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Group Learning and University Students' EFL Learner Identity Construction: A Multiple Case Study in China

Ruijin Lan¹, Chunshou Lan²*

¹Concord University College, Fujian Normal University, Fuzhou, China
²College of Foreign Languages, Fujian Normal University, Fuzhou, China
Email: lan601269610@outlook.com, *lancs68@163.com, *lancs@fjnu.edu.cn

Abstract

The implementation of group learning in university EFL teachers' classrooms in China has involved students in learning more academically and socially. It is a reaction to the EFL curriculum reform and a reaction to the rapid development of information technology as well. In the light of the previous studies on group learning and learner identity construction, the purpose of the present study is to report on university EFL learners' perception of the relationship between group learning and their EFL learner identity construction. A qualitative survey study was conducted by randomly selecting nine university EFL learners for in-depth interviews about their experiences in that particular group learning context. Grounded theory procedures that involve open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were used to analyze the data gathered through interviews so as to identify the categories and findings. The results reveal that group learning employed in EFL teaching at universities has the practical value of facilitating EFL learners to construct the identity as learners with higher learning motivation, better critical thinking skills, more skilled at group cooperation or collaboration, and more aware of getting focused in learning.

Keywords

Group Learning, University Students, EFL Learner Identity, Identity Construction

1. Introduction

A growing number of EFL teachers at universities in China have been changing their large class settings to make them more academically and socially involving

for their students and group learning is one of the most-often-used strategies to get students engaged in the learning in both theoretical and practical courses (Cao, 2020). The implementation of group learning in university EFL teachers' classrooms in China is conceived to be driven by the increasing demand of a diverse student population for ways of learning together in order to achieve their learning goals, and the demand for learner-centered approaches to EFL teaching and learning like student projects that often require group work. It is also a reaction to the EFL curriculum development during the last twenty years of educational reform, and a reaction to the rapid development of information technology as well. There are several areas where students learning in groups are superior to students learning independently, such as; thinking capabilities, course satisfaction, knowledge development, and social/communication skills (Barkley et al., 2014). Active and interactive learning in groups of appropriate size is valued to engage students in reflecting on course material or thinking. Johnson and Johnson (2008) argue that learners maximize their own and others' learning by working together to improve socialization and learning among the learners. In such a group learning context, the construction of learners' own knowledge and meaning and the creation of a communicative climate within the class lead to learners' deeper engagement and more lasting learning (Rudina, 2011). Also, the group learning environment helps learners build self-confidence, make themselves responsible, perform diverse tasks, and respect the opinions of others (Abulhassan & Hamid, 2021). In view of these opinions, it is evident that the group learning environment is closely related to students' identity construction. Although a consensus is reached among researchers concerning the vital role that learning in groups plays in modern pedagogy, whether at kindergarten or higher educational level (Abulhassan & Hamid, 2021), few studies have been intended to investigate the nexus of group learning and learners' identity construction. Therefore, the present study contributes to the literature with the purpose to investigate the effects of group learning on University EFL students' learner identity construction in China.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Group Learning and Its Relevant Research

There are two basics of learning, one is individual learning and the other is group learning. Group learning, used interchangeably with collaborative learning, cooperative learning, peer learning, and group work, is superior to individual learning (McKeachie, 2002; Timpson & Bendel-Simso, 1996; Gunderson & Moore, 2008). More recently, Janzen (2021) explained that the terms collaborative learning groups, cooperative learning groups, team-based learning, and learning communities were used almost interchangeably with group learning in the literature, with few distinctive differentiation. In group learning, students work together in groups of the appropriate size to carry out a collective task, while they are embedded in a network of informal social relations (Rau & Heyl,

1990). By group learning, Gautam (2018) refers to a group of learners engaged in solving problems, creating products, and making meaning cognitively, emotionally, and aesthetically.

The relevant research on group learning was once concluded by Gunderson and Moore (2008: p. 35) as follows:

Previous research on the effects of group work have shown that such environments give to students socio-emotional benefits from interpersonal relationships; added psychological health by learning to see the perspective of others, taking on more positive attitudes toward peers, and developing higher self-esteem; the ability to probe more deeply and critically into course material; and often greater academic success and more positive attitudes about learning.

