find a solution to that conflict, there are some researchers have confirmed that failure to resolve disputes between individuals can leads to a significant decrease in performance. (e.g., Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Chatman, 2000).

As a result, all the mentioned types of IPS (ie, active listening, oral communication, assertive communication, and non-verbal communication) and relationship building (i.e., cooperation and coordination, intercultural sensitivity, social influence, and conflict resolution and negotiation ) considered of a great importance and among the basic skills that all members of society need alike, they enable individuals to enhance their abilities to adapt to all

the circumstances surrounding them and qualifies them to be integrated in a way that allows them to contribute to developing themselves and in building their society.

### 1.2.2. The Importance of Interpersonal skills

One of the best ways to measure success related to academic achievement is to focus on strengthening interpersonal and social skills, which are of great importance in improving student's level and obtaining the best results.

- It is important for students to have IPS because it helps them connect with people and develop their personality as well. Therefore people with strong IPS are the people who are most able to identify and improve their self behavior with others as well as good interaction and sense of responsibility more easily. (Bar-On, 2005).
- Furthermore IPS helps to improve relationships between individuals and facilitate working together as a team, especially among students during collaborative activities, as they work to enhance cooperation and participation among team members, and this is what Klein (2009) indicated that the basis for team success is individuals with good IPS.
- It also contains different skills such as active listening, which is one of the most important skills. According to Păstae (2017), listening is very important by paying attention and respecting what the speaker is saying. Some people have the ability to listen well, and therefore they can understand and analyze the message better, in addition to the necessity of having the skill of concentration.
- As for communication skills, students need to learn to talk with their teachers in order to express themselves . Adler, Rosenfeld, Proctor (2001)

notes that without oral communication, nearly all people will feel lost and lonely.

In sum, IPS do not only help students interact with others in their education, but also throughout their careers. It is essential for students to develop their skills and it will be a part of their behavior and help them interact with people in various sectors. Thus, IPS increase the chances of employment and a successful career.

### 1.2.3. How to enhance Interpersonal Skills

Developing IPS is very important to every person who wants to develop himself and achieve his goals, therefore it requires constant practice until it becomes a habit. Among the ways that can help individuals in improving their skills is as follows:

- 1- **Being an active listener**: Active listening refers to understanding the sender's message through encouraging and sympathizing with the speaker; Refrain from provinces, clarify what is said to ask questions or express an opinion and eye contact. (Rane, 2011). He also suggested that several strategies for active listening. Where one cannot speak and listen at the same time. Among the strategies he proposed:
  - Resting the speaker; show the desire to learn ,sympathy for the speaker ,eye contact, asking questions or expressing an opinion on what is said. (Rane, 2011). There is also Eunson's study (2012), students get advantages from the use of active listening in learning in the classroom. The students respect the other students' opinion by paying close attention to the speaker when delivering arguments and asking questions. It makes the discussion interactive to support them in their communication skill. You can show your interest through: gestures, appreciate others, Smile and the use of body language.

## 2- Improving oral communication skills:

- A research done by Alghamdi (2014) proves that learning collaboratively in a small group can improve their verbal interaction. Students practice their verbal communication by following the group discussion in real settings.
- ▶ IPS help students improve their verbal communication skills and this has been pointed out by Tevdovska (2015); the discussion and group cooperation has many positive aspects on the interpersonal relationships between students and thus improve their communication.
- Păstae (2017) also reported that students communicate in verbal and non-verbal communication through discussion during group work. Because during the group discussion students are more comfortable expressing their opinions and ideas orally, and thus improving their communication skill.
- 3- Improving teamwork skill: Students can learn with their peers in groups. As the individual differences during the group discussion enable students to cooperate by providing opportunities, to participate while performing various social activities. (Cheruvelil et al., 2014). A study by Ayon (2013) showed that three factors are necessary for effective teamwork: team dynamics, team relationships and instructor support. The instructor's greatly contributes to the success of each group member. Regarding the productivity of the members, it has been suggested that students sign the project to let the instructor know who is responsible for completing the task.

Furthermore, among the suggestions of Ayon (2013) is to give students the freedom to choose their groups rather than being assigned by the instructor, but he has the right to change them if he has concerns.

4- Improving relationships building skills: students IPS develop through participation in discussions and group activities. It is considered one of the effective methods in developing relationships between students. (Cheruvelil, et al., 2014). this is also suupported by Bonanno, Brocato and Ulbig's research (2013),which indicated the importance of group work discussion in which they declared that group discussion provides the chance for students to better share their opinions and to build strong relationships with each other even in real and professional life interaction.

# 1.2.4. The important elements of interpersonal skills

- Self confidence: Srivastava (2013) stated that confidence is one of the most positive attitudes possessed by each individual and it is the belief in his personal and mental abilities that allow him to be more confident. Besides according to Dowd et al.(2015) self-confidence is one of the most important aspects of student learning. Goel and Aggarwal (2012) stated that Confident people are more competent and independent emotionally and socially, and they make the teammates confident in their abilities and can confront and solve all the problems that it encounters, so that it can carry out the required tasks independently and achieve high and impressive results. Through CL students improve their self-respect, decrease their learning anxiety, generates a sense of self-esteem as competent and important individuals, and ultimately promotes mental health. (Johnson et al., 1998; Kagan,1994; Slavin, 1995).
- A sense of cohesion: Occurs when the individual feels that he belongs, or is a part of the group in which it operates one of the most important factors because it enhances the spirit of interaction and collaboration between individuals, and also makes him make an effort to complete his

duties to the fullest. People who have a strong sense of cohesion have a sense of mutual admiration and liking with others and perceive their world as comprehensible. Ready to take on, difficult tasks, deal with tension and challenge, as well as assume responsibility for the group's success, and support their peers. (Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Kagan 1994; Slavin,1995). Besides, Forsyth (2006) defines the group as the integration of many individuals connected to each other through social relationship and different elements like: communication, influence, interaction, interdependence, interrelation, shared identification, common tasks and goals, structure and system and group cohesion is the key to the group task's success.

