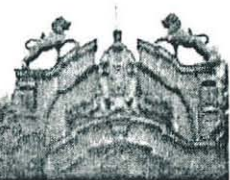


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EFL Learners' Attitude towards Group Work: The
Case of High and Low Achievers

By

Abebaw Andargie



June, 2011

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to describe and compare high and low academic achiever students' attitude towards group work. It has used samples of grade 12 students from Belay Zeleke preparatory school. Sixty sample students were selected from ten sections through purposive sampling technique so that there were thirty high achiever and thirty low achiever students for this study.

To achieve the intended goal, the study has used descriptive-comparative study design and qualitative & quantitative data gathering methods. Kouros & Abrami's (2006) questionnaire was employed with important modifications. The modified self-report questionnaire with 29- items administered to all sample students. In addition, interview was used with 10 high and low achiever learners. Data obtained through the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version-13. The descriptive statistics such as mean values, standard deviations, and Independent T-test were considered in the discussion. During the discussion, data obtained through the self report questionnaire were deeply analyzed together with the data obtained through interview.

Results of the study revealed that both group of high and low achiever students have a favorable attitude towards group work and no significant difference was found in their attitude. Based on the data gained it is concluded that academic achievement level does not play any significant role in differentiating learners' attitude towards group work.

Since the students do not vary in terms of their group work attitude based on the level of their achievement, it is recommended that teachers of English should incorporate group work activities in their teaching strategies by taking all necessary preparations. Students must also provide input in designing group work like group size, group composition, the time needed, and other related things.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Learning another language apart from the mother tongue has always been important for people, because of the reasons such as knowing other cultures, traveling, trade, and religion or may be for other reasons. Although difficult to examine where and when second language education started, it is a fact that bilingualism has always been the norm instead of monolingualism. In line with this idea, Richards and Rodgers (1986) said “It has been estimated that some sixty percent of today’s world population is multilingual. Both from contemporary and a historical perspective, bilingualism or monolingualism is the norm rather than the exception”.

Another point is that second language education has changed through languages. For instance, as Richards and Rodgers (Ibid) have mentioned, ancient Romans were trying to learn Greek, and then Latin became popular and the dominant language of education, commerce, trade, religion and government in the western world. Finally, English has the importance now. Even though, we know why people want to learn other languages, the way how they learn these languages is another important point. This has always got the attention of pedagogues, linguists and scientists all together. Different researchers state that the way of second language learning has also changed according to reasons why people want to learn languages and what the pedagogues, linguists and scientists understand from teaching language.

Furthermore, many approaches, methods, and techniques have been developed for the needs of language teaching. Brown (1994) has stated that “as the field of second language pedagogy has developed and matured over the past few decades, we have experienced a number of reactions and counter reactions in methods and approaches to language teaching”. Likewise, as Richards and Rodgers (Ibid) have tried to illustrate, a Communicative Language Teaching approach started its movement from a theory of language as communication away from traditional lesson formats where the focus was on the mastery of different items of grammar and practice through controlled activities such as memorization of dialogues and drills, towards the use of pair work activities, role plays, group work activities and larger project works.

According to these language teaching experts, the current trend of second language teaching lies on the Communicative Language Teaching which gives higher priority to communicative

competence. Then, as communication is interaction between people who exchange information, ideas, opinions and feelings, the range of exercise types and activities compatible with a communicative approach are unlimited, provided that such exercises enable learners to attain the communicative objectives of the curriculum, engage learners in communication, and require the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction.

So, if communication activity involves at least two people who interact with each other, it is inevitable that the emphasis should be on pair work, role play and group work activities i.e., most descriptions of Communicative Language Teaching encourage teachers to use pair work, role play and group work during their lessons by taking the situation, the students' ability & interest, and the availability of teaching materials in to account.

The shift in language classroom organization from teacher-fronted to student group work has received a growing amount of theoretical and empirical support as the idea behind group work is that by allowing students to work together to solve problems, the teacher facilitates the development of cooperation and teamwork skills. In addition, different researchers and experts in the field of language teaching and learning have considered that there are a number of merits of using group learning. For instance, Harmer (1991) and Long & Porter (1987) said that group work increases the amount of student talking time and gives opportunities to students in order to use the target language to communicate with each other.

Generally, different sources argue that students learn a language best from tasks that involve social interactions as group work can be an effective method to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop key critical-thinking, communication, and decision-making skills.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Since interaction between a teacher and students and among students themselves is regarded as a crucial element in language learning, giving a considerable attention to classroom interaction in a language classroom seems very important. As mentioned in the previous section, this classroom interaction can be realized through the use of pair, role play and group works so group work can be taken as the main manifestation of good classroom interaction. And it is true that if a teacher is

constantly talking, learners of English as a second/ foreign language may not get a chance to practice, so group work gives students an opportunity to practice the language.

Nowadays in Ethiopia, textbooks and other teaching and learning materials are being designed in line with the practice of role play, pair work and group work. The practice of group work is also quite common in secondary schools, colleges and universities. Through this practice, students are given the opportunity to work together with their partners towards accomplishing an academic goal.

A number of local researches were conducted on the practice of group work. For instance, Alamirew (1992) conducted a kind of experimental research on the practicability of group work. Finally he said that students developed communicative competence through group work than the traditional approach.

Birhanu Bogale (2000) has also conducted an exploratory research to investigate the verbal participation behavior of first year college students as they took part in group discussion in their college English classes. By using the qualitative methodology, and interview and observation of group discussion, he finally concluded that there is a huge difference in the amount of verbal participation in group discussion among students and the presence of number of factors which are responsible for this difference such as lack of knowledge of the subject, confusion as to group process, not understanding the discussion, anxiety or shyness, or less attitude towards working in a group or learning in general.

In addition, Mulat (2007) conducted a kind of descriptive study on teachers' roles in implementing group work in Debre Berhan College of teachers' education basically to know whether teachers employ group work in their classrooms, factors that hinder the use of group work, and the roles they are expected to play. He said that although pair and group work learning should be included in almost every classroom based on the situations and contexts, some teachers struggle with having students work cooperatively. This can be caused by the problem of developing good group lessons and assessing the individual performance of the group members. This is where understanding how to teach effective group work becomes a crucial task for the teacher.

Gatachew (2008) on his way studied some major factors that can affect EFL learners' verbal participation in group work activities plasma TV and the roles expected from teachers in maximizing the students' verbal participation in group work. At the end, his study revealed that the time given for group work activities, the size of a group, composition of learners with in the group, and seating arrangements as the major factors that affect the students' participation in group work activities particularly in English classes.

In group work activities, all students with in the group are expected to actively participate for their own learning. According to Charness, et al (1994) students in a given group have the roles of "initiating, giving and asking for information and for reactions, restating and giving examples, contrasting, clarifying, synthesizing, summarizing, evaluating and diagnosing activities with in the group". In contrast, it is evident that in different stages of school levels some students were reluctant and passive to participate in discussions of group work activities while some others were active participants.

In different studies, it was found that students who participate more and thereby elicit more teacher inputs exhibit greater gains in L2 proficiency compared to students who play a passive role in language interaction. In addition, according to Alfred (1971: 82), "it is the student's good or poor attitude that makes life easy or difficult in the foreign language classroom". As attitudes toward learning are believed to influence behaviors and a relationship "between attitudes and achievement has been shown to exist, it becomes an essential component of second language learning pedagogy.

Some external studies were carried out to see the attitudinal difference of high and low achiever students towards foreign language learning, towards learning in general and to other classroom components. However, it is believed that the result of these studies could not assure the level of Ethiopian learners' attitude specifically and little study has been done looking at the learning habits and attitudes to the learning of students at any level of the education system in Ethiopian context.

So, as group work has gained a great emphasis in current language teaching methodologies and student's attitude is taken as an integral part of language learning classrooms, it seemed plausible to see the students' attitude towards group work. Therefore, being different from the

aforementioned studies, the current study was focused on high and low achiever learners' attitude towards group work in their English language classrooms.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1. Main Objective

The main objective of this study was to describe and compare the attitudes of high and low achievers towards group work and to see the relationship between academic achievement and students' group work attitude.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study sought to describe the attitudes of students towards group work by looking at:

1. the attitudes of high achiever learners' attitude towards groups in their English language classes,
2. the attitudes of low achiever learners' attitude towards groups in their English language classes,
3. if there was any significant difference between the attitudes of high and low academic achievers towards group work and
4. the impact of achievement on students' attitude towards group work.

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is believed that the result from this study would help teachers because understanding areas of group learning that students harbor negative attitudes towards may help them implement group work activities that are productive and enjoyable for the students.

As positive experiences may reduce the chance of interpersonal conflict within groups and create a more conducive learning environment, this study can be used by teachers and students to determine the cooperative climate of the classroom, as well as, any conflicts among members that the teacher may not be aware of.

For various reasons, students may be reluctant to express their concerns and frustrations with their group members. For instance, student perceptions that their ideas are being belittled, or that others are benefiting unfairly from their efforts can be revealed and subsequently dealt with. This will enable students to focus on the group task rather than interpersonal dynamics.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

As the aim of the study was to describe and compare high and low achiever students' attitude towards group work particularly in their English language learning classes, the primary focus was on in-class group work, rather than projects that are done outside of classroom.

The study has used subjects with reference to grade 12 students from Belay Zeleke Preparatory School in 2010/11 academic year. Therefore, all generalizations and conclusions made were bounded by this scope.

1.6 Limitation of the study

From the very beginning, it was intended to investigate students' attitude towards group work taking different factors like their gender difference, location (urban/ rural), academic achievement level and other very essential demographic variables into account. However, because of the unavailability of enough time this study was confined itself only on the attitudes of high and low achiever students towards group work.

Even on this limited variable (academic achievement) it was better to take different grade levels and schools as well, but it was limited on grade twelve Belay Zeleke Preparatory School students. While collecting data through interview students were not voluntary to be recorded, and did not show any interest of that. However, all necessary actions were taken to solve these problems and to make this study complete.

1.7 Operational Definitions of Terms

Group work: is defined as small groups of learners working together as a team to solve a problem, complete a task, or accomplish a common goal that requires student cooperation and interdependence.

Attitude: a psychological predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor.

High achievers: students who score the average mark of above 86% and ranked from 1-3 in a given classroom setting.

Low achievers: students who score below an average of 60% and ranked least in that classroom setting.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 The Concept of Group Work

Different authors in different disciplines and field of study have forwarded their definition of group as well as group work. In part differences in definition occur because writers often select those things that are of special importance in their work and then speculate these as the criteria for group existence.

Groups are a fundamental part of social life. As we will see they can be very small - just two people - or very large. They can be highly rewarding to their members and to society as a whole, but there are also significant problems and dangers with them. A group exists when two or more people define themselves as members of it and when its existence is recognized by at least one other, and group work which is a form of cooperative learning, aims to cater for individual differences, develop students' knowledge, generic skills (e.g. communication skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking skills) and attitudes (*Brown 1988*).

In addition, according to Forsyth (2006), a group is defined as two or more individuals who are connected to one another by social relationships, and group work is a way to servicing individual within and through small face to face group in order to bring about the desired change among the client participants. Group work which involves students working collaboratively on set tasks, in or out of the classroom, includes any learning and teaching tasks or activities that require students to work in groups and any formal assessment tasks that require students to work in groups.