That group learning is used interchangeably with the terms related to co-operation and collaboration is probably because all are grounded in the theory of the social construction of knowledge, suggesting that learners' understanding of reality comes from their interaction and discussion with others in a social context (Bay & Pacharn, 2017; Janzen, 2021). In group learning, the students are provided with adequate opportunities to develop various interpersonal, intrapersonal, presentational and communicational skills, all beneficial to life outside the classroom, including: becoming active learners with collaborative and co-operative skills, and lifelong learning skills, developing and practicing skills in decision making, problem solving, values clarification, communication, critical thinking, negotiation, conflict resolution, teamwork, etc. (Gautam, 2018).

Although, in the past decade, the research on group learning has become more diversified, it becomes more and more focused on the effects of group learning on core competency development of learners. A Core Competency is knowledge, skills and their application that is vital to the success of a learner. Koutselini (2008) stated that group learning offers students a wide range of experiences like enhancing social skills and high-order thinking skills and active learning opportunities. Similarly, Erdem's study (2009) concluded that group learning improves communication skills, enhances self-respect, helps express ideas during the discussion, develops social skills, and enhances meta-cognitive thinking skills. In Alhabeedi's study (2015), students' motivation, participation, and their sense of responsibility are improved in the group learning environment. Jacobs et al. (2016) discussed that group learning increases students' motivation, improves their attitudes towards learning, their achievements, and their collaboration skills. Almulla's study (2017) showed that group learning provides students with expertise and ideas to achieve their learning goals. Further, a group learning environment offers excellent opportunities for the students to ask questions, discuss issues, defend opinions, exchange ideas, and clarify concepts (Janzen, 2021). These studies provide us with an overall picture of the contribution of group learning to the development of learners' core competencies. This developing process is conducive to socializing students to the learning role, which, in turn, influences their learner identity construction.

2.2. EFL Learner Identity and Its Relevant Research

EFL learner identity refers to the identity a learner constructs in the context of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. From the perspective of student identity, EFL learner identity is a set of beliefs, values, and commitments that an individual EFL learner connects towards being a student of learning English as a foreign. The notion of EFL learner identity for university students can be understood as the development of attitudes and habits that influence the process of EFL learning of university students, and the emerging and constantly changing ways in which university students perceive and position themselves as EFL learners.

The investigation into a language learner identity in SLA is rooted in the field of social sciences and identity is discussed as constantly changing in relation to social life, both on local as well as on global scale (Bruner, 1991; Giddens, 1991). Peirce (1995) argues that SLA theories need to view learners as having complex social identities with which they carry in a large and frequently inequitable social structure formed in daily social interaction. From a different perspective, sociocultural theorists view language learning as embedded within the individuals' participation in social activities like interacting with other individuals, objects and events (Anwaruddin, 2012). Learning a language is a social and human experience and in the process of learning, learners not only produce meaning through language but also negotiate who they are in response to their relationships with others and who they want to be in that context (Flórez González, 2018; Norton, 2006, 2011).

In view of the development of EFL learners' attitudes and habits, due to the fact that learners have many different and dynamic identities, learners' identities influence the need, the desire, and the opportunities of second language learners to receive input and practice the target language (Chee, 2003). Learner identity thus plays very central roles in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. Many researchers propose questions with reference to the issues of learner identity related to the complex social contexts that engage EFL learners in active learning activities and help them achieve their educational goals. Collazos and Gómez (2019) focused their study on EFL learners' identity construction with reference to investment and the importance of English in their lives. They found that the participants' academic investment was influenced by their diverse English learners' identities negatively (such as learners' submissive identity and resistant identity) or positively (such as learners' dominant identity and productive identity).

Although research on EFL learner identity construction has become paramount in EFL/ESL education (Collazos & Gómez, 2019), it is only in recent years that the research has grown in many areas, one of which is about how learners construct their identity through English interaction with their peers (Ortiz-Medina, 2017). In educational context, group learning, with its advantages of encouraging learners to become active ones by developing collaborative

and co-operative skills, and lifelong learning skills, contributes a lot to the reinforcement of EFL learners' language interaction with their peers. As most studies in the areas of leaner identity and group learning have indicated, these positive orientations towards learning in a group learning context are just as valuable as the more easily measurable domains of content knowledge and skills. In a similar put, positive EFL learner identities for university students are meaningful learning outcomes in their own right.