➤ Initiative in socialization: Lorr et al.,(1991) define Initiative in socialization, as a major component of assertiveness. Riggio and Carney(2003) stated that it is a social expressivity refers to the ability and willingness of someone, to start communication and interaction with others. Besides CL incorporates individual accountability, equal participation and proacademic peer norms into classroom teaching. Furthermore, Gillies and Ashman (2003b); Kagan (1994) stated that initiative is expected to stimulate students' to initiate interaction with each other, and Johnson et al.(1998) promote constructive socialization.

Jacobs, McCafferty and DaSilva Iddings, 2006 stated that "uniqueness of each individual and the need for self-initiative as opposed to be convenient to all and teacher-fronted instruction" (p. 16).

Furthermore, in collaborative learning environments aren't engaging in large events but rather in daily practices of social interaction (Goffman, 1967).

- Being positive: positive enjoyment is important in building a rich learning environment, especially among students. The term positive refers to the behaviors that result from students with their peers. Which results in building strong relationships between students and the motivation to learn and work together and support each other to achieve their common goals. (Brown & Thomson, 2000; Dishon & O'Leary, 1998) pointed out that it serves as a prerequisite for the success of the team. Many studies have indicated that integrating positive interdependence facilitates positive attitudes towards others and promotes peer interaction. (Gillies & Ashman, 2003a; Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1995).
- Checking for understanding: required to make sure the students' understanding of materials and tasks given to them as well as their understanding of each other in order to achieve success and reach the desired academic results (Johnson et al., 1998; Kagan, 1994). Checking for understanding is one of the most important in the CL process, working in groups, understanding materials, task delivery, and evaluations. (Baloche, 1998; Brown & Thomson, 2000; Dishon & O' Leary, 1998; Johnson et al., 1998; Kagan, 1994).
- Fequal participation and individual accountability: One of the most prominent principles of group learning, each element complements the other, as individual accountability leads to equal participation among students. Equal participation is an important component of success. (Kagan, 1994). According to other researchers (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997; Baloche, 1998; Cohen et al., 1994; Kagan, 1994; Sharan & Sharan, 1994), equal participation of teammates is another distinctive

characteristic of CL and a result of positive interdependence and individual accountability. Besides equal opportunities for success means that students contribute with their teams by improving their own past performance (Slavin, 1995); in other words, the more improvement points teammates gain, the more likely their team will succeed. This element allows students of different academic levels to be equally challenged to make a contribution to their teams because they compete with themselves rather than with others. Research suggests that if students are rewarded for doing better than they have in the past, they will be more motivated to achieve than if they are rewarded for doing better than others (Slavin, 1995).

- Acceptance and empathy: Is one of the most important motivational elements in the success of collaborative education, a harmony and empathy, as well as acceptance and understanding of students to each other, it affects their psyche and provide them with positive energy and spirit of cooperation, acceptance and empathy which are an essential part of social skills (Lorr et al., 1991; Riggo, 2003). It plays a crucial role in maintaining positive linkages and establishing effective and productive teams. (Brown & Thomson, 2000; Dishon& O'Leary, 1998). These are possible social outcomes from the work of a well-organized CL group (Gillies, 2007; Gillies& Ashman, 2003a; Johnson et al., 1998; Slavin, 1995).
- Conflict management and resolution: According to Okoth et al. (2016), the conflict is the differences in views between individuals on certain issues, it is imperative. There will always be differences between

the school administration, teachers and students. Since there are differences and different levels for each member of the group, where each one of them is trying to introduce the idea and thus produces a conflict here they must manage this conflict to reach a satisfactory result for the group as a whole and produce work of high quality. The latter involves skills related to good listening, persuasion, negotiation, reflection, rethinking, high-level reasoning, and criticism, aimed at reaching consensus or finding solutions. Conflict management skills are important social skills in CL (Baloche, 1998; Hill & Eckert, 1995; Johnson et al., 1998b; Kagan, 1994).

## 1.2.5. The importance of Collaborative Learning in improving Interpersonal skills

CL enables groups to share in the success of its members, and it has many benefits in learning and improving students' IPS. Because often a set of tasks or ideas are presented, and there is often a process of clarification, discussion and evaluation of ideas. Thus, it can be said that all of this can be done during CL.

- 1- CL improves listening and peer learning: One of the most important IPS is listening and focusing on what others say. As De La Harpe, Radloff, and Wyber (2000) asserted that through discussions in collaborative work, student's willingness to learn and collaborate reinforces the most important components of IPS: oral-communication, listening, and self-awareness. Thus understanding the thoughts and opinions of peers.
- **2- CL improves critical thinking**: Learners are more involved and active during the collaboration process among team members, as they work together to solve the tasks given to them. In CL groups, participants are interconnected and learn from each other by working together. They help

each other, actively collect and share knowledge, and while they are all held responsible for carrying out their tasks, they assess the team's performance and thus enhance their critical thinking.(Laal & Laal, 2012).