- Basically, group work is based on the concept that shows the physical, mental and social developments of men through necessary and significant interaction with other men i.e. he is shaped by others and is shaping others. Brown (1991) also defined group work as a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves a cooperative work. This author has also shown the importance of cooperation among members to deal with the given task. Simply a collection of individuals sitting together without any coordination and common objectives may not mean group work. In order to say the collection of individuals group work learning, there must be a link among all group members that shows cooperation and collaboration to achieve a common goal of their learning.

In the definition of group work, Long and Porter (1985), Pica and Doughty (1985) and Foster (1998), cited in Byram (2000) highlighted the importance of making clear cut distinctions between working in a group and working as a group. According to them, “working in a group is mainly a matter of location”. In this case a certain number of students may sit together in a common area, but doing independent activities (simply a group of people with out the same purpose), or they may sit together having and working on the same task but without any force for everyone to participate (a group of people having the same purpose but doing with out any interaction and cooperation to achieve their common goal/s). On the other hand, “working as a group presupposes a task in common.” It implies that a group of students sitting together, having the same purpose and show some sort of interaction and cooperation amongst group members to make the result of their work effective as possible. A task obliges each member to make a contribution.

Johnson & Johnson (1989) has listed out the following five essential elements in order to have effective cooperative group work learning: individual accountability, positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, group processing, and interpersonal and small group skills.

Positive Interdependence

This point of group work indicates that each group member depends on each other to accomplish a shared goal or task i.e. students need each other to complete the groups task with the help of all members, and the group may not able to reach the desired goal with out the participation of all members. Therefore, in order to strengthen such kind of link among students, teachers may structure positive interdependence by establishing mutual goals, joint rewards, shared resources and assign roles.

Face-to-face Interaction

This has a decisive role in promoting success of group members by praising, encouraging, supporting, or assisting each other. This shows that in the context of group work, students promote each others learning by helping, sharing, and encouraging efforts to learn and discover new ideas and innovations with in the group. So students explain, discuss and teach what they know to classmates with the help of their teacher. Teachers are also expected to structure the groups so that students seat together and discuss through each aspect of the task given.

Individual Accountability

Each group member is accountable and responsible for his/ her own learning. Members of a given group cannot rely on one or few students to do the total work of the task. The result of their effort should reflect a balance of contributions from all members of the group, and also each member's effort to the group could be assessed so that assessment needs to be shared to continue to support and encourage each member of the group. Therefore, this individual accountability helps to avoid members from merely relying on other group members' efforts.

Social Skills

Group work makes things smooth for students to learn and develop different interpersonal and social skills which will help them to build stronger cooperation among group members and beyond the group. These skills include leadership, decision making, trust building, communication, and conflict management skills.

Group Processing

This refers the ongoing assessment of how groups are functioning to achieve their group goals or to complete the tasks. So groups need a specific time to discuss on how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships among members, to describe and decide on what behaviors are useful or not and what changes need to be made to move the group along and complete tasks.

In the system of group work learning and teaching, Brown (1991) states that students are expected to work together for the success of their goal and completion of the tasks given. And group work, which needs full cooperation and collaboration, occurs when all members of a group are aware of their responsibility and role, and when commit themselves to accomplish the task in the best way possible.

2.2 Types of Group Work

Students learn best when they are actively involved in the process. Researchers report that regardless of the subject matter, students working in small groups tend to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same content is presented in other instructional formats. Students who work in collaborative groups also appear more satisfied with their classes.

There are three general types of group work: informal learning groups, formal learning groups, and study teams (Brumfit, 1984, and Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991).

Informal learning groups are extemporized clustering of students within a single class session which can be formed by asking students to turn back to a neighbor and spend some two or three minutes discussing on a question the teacher has risen. The teacher can also form such kind of groups having three to five members to solve a problem or pose a question. In order to check the students' understanding of the material being learned, and to give students opportunities to apply the learned content in to practice, the classroom teacher may form this kind of group at any time and without worrying much on the size of the group.

Formal learning groups are established to complete a specific task such as write a report, carry out a project, or prepare a position paper which can be completed in a single class session, or in days and weeks. Here students work together until the task is finished.

Groups typically meet regularly over an extended period of time. This allows for continuity of interaction among group members and creates the opportunity for social cohesion and bonding to develop among group members.

Study teams are long-term groups that need a semester and more time to complete the requirements and with equitable members who has the responsibility of providing members with support, encouragement, and assistance through out the time. This kind of groups share some features with the formal groups.

2.3 The Purpose of Using Group Work in the Classroom

As can be understood from the above parts of this section, the main goal of group work can be achieved through the combined efforts, talents, ideas and knowledge of group members. Therefore, apart from the end product of students' work, the aim of engaging students in group work activities includes the following points as Exley and Dennick (2004:4-5) has listed out.

First, the development of intellectual understanding and of intellectual and professional abilities: by thinking and problem solving, e.g. analyzing, evaluating evidence, logical reasoning and synthesizing, by clarifying concepts and theories through discussing and accepting and seeing interrelationships and connections.

Second, the development of communication skills and of group work skills: working in a group gives an opportunity to practice a variety of group management skills and group roles including leadership, planning and organization, giving support and encouragement to others, setting tasks, monitoring progress. Through discussion practicing, giving explanations, listening, questioning, presenting and defending a position and giving constructive feed-back.

Third, personal growth and support for independence: by taking part in debate and discussion students can test their values and attitudes while developing self esteem and confidence and by preparing for and taking part in small group teaching discussions and activities students accept their personal responsibility for the progress and direction of their own learning.

Finally by reviewing and reflecting on their actions, students can learn from their successes and failures and so develop their skills and understanding, and plan future learning.

2.4 Advantages of Group Work

In the teacher-fronted classroom, which is a typical format in most Ethiopian secondary school classrooms, the learner's opportunities for participating in classroom communication are very limited; teacher talk dominates the lesson, and students rarely participate in classroom communication. Even if the students are allowed time for discussion or answering the teacher's questions, the time is shared among forty or more learners. In fact, such a teacher-led classroom format is not unique to Ethiopia. It is also a very common classroom management device in many ELT classrooms in other parts of the world.

Since the 1960's, there have been many discussions on the value of group work for language learning (Brumfit, 1984, p.76). Recent research and literature have confirmed the advantages of group work.

Group work promotes a positive affective climate. According to Dunn and Dunn (1993), many exceptional students have difficulty in socializing with peers and they may feel intimidated when asked to participate in whole class activities. Structured group work techniques alleviate much of the anxiety of participation and also provide opportunities for exceptional students to practice social skills. They also said that when mutual goals are established, and ideas, material and information are shared, a collaborative partnership also develops in which students learn how to learn with one another. Students can develop social skills which were normally practiced only by

the teacher such as changing topic, turn-taking, asking for clarification and so on. Given appropriate materials to work on and problems to solve, students can engage in genuine information exchange.

Group work increases language practice opportunities. Long and Porter(1985) explained that group work motivates learners and allows for a greater quantity and richer variety of language practice, and lack of clear and open opportunities to practice the new language system may be associated with low achievement of students on the target language. Thus, in such narrow situations to practice the target language, group work is a key to engage learners in real like situations through the target language.

Group work improves the quality of student talk and increases their talking time. Long and Porter (1985) reported that learners have more opportunities and speaking time which allows them to use a greater variety of English to express what they really want to communicate. This type of work usually motivates students because it is quite simply more fun to work and talk with your classmates than it is to do tasks individually. They estimated that in a 50 minute lesson with 30 students, if the students talked only to the teacher, they would get 30 seconds of talking time per lesson which equals “just one hour per student per year” (p. 208). Therefore using group work and pair work substantially increases the opportunities which students get to speak English.

Group work encourages students to become more engaged in material through discussion, debate, and the opportunity to articulate explanations to their peers (Michael 2006). Such classroom practices allow students to check their understanding and construct new knowledge through interactions with each other and with course material which are the most important aspects for meaningful learning. He added that it may represent one of the most accessible methods for converting a classroom from a teacher-centered setting to an active, learner-centered environment.

Group work allows students a far greater degree of autonomy. According to Exley & Dennick (2004) and Sharan & Shaulov (1990) it enhances students' decision making power by involving them in the selection of the learning tasks from a variety of alternatives as well as in deciding who in the group will study which features of the group topic and how the groups' work will be reported to the class as a whole. Students can be more autonomous and self reliant; they can take on roles and adopt positions which are usually the teacher's preserve. So that they can practice a

include being silence which can be caused by lack of knowledge of the subject, by confusion as to group process, by not understanding the discussion, by members' slowness in phrasing his or her thoughts in quick talking group, or by shyness; over participants, the repeater, the wanderer, the story teller, or other non significant behaviors of students. According to them, a good group handles the problems that arise and realizes the potential of the members in order to enhance learning. Each group involves properties and strengths of its own that encourage learning. It should also promote a warm, friendly atmosphere that encourages all members to participate.

2.7 The Process of forming Groups

The size of each group and the selection of members for each group are some of the most important aspects that an ESL/EFL classroom teacher needs to consider when forming groups.

2.7.1 Group Size

Most researchers define a small group as having at least three and no more than twelve or fifteen members: A group needs to have at least three members; otherwise it would simply be a dyad. With three members, coalitions can be formed and some kind of organization is present. Too large of a group (more than twelve or fifteen members) inhibits the group members' ability to communicate with everyone else in the group. According to Welton and Mallan (1992,p: 400) the purpose of the teaching and learning process has a decisive role in determining how a group should be and for most purposes, three to eight students per group is acceptable.

Parker and Jarolimek (1997), on the other hand, stated that the number of students in a certain group can influence the goal of the teaching learning process that can be accomplished. They clarify this as follows:

The size of a small group affects its achievement both of academic knowledge and cooperative skills. If groups are too large, there may be duplications of responsibilities, less opportunity for individuals to carry their share of the group effort, difficulty achieving face to face interaction, and a tendency for some members to fade out of the group activity. On the other hand, if groups are too small, there may be insufficient division of labor to warrant group work and too few opportunities to cooperate. In general, how ever, groups should be kept small from two to five children, with four to five as the optimal size (Parker and Jarolimek, 1997, p: 305).

According to Byrne (1987), four to eight students in each group is an acceptable size although there is no one and clear group size. Groups with smaller number of students are better for some

activities like games, but a larger number may be also better if the teacher needs students to share ideas and experiences with their group members. He finally, says that the size of each group can be decided based on the nature of the classroom furniture.

Harmer (1991) also shows “Groups of more than seven students tend to be less than totally appropriate since the amount of student participation obviously falls and the organization of the group it self may start to disintegrate”. According to this author deciding the number of students in a certain group much depends on the activity being performed.

With respect to group size, the larger the group, the broader the range of experiences, expertise, skills and interests to contribute to the learning activity. However, larger groups have the potential for members to be uninvolved or to dominate others.