Based on the discussion of the above sections about what the studies concerning group learning and learner identity have suggested, it is of great significance for the present study to reveal the nexus of group learning and EFL learner identity. Thus, the present study intends to investigate how EFL students at universities in China construct their EFL learner identity under group learning circumstance. To put it specifically, in the group learning circumstance, how do the EFL learners at universities in China perceive other learners in the group? How are their beliefs, learning motivation, thinking ways, cooperation, and efforts in learning changed through interaction with their groupmates?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The present study invited 9 undergraduates from a university in Macao, China, to participate in the survey. The participants are all junior students, aged between 20 and 21 years, including 5 females and 4 males. Group learning was frequently implemented in EFL classroom teaching at the university where the participants studied. Having finished two years of study at the university, the juniors had a lot of experience in group learning. This is why the present study selected junior students as research participants and the nine participants were randomly chosen from the pool. Two of the participants came from School of Business, majoring in business administration; one from Faculty of Law, majoring in Laws; two from Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, majoring in Hotel Management; two from Faculty of Chinese Medicine, majoring in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and two from Faculty of Humanities and Arts, majoring in Arts in Journalism and Communication. The participants were randomly selected by the help of three EFL teachers of that university who taught *University English* to the students from these schools or faculties.

3.2. Interview

The information about the participants' perceptions in a group learning environment was collected by interviewing. The interviews were done by the second author and were semi-structured so as to enable each participant to expand on the questions posed as suggested by Gillies and Boyle (2011). The researcher used an interview protocol composed of 8 questions informed from the research findings of the study by Abulhassan and Hamid (2021). They modified the interview protocol which was first designed by Gillies and Boyle (2011). Abulhas-

san and Hamid first validated the eight-question interview protocol through triangulation. In the study four themes of EFL learners' perception concerning group learning were identified as follows; learning motivation, problem solving, group collaboration, and learning concentration in group learning.

The present study followed the tips for interview process proposed by Abul-hassan and Hamid (2021). First, in the semi-structured interviews, chances for elaboration are provided to the participants. Second, Mandarin was used by both the interviewer and the participants to allow better expression of ideas. Third, the interviews were all audiotaped with the permission of the participants in advance and each interview lasted about 20 minutes. All the audio of the interviews was transcribed for further analysis. The researcher transcribed all the audio and the transcriptions were reviewed and checked by the second author of the present paper.

3.3. Data Analysis

Grounded theory procedures that involve open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) were used to analyze the data gathered through interviews so as to identify the categories and findings. The analysis followed the procedures elaborated by Abulhassan and Hamid (2021) for identifying the categories in qualitative analysis, which were originally proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), such as breaking the phrases, examining, comparing, and categorizing.

At the level of open coding, the researchers read and reviewed the transcriptions several times to identify and name EFL learners' experiences, beliefs, and opinions about how group learning influenced their EFL learning and identity construction as the initial categories of information of the interview transcriptions. The phrases concerning the beliefs, experiences, opinions and concepts were thus identified and named. At the level of axial coding, the beliefs, experiences, and opinions were labelled with concepts such as group learning, learner identity, identity construction, and influences. Based on the pre-categorization, the themes concerning how group learning affected learner identity were categorized. At the selective coding, the main themes about the impacts of group learning on university students' EFL learner identity construction were definitely confirmed by reviewing, combining, organizing, and refining of the themes categorized.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

The first question of the interview was used as an introduction to convey the topic of the interview to the participants and an understanding of their group participation experience in their university life. Frequent group participation, nearly once a week during the period of their university English learning, was reported by the participants. The data of this first question reflected the partici-

pants' understanding of the concept of group learning and its differences from individual learning, which was the prerequisite for analyzing their self-perception of identity as university English learners in a group learning circumstance. In this connection, the different themes of the impacts of group learning on participants' identifying themselves as EFL learners, which were revealed by the analysis of the interview data, was categorized as follows.

4.1.1. Group Learning and EFL Learners' Motivation

In a group learning circumstance, the first theme is that the participants identified themselves as more motivated EFL learners. In group learning, there are many group mates learning together. Group members are required to work together and cooperated with each other to finish some tasks or carry out some projects. They are driven to contribute their efforts to achieve better group performance. The majority of the participants expressed their willingness and readiness to learn English in that group learning context. One of the participants said that;

"*What benefits me a lot in group learning is the interaction that involves me in communicating in English with other groupmates. For me, the interaction with group mates is something like the experience of getting along with people in social life and also a kind of social demands for practicing English as a communication tool*" (Participant No. 1).