3- CL improves the spirit of cooperation and participation among team members: Learners learn to work in groups where they are able to exchange their ideas with others and also promote social and Cognitive interactions. The latter engage in two-way communication, respond to the shift from understanding what is modern, and provide attention ,Understand what is said, plan and think about teamwork. (Isohätälä et al., 2020).

In order to create an environment in which people collaborate to develop effective participation and interaction processes and cognitive interaction, an individual needs to build trust and interdependence, common understanding, and the most importantly, accepting failure (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Social interactions can create a positive social and emotional environment classified as interactions (Isohätälä et al., 2020). Furthermore, Teams show a high level of participation in CL projects that offer high levels of both types of social interactions. (Sinha et al., 2015). Sharing ideas is not easy for everyone; there are different types of characters: shy and open, or not wanting to speak to team members to enable all team members to learn to share their thoughts successfully.

# 1.3. Conclusion

In light of the circumstances the world is going through due to the Corona pandemic and the obstacles it has caused, especially in the field of education, it led to harnessing various means and strategies to complete the study virtually. The importance of this study lies in introducing the most effective methods that facilitate students to obtain better results when cooperating together; Working in groups creates an atmosphere of collaboration and close relationships between students; Where they can share their ideas and exchange their experiences to benefit from each other. In addition to contributing positively, all of these factors help to enhance their interpersonal and social skills, as well as critical thinking, improve performance achievements, thus obtaining and and better results.

# 2. Introduction

The research questions in this study is to investigate whether students prefer to work individually or collaboratively with their peers, in COVID 19 pandemic and how they behave in groups either real or virtual. In addition to the significant role that the IPS plays in the success of the team work. These research questions require the use of quantitative research methodology in this study. This chapter starts with some key concepts essential for a quantitative study. It is followed by an introduction of participants and the general research procedure, the questionnaire is used as instrument for collecting data. At the end of the chapter an explanation of specific techniques used to analyze the data and some principles that guided the data analysis.

### 2.1. Methodology

The descriptive approach is used in this study because it is the best way to investigate the extent to which students collaborate and accomplishing their tasks, especially in the light of the current situation imposed by the COVID 19 pandemic, and what are the IPS and competencies that students help to facilitate interaction between team members and achieve their common goals.

The survey is a useful means of collecting and disseminating data to generalize to a population and the questionnaire is the best way to collect the information in order to confirm the research questions and hypothesis.

In this study, the focus was on the best way that students prefer to accomplish their collaboration either in real, virtual groups or both. In addition to the skills that must be possessed for the success of collaborative work.

The research questions and the hypothesis questions require quantitative method to know how learners accomplish their tasks either in real group " face to face" or in virtual group especially during COVID 19 pandemic and what IPS use to achieve the collaborative work.

## 2.2. Participants

This research was conducted at University Center of Barika. Participants were English students majored in didactics, the main reason for this choice is that learners have some assignments in CL groups more better than the other levels. A questionnaire was distributed to 37 students.

The sampling type is non-probability convenience sampling in which the sample is selected from the population only because it is conveniently available and easy to reach, and it is better to test a sample that represent a population, the number of surveyed learners are thirty seven (N=37).

### 2.3. Data collection tool

Data are collected through a questionnaire, the latter consists of 40 items, which are categorized into eight constructs: self-confidence, sense of cohesion, initiative in socialization, being positive, checking for understanding, equal participation and accountability, acceptance and empathy, and conflict management. It uses a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = not at all like me to 5 = exactly like mean and the higher scores indicate better social skills.

The questionnaire was used to investigate the various views of students about collaboration between teammates in group either in real or virtual group, and IPS that students possess when they collaborate with giving each student an opportunity to express their views on the appropriate environment for collaboration and success.

The learners were invited to answer the questionnaire with enough time to respond. It aims to make students aware of the importance of IPS in a different collaborative environment, as it contains two main sections: First one is about collaboration's

accomplishment "real group, virtual group or work either in real or virtual group, while the second section is about IPS "self-confidence, sense of cohesion, initiative in socialization, being positive, conflict management, checking for understanding, equal participation and accountability, acceptance and empathy". This questionnaire seeks to collect data and distributed to master students during the 2021/2022 academic year, where it was answered by the participants at the same time of the distribution.

### 2.4. Analysis Procedure

In this research, the quantitative method is used to treat the respondents' answers. Then the questionnaire constructs were studied, counted the responses, calculated the mean, the standard deviation for each construct and presented in a form of graphs and tables.

### 2.4.1. Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 23,0 Version) was used to conduct data analysis on the eight constructs of IPS in CL, in this research, the statistics were calculated through entering mean score and standard deviation of the eight construct, mean scores.

### 2.4.2. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF INSTRUMENTS

Oso and Onen (2009) pointed that reliability is the extent to which tools provide consistent responses over time, while validity reflects the tool and the extent to which it reaches from the measurement. In addition the instrument was validated and the reliability was assured by the questionnaire which was adopted from (Huiping Ning, 2010). The instrument reliability was also obtained using SPSS version 23 (Cronbach's Alpha coefficient = 0.777) (see the table1). According to Orodho (2008), a reliable questionnaire should have an alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above.