A number of studies argue that learning through group work works best when group size is smaller where students are grouped in clusters of three to five. The larger the group size the more difficult to organize tasks, to manage different skills, and reach in a consensus though good to make diversity in the group. The amount of materials, classroom furniture, the amount of time allocated for the learning activity, the type and the size of the task may determine the size of each group.

2.7.2 Selection of Group Members

According to different experts in the field of language teaching, there is no one single way of allocating students into groups since there are a number of practices that the teacher can use depending on the task set for the group, the expertise of each student in the class and the learning objectives for the subject.

With regard to the learners i.e. their ability of language use and achievement, age level, gender, intimacy, sitting arrangement are some of the important points that the teacher should take in to account while forming groups (Cohen, 1972; Byrne, 1987; and Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, considering the aforementioned and other important variables, the teacher may select students in a certain group through random appointment, self-selection, and selective appointment.

Random appointment methods are often employed as they are relatively easy to administer with little preparation, break up friendship groups and allow people to work with people they ordinarily wouldn't and are criticized as students have the chance to be assigned to a group with unsuited members and this can directly affect their interaction in the group discussion. In this method, Gower & Walters (1983) suggest several ways of assigning learners in to groups. For example, the teacher can give each student a number and then ask all the same number to sit together, or by dividing the class on the basis of likes and dislikes, color of clothes, hobbies, gender, or the teacher can give out to each student at random a card with a word written on it.

With respect to assignment by ability, the teacher may want to place students through two ways (Byrne, 1987; Harmer, 1991; Slavin, 1991).

1. With students of similar ability levels in one group (same ability or homogeneous grouping). It is the placement of students of strong students into one group and the weak ones in another group. It has always been a topic of debate among academic researchers and child psychologists whether students should be differentiated and grouped according to their academic achievement, ability or their participation in the classroom. Many believe that homogeneous groups created based on achievement would be more effective and worthwhile. Other experts believe that this may create a feeling of inferiority, depression, lack of concentration, and other destructive symptoms among students who are not in the "smarter" group.
2. The teacher may structure each group with a representation of mixed ability students of fast and slow members together (mixed ability or heterogeneous grouping). It refers to the whole group of students of varying intellectual ability learn together. The grouping practice is associated with efforts to allow all students the benefits of access to high-level instructional practices. This kind of grouping is "better for fluency work" and also selective where the larger the class size prohibits moving the students around. As the nature of the task needs cooperation and collaboration, mixed ability grouping helps students to assist and help one another and also correct each others' mistakes by themselves with less effort of the teacher. Research shows positive effects of mixed ability grouping on achievement, self-esteem, and inter-group relations (Slavin, 1991). For example, if the teacher wants the groups to develop

sketches, then he/she would probably need one or two creative individuals in each group. Thus, it is important for the teacher to consider diversity in group composition.

But there are conditions where mixed ability grouping is difficult as the best students may dominate the rest members and do all the work. There seems, however, to be "no firm research to give an ideal answer to the ideal combination of students of mixed levels. Teachers have to decide whether they will put strong students with weak students or whether they will vary the combination of the pairs from class to class" to fit their needs (Harmer, 1991).

2.8. Important Considerations in Implementing Group Work

In implementing grouping for the ESL classroom, important considerations should be given to three main aspects. They are the teaching context, the teaching content and the individual learner.

2.8.1 Language Learner

In a group work activity individual differences can be clearly observed especially in their participation and the kind of roles they play in different classroom activities. Thus, by varying student roles and the types of student involvement the teacher can accommodate these learner differences through different grouping arrangements.

A group's members must be able to communicate freely and openly with all of the other members of the group. Groups will develop norms about discussion and group members will develop roles which will help the group's interaction. According to Freiberg and Driscoll (1992), group work learning strategies can offer alternative choices by allowing for varied roles for different experiences in the same activity. Through this, the range of roles can be expanded and used in different grouping arrangements. Some examples of the varied roles of students in group work activities are a direction giver, a summarizer, a generator, an observer, a record keeper, a reader, an evaluator and a resource person.

This also allows students to change roles. They act both as students and teachers by "exhibiting a degree of self reliance that simply is not possible" (Harmer 1991) in teacher centered environments. A teacher can accommodate learner diversity by varying the types of involvement in groups.

2.8.2 Teaching Content

In implementing group work, the teacher may consider the content of teaching first by identifying the intended outcomes in cognitive, affective or psychomotor skills, or other related goals which can be achieved through working in groups.

As clearly described in the previous parts, grouping provides the opportunity for peer interpretation and sharing of experiences and insights. In small groups, Freiberg & Driscoll (1992) added that students are engaged in paraphrasing, explaining, describing, asking for clarification, and talking about content than what whole class interactions may provide. They have also the opportunities to contribute experiences and insights.

Therefore, the teacher should select activities that will encourage the students to use the target language freely and he/she should also make based on the students level of understanding and on what they can discuss openly. On the other hand, the activities which have frustrating or embarrassing content may make them silent and passive participants of the discussion (Byrne, 1987)

2.8.3 Teaching Context

In fixed classrooms a teacher's grouping arrangement and the way how the students' seats are arranged depends on a number of factors like the size of the class, the size of the groups, the types of activities and the layout of the furniture (Gower & Walters, 1983). As it is important in engaging all members of a group in a discussion or activity being accomplished, they should face each other rather than sitting only on one side of a table. Separating the members of a group too far can also make talking and discussing easily difficult for them. To be sure about such things the teacher can assign informal committees of students who go into action when a different arrangement is needed.

According to Freiberg & Driscoll (Ibid), time is another contextual matter which should be taken in to account while implementing group work. The teacher should make decisions about pace and schedule. Grouping is best scheduled in short time periods, with opportunity for movement around the room between activities. Time periods may vary as there are time limits in terms of student attention and interest. Byrne (1987) also states that the teacher "will not be able to do group work every lesson", but in order to enable "students really get a chance to use what they have learnt"; doing group work once a week is advisable.

In addition, well organized and managed classrooms best support grouping practices in which students develop socially and emotionally. Weber (1994) said that for students' interaction there must be frequent opportunities which can be resulted from several planned activities and assignments. In this respect, the classroom teacher should help the group establish, accept and maintain productive group norms and consider the norms of the class to determine its cohesiveness.

2.9 The Nature of Attitude, Language Learning and Achievement

Various scholars and psychologists have defined attitude in different forms where the general conceptions are the same. The term attitude is widely used to denote the psychological disposition to respond positively or negatively to a certain object, situation, institution, or person (Sherif, et al, 1965). Brown (1994: 168), added "Attitudes, like all aspects of the development of cognition and affect in human beings, develop early in childhood and are the result of parents' and peers' attitudes, contact with people who are different in any number of ways, and interacting affective factors in the human experience". Here, it means that there are many stimulants lead to positive or negative attitude of an individual.

Jones (1984) said that attitudes help people to understand the world around them by having predispositions to respond and act quickly; to protect their self-esteem, either by avoiding unpleasant truths about themselves or cover up uncomplimentary thoughts; to adjust to a complex world so that they will do the right rewarding things at the right time; and to express their fundamental values. They can not be observed directly rather they can be inferred from certain behavior toward some class of objects, persons, event and issues over a time span.

According to Jones (Ibid) learning is related to attitudes; what is learned may depend on the attitude of the learner. Students' attitude toward the teacher, the school and various subjects are primarily important in the learning situation. Chamber (1999) asserted that learning occurs more easily, when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language and learning. Thus, attitudes have their own effect up on the process of learning. It either facilitates or hinders learning. Students' lack of motivation in class participation can be taken as the symptom of their unfavorable attitude to the given context.

Again much research has been devoted to the subject of the interaction between students' personal characteristics and the method of instruction in affecting learning outcomes. Owens (1983), cited in Sharan & Shaulov (1990) reported that students with a highly positive social orientation toward working in groups with peers in the learning process, such as willingness to share informational sources, to exchange ideas with peers, and to make decisions collectively, preferred cooperative learning classes more than did those who expressed a competitive social orientation.

The students' prior level of achievement will very likely play an important role in determining achievement in the future. The students' achievement prior to the implementation of group learning in the classroom will serve as a significant predictor of their achievement in the future both directly and indirectly by affecting their motivation to learn. Motivation is a construct that must be inferred from various behavioral manifestations and can not be evaluated directly. Ames (1986), cited in Sharan & Shaulov (1990) noted that the following behaviors can be taken as indicators of motivation to learn: serious attention to learning tasks, effort extended in learning activities, valuing learning for its own sake, deriving satisfaction from the process of learning, the quality of involvement in the learning process, attraction to learning, the extent of individual responsibility and independence in respect to ones own learning.

De bot lowie and Versepour (2005, p. 72) claimed that "teachers, learners and researchers will all agree that high motivation and a positive attitude towards a second language and its community help second language learning". Baker (1988) believed that attitudes are not subject to inheritance because they are internalized predispositions. Attitudes towards a particular language might be either positive or negative. Some learners may have negative attitude towards the second language and want to learn it in order to prevail over people in the community but generally positive attitude strengthens the motivation. Some individuals might generate neutral feelings. Attitudes towards language are likely to have been developed by learners' experiences. They may change during the passage of time. It could refer to both attitude towards language learning and attitudes towards the members of a particular speech community.

Fasold (1984) claimed the attitudes towards a language are often mirrored in the attitudes towards the members of the speech community. Language attitude is an important concept because it

plays a key role in language learning and teaching. According to Prodromou (1992), a successful learner is the one who possesses positive attitudes towards the target language.

2.10 Research Evidences on the Attitudes of Students towards Group Work

Different experts argue that attitude of students towards learning, the school, and specifically towards group work learning can be affected positively or negatively based on different factors. For instance, the result they receive, the unbalanced task they perform in the group, their gender difference, their age and grade level, and achievement are some of them.

Studies of students' perceptions during small group cooperative learning have emerged as a useful line of inquiry in the study of teaching. This would seem inevitable given educator' and researchers' interest in small group learning. Although significant research on student outcomes from such learning has been undertaken, less is known about student behaviors during lessons where such teaching strategies are used. Even less is known about students' perceptions when they are engaged in small group learning.

A study conducted by Leonard (1993) was focused on the thought processes of 8 high and low achiever American third grader learners who were learning mathematics in a small-group cooperative learning. Results revealed that, although low achievers were active in the learning process, the small-group model did not reduce greatly the differential status effects between high and low achievers. High-achieving students assumed dominant roles in the undertaking of group tasks, in group decision making, and in the frequency and quality of contributions to group efforts. The findings suggest that low achievers are generally passive during small-group work. In addition, Peterson and Miller (2004) also reported that high achieving students experienced greater quality of experience particularly in the areas of engagement, perceived skills and self-esteem than low achieving students in group work learning situations. And some students may feel that it was unfair that they were in a group in which members did not have the interest, motivation or ability to attain the grades that they were used to.

On the other hand, a study by Gardner, Margoret, Tennat, and Mihic (2004) on students who had different grades showed the little possibility of achievement in differing students' attitude towards working in groups. The majority of high and low achiever students have showed a

positive attitude towards group work, so in relation to their ability students have no attitudinal difference towards group work.