In a similar way, another participant explained that;

"*The impact of group work on my daily English learning is generally positive. In group learning there exist different approaches to solve a problem as different groupmates may present their understanding of the questions from different perspectives. Similarly, different groupmates have different personalities. Gradually, I've learned how to negotiate and get along well with other members when the divergence appears*" (Participant No. 5).

One of the participants also added that;

"*About the opinion on the group learning, I will mention both the positive and negative sides. For the positive side, in group learning I was always told by my English teachers how to learn from others' strengths to offset my weaknesses. Group discussion activities provide me with a pool of other members' ideas, which helps me enrich my vision on the problem. The negative side is that some group members with relatively low English ability may influence the performance of the whole group, which is likely to slow down the process of group work. Anyway, since we are in the same group, we trust each other, communicate in time if there are problems and maintain strong learning drive*" (Participant No. 9).

4.1.2. Group Learning and EFL Learners' Cooperation

The participants described their perceptions about group learning with reference to individual learning. In group learning, the EFL learners usually work cooperatively or collaboratively in a group. As for individual learning, EFL learners are

generally encouraged to work separately on individual tasks. The participants expressed their views in support of group learning. They took group learning as chances to cooperate or collaborate with other learners while learning English. One of the participants remarked that;

"*The main difference between group learning and individual learning is that group learning has more learners working together, which encourages me to cooperate with other group members complete English learning tasks. In this way, that is, working together and helping each other, my group always perform well the learning tasks assigned by our English teachers*" (Participant No. 3).

Although Participant No. 6 held the view that group learning and individual learning had their own advantages and disadvantages, she reported that;

"*In individual learning, an English learner is able to have more room for thinking and have the chance to solve a problem independently. In this case, I prefer to analyze the problems from my own perspective. But when it comes to group learning, the situation is different. I would like to listen to opinions of other group members first and form my own in relation to other members' views. We have to do this in English. So, the major difference is that group learning provides learners with more opportunities to collaborate with others in English than that in individual learning*" (Participant No. 6).

Participant No. 7, who identified himself as a passive EFL learner, explained his opinion about group learning and individual learning as follows;

"*In individual learning, as an EFL learner, I have the freedom to decide the scope of solving the problems when performing the learning tasks required by English teachers. When I'm ready and willing to engage myself in English learning, I would like to go deep into the problem-solving. Otherwise, I would skip the task. However, in group learning, the group work requires every group member's investment. For example, group discussion provides me with various aspects of opinions from different group members and I'm often pushed to contribute my ideas to analyzing and solving the problems. It's good for passive learners like me, but it sometimes results in the psychological dependence on other group members' opinions*" (Participant No. 7).

4.1.3. Group Learning and EFL Learners' Critical Thinking Skills

In group learning, group members share their own views with others and think critically about others' views. Some of the participants took group learning as a context in which they had the chance to develop and strengthen their critical think skills. They perceived to be more influenced in group learning in term of their critical thinking skills. For example,

"*I think the conflicts and the divergence of opinions always exist in group interaction. I notice that the process of interaction in our groups often involves solving the divergence in discussion and then we come to an agreement finally. For me, group discussion becomes a beneficial tool to help my English studies. I learn from others about how they think in English. I notice the gaps between what I think and what my groupmates think. I try to bridge the gaps. It really*

quickens the process of problem-solving in our learning group" (Participant No. 4).

The above participant voiced that working in groups positively influenced his ways of thinking in English. In the similar vein, another participant expressed her views that;

"*In group learning, I think that if each member of a learning group shares a different opinion on the problem, the divergence of opinions will slow down the problem-solving process. In dealing with the divergence of other group members' opinions, I prefer to listen to their opinions first to weigh up their relative merits. Then, I turn to the whole group to discuss with them thoroughly to help solve the problem*" (Participant No. 8).