**Table 1** *Reliability.* 

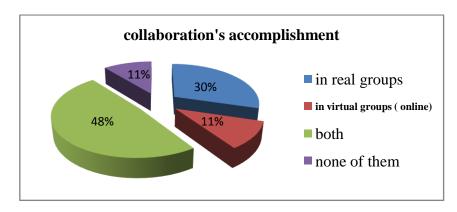
Cronbach"s Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based of Standardized Items	No. of Item
0.746	0.777	41

## 2.5. Results and Interpretation.

## **Section 01: Groups Learning Accomplishment.**

Figure 1

Collaboration Learning Accomplishment



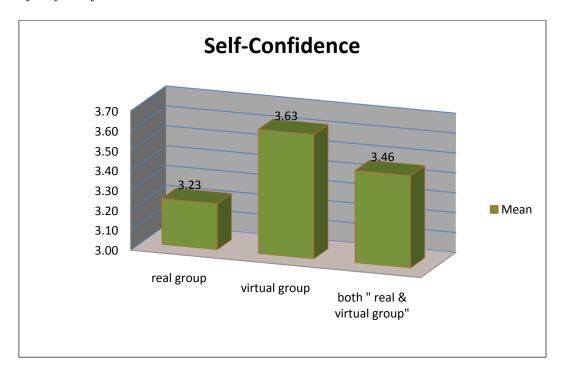
As the graph shows, 89,2 % of Master I students prefer to learn collaboratively in either real and/or virtual collaborative groups, While 10,8 % do not collaborate at all.

# **Section II: Interpersonal skills**

### 1. Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is a key component of mental health and self-esteem, the individual feels that s/he can achieve success with his/her efforts and competences. it related with other factors such as: self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-acceptance, and self- esteem (Johnson et al., 1998; Slavin, 1995). The results related to self- confidence are illustrated in the table and the graph below.

**Figure2** *Mean of Self-Confidence.* 



As shown in the graph above, the three groups show a moderate to high level of self-confidence, students during group interaction are more confidence in virtual groups than in real groups, this is maybe due to the personality of some individuals, as they feel shy while expressing their thoughts in front of their peers, but in the virtual atmosphere they are more comfortable and confident in expressing themselves. This is what Rubio's (2007) supported that low self-confidence is due to psychological barriers such as feelings of safety, fear, anxiety, feeling out of society and that arises for the student during the classroom and negatively affects the individual's performance.

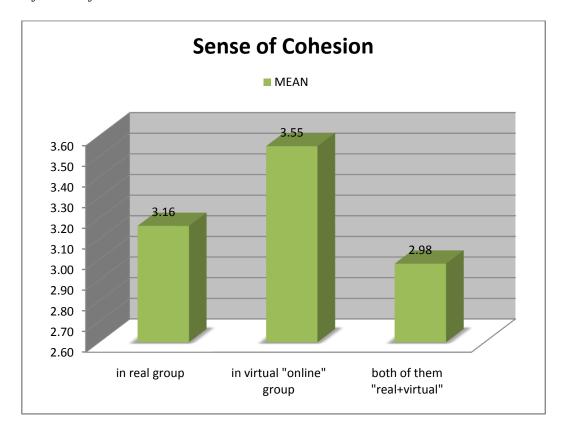
### 2. Sense of cohesion

Sense of cohesion is how one feels being part of a group and it is an important factor which maintains individual psychological health and it results from positive interdependence, People with a strong sense of cohesion have a feeling of liking each other and understand their world. They can take any difficult tasks, and face any stress or challenge, hold

responsibility for group success, and offer peer support. (Johnson and Johnson, 2003; Kagan, 1994; Slavin, 1995). The results related to sense of cohesion are illustrated in the table and the graph below.

Figure 3

Mean of Sense of Cohesion

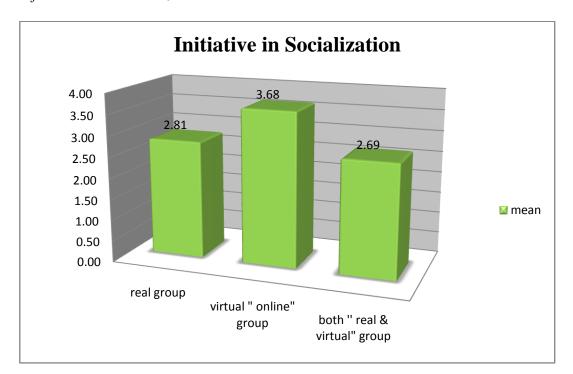


The graph reveals that the three groups show a moderate to high level of sense of cohesion with the virtual group on the top (M=3,55). This is may be due to students have the ability to work with others in virtual environment because of the absence of cultural backgrounds and creating a virtual environment where they interact and feel comfortable to learn with others far from psychological barriers; they can gain knowledge and skills from others virtually.

### 3. Initiative in Socialization

Lorr et al. (1991) define initiative in socialization, as a major component of assertiveness. In addition Riggio and Carney (2003) stated that it is asocial expressivity refers to the ability and willingness of someone to start communication and interaction with others. The results related to initiative in socialization are illustrated in the table and the graph below.