From the above discussion, it is clear that different studies in different settings revealed different results on learners' attitude towards group work based on their academic achievement level.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

As clearly stated in the first chapter, the main objective of the current study was to describe the attitudes of learners toward group work with particular reference to high and low achiever students. Therefore, the study employs a descriptive- comparative research design in which data are collected to describe and compare two groups of participants i.e. high and low achiever students. By employing this study design, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. In different studies, it is believed that this descriptive- comparative study design can increase the reliability and applicability of research conclusions by providing more and different types of information related to the same research question.

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 The School and Grade

The study was conducted using the target population from Belay Zeleke Preparatory School found in the Amhara National Regional State, Bichena town which is 265 km far from Addis Ababa. The school was established in 1968 E.C and giving services for preparatory level learners. It was selected because of the fact that the researcher has familiarity and acquaintance with the school community and the school environment at all. This familiarity and acquaintance with teachers and school principals would help the researcher to get access of different documents and other materials which were very essential for the study.

For this study, it was intended to have both grade eleven and twelve students by identifying as high and low achievers based on their first semester total results in 2003 E.C academic year. However, from both grade levels, it was impossible to identify high and low achiever students as their grade report was incomplete. Because of lack of teachers for some subjects, students' current cumulative result could not be found. Therefore, only grade twelve students from Belay Zeleke Preparatory School are selected based on their grade eleven cumulative results.

3.2.2 Students

In the school there were ten Grade twelve sections with a total of 480 students. Of these students, three students from each section, and totally sixty grade twelve students (30 high achiever and 30

low achiever learners) were selected through purposive sampling mechanism based on their grade eleven average result to fill the questionnaire of this study. Again five high achiever and another five low achiever respondents were selected randomly for interview.

3.3 Instruments

In order to gather valuable information for the study, the researcher has used questionnaire and semi structured interview. In order to make clear understanding between the students and the researcher their first language Amharic was used.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

It was used a questionnaire which was first developed by Kouros & Abrami (2006) to determine student attitudes towards group learning. This questionnaire was the most widely used around the world to assess learners' group learning attitude. The utility, reliability and validity of the instrument have also been recognized on various studies. It was adapted in line with the objectives of the current study; it was translated in to Amharic in order to make it more clear and easy to the students.

The questionnaire was used to gather data from sample respondents on their attitude towards group work in relation to different aspects found in group work like the quality of the work (five items), the time group work takes (four items), learners' relationship with other group members (six items), group evaluation (four items), experiences gained from working in groups (five items), and in relation to the roles of students and decisions made in group work activities (five items).

This questionnaire was developed with 29 positively and negatively worded likert scale statements, where individuals respond to statements between the extremes on the continuum that represent their attitude by responding to scales ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree to each statement. For positively worded items, strongly agree had a score of '5' and strongly disagree had a score of '1'. However, the negatively worded items and those items which had negative implication were reversed in scoring. For these items, strongly agree had a score of '1' and strongly disagree had a score of '5'. Scores of 3.5 and above indicated better and favorable attitude towards group work; scores between 2.5 and 3.5 showed neutral attitude while scores below 2.5 are considered as unfavorable attitude.

3.3.2 Interview

In addition to the questionnaire, semi structured interview was used by assuming that respondents will be able to talk about the subject in detail, and complex questions and issues which were not raised in the questionnaire can be discussed / clarified.

This tool was used to collect qualitative data by setting up the interview that allowed respondents the time and scope to talk about their opinions on group work. It has used open-ended questions, some suggested by the researcher (“Tell me about...”) and some arose naturally during the interview (“You said a moment ago...can you tell me more?”).

The researcher tried to build a rapport with the respondents; the interview was like a conversation and questions were asked when the interviewer feel it was appropriate to ask them. Having five high achiever and five low achiever students, the interview was held before the questionnaire. The content and the objective of the interview did not differ with that of the questionnaire.

3.4 Data Organization and Analysis Procedures

The data from the questionnaire was grouped and tabulated based on the issues raised in relation to group work; average mean values of responses were made thematically; discussion of results with data gained from interview was made, and finally t-test was used to see the significance of the difference between the mean score of high and low achiever respondents. For instance, the first five questions which were related to the quality of group work activity were presented in Table 1, and then analysis and description of the high and low achievers' data was given under the table followed by the average mean value in Table 2, then its description with the data collected from interview was given. Finally, independent samples test was made and analyzed to see the significance of the difference between high and low achiever students' attitude.

Thus, attitudes of both high and low achiever students towards group work were described and compared using paired student's average mean values and t-tests with 58 degrees of freedom at $p < 0.05$, and 2.001 t-table value.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter the data collected through questionnaire and interview are tabulated, analyzed and discussed thematically. To avoid a bulky report and unnecessary repetition that might reduce the quality of the research work, the researcher has omitted presenting separate analysis of the data obtained through both instruments. Hence, the data collected from questionnaire and interview were presented and analyzed together thematically.

4.1 Students' Attitude towards Group Work in Relation to the Quality of the Work

As Exley and Dnnick (2004) said group work can be an effective method to motivate students, encourage active learning, and develop key critical-thinking, communication, and decision-making skills. In a given classroom, each group is expected to generate a formal product which represents a concrete manifestation of the group's collective effort, and this high quality result & high level of member satisfaction can be achieved through equal contributions of members.

In this study, in order to see their attitude towards group work in relation to the quality of the product, five items in the questionnaire were designed. Accordingly, their responses are analyzed as follows.

Table 1 High and low academic achievers' attitude towards group work in relation to the quality of the work

No	Attitudinal Items	High Achievers					Low Achievers				
		SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	The Work gets done faster and more qualitatively.	8	10	2	8	2	10	11	1	6	2
2	When I work in a group I do better quality work.	19	7	1	2	1	18	8	1	2	1
3	My work is better organized when I am in a group.	13	11	2	4	-	13	13	3	1	-
4	The material is easier to understand when I work with other students.	13	13	2	1	1	12	15	2	1	-
5	I like working in groups because the work load is less than doing individually.	11	10	1	4	4	13	12	1	3	1

In the first item of Table 1 above, both groups of students were asked whether their work gets done faster and more efficiently while working in groups. Thus, while 18 of the total high

achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 10 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and 2 learners undecided about their preference. On the other hand, 21 low achiever participants agreed or strongly agreed with the idea of the statement; 8 low achiever respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, and only 1 respondent was unable to decide his/her preference. Therefore, it can be said that although the majority of students from both groups agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, a large number (21) of low achiever students agreed or strongly agreed than those of high achiever (18) respondents. Generally, the majority of both high and low achiever respondents agreed that their work could produce an efficient and timely product. This quality and timely product of group work can be a result of their active participation and the presence of different views in all stages of their work.

Regarding item 2, which reads, "When I work in a group I do better quality work", 26 of the high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed while 3 students disagreed or strongly disagreed, and of the total high achiever respondents 1 remained undecided. Of all low achiever students, 26 agreed or strongly agreed and the same number as high achiever students disagreed or strongly disagreed and undecided. Based on the relevant responses, it is possible to say that both high and low achiever students do a quality of work through group work than individually.

To the statement, "My work is better organized when I am in a group", 24 high achiever students agreed or strongly agreed, 4 respondents were disagreed and 2 learners undecided. From the low achievers' side, 26 respondents agreed or strongly disagreed, 1 disagreed, and 3 low achiever students undecided. This shows us that a large number of students from both groups agreed to the statement, but more than high achiever students (24), low achiever students (26) said that their work was better organized when they were in a group.

Then item 4, states, "The material is easier to understand when I work with other students". Concerning this, 26 of the high achiever respondents agreed and strongly agreed while 2 disagreed and strongly disagreed, 2 of them were unable to decide about their preference. On the other hand, 27 low achiever students agreed or strongly agreed where as 1 disagreed and 2 students undecided to the statement. From this point, it is clear that a majority of students from both high and low achiever groups agreed to the statement. However, when compared with high achievers (26), 27 low achiever students agreed or strongly agreed. In order to approach a given material, it is better to be with friends who will help when difficulty of understanding happen. So

group work is better in such situations as ideas may come from different angles and point of view.

Regarding item 5, which reads, “I like working in groups because the work load is less than doing individually”, 21 of the high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed while 8 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and 1 of the respondents was unable to decide about the simplicity of work load in group work activities. In contrast, 25 low achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed, whereas 4 students disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 1 of the respondents’ undecided to the idea of the statement. In general, a large number (21) of high achiever and 25 low achiever respondents said that the work load is minimized when they were in groups. It is also clear that doing a given task in groups is better to minimize work loads than individually.

Moreover, from the table above it is clear that the majority of high and low achiever students have shown their positive attitude towards group work in presenting a good quality of work.

Table 2 Groups statistics

	Students Status	No	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Learners’ attitude towards the quality of the work	High achievers	30	3.96	1.1668	0.2132
	Low achievers	30	4.13	0.9994	0.1824

From Table 2 above it is reflected that the low academic achievers obtained a higher overall mean of 4.13 as compared to the overall mean of high achiever respondents which is 3.96.

Generally, these mean values indicate that both groups have a favorable attitude towards group work as it enabled them to present well organized and a quality product. Apparently, the high and low academic achievers believe that through group work they can yield a material which has value and quality, and this can be done through all group members’ active involvement in the activity.

In addition to the questionnaire, some students from both sides were asked some related questions like the organization, completeness, flow of ideas, coherent and cohesiveness, and the understandability of their work and their attitude towards group work, through interview. Thus,

data from interview has shown that both high and low achiever students like working in groups to make their work more productive and effective because there were “discussions and interactions” of all group members for better understanding of the material and to make their work better.

Therefore, the data from questionnaire and interview has shown that high and low achiever students have a favorable attitude towards group work in relation to the quality of the work because group work enables them to present a work which has some sort of value.

To determine if there is a significant difference between the overall means of the above data, the following t-test was used.

Table 3 Independent samples test

		Levine's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
1	Equal variances assumed	1.584	0.48	-0.442	58	0.569	-0.1734	0.281	-0.736	0.389
2	Equal variances not assumed			-0.442	55.72	0.5694	-0.1734	0.281	-0.736	0.389

For this particular test statistics the degrees of freedom are 58 which is the summative value of both groups minus two, and the level of risk that the researcher is willing to take (p) is 0.05. However, at the $p < 0.05$ level, with 58 degrees of freedom for a two tailed test, the value needed for rejection of the hypothesis is not available from the t-table value i.e. there is no 58 degrees of freedom in the table. Although statisticians differ in their view point as what to do in such situations, it is always advisable to go with the value that is closest to the actual sample size. So, the value needed to with 58 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance is 2.001.

As you can see from Table 3 above the t-calculated (obtained) value is -0.442 which is less than the t-critical (table) value (2.001), and the computed t-value (-0.442) indicates that the mean difference is not significant. This implies that the observed difference is only due to chance, and the high and low academic achievers have similar preference and or attitude towards group work

in relation to the quality of the final product or they did not have different attitude towards group work considering the quality of the work because of their achievement difference.

Therefore, achievement level did not have any contribution to differ students' attitude towards group work in relation to the quality of the final product and their involvement in group work activities, or it can be said that regardless of their achievement level learners show favorable attitude towards group work in order to have better quality of work.

