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Incorporating Cooperative Project-Based Learning in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language: Teachers' Perspectives

Abderrazak Zaafour * and María Sagrario Salaberri-Ramiro

Department of English Studies, University of Almeria, 04120 Almeria, Spain; sagrario@ual.es
* Correspondence: zaafourabderrazak@gmail.com

Abstract: Cooperative Project-Based Learning (CPBL) is an instructional approach that enhances students' motivation to learn cooperatively by investigating a range of tasks related to an authentic project. This study explores the impact of teachers' age on CPBL implementation when teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and identifies teachers' perceptions, views, and attitudes regarding this methodology. This research is exploratory in scope, quantitative in design, and correlational-factorial in nature. The quantitative method applied provides the means to determine the correlation between variables and how the implementation of CPBL is determined. To fulfil the aims of this research, questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 84 EFL teachers from primary and secondary schools. The factorial analysis revealed that the age of teachers had a significant impact on CPBL implementation ($p < 0.001$). Accordingly, younger age groups of 21–30 and 31–40 showed a greater predisposition for the implementation of CPBL than the 41–50 range. Additionally, the results revealed that 36.9% of teachers implement the methodology. Moreover, 79.76% of all responses indicated positive attitudes towards this approach. The findings point to important implications for course designers and for teachers.

Keywords: cooperative learning; project-based learning; innovative education; motivation; English as a foreign language (EFL)

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1. Introduction

It is assumed that the main objective of any educational system in our modern world is to provide students with opportunities to contribute in ways that demonstrate their diverse talents and creativity [1]. In facing and adapting to the ever-changing challenges and complexities of today's information age, students should be equipped with a broad range of abilities, such as communication, critical thinking, and collaborative skills [2]. The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic famously closed schools for extended periods and, during these lockdowns, students had their lessons remotely. Hence, preparing teachers and students for such events by offering the most appropriate methods and techniques and then applying them to improve the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can bear great results [3].

Therefore, Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Cooperative Learning (CL) are regarded to be among the best methods of empowering students with the most needed skills in the twenty-first century, especially if these two approaches are combined so that one reinforces the other, with one major aim: to involve students in cooperative work when incorporating their projects. The benefits of cooperative projects in English teaching and learning are enormous, particularly in enhancing students' oral skills. A group project also allows students to talk and reflect on educational activities and benefit from immediate feedback from their peers and teachers [3]. PBL has its origins in the mid-1960s at McMaster University Medical School in Hamilton, Canada [4]. PBL refers to the process of learning that focuses on carrying out a task that integrates different resources, people, and materials

through which students practise an array of skills and language systems [5]. According to Fried-Booth [6], PBL is a methodology that is commonly used in multiple levels and contexts to advance students' language learning skills by addressing issues or topics rather than language elements to create an end-product. Such products can be public speaking events, written reports, a handbook or file, technology-based presentations, etc. [7].

Indeed, PBL is a constructive teaching strategy that can influence students' motivation to learn English by sharing knowledge with others while working cooperatively on projects. Students may be better equipped to foresee imminent real-world problems and follow new methods in resolving problematic situations [8]. CL emerged in the 1970s from the American Society, and it was developed into a practical teaching theory in the 1980s. In fact, the available literature provides numerous definitions of CL. Johnson et al. [9] described CL as an instructional approach involving students working in teams to accomplish common goals, assignments, and projects set up with specific criteria to be met. Additionally, Neo et al. [10] explain that CL provides a favourable environment for students' interaction, participation, and learning. Bas [11] (p. 2) also views CL as "an instructional method centred on the learner". Ning and Hornby [12] note that CL may solve the problem of eroding the motivation of EFL students.

Although there are studies that discuss CL and PBL, research on the methodology that integrates them is very scarce, especially when it pertains to the teaching of EFL. Hence, this study supports the combination of Project-Based-Learning (PBL) and Cooperative Learning (CL) to form "Cooperative Project-Based Learning", under the acronym "CPBL". CPBL can be described as a teaching approach that focuses on involving students in participating and accomplishing their projects in a cooperative manner.

After a deep review of previous research studies on the topic of this investigation, it was found that there is a lack of studies regarding the impact of teachers' age, gender, and stage of teaching on the implementation of the CPBL methodology. Specifically, there is a lack in the context of teaching English to non-native speakers, as in the case of the Spanish educational system, where this investigation took place. In Spain, according to the recent legal reference document 8/2013 [13], the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE) structured the education system at a national level according to the following pattern: (1) early childhood education from birth to 6 years; (2) compulsory primary education between 6 and 12 years; (3) compulsory secondary education until the age of 16, including baccalaureate and professional education; and (4) university studies [14].