**Figure 4** *Mean of Initiative in Socialization.* 



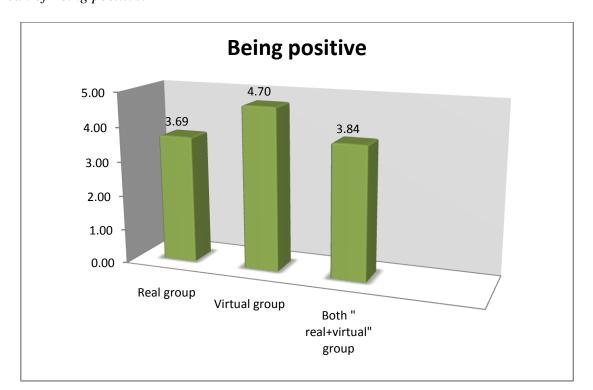
The graph reveals a moderate to high level of initiative in socialization in the three groups with the virtual group on the top (M=3,68); students in virtual group have the ability and the willingness of someone to start communication and interaction. This is maybe due to the fact that the person is either an introvert or suffers from psychological problems, so he prefers to communicate virtually. Ahuja and Carley (1999) state that individuals in virtual groups enjoy greater autonomy than those in traditional one.

## 4. Being Positive

According to Brown and Thomson (2000) and Dishon and O'Leary (1998) being positive refers to specific behaviors among peers such as offering encouragement, praise, and support to achieve group outcomes, and it is the main component of interrelationship or maintenance skills for the team's success. The results related to being positive are illustrated in the table and the graph below.

Figure 5

Mean of Being positive.



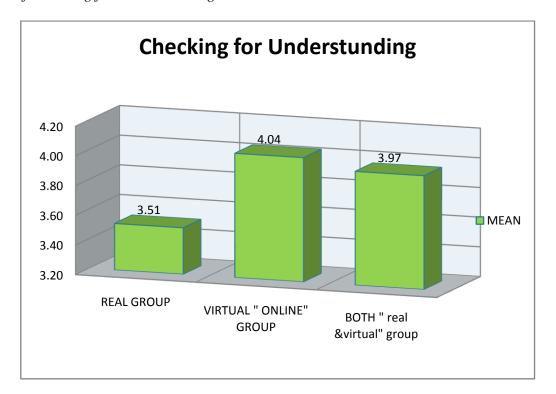
As shown in figure 5, a moderate to high level of being positive in the three groups with the virtual group on the top (M=4,70); the majority of respondents said that students have the power to help and encourage positively when working with others in virtual groups, this is maybe due to the fact that virtual environment give them the freedom to participate and interact with others positively without caring about the social and cultural backgrounds.

### 5. Checking for understanding

Checking for understanding aims to ensure that all team members have a good understanding of each other, grasp the learning materials and a skill for a good interaction and achieve group goals(Johnson et al., 1998; Kagan, 1994). Besides, this skill involves offering and asking for explanation, clarification, elaboration, illustration and summarization to make the point presented well understood. The results related to checking for understanding are illustrated in the table and the graph below.

Figure 6

Mean of Checking for Understanding



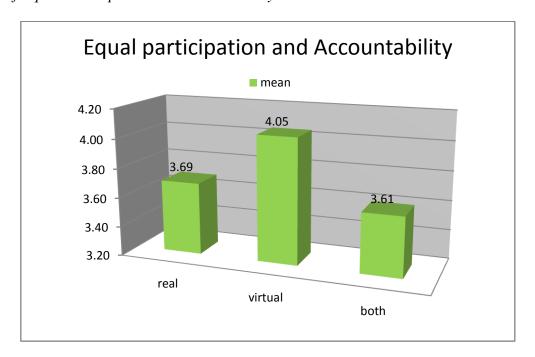
As the figure 6 reveals a moderate to high level of checking for understanding in the three groups with the virtual group on the top (M= 4,04); it means that students in virtual groups discuss their answers and try to figure out the misunderstanding and try to correct them with their teammates to reach their goals, this is maybe due to the fact that students can articulate their lack of understanding comfortably without shame in virtual groups. The virtual technological means facilitate the students to search for what is missing quickly and easily.

## 6. Equal participation and accountability.

Equal participation is an essential ingredient for success of all students, in which individual's accountability provides a powerful means (Kagan, 1994, p. 4:10). The results related to equal participation and accountability are illustrated in the following table and the figure.

Figure 7

Mean of Equal Participation and Accountability



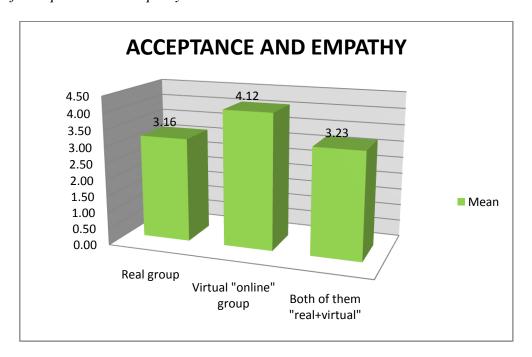
The figure above shows a moderate to high level of equal participation in the three groups with the virtual group on the top (M=4,05); students in virtual groups have the opportunity to participate in group discussion or tasks equally within the team and to encounter themselves in order to make the work succeed than participation in real one (M=3,69). This is maybe due to the wide spread of various technological means that help the student to share and discuss his opinions comfortably and independently without fear.

## 7. Acceptance and empathy

Acceptance and empathy is the ability of an individual to accept and understand different personalities, academic levels, social backgrounds, and personal perspectives of others and it is an integral part of social skills (Lorr et al., 1991; Riggo, 2003). The results related to acceptance and empathy are illustrated in the table and the figure below.