4.2 Students' Attitude towards Group Work in Relation to the Time the Work Takes

Many studies and academic texts show that a task completed as group work will take more time than the same task completed individually because the group has to establish effective group processes before the task can be tackled. Having this idea in mind, this study has raised some questions through close ended questionnaire and semi structured interview to see students' attitudes towards group work in relation to the time it takes and given to conclude the tasks.

Table 4 High and low academic achievers' attitude towards group work in relation to the time given and needed for the work

No	Attitudinal Items	High Achievers					Low Achievers				
		SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	I don't like group work as it takes more time to complete the task.	3	8	5	13	1	3	4	4	11	8
2	I dislike working in groups because we spend much time talking about other things.	8	2	2	13	5	3	5	4	14	4
3	I like group work because it gives time to discuss with friends freely.	9	11	1	6	3	10	10	2	4	4
4	I do not enjoy working in groups as discussions and tasks remain incomplete.	4	1	3	13	9	1	1	5	12	11

According to Table 4 above, students were asked whether they disliked group work as it takes more time to complete the tasks. 11 of the total high achiever students agreed or strongly agreed whereas 14 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 5 students undecided to the statement. On the other side, when 7 respondents of low achiever students agreed or strongly

disagreed, 19 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and some 4 low achiever students undecided. Therefore, the responses of student respondents on this item show us that a large number of low achiever students (19) as compared with high achievers (14) said that the time given for group work activities in the classroom is enough so that they did not dislike group work.

Regarding item 2, which states, "I like to work in groups because we spend much time talking about other things", 10 of the high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed and 18 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that in group work students spend much time on talking other things and 2 respondents of these high achievers undecided. On the other hand, 8 respondents from the low achievers group agreed or strongly agreed while 18 of them disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 4 undecided that they dislike working in groups as they spend much time talking other things. The responses from both high and low achievers tell us that equal number of high achiever respondents (18) and low achiever students (18) said that they did not spend much time talking other things while they were doing group work activities so that they did not dislike group work by this aspect.

To the statement "I like group work because it gives time to discuss with friends freely", the majority of high achiever respondents (20 in number) agreed or strongly agreed that group work gave them a chance to discuss with their relatives freely where as 9 respondents disagree or strongly disagree and a single respondent was undecided. When we see the data of low achiever students again 20 respondents agreed or strongly agreed while 8 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and other 2 were unable to decide that group work enabled them to discuss with their peers freely. From this data it is evident that a large and at the same time equal number of high and low achiever respondents said that they liked group work as it enabled them to discuss with their group members openly.

To the last item of Table 4 above which says "I do not enjoy working in groups as discussions and tasks remain incomplete", only 5 high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they did not like working in groups as group discussions and tasks remain incomplete because of the shortage of time whereas 22 respondents of them agreed or strongly agreed and the remaining 3 high achiever respondents undecided. To the same item, 2 respondents of low achiever students agreed or strongly agreed while 23 of them disagreed or strongly disagreed, and the other 5 low

achiever respondents undecided that they did not like working in groups as group discussions and tasks remain incomplete because of the shortage of time.

Therefore, it is possible to say that the large number of respondents i.e. 22 high achiever students and 23 low achiever students said that they did not dislike group work and tasks and group discussions did not remain incomplete because of time given for activities.

The average mean scores of the two groups in relation to their attitude towards group work concerning the time group work takes was done as follows.

Table 5 Groups statistics

	Students status	No	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' attitude towards the time in group work	High achievers	30	3.575	1.333	0.24325
	Low achievers	30	3.59	1.31	0.239

Table 5 above indicates that the mean score of high achiever students' attitude towards group work in relation to the time it takes is 3.575 and the mean score of low achiever students is 3.59. From this data we can say that both high and low achievers agreed with the stated statements. So, it can be said that both group of students have a positive attitude towards group work in relation to the time it takes and their achievement level did not show any role to differentiate students' attitude towards group work.

In the interview session some high and low achiever students were asked about the time given and its sufficiency to accomplish group work tasks and the length of time that group work has taken. Most of these students said that this can be related to lack of time management skills of the participants and the time given for the group tasks was short to make all necessary discussions and reach to an agreement and conclusion, but it could be possible to use the time given appropriately through good time management skills. In addition to the shortage of time given, students were reluctant to begin doing the task immediately. In general, data from both instruments shows that the majority of both high and low achiever students have shown their positive attitude towards group work considering the time needed & given for group work tasks.

To see the significance of their mean value and to confirm the data, the following independent samples test was made.

Table 6 Independent samples test

		Levine's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
1	Equal variances assume	0.97	0.604	-0.662	58	0.591	-0.216	0.342	-0.9012	0.4677
2	Equal variances not assumed			-0.662	57.05	0.591	-0.216	0.342	-0.9015	0.4682

In this particular test statistics the degrees of freedom are 58 and the level of risk that the researcher is willing to take (p) is <0.05. So, as tried to show previously the t-table value needed with 58 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance is 2.001.

The independent sample test above indicates that the t- calculated (obtained) value is -0.662 while the t-critical (table) value is 2.001 at $p < 0.05$. Having 30 participants in each group, the critical value of 2.001 represents the value at which chance is the most attractive explanation for any of the observed differences between the attitudes of high and low achiever students towards group work considering the time needed and given to complete group work tasks.

As the t-calculated (obtained) value (-0.662) is less than the t-critical (table) value (2.001), the attitudinal difference between high and low achiever students towards group work in relation to the time it takes is not significant. This implies that both high and low achiever students' have similar favorable attitudes towards the time that group work takes and achievement level does not have any role in differentiating their attitude towards group work and their involvement in group work activities.

4.3 Students' Attitude towards Group Work in Relation to the their Relationship with Group Members

Another significant issue pertaining to a group is the interpersonal interactions that develop among its members. As stated in the literature review section, group work encourages students to become more engaged in material through discussion, debate, and the opportunity to articulate explanations to their peers. Such classroom practices allow students to check their understanding and construct new knowledge, through interactions with each other and with course material.

While individual projects are usually the sole responsibility of one person and the consequences of the project are directly linked to that individual, group projects are the joint responsibility of several individuals and the consequences of the quality of the project are thus suffered or enjoyed by all. The nature of group work can lead to increased effectiveness and more creative solutions, but the unique conditions imposed by such work can also be conducive to negative, undesirable consequences (Houldsworth & Mathews, 2000).

Table 7 High and low academic achievers attitude towards group work in relation to their relationship with other group members

No	Attitudinal Items	High Achievers					Low Achievers				
		SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	It is good to do in groups since every one helps each other.	15	8	1	3	3	15	8	2	3	2
2	Group work makes me feel good as be with my friends	12	11	3	2	2	11	14	1	3	1
3	When I work in a group, I become friends with my group members and am able to share my ideas.	17	9	1	2	1	14	8	2	3	3
4	I do not enjoy working with the students I am assigned in most cases.	2	2	3	15	8	3	2	1	13	12
5	I don't like group work as my group members don't respect my opinions and care about my feelings.	2	3	3	9	13	2	2	2	14	10
6	I do not like group work because I am shy when assigned with opposite sex.	3	1	1	9	16	1	4	1	12	12

In item 1 of Table 7 above, both groups of students were asked whether they like group work as everyone helps each other. Thus, while 23 of the total high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed, 6 respondents of them were disagreed or strongly disagreed and 1 was undecided that they were happy with working in groups as everyone helps each other. On the other hand, 23 respondents from the low achievers group agreed or strongly agreed that they were happy with working in groups since everyone in the group helps each other whereas 5 low achiever respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, and only 2 respondents undecided. Therefore, it can be said that the majority of students from both groups (equally 23 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed to the statement.

Regarding item 2, which reads, "Group work makes me feel good as be with my friends", 23 of the high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed that group work makes them feel comfort as be with their peers while 4 students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of the statement, and 3 of the respondents undecided. Of low achiever students, 25 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that group work gives them a good feeling as working with their relatives, and at the same time 4 number of respondents, as high achiever students, disagreed or strongly disagreed and 1 respondent was unable to decide. Based on the relevant responses, more low achiever students (25) than high achievers (23) said that group work makes them feel well since they were doing with their friends. And generally, we can say that both high and low achiever students feel good with working in groups.

To the statement, "When I work in a group, I become friends with my group members and am able to share my ideas", 26 respondents of high achiever students agreed or strongly agreed that they became friends with group members and were able to share ideas when working in groups while 3 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and 1 respondent undecided to the idea of the statement. From the low achievers' side, 22 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that working in groups enabled them to make friends and share ideas whereas 6 low achiever respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 2 students undecided. This shows us that a large number of students from both groups agreed to the statement, but more high achiever students (26) said that they become friends with group members and able to share their ideas than low achiever students (22).

The next statement item 4, states, "I do not enjoy working with the students I am assigned most of the time". Concerning this, 4 of the high achiever respondents agreed and strongly agreed while 23 of them were disagreed and strongly disagreed, and the rest 3 of them were unable to decide about their preference. On the other hand, 5 low achiever students agreed or strongly agreed where as 25 disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 1 respondent undecided to the statement. From this it is clear that a majority of students from both high and low achiever groups said that in most cases they were enjoying with their group members assigned. However, when compared with high achievers (23), greater numbers of low achiever students (25) were satisfied with their group mates.

Regarding item 5, which reads, "I don't like group work as my group members don't respect my opinions and care about my feelings", 5 of the high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they did not like working in groups as their group mates did not respect their opinions and care about their feelings. While 22 high achiever respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of the statement, 3 of the respondents was unable to decide about their preference. In contrast, 4 low achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed where as 24 students disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 2 of the respondents' undecided to the idea of the statement. From this data, it is possible to say that a large number of low achiever students said they did not have any complain in relation to the value of their opinions and feelings than that of high achiever respondents. However, a lot of respondents from both groups reported that they did not have problems concerning their opinions and feelings in group work activities.

In the last item of Table 7, students were asked whether they like group work when assigned with male- female groupings. As a result 4 high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they dislike group work when assigned with different sex, where as 25 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea, only a single respondent undecided. On the other side, of the low achiever respondents 5 of them agreed or strongly agreed that they were shy when assigned with different sex; when 1 student undecided, 24 low achiever students disagreed or strongly disagreed that they did not like group work when grouped with different sex. In general, it is clear that a large number of students from both high and low achiever groups disagree with the stated idea that they dislike group work when female and male students were assigned together.

All in all, the majority of high and low achiever students have shown their positive tendency to the statements stated in relation to their attitude towards group work concerning their relationship and interaction with other members in a given group.

Table 8 Groups statistics

	Students status	No	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Learners' attitude towards their relationship with other group members	High achievers	30	4.021	1.2125	0.2215
	Low achievers	30	3.96	1.204	0.22

Table 8 above shows the comparison of average mean values between the attitudes of the high and low achievers towards group work. The high achievers obtained an overall mean of 4.021 while the low achievers had 3.96. Thus, it can be said that both groups have mean score values which are positively related to group work attitudes in relation to their relationship and interaction with other members in a group they are assigned.