Considering the influence of group learning on EFL learners' ways of thinking critically, Participant No. 9 added that;

"*The divergence of opinions is very common in group learning. The divergence occurring in the process of group learning results from the differences of group members' personalities. It has become a barrier in the problem-solving process of my group. I think we must find ways to overcome this barrier, otherwise there will be a low efficiency in our group learning task performance. To overcome this barrier, I'm very likely to listen to others' opinions first and summarize their ideas, and then express my own or pool the best ways of solution for the whole group to discuss*" (Participant No. 9).

Unlike the former two interviewees, Participant No. 7 considers himself as a less confident EFL learner in group learning. He reported that;

"*Communicating and thinking in English plays a vital part in group learning. As for me, I like to listen to other's opinions in group learning. My group members are better at thinking and expressing opinions. When I think in English, I'm always 'half a beat' slower than others. I prefer to listen to my groupmates to learn how they express their views in English from different angles*" (Participant No. 7).

4.1.4. Group Learning and EFL Learners' Concentration

EFL learners' concentration in group learning is the final theme that has been identified from the interview data. The participants reported their experience of struggling to stay concentrated and focused in group learning. Some indicated that they were prone to get distracted in group learning and didn't concentrate the way they did in individual learning. The following are excerpts of how they perceived themselves in terms of concentration in group learning and how they struggled to get concentrated.

"*I think I have a higher level of English learning efficiency when I'm in the group learning environment. As for me, group learning creates an atmosphere for study which helps to increase my concentration on learning. I like group learning atmosphere because it's easy for me to be distracted by other things or external factors when learning alone. In group learning, when I'm not on the right track, I will get reminded*" (Participant No. 2).

But Participant No.3 had different views on group learning, taking it as a circumstance beneficial to English learners' concentration on learning. She is an excellent learner of English and always provides support to her peers. She stated that;

"*From my experience of group learning, I find that I was always interfered by my group members' questions or the helps they sought while I was burying myself in thinking. That is, in group learning, I become a kind of resource provider, which makes me busy in helping my group mates. Though I cannot concentrate much on my English learning, I like to provide helps to my group members and work together with them to perform the learning tasks*" (Participant No. 3).

When talking about concentration in group learning, Participant No. 8 made a comment on her experience from a distinctive perspective as follows;

"*Sometimes in group learning I became distracted by the chatting between group members. Group members are usually familiar with each other. They know each other well and sometimes they are likely to start a topic which is not related to the group learning goals. In that case, the progress of group performance slows down. However, when it happens, some of us, including me, will draw our attention back to the focus of the group work. This becomes a challenge for us to stay concentrated, sometimes*" (Participant No. 8).

4.2. Discussion

Drawing upon an interview with nine university EFL learners in China, this study explored the relationship between group learning and university EFL learner identity construction. The processes through which the university EFL learners reach agreements regarding "who is who" in their group relationship is revealed by the analysis of the interview data. It is a process of identity negotiation. The university EFL learners' identity negotiation in group learning provides an interpersonal "glue" that holds group member relationships together to achieve task goals. Overall, the identity construction of university EFL learners in a group learning context in China is in a state of flux, negotiating around the following four categories.

First, group learning affects the identification of university EFL learners as motivated learners. Their identity as motivated learner is mediated by their individual agency, which finally influences their learner identity formation as mentioned by Teng (2019). In the case of Participant No. 1, she was driven to communicate with other group members in English. This identity made her feel like using English in that real life social context. Participant No. 5 perceived to become a more motivated learner in group learning because of the necessity to negotiate with other group members to deal with the divergence within the group. Participant No. 9 was driven to learn by the influence of his groupmates in both learning methods and team spirits. These three examples imply that "emotional intelligence" (Teng, 2019: p. 55) assisted them to monitor their feelings and emotions in group learning context.

Second, university EFL learners tend to identify themselves as co-operators or collaborators in group learning. According to Teng (2019), the cognitive awareness or ideology of university EFL learners impacted the formation of their identity as co-operator or collaborator. Learner identity selection is influenced by the learner's belief system, which is imposed upon the group learning reality. This is why the university EFL learners investigated took group learning as chances to cooperate or collaborate with other learners while learning English. In the case of Participant No.3, she was encouraged to work cooperatively with her groupmates to achieve group learning goals. The experience of Participant No. 6 shows that group learning has made her more aware of the ways to collaborate with groupmates. Participant No. 7, claiming himself to be a passive EFL learner, was willing to make his contributions to group work as demanded. These three excerpts indicated that in group learning context the belief of the university EFL learners navigates the construction of their learner identity as cooperators.