Figure 8

Mean of Acceptance and Empathy

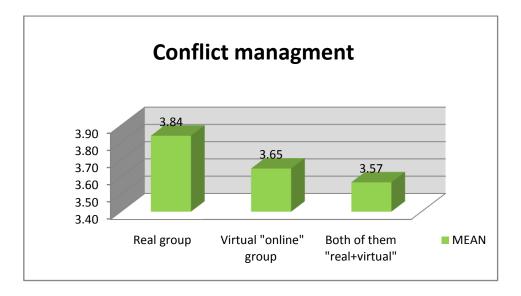


As shown in the figure 8, the three groups show a moderate to high levels of acceptance and empathy, with the virtual group on the top (M=4.12). Acceptance and empathy in virtual group is prevailing than in real one; students are aware about the differences between them, they work together to complete the tasks, try to figure out the level of each member and encourage others. This is maybe due to the fact that the virtual groups exclude the personal and social differences between the group members, this makes it easier for them to interact with each other.

### 8. Conflict Management

Conflict is a contradiction of views or competition between two powers to gain access to non-compliant targets (Baskaran & Thushyanthan, 2015). Furthermore, conflicts are not bad but what is important is how to manage them, if in a constructive way the results will be better and vice versa. This means its management is a necessary condition to achieve better results (Bano & Ashraf, 2013). The results related to conflict management are illustrated in the table and the figure below.

**Figure9**Mean of Conflict Management.

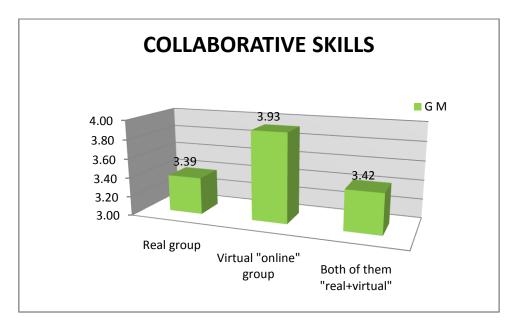


As shown in figure 9, a moderate to high level of conflict management in the three groups with the real group on the top (M=3.84), students in real groups have the skills of managing conflicts that may occur during group work, they can solve problems and explore solutions to achieve the group balance. This is maybe due to the preference of facing each other in real group in order to know the real background of the opposition to give an effective solution and to not lead to misinterpretation of messages, conversations, point of views because of the geographical factor.

The general average of the mean related to collaborative skills was calculated and represented in the figure below.

Figure 10

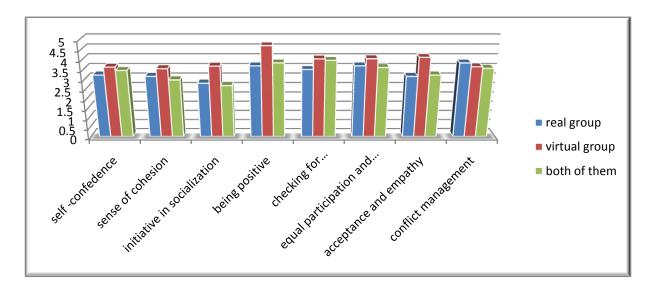
Mean of Collaborative Skills.



The results obtained from the analysis of scores on the eight constructs and the total scores on the questionnaire are summarized in Figure 10, which includes mean scores, standard deviations, and variance within each group, indicate a higher level of collaborative interpersonal skills in virtual groups.

Furthermore, the figure below shows the IPS of the three group.

**Figure 11**Mean of the Interpersonal Skills in Collaborative Learning.



As shown in the figure 11, some of IPS are prevailing in virtual groups (being positive "M=4,70", equal participation and accountability "M=4,05", checking for understanding "M=4,04", acceptance and empathy "M=4,12" and others are prevailing in real group (conflict managment "M= 3,84"); students find themselves share and communicate with others in virtual work environment, using their IPS better, this is may be due to the fact that virtual team members contains different skilled individuals, more productive because of using technology to interact with others, furthermore, IPS can help students communicate, make a discussion, resolving a conflict, solving problems virtually.

#### 2.6. Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the extent to which students collaborate during group work, and their use of the IPS necessary for the success of teamwork. The results will be discussed according to the sequence of study questions and the hypotheses presented in the general introduction above.

The first research question is: Do students work collaboratively during the COVID-19 pandemic? The results indicated that (89.2%) of students learn collaboratively during the COVID 19 pandemic. There is a study on how students view virtual collaborative learning by

Faja (2013) shows that students benefit from additional time, as they spend it in thinking or answering questions before they are posted on forum. While in face-to-face, they have to provide quick answers. As studies revealed also, students who learn virtually have time to access course materials, the various sources and information that lead to a more in-depth discussion. In addition, it is easy for students to share these resources virtually. As for the problems that they may encounter in the virtual collaborative learning application are interruptions of communication, misunderstanding, lack of time and fear of expressing their comments publicly on social media (Faja, 2013). Furthermore, Listyani (2021), in a recent study on Indonesian first-year perspectives, found that the English language students while working collaboratively in virtual groups during the writing classes, the participants confirmed that CL contributed significantly to improve their skills to write better essays due to the interaction and the exchange of ideas between them and their peers. Only two of the 14 students who participated in the study's research were not satisfied on CL.