In a semi structured interview, some students from high and low achiever sides were also asked to explain their opinions and experiences in group work activities concerning members' relationship. They have said that grouping was dynamic sometimes formed by the teacher and sometimes by themselves with different sex and achievement level. This difference in achievement level or in sex made them happy as it enabled them to see new friends and share different experiences from multidimensional angles.

To determine if the overall mean difference is significant, the t-test was used as follows.

Table 9 Independent Samples Test

		Levine's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
				F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference
									Lower	Upper
1	Equal variances assumed	0.684	0.494	0.19266	58	0.7436	0.061	0.3126	-0.564	0.687
2	Equal variances not assumed			0.19266	56.94	0.7436	0.061	0.3126	-0.564	0.687

In this study as the t-calculated value (0.19266) which is less than the t-critical value (2.001) is not significant i.e. the attitudinal difference between high and low achiever students towards group work in relation to their interpersonal relationship with other students is insignificant. Therefore, from this result it can be said that both high and low achiever students' have similar positive attitudes towards group work in relation to their interpersonal relationships with other group members, and achievement level do not have the role of differing high and low achiever students' attitude towards group work and their involvement in group work activities.

4.4 Students' Attitude towards Group Work in Relation to Group Evaluation

It has been said that group work has many advantages in terms of student learning, and assessment is a great motivator for learning. One of the strongest concerns that students have about group work is the possibility that group assessment practices may not fairly assess individual contributions. Students are keen that grading practices are established such that grades properly reflect the levels of performance of each student.

A number of studies said that when evaluating a group project, the teacher may face more difficult problems. He or she must decide whether or not all the students should receive the same grade, and, if students are to receive different grades, he/she must have some system in place for determining how to differentiate the contribution of one student from that of his or her group peers because grades play an important role in a students' success and failure. Therefore, it is important to examine student attitudes regarding the grading of their group work activities.

For this particular study, students have given different positively and negatively worded statements like "I like to do things individually since in group work I get similar marks with all group members; I don't like group work because I get low marks when assigned with low achieving students; I like to do in groups because I can get good results than alone, and I am not happy with working in a group because group marking is not fair" to their attitude towards group work in relation to group evaluation.

Table 10 High and low academic achievers attitude towards group work in relation to group evaluation

No	Attitudinal Items	High Achievers					Low Achievers				
		SA	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	I like to do things individually since in group work I get similar marks with all group members.	1	3	2	12	12	3	1	1	11	14
2	I don't like group work because I get low marks when assigned with low achieving students	2	2	2	12	12	2	3	2	9	14
3	I like to do in groups because I can get good results than alone.	12	11	-	4	3	12	12	1	3	2
4	I am not happy with working in a group because group marking is not fair.	2	5	3	14	6	2	2	6	10	10

Regarding the first item of Table 10 which says “I like to do things individually since in group work I get similar marks with all group members”, 4 high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they liked to do things individually as they got similar marks with all members in group work; when 24 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea, only 2 respondents of high achiever students were unable to decide their preference. To the same item, while 4 students from the low achievers group agreed or strongly agreed that they did not like group work since marking was similar to all group members, 25 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of the statement, and only a single low achiever respondent undecided to his/ her preferences. Generally, a large number of high achiever (24) and low achiever (25) respondents said that they did not like to do things individually as in group work marking was similar along all members of their group, and it is evident that they like to do in groups besides its marking mechanisms.

To the statement “I don't like group work because I get low marks when assigned with low achieving students”, 4 high achiever students said that they did not like working in groups as they got low marks with low achiever students, but 24 high achiever respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea, and 2 respondents undecided with the idea. From the low achievers' side to the same statement, 5 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they did not like to do in groups as they got low marks when assigned with low achiever students; while 23 low achiever respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of the item and only 2 respondents

undecided. In this item a significant number of high (24) and low achiever (23) respondents opposed the idea of disliking group work since low mark was gained with low achiever students.

Regarding the next statement which says "I like to do in groups because I can get good results than alone", 23 respondents of high achievers said that they liked group work as they could get better results than alone while 7 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of the statement. On the other hand, when 24 respondents of the low achievers agreed or strongly agreed with their preference of doing in groups to get good results, 5 respondents disagreed or strongly disagree with the idea and only 1 respondent was unable to decide his preference of the item. In general when we see the data above it is evident that the majority (24) of low achiever respondents and high respondents (23) said that they liked group work since it helped them to get better grade than alone.

The last item of Table 10 says "I am not happy with working in a group because group marking is not fair". To this item 7 high achiever students said that they were not happy with working in groups as marking was not fair; when 20 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea, only 3 undecided with the idea of the statement. On the other hand, 4 low achiever respondents said that they disliked group work as marking was not fair, 20 of low achiever respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed to the stated idea whereas 6 respondents were unable to decide their preference to the statement. In general, group evaluation is usually an issue of contention with students, but equally important number of both high and low achiever respondents said that they did not complain with the fairness of group marking.

In addition to the above data from questionnaire, results from interview show that most of the time teachers evaluate group work activities by giving similar marks in a given group, and some times marking is different across members of a similar group. Some of the students felt that group members received a good grade even if they did not do their share of the work and some of the students said that a group grade was fair. Participants of high achiever students during the interview said that evaluation in group work is better if different marking system is practiced to make all students active participants and lower achiever students said that they like group work evaluation with similar marking system in order to make all discussions and the total work cooperative and collaborative which is very important for the development of their language use.

In order to see if there is a significant attitudinal difference between high and low achiever students towards group work in relation to group assessment the following group statistics and independent samples test were made.

Table 11 Groups statistics

	Students status	No	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Learners attitude towards Group evaluation	High achievers	30	3.8575	1.208	0.2205
	Low achievers	30	3.96	1.23	0.2247

As we can see from the group statistics above, the mean score of high achiever students is 3.86, and the mean score of low achievers is 3.96. According to this result, it can be said that both high and low achiever students have similar positive attitudes to the evaluation systems employed in group work activities. And the following independent samples test was made to confirm this input.

To determine if there is a significant difference between the overall means of the above data, the following t-test was used.

Table 12 Independent samples test

		Levine's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
1	Equal variances assumed	0.375	0.5885	-0.3167	58	0.7637	0.0997	0.315	-0.73	0.53
2	Equal variances not assumed			-0.3167	57.4	0.7637	0.0997	0.315	-0.73	0.53

This is evidenced by a significant t-value ($p < .05$) that the computed t-value (-0.3167) indicates that the mean difference is not significant which implies that the observed difference is only due

to chance. Generally, the high and low academic achievers have the same preference of group work assessments. The result shows the absence of clear relationship between academic achievement and difference in attitude towards group work in relation to group evaluation.

4.5 Students' Attitude towards Group Work in Relation to the Experiences Gained from It

As noted earlier in the literature part, group work is incorporated into many units and focused on learning and improving group processes in addition to the development of a final product such as a report. It has been suggested that one of the major benefits of well-designed group work is that it can facilitate learning and enhance student understanding of unit-related knowledge and generate deeper levels of students' understanding; it can also be used for the development of communication, collaboration and social skills.

Table 13 shows a comparison of the high and low academic achievers on their attitude towards group work in relation to the working experiences that can be gained from group work.

No	Attitudinal Items	High Achievers					Low Achievers				
		S.A	A	U	D	SD	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	I am happy to be in groups because it gives me the way of working with different people.	16	12	2	-	-	17	8	3	1	1
2	I like group work as it gives the benefit of everyone's ideas.	15	13	2	-	-	16	12	1	1	-
3	I have gained a great deal of satisfaction from participating in group activities.	13	13	2	2	-	14	13	1	2	-
4	Group work enables me to use others ideas together with my own.	13	15	1	1	-	14	15	1	-	-
5	When I work in groups my work habit shows improvement.	12	14	3	1	-	13	12	2	2	1

To the first item of Table 13 saying “I am happy to be in groups because it gives me the way of working with different people”, 28 high achiever respondents said that they were happy to work in groups because that gave them the way of working with different people whereas only 2 respondents were unable to decide their opinion to the idea of the statement. In contrast, 25 low achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the idea of the statement; 2 respondents said that they were not happy to do in groups as that did not give them the experience of working with other people, and 3 respondents of low achiever students were unable to decide their preferences. In sum, a significant number of respondents from both high achiever (28) and low achiever (25) groups said that they were satisfied with the experiences gained from participating in group work activities. This shows that students were well involved in group work activities which benefit them in developing experiences to interact and communicate with other people.

The second item asks learners whether they like group work as it gives the benefit of everyone’s ideas. As a result, 28 high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they like group work since there was the benefit of different ideas while discussions and interactions held where as only 2 respondents were unable to decide their preference of the idea stated. On the other hand, the same number (28) of low achiever respondents said that they liked group work because there were different view points and inputs to their group work tasks; while 1 respondent disagreed again a single low achiever respondent was unable to decide his preferences. Here, it can be said that both group of students show a positive outlook to the advantage of group work by incorporating different ideas from different people in a given group.

Regarding their satisfaction by participating in group work activities, 26 high achiever respondents agreed that they were satisfied after participating in group work activities; 2 of the respondents disagreed with their satisfaction whereas 2 respondents undecided. From the other group, 27 low achiever respondents showed their agreement with the idea of the statement; 2 respondents reported that they disagreed or strongly disagreed, and only 1 respondent said that he/she was unable to decide his/her preferences of the stated idea. From this it can be said that the majority of the respondents gained a great deal of satisfaction after fully participating in group work, but when we compare, the number of high achievers (26) is less than the number of low achiever (27) respondents.

The next item says “group work enables me to use others ideas together with my own”. As a result, from a total of 30 high achiever students, 28 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that in group work they were able to have different ideas to understand and do tasks properly, whereas 1 respondent disagreed, the remaining 1 student was unable to decide about his/her preference. On the other hand, while 29 low achiever respondents completely agreed or strongly agreed that group work helps them to get different ideas from different angles that would help them to fully understand the learning material, only 1 respondent said that he/she was unable to decide. Shortly, it is evident that the majority of i.e. 29 of low achiever and 28 of high achiever respondents agreed with the idea of the statement. From this data one can say that group work helps learners in order to get different ideas from different sources in order to fully understand and participate in group work activities. This will also help them to be free of confusions and activate their full group participation.

Finally, respondents were asked whether their work habits were improved when they work in groups. Thus, 26 high achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their work habit shows improvement while working in groups; only 1 respondent disagreed with the idea and 3 respondents were undecided about their preferences. On the other side, 25 low achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed that group work enabled their work habits be improved; 3 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of the item while 2 respondents were unable to decide about their preferences. All in all, 26 high and 25 low achiever respondents said that group work improves work habits, and enables them to have the skills of working with other people and to have resistance of working.

Table 14 Groups statistics

	Students status	No	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attitude towards Experiences gained from group work	High achievers	30	4.338	0.7196	0.1314
	Low achievers	30	4.318	0.8394	0.1514

The high achievers obtained an overall mean of 4.338 while the low achievers had 4.318. This implies that both high and low achievers agree with the experiences gained from group work.

More importantly, in the interview session some high and low achiever students were asked questions about their attitude towards group work in relation to the work experiences, about the advantage of group work to their entire work experience and other related ideas. Then the majority of students from both groups have shown their interest and satisfaction to do in groups as it enables them to have a good work experiences not only in group work activities but also in individual tasks.