Third, in group learning, university EFL learners perceive themselves as learners better at critical thinking. This is grounded on the proposal by Swann Jr. and Ely (1984) that a disagreement or confrontation may appear when the expectancies of perceivers clash with the self-views of targets. According to this psychological view, the negotiation process of university EFL learners' identity as learners better at critical thinking represents the means through which these conflicting tendencies are reconciled. Although different group members have different personalities and different thinking styles, all the participants agree that their groups will benefit when there is congruence among group members. They are aware of the importance of critical thinking skills in handling the discrepancies between their self-views and the expectancies of others. For example, Participant No. 4 tried to bridge the gaps he noticed between what he and his groupmates thought. Participant No. 8 preferred to weigh up the merits and demerits of her groupmates' opinions to tackle the divergence of opinions in her group. Similarly, Participant No. 9 often pooled the best ways of problem solution for the whole group to discuss by summarizing his group members' opinions.

Forth, university EFL learners describe themselves as learners struggling to keep concentrated and focused due to the disadvantages of group learning. University EFL learners' sense of agency also mediates the development of their identity as concentrated learners. "Good learners were more willing to exercise human agency to negotiate their entry into the social networks, so they can practice and improve their competence in the target language" (Teng, 2019: p. 54). In group learning, each member has to work hard to achieve the group objectives and it often takes a long time for them to reach an agreement or consensus. In this process, some potential distractions may result from the pressure put on the group members when they are engaged in a task or activity where they have to work together. Some of them are thus distracted by others and don't concentrate the way they do as usual. Most of the participants investigated reported to have struggled to get focused. Participants No. 2 and No. 3 held a positive attitude towards the influence of group learning on concentration in learning, indicating

that they are active learners of English. Participant No. 8, she explained how she and her groupmates took measures to stay concentrated once they missed the points during their group work. These three excerpts also collaborate with the views by Teng and Bui (2020) that learners with a strong motive and desire will become competent language learners and occupy a centripetal position in their communities.

5. Conclusion

The present study reports on the perceptions of nine university EFL learners in the context of group learning to explore the relationship between group learning and university EFL learner identity construction, and to gauge how EFL learners beliefs, attitudes, motivations, thinking ways, and efforts in learning change with reference to characteristics of that specific context of learning. The study used an interview protocol composed of questions informed by the research findings of the study by Abulhassan and Hamid (2021). Four themes of EFL learners' perception concerning group learning were initially categorized. The analysis depicted that the participants held positive views that group learning increased their motivation for EFL learning, their awareness of getting concentrated, their demands for group cooperation, and their respect for different opinions and skills for critical thinking.

In view of the positive impacts of group learning as perceived by university EFL learners, the study suggests that group learning employed in EFL teaching at universities has the practical value of facilitating EFL learners to construct the identity as learners with higher learning motivation, better at critical thinking skills, more skilled at group cooperation or collaboration, and more aware of the importance to get focused in learning.

In terms of pedagogical implications, the results of the present study shed light on the promotion of group learning for higher education faculty, which could aid in understanding the process of university EFL students' learner identity construction. For university EFL teachers, they need to take surveys on the personalities and learning styles of the students in their class before grouping, planning in advance the homogeneity or heterogeneity of grouping according to task requirements so as to maximize the positive impacts of group learning. For classroom teaching, EFL teachers need to provide more group activities that enable EFL learners to discover the implied meaning of the content required for learning and to practice skills in decision making, values clarification, critical thinking, negotiation, conflict resolution, etc., to develop various interpersonal, intrapersonal, presentational and communicational skills. For classroom engagement, EFL teachers need to design the learning tasks aiming for group members to work on simultaneously and cooperatively, with a particular purpose for introvert or passive learners to have opportunities to speak and be heard, so as to overcome the anonymity and passivity associated with the class of large size.

However, in this study, two limitations need to be avoided in future research. First, we depended on the university EFL learners' self-perceptions of the rela-

tionship between group learning and their learner identity construction without directly observing their behaviors and performance in a group learning context. Second, the small number of university EFL learners who participated in the interview does limit the generalization of the research results to other EFL learners at universities.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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