The second research question deals with: How do students accomplish their collaborative work during the COVID 19 pandemic?. The results of the statistical analysis indicated that students accomplish their collaborative work during COVID 19 pandemic in different ways: real collaboration (28.2%), virtual collaboration (10.3%), or both (46.2%). This indicates that the students do not tend to a certain method, but rather have a willingness to accomplish their goals, whether in real or virtual groups during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is due to the students' desire to improve their academic achievements and to accomplish their specific tasks. Through the results we can say that the students of University Center Barika work collaboratively either in real groups, virtual groups or both of them, because in the end, the required tasks will be completed. CL in virtual groups enhances trust between individuals as well as ease of interaction and communication, this view was supported by Bernard et al.( 2000) that working in these small groups are 'comfort zones' in which to

improve social and academic trust among team members. On the other hand, CL in real groups and face-to-face interaction between students enhances understanding and communication, in addition to the trust between individuals faster. where a study examining the effects of communication opportunities in different mode groups. Bos, Olson, Gergle, Olson and Wright (2002) confirmed that face-to-face groups develop trust between students faster. Hence, the result of the present discussed above support the first hypothesis:

The third research question deals with: What interpersonal skills do students have/use during their collaborations in the COVID-19 pandemic?. Relying on the results of the study, we can say that students use/have almost high levels of IPS in all the collaborative learning groups; while students in real groups exhibit a higher level in conflict management skills, students in virtual groups exhibit higher levels in self-confidence, sense of cohesion, initiative in socialization, being positive, checking for understanding, equal participation and accountability, and acceptance and empathy skills. These findings reject the second hypothesis, claiming that English students at Barika university center exhibit better interpersonal skills in real collaborative groups, and confirm the third hypothesis, claiming that English students at Barika university center exhibit better interpersonal skills in virtual collaborative groups.

### 2.7. Conclusion

According to the data collected and the results presented, we conclude that students are aware of the great importance of collaborative learning and the role that interpersonal skills play in its success. In addition, students prefer working in virtual groups especially with the spread of COVID-19, as students are becoming more interested in online collaboration for ease of interaction in this environment, the availability of technological means that help students interact with different cultural and intellectual teammates backgrounds

## **General Conclusion**

Our dissertation investigated Master one student's insights toward collaborative learning process either in real collaboration or in virtual one. The effective learning strategy adopted by the educational authorities as an alternative to classroom education due to the security conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study depends on the descriptive analytical method in the research. The beginning contains an attempt to provide a comprehensive description of the strategy and its characteristics, as well as, ways to apply it to take advantage of its multiple benefits for all parties. In addition, it attempts to present interpersonal skills with a focus on their importance and ways to improve them for their significant role in the success of this strategy and achieving teamwork common goals.

The first objective is to highlight the benefits of working in collaborative groups and students' attitudes towards collaborative activities, which are the basis for the success and achievement of students' common goals. Where the results of the investigation showed through analysis of the administered questionnaire that students of Master one degree in didactics accomplish their tasks in virtual groups better than in real group.

The second objective of our study is to identify the various interpersonal skills that students possess and the effective role they play during collaborative activities. having these skills to undergraduate students is vital, and students should focus their attention on trying to find different ways to develop these skills by organizing various collaborative activities and projects in order to enhance interaction and cooperation among students. The findings of the investigation reveals that collaborative learning in virtual group enhance the interpersonal skills better than in real group due to the use of various means that help the individual to work collaboratively.

This research sheds light on testing the hypothesis formulated in the general introduction. The results confirm the above mentioned hypotheses

At a final notice, we can stop at the most important recommendations as a result of this study, as it is clear from all of the above that collaborative learning should be integrated within the curriculum in addition to training students on how to work in groups and educating them to take advantage of its multiple benefits and harnessing all means by professors and institutions to improve interpersonal skills that Contribute to the success of collaborative learning.

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## Questionnaire for 1st year Master Students at Barika University Center

virtual « ONLINE » group learning in learning group, whether it is virt I sincerly invite you to participate it	ng. W tual gr	e want to oup learn	know if the ing or real gr	student has oup learning	interperso	onal skills
Are you : male			female			
1) How do you accomplis	sh yo	ur grou	o work ?			
In Real Groups In Groups (Or	nline)	Virtual	Both		None Of	Them
❖ During group work :						
2) <u>Self-confidence</u>		Not at all like me (1)	A little like me (2)	Moderately like me (3)	Very much like me (4)	Exactly like me (5)
participating again.	e. glish glish d be from					
❖ During group w 3) Sense of Cohesion	OIK.	Not at a like me (1)	A little like me (2)	Moderatel y like me (3)	Very much like me (4)	Exactly like me (5)
6. It is hard for me to stay on task in class.					(1)	
<ol> <li>I consider peer support indispensable to my language learning and success.</li> </ol>	7 Englis	h				
8. Working withpeerscantakemefurtherthanworking	alone.					
9. I have a strong sense of belonging when work	king wit	h				
peers						
10. I offer teammates support and assistance as me can and want them to do their best in English.	nuch as	I				

## **❖** During group work :

	Not at all	A little like	Moderatel	Very much	Exactly
4) Initiative in socialization	like me	me	y like me	like me	like me
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
11. I'm usually the one who initiates					
conversation.					
12. I usually take the initiative to					
introduce myself to others.					
13. I don't speak until others speak to					
me.					
14. I find it very hard to speak in					
frontofclass.					
15. I feelstressed and uncomfortable					
when working with others in English					
class.					

❖ During group work :

· _ ag g. cp c					
	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very much	Exactly like
5) Being positive	like me	like me	like me	like me	me
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
16. I tend to encourage and praise when					
working with others.					
17. I offer help to those who can't grasp					
materials learned.					
18. I don't give —put-downs to others,					
even if they haven't done a good job.					
19. I can always find something to learn					
from others.					
20. I believe in the power of					
encouragement and praise.					