Thus, the following independent samples test was made to see if significance difference was observed between the two groups of students.

Table 15 Independent samples test

		Levine's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
1	Equal variances assumed	0.94	0.516	0.055	58	0.687	0.02	0.203	-0.387	0.426
2	Equal variances not assumed			0.055	54.34	0.687	0.02	0.203	-0.3876	0.427

As you can see from the above independent sample test the t- calculated (obtained) value is 0.055 while the t-table value is 2.001 at $p < 0.05$. The critical value of 2.001 represents the value at which chance is the most attractive explanation for any of the observed differences between the two groups given 30 participants in each group and the willingness to take $p < 0.05$ level of risk.

Here, as the t-calculated value (0.055) is less than the t-table value (2.001), the attitudinal difference between high and low achiever students towards group work in relation to experiences gained from working in groups is not significant. This directly shows that both high and low achiever students do not have different attitude, and achievement level can not be taken as a factor in differing high and low achiever students' attitude towards group work in relation to the experiences gained from group work and participating in group work activities.

4.6 Students' Attitude towards Group Work in Relation to their Roles and Decisions Made

A sense of individual responsibility to the group may be increased if each group member has a specific and essential role to play in achieving the group's final goal or product. For instance, individuals within the group could be assigned the following interdependent roles: group manager--who assures that the group stays on task and that all members actively contribute; group recorder--who keeps a written record of the group's ideas; group spokesperson--who is responsible for verbally reporting the group's ideas to the instructor or other groups; and group processor who monitors the social interaction or interpersonal dynamics of the group process.

Table 16 High and low academic achievers attitude towards group work in relation to their roles and decisions made.

No	Attitudinal Items	High Achievers					Low Achievers				
		SA	A	D	D	SD	SA	A	D	D	SD
1	I don't enjoy in group work because there are conflicts.	3	6	4	12	5	3	5	3	12	7
2	I like group work as most students are active participants to play their expected roles in the group.	7	10	1	8	4	7	7	3	8	5
3	I like to learn individually because in group work activities students do not talk in English.	6	4	1	9	10	5	4	3	13	5
4	I like group work as decisions are based on different views.	8	5	3	11	3	5	3	5	8	9
5	I prefer to learn individually better than group work because students are more careless on group work activities	5	6	3	11	5	3	5	3	13	6

In the first item of Table 19 above, students were asked whether there were conflicts or disagreements that pull back them from engaging in discussions. Accordingly 9 high achiever respondents said that they did not like group work as there were conflicts and disagreements; other 17 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of the item, and the rest 4 respondents were unable to agree or disagree with the idea stated. In addition low achiever

students were also asked the same question then 7 respondents of them agreed or strongly agreed that there were conflicts in group work, but 19 respondents were disagree or strongly disagree with the idea and power of conflicts which prohibit learners to be involved in group work activities, and 4 respondents were unable to decide. In sum, the majority of both high and low achiever respondents i.e. 17 and 19 respectively, disagreed the presence of conflicts in their group work activities.

The second item of Table 19 says "I like group work as most students are active participants to play their expected roles in their group". As a result when 17 high achiever respondents said that since most group members were active participants, and play their expected roles they liked group work, 12 respondents said that they were disagree or strongly disagree with the idea, and only 1 respondents remained undecided to the item. To the same item, 14 low achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they liked group work as members were active participants to the success of their group work; 13 respondents said that they were disagree or strongly disagree with the idea of students full participation, and 3 respondents were also remain undecided. To this item 14 low achiever and 14 high achiever respondents said that everybody played his/her expected roles in group work activities so that they were interested in group work.

Regarding the use of the target language, students were also asked to show their preferences. Accordingly, 10 high achiever respondents said that as students mostly inclined to their mother tongue English was not practiced as opposed with the objective of the language classroom and particularly group discussions; to this negatively worded statement 19 high achiever respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and only 1 respondent was unable to decide about his preferences. On the other hand, while 9 low achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed on the impractical exercise of students using the target language, 18 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea; 3 respondents did not decide to agree or disagree with the idea of the statement. Moreover, 19 high and 18 low achiever participants said that they used English language as much as possible in their discussions of group work tasks.

Similarly those respondents were also asked whether they like group work and if decisions were based on different view. As a result 13 high achiever respondents said that they liked group work since decisions were made based on different views and discussions, but 14 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of the item and 3 respondents were limited to be

undecided their options. Again 8 low achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the idea stated; but other 17 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea and 5 low achiever respondents were remain undecided. In group work decisions should be collaborative like ways 13 high and 8 low achiever participants said that they liked group work and decisions were made based on group agreements.

Lastly both groups of respondents were asked if students were careless on group work activities. To this item, when 11 high achiever respondents said that there were some students who were careless about the group work tasks, 16 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea and the rest 3 of high achievers respondents were unable to decide about their preferences. On the other hand, 8 low achiever respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the presence of some careless individuals while working in groups, but other 19 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of the item, and only 3 low achiever respondents were unable to decide about the idea.

Therefore, it can be said that both high and low achiever students have a positive attitude towards group work in relation to their roles and decisions made in group work activities.

Table 17 Groups statistics

	Students status	No	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Students' attitude towards their roles and decisions in group work	High achievers	30	3.498	1.428	0.2605
	Low achievers	30	3.515	1.4055	0.2568

According to Table 17 above the mean score of high achiever students is 3.49 while the mean score of low achiever students is 3.515. This average mean value shows that participants agreed with the items presented to see their attitude towards group work in relation to their roles and decisions made in group work activities.

In addition to the questionnaire, students were asked some questions in relation to their roles and the decisions in group work activities. According to the data from this interview students said that as the teacher was available in the class while working in groups, they were doing tasks harmoniously with less disagreements to decide which is better and not for their work, and decisions were made through the real participation of all group members but there may be some times that inclination to certain students' ideas. In most cases high achiever students got a chance

to lead the group, and they tried to encourage all members to use the target language freely. Sometimes, as the majority of them said, problems may arise for groups where it was perceived that some members were not contributing, and another common concern was the need for students to use English in order to exercise their language use.

As shown below a more detailed independent samples test analysis was conducted to see if significance differences were found within the two cohorts of students.

Table 18 Independent samples test

		Levine's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						
				F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference
		Lower	Upper							
1	Equal variances assumed	0.397	0.679	-0.104	58	0.504	-0.033	0.366	-0.766	0.699
2	Equal variances not assumed			-0.104	57.71	0.504	-0.033	0.366	-0.766	0.699

The above table of independent samples test shows that the degrees of freedom, t-calculated value, and other statistical values at (p) <0.05 level of risk.

So from the above independent sample test it is evident that the t- calculated (obtained) value is -0.104 while the t-critical (table) value is 2.001 at p<0.05, and the t-table value was 2.001 with 58 degrees of freedom. As the t-calculated (obtained) value (-0.104) is less than the t-critical (table) value (2.001), the attitudinal difference between high and low achiever students towards group work is not significance. This implies that learners' attitude towards group work in relation to member roles and decisions made in the group activities can not be differentiated because of their difference in their academic achievement level.

Generally, it is vividly observed that in relation to their group roles and different decisions made in their group work activities both groups of learners have shown a favorable attitude, and from this idea it is evident that difference in academic achievement does not play any significant role to differentiate learners in their attitude towards group work.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter conclusions and recommendations have been made based on the data gathered and the findings of the study.

5.1 Conclusions

In conclusion, this study sought to describe and compare high and low achiever students' attitudes towards group work. Based on the data gathered and the findings, the researcher reached the following conclusions regarding the initial specific objectives.

- It is clearly discussed in the previous chapter that students were asked to show their attitudes towards group work by taking different aspects like the quality of the work, the time group work takes, their relationship with in the group, the group evaluation, the experiences gained from group work, and their roles in the group and decisions made in to account. Therefore, the finding revealed that learners appreciate the opportunities to work in groups and show positive experiences satisfied with group learning.
- Again the same agenda was raised with those of low achiever students, as a result the majority of these low achiever students were very interested to learn through group work which has a vital role to exercise the target language, and cooperate with their peers in understanding the content of the learning material.
- In all points rose in relation to group work, both groups of students show a favorable attitude towards group work, and different statistical inferences were made to see if any significant difference were there, however the difference was not clearly observed.
- The finding of this study revealed that both high and low achiever students have shown positive attitudes towards group work. These students did not show any attitudinal difference because of their achievement difference. Therefore, it can be said that achievement does not play any significant role in differentiating learners' attitude towards group work.

5.2 Recommendations

Finally based on the data collected and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were forwarded:

- ❖ Many teachers may face student resistances when trying to implement group learning strategies in the classroom but they are advised to cope up with any problems and get their students work in groups in all necessary contexts.
- ❖ It is also recommended that teachers should plan group work activities in line with the time available to make student interactions productive.
- ❖ Effective group work can be encouraged and reinforced by marking practices so teachers are advised to make the assessment criteria as clear and explicit as possible even it is helpful if students are involved in developing the criteria
- ❖ In order to arrive at more reliable conclusions it is better to conduct more research to see the attitudes of other grade levels and sites towards group work in relation to other more of group work.

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Appendix B: Questionnaire for Students (the Amharic version)

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
የድህረ ምረቃ ፕሮግራም
የቀንቀዎች ጥናት ተቀም
የእንግሊዝኛ ትምህርት ክፍል

በተማሪዎች የሚሞላ መጠይቅ

ውድ ተማሪዎች፡

የዚህ መጠይቅ ዋና አላማ ተማሪዎች በቡድን ስራ ላይ ያላቸውን አመለካከት እንዲሁም በክፍል ውስጥ ከፍተኛ ውጤት ባላቸው እና ዝቅተኛ የትምህርት ውጤት ባላቸው ተማሪዎች መካከል በቡድን ስራ ላይ የአመለካከት ልዩነት መኖሩንና አለመኖሩን ለማወቅ ነው። በመሆኑም ይህ ጥናት አንተ ተማሪው/ አንቺ ተማሪዎ በእንግሊዝኛ ትምህርት ክፍል ጊዜ በቡድን በምትሆን/ኝበት ወቅት ምን እንደምትወድ/ጅ እና ምን እንደምትጠላ/ይ ማየት ይፈልጋል።

ስለዚህ በመመሪያው መሰረት የተቀመጡትን ጥያቄዎች በሙሉ ታማኝነትና ግልጽነት በመመለስ ትተባበሩኝ ዘንድ በአክብሮት ትጠየቃለሁ።

ለትብብራችሁ በቅድሚያ በጣም አመሰግናለሁ!!!
አበባው አንዳርጌ

መመሪያ

ከዚህ በታች የተለያዩ መጠን ያላቸውን ሀሳቦች የያዙ ስድስት ሠንጠረዦች ተመልክተዋል። እንዲሁም በአያንዳንዱ ሀሳብ ትይዩ በጣም እስማማበታለሁ፣ እስማማበታለሁ፣ አልወሰንኩበትም፣ አልስማማበትም እና በጣም አልስማመበትም የሚሉ አማራጮች ቀረበዋል። በመሆኑም ለአያንዳንዱ ሀሳብ አንድ አንተን/ አንችን በሚመለከትህ/ በሚመለከትሽ አማራጭ ግርጌ የ"X" ምልክት በማስቀመጥ መልስ/ሽ።