**❖** During group work :

	Not at all	A little like	Moderately	Very much	Exactly
6) Checking for understanding	like me	me	like me	like me	like me
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
21. I often ask for clarification and elaboration to have a better					
understanding.					
22. I feel reluctant to ask for help even when I don't understand the					
learning material.					
23. I often offer clarification and elaboration to get my idea across.					
24. If there are too many details mentioned I often summarize the					
main points to generate a clear and overall picture.					
25. I often use examples to make myself understood in English class.					

## **❖** During group work :

	Not at all	A little like	Moderately	Very much	Exactly like
7) Equal participation and accountability	like me	me	like me	like me	me
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
26. I have a clear picture of my personal role in English					
group work and participate actively.					
27. I tend to keep silent in English class, except when I					
am called to answer some questions.					
28. I am willing to share my knowledge and experience.					
29. I interrupt politely someone who speaks too long in					
group discussion to make sure everyone gets a turn.					
30. I know my share of contribution is indispensable to					
group success.					

**❖** During group work :

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very much	Exactly like
8) Acceptance and empathy	like me	like me	like me	like me	me
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
31. I can easily figure out what others are thinking.					
32. It is hard for me to understand others' perspectives.					
33. Few people are as sensitive and understanding as I am.					
34. Working with a person who is not like me is unbearable.					
35. I believe everybody of different English levels can make a					
contribution to the completion of group tasks.					

During group work :

The parting group work.					
	Not at all	A little like	Moderately	Very much	Exactly like
9) Conflict management	like me	me	like me	like me	me
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
36. Whenever in a conflict, I like to hear the other side, negotiate					
the problems and reach a consensus.					
37. When there is a disagreement among us, I withdraw and try to					
escape from it.					
38. I oftenadaptmyideas and behaviourtothegroup I workwith.					
39. I am good at negotiating and interacting with others in the					
process of resolving conflict.					
40. I can always reach constructive solutions to problems and find					
a way out.					

Your contribution to insight is precious, and I assure that I will keep the information confidential and for academic purposes 'use'.

Thank you for your help

Appendix B

Table 2

Collaboration Learning Accomplishment.

	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage	Cumulative
	rrequency	1 creemage	1 creemage	percentage
Real groups	11	28.2 %	29.7	29.7
Virtual groups ( online)	4	10.3 %	10.8	40.5
Both	18	46.2 %	48.6	89.2
None of them	4	10.3 %	10.8	100.0
Total	37	94.9%	100.0	

Table3

Mean of Self-Confidence.

SELF_CONFIDENCE	N	MEAN	SD	Variance
Real group	11	3.23	0.45	0.20
Virtual"online" group	4	3.63	1.00	1.00
Both of them "real+virtual"	18	3.46	0.70	0.49

Table 4
Sense of cohesion.

Sense of cohesion	N	MEAN	SD	Variance
Real group	11	3,16	0,71	0,50
Virtual"online" group	4	3,55	0,34	0,12
Both of them "real+virtual"	18	2,98	0,63	0,39

**Table 5** *Mean of Initiative in Socialization.* 

Initiative in Socialization	N	MEAN	SD	Variance
Real group	11	2.81	0.51	0.26
Virtual group	4	3.68	0.91	0.82
Both" real +virtual" group	18	2.69	0.62	0.38

Table 6

Mean of Being Positive.

BEING_POSITIVE	N	MEAN	SD	Variance
Real group	11	3.69	0.83	0.68
Virtual group	4	4.70	0.25	0.06
Both" real+virtual" group	18	3.84	1.01	1.01

 Table 7

 Mean of Checking for Understanding.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING	N	MEAN	SD	Variance
Real group	11	3.51	0.65	0.43
Virtual group	4	4.04	0.69	0.47
Both" real &virtual" group	18	3.97	0.60	0.36

**Table 8**Mean of Equal participation and Accountability.

Equal participation and Accountability	N	MEAN	SD	Variance
Real group	11	3.69	0.72	0.52
Virtual group	4	4.05	0.68	0.46
Both" Real & Virtual" group	18	3.30	1.10	1.21

 Table 9

 Mean of Acceptance and Empathy.

ACCEPTANCE_AND_EMPATHY	N	MEAN	SD	Variance
Real group	11	3.16	0.53	0.28
Virtual group	4	4.12	0.60	0.37
Both " real & virtual" group	18	3.23	0.57	0.32

Table 10

Mean of Conflict Management.

CONFLICT_MANAGEMENT	N	MEAN	SD	Variance
Real group	11	3.84	0.66	0.43
Virtual"online" group	4	3.65	0.94	0.89
Both of them "real+virtual"	18	3.57	0.55	0.30

**Table 11** *Mean of Collaborative Skills.* 

Collaborative_skills	N	MEAN	SD	Variance
Real group	11.00	3.39	0.41	0.16
Virtual"online" group	4.00	3.93	0.58	0.34
Both of them "real+virtual"	18.00	3.42	0.42	0.17

Table12

Mean of the Interpersonal Skills in Collaborative Learning.

IPS	real group	virtual group	both of them
Self -confidence	3,23	3,63	3,46
Sense of cohesion	3,16	3,55	2,98
Initiative in socialization	2,81	3,68	2,69
Being positive	3,69	4,70	3,84
Checking for understanding	3,51	4,04	3,97
Equal participation and accountability	3,69	4,05	3,61
Acceptance and empathy	3,16	4,12	3,23
Conflict management	3,84	3,65	3,57