ሠንጠረዥ 1 ከሚሰሩት ስራ ጥራት አንጻር ተማሪው/ዋ ለቡድን ስራ ያለው/ያላት አመለካከት

ተ. ቁ.	የተሰጡ ሀሳቦች	አማራጮች					
		በጣም እስማማቃለሁ	እስማማቃለሁ	እስማማቃለሁ	እስማማቃለሁ	እስማማቃለሁ	በጣም አይደለም
1	የቡድን ስራ በፍጥነትና በጥራት ስለሚሰራ ደስ ይለኛል።						
2	በግል ከመስራት ይልቅ በቡድን በመስራት ጥራት ያለው ስራ አቀርባለሁ።						
3	ስራችን በአግባቡ የሚቀረጠው በግል ከመሆን ይልቅ በቡድን ስንሆን ነው።						
4	የምንሰጠው ስራ ግልጽነት የሚኖረው ከሌሎች ተማሪዎች ጋር ስሰራ ነው።						
5	በግል ከመስራት ይልቅ የቡድን ስራን የምወደው የስራ ጫናው ቀላል ስለሆነ ነው።						

ሠንጠረዥ 2 ከሚሰጣቸውና ስራው ከሚወስደው ጊዜ አንጻር ተማሪው/ዋ ለቡድን ስራ ያለው/ያላት አመለካከት

ተ. ቁ.	የተሰጡ ሀሳቦች	አማራጮች					
		በጣም እስማማቃለሁ	እስማማቃለሁ	እስማማቃለሁ	እስማማቃለሁ	እስማማቃለሁ	በጣም አይደለም
1	ስራውን ለማጠናቀቅ ብዙ ጊዜ ስለሚፈጅ የቡድን ስራን አልወደውም።						
2	የቡድን ስራን የማልወደው ከትምህርት ይልቅ ሌሎች ነገሮችን በማውራት ጊዜውን ስለምንፈጀው ነው።						
3	ከስራ ባልደረቦቼ ጋር በነጻነት ለመወያየት ጊዜ ስለማገኝ የቡድን ስራን እወደዋለሁ።						
4	የምንሰጠው ሰዓት ስራውን ለማጠናቀቅ ስለማይበቃ በቡድን መስራትን አልወደውም።						

ሠንጠረዥ 3 ከቡድን አባላት ጋር ካላቸው ግንኙነት አንጻር ተማሪው/ዋ ለቡድን ስራ ያለው/ያላት አመለካከት

ተ. ቁ.	የተሰጡ ሀሳቦች	አማራጮች					
		በጣም እስማሪ	እስማሪ	እስማሪ	አልወሰነም	አልሰማኝም	በጣም አልሰማኝም
1	እያንዳንዱ የቡድን አባል ስለሚረዳዳ በቡድን መስራት ጥሩ ነው።						
2	ከምራልጋቸው ባልንጀሮቹ ጋር ስለምሆን በቡድን መስራት ያስደስተኛል።						
3	በቡድን ስራ ላይ ከአባላቱ ጋር ወዳጅ መሆንና ሀሳቤን የመግለጽ ዕድል አገኛለሁ።						
4	ብዙ ጊዜ አብራ ከምስራባቸው ልጆች ጋር ስለማይመቸኝ የቡድን ስራን አልወደውም።						
5	የቡድን ስራን ማልወደው አብራ የምስራባቸው ልጆች ሀሳቤን ስለማይቀበሉኝና ለስሜቴ ስለማይጨነቁ ነው።						
6	በአብዛኛው ከታቃራኒ ጾታ ጋር ስሆን ስለማፍር የቡድን ስራን አልወደውም።						

ሠንጠረዥ 4 ከቡድን ምዘና አንጻር ተማሪው/ዋ ለቡድን ስራ ያለው/ያላት አመለካከት

ተ. ቁ.	የተሰጡ ሀሳቦች	አማራጮች					
		በጣም እስማሪ	እስማሪ	እስማሪ	አልወሰነም	አልሰማኝም	በጣም አልሰማኝም
1	በቡድን ስራ ወቅት አባላቱ በሙሉ ተነሳሳይ ውጤት ስለሚያገኝ በግሌ መስራትን እመርታለሁ።						
2	የተመደብኩት ዝቅተኛ ውጤት ካላቸው ተማሪዎች ጋር ከሆነ ዝቅተኛ ውጤት ስለማመጣ የቡድን ስራን አልወደውም።						
3	በግሌ ከመስራት ይልቅ በቡድን ስራ ጥሩ ውጤት ስለምመጣ የቡድን ስራን እወደዋለሁ።						
4	የቡድን ስራን የማልወደው ምዘናው ሚዛናዊ ስለማይሆን ነው።						

ሠንጠረዥ 5 የቡድን ስራ ከሚሰጠው የስራ ክሂሎች አንጻር ተማሪው/ዋ ለቡድን ስራ ያለው/ ያላት አመለካከት

ተ. ቁ.	የተሰጡ ሀሳቦች	አማራጮች					
		በጣም እስማማ	እስማማ	አልወሰንኩም	አልሰማኩም	በጣም አልሰማኩም	አልሰማኩም
1	ከሌሎች ሰዎች ጋር አብሮ የመስራትን ክሂል ስለማገኝ በቡድን መስራት ስደስተኛል።						
2	የቡድን ስራ ከብዙ ሰዎች ብዙ ሀሳቦችን ስለሚያሰባስብ ይመችኛል።						
3	በቡድን ስራ ላይ ስላተፍ ልዩና ጥሩ የሆነ ደስታ አገኝብታለሁ።						
4	የቡድን ስራን የምወደው የሌሎችን ሀሳቦች ከራሴ ጋር መጠቀም ስለሚያስችለኝ ነው።						
5	የስራ ልምዴ እየዳበረ ስለመጣ በቡድን መስራትን እወደዋለሁ።						

ሠንጠረዥ 6 ከስራ ድርሻና ከሚተላለፉት ውሳኔዎች አንጻር ተማሪው/ዋ ለቡድን ስራ ያለው/ያላት አመለካከት

ተ. ቁ.	የተሰጡ ሀሳቦች	አማራጮች					
		በጣም እስማማ	እስማማ	አልወሰንኩም	አልሰማኩም	በጣም አልሰማኩም	አልሰማኩም
1	የቡድንን ስራ የማልወደው ጭቅጭቅ ስለሚበዛበት ነው።						
2	እያንዳንዱ አባል የስራ ድርሻውን በአግባቡ ስለሚወጣ በቡድን መስራት ደስ ይለኛል።						
3	በቡድን ስራ ወቅት ተማሪዎች እንግሊዝኛን ስለማይጠቀሙና ይህም ጥሩ ስላልሆነ የቡድን ስራን አልወደውም።						
4	በቡድን ስራ ወቅት ውሳኔዎች የሚተላለፉት ከተለያዩ ጎራ ከመጡ ሀሳቦች ስለሚሆን በቡድን መስራት ደስ ይላል።						
5	በቡድን ስራ ላይ ተማሪዎች ግዴታ ስለሚሆኑ ከቡድን ስራ ይልቅ በግሌ መስራትን እመርጣለሁ።						

Appendix C: Key Interview Questions for Students

1. Do you ever work in groups?
2. Do you like working in groups?
3. What do you like about working in groups?
4. What do you say about the quality of the work while you were in group work?
5. In most cases was the time that your teacher has given you enough to conclude the tasks?
6. What can you say about group assessment, marking and other related ideas with group work evaluation?
7. How do you form groups by yourselves or by your teacher and how?
8. What can you say about your relationship with other group members?
9. Can you tell me some thing about your roles as a group member, how decisions were made in your groups?

Appendix D: Sample Students' Cumulative Mark list

High Achiever Students				Low Achiever Students			
No	Name	Sec.	Av. mark	No	Full Name	Sec.	Av. mark
1	Eshetu Wudie	A	89.95	1	Yalem Andualem	A	51.15
2	Getaye Aynetu	A	87.4	2	Sintayehu Lewoyehu	A	49.7
3	Mohammed Usman Indris	A	86.5	3	Tigist Belete Gebeyehu	A	57.8
4	Solomon Ferede Tegegne	B	95.85	4	Asmarech Anteye Mekonen	B	55.5
5	Mekuanint Tadu Debas	B	95.45	5	Ayal Ashebir	B	53.7
6	Umer Kassa Adem	B	87.15	6	Hibist Admas Gebeyehu	B	52
7	Awoke Wudie Alemu	C	91.2	7	Momina Bilal Seid	C	55.7
8	Ashebir Tsegaye Gelaw	C	88.6	8	Fikrie Esubalew Fentie	C	54.7
9	Solomon Ferede Eredie	C	88.1	9	Lemlem Hailu Damtie	C	59.9
10	Mekuanint Lewoyehu Shiferaw	D	94.3	10	Banchigizie Meshebiaw Ayalew	D	55.45
11	Desalegn Aychiluhim	D	92.85	11	Momina Moges	D	53.3
12	Adem Ahmed	D	92	12	Yayesh Tilahun	D	57.2
13	Muhamed Husien Yibrie	E	95.35	13	Askal Goshu Beyene	E	56.6
14	Zelalem Chanie	E	92.3	14	Birhan Lijalem	E	52.8

15	Misganaw Damtie	E	86.9	15	Wudie Ayele Belete	E	55.4
16	Banchamilak Abie	F	96.25	16	Mastewal Habtamu	F	55.7
17	Belayneh Anawtie	F	91.3	17	Desta Eshetu	F	52.5
18	Abayneh Tenaw	F	89.15	18	Woynitu Tefera	F	55.1
19	Abezaw Shiferaw	G	92.2	19	melkam gashu	G	57.6
20	Birtukan Eshetie	G	90.95	20	Bewustish Esuendalew	G	56.6
21	Alehegn Aregaw	G	90.15	21	Waltu Habtamu	G	55.8
22	Walelign Demsie Baye	H	94.8	22	Genenew Melaku Derese	H	57.7
23	Simachew Biarglign	H	94.35	23	Bezabish Feleke	H	56.3
24	Zelalem Adugna Mosie	H	92.9	24	Dejitnu Tadese	H	57.6
25	Yibeltal Alamir Ferede	I	94.35	25	Banichayehu Mezgebu Melie	I	57.7
26	Tenaw Melese Biazin	I	91.15	26	Kelemua Tesfaw Awoke	I	53.3
27	Endale Abezaw Meselu	I	90.7	27	Yibeltal Wodaje Abate	I	59.6
28	Amare Getechew Adam	J	90	28	wubalem kassa	J	56.9 5
29	Mosa Ibrahim Beshir	J	89	29	Banchayehu Sibhat	J	56
30	Tadese Minalku	J	88.5	30	Muluken Abiyu	J	53.6

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work, and has not been presented for any degree to any university, and that all relevant sources used in the thesis have been dully acknowledged.

Name: Abebaw Andargie Melaku

Signature:  _____

Date: June 9, 2011