By investigating the impact of the referred variables on the methodology, many related issues could be identified. For example, whether there are significant gender differences in the adoption of CPBL among teachers in primary and secondary schools, or whether some age group implements CPBL more than others, what motivates them, and so forth. Having identified which variables most affect CPBL implementation, alternative strategies can be developed to minimise the challenges and motivate teachers to incorporate this approach into their EFL classrooms and guide their students toward a bright academic future. Thus, the objectives of this research are to answer the following questions:

1. Do teachers' age, gender, and stage of teaching (primary and secondary) have an impact on CPBL implementation in EFL classrooms?
2. How do teachers perceive CPBL implementation and the challenges as well as the outcomes it presents in the teaching and learning of EFL?

2. Literature Review

The Importance of CPBL in the Teaching and Learning of EFL

As the education sector adapts to the globalised world, studies on CPBL have shown their effectiveness in this transition process. Komljenovic [15] suggests that this approach can increase the academic achievement of EFL students if the learning process is made more enjoyable and meaningful. Additionally, CPBL has been regarded as one of the most considered and sought-after learning methodologies that could be used in the teaching of

EFL [16], since this methodology can provide students with a richer variety of learning experiences when compared to other more traditional approaches [17].

According to Leask, educational institutions should teach students how to "live and work in a complex, globalised world" as cited in [18] (p. 2). However, keeping students motivated and engaged can be one of the biggest challenges facing EFL teachers, particularly those who have limited opportunities to practice their language skills outside of the classroom as they live in countries where the first language is not English (e.g., Spain, Morocco, and Latin American countries) [19]. Teachers' motivation and determination are thus critical in facing these challenges, as applying innovative methods can then help students explore their areas of interest within the curricular framework, and critical in promoting deep learning and encouraging teachers' autonomy in the use of English. One such example is mobile devices in the flipped classroom model, in which students can access course content every time and everywhere. This, in turn, can augment their engagement in project tasks to both facilitate their learning of English and guide them in their use of technology to meet their own needs, thus empowering them as independent learners [20].

The success of any CPBL initiative and implementation, however, lies in the teacher's preparedness to guide their students throughout the entire process, which means that teachers should have a clear understanding of this approach components and the necessary support to carry it out, because this approach, like others, has potential challenges ranging from insufficient time and resources, an inflexible school schedule, a rigid school curriculum, and classroom management. Aldabbus [21] states that without additional technical and logistical support to introduce and carry out a project, teachers will surely face a broad range of challenges that could discourage them from wanting to implement the methodology again. Faced with such difficulties, Aldabbus found in his study that only seven out of twenty-four preservice teachers were able to implement the approach during their teaching practice time.

Providing the necessary support and motivation could have a substantial impact on the teachers' ability to implement a cooperative project to its completion. Teachers could, for example, be better equipped to manage these challenges so that they can then focus on motivating their students to work cooperatively and guiding them to take personal responsibility to complete their projects in the best way possible [22]. The more motivated and prepared teachers are in advance, the more likely they will be able to face the obstacles and inspire their students' creativity at all stages of project completion.

Critical to this approach process is for students to freely choose, plan, and manage their projects. In having the autonomy to pick a topic that interests them, students are then required to seek out pertinent information relevant to this topic, compare and analyse their findings, prepare a summary, and then present their final product to their classmates or in a public forum [23]. By sharing what they have learnt, students reinforce what they already know while also learning what they do not know. Because the project process is structured around an open-ended question initiated by the students, this will trigger their curiosity, captivate their attention, and keep them focused on its completion [24].

Bell [25], for example, points to students in the EFL classroom being able to develop and work through their projects, but teachers would also be expected to monitor their projects accordingly. Within this learning framework and in connection to related problem-solving activities, students are thus expected to become fluent communicators, critical thinkers, and responsible for their learning [21,22].

To date, research has not yet had a substantial influence on the actual practice of CPBL EFL classrooms for a variety of reasons. First, because this approach is relatively new to language teaching and learning, educators who are willing to implement it may not have been exposed to its theory and practice in any substantial way. Then, even if professional development is offered to preservice teachers, there are few accepted frameworks or theories related to these methodologies upon which quality training can be based. Because of this, teachers of EFL might simply dismiss CPBL as impractical when they compare it to the more immediate problems encountered every day [26]. Even so, teachers

could be motivated to develop projects individually or in collaboration with colleagues at schools [27]. Schneider et al. [28] have alternatively demonstrated that applying CPBL can assist students in improving their collaborative abilities.

At present, attempts have been made to adopt the project-based methodology in the EFL classroom to engage students toward meaningful, deeper, and motivational learning experiences and to provide them with cognitive knowledge and professional skills [29]. In this manner, this study suggests that CPBL can be a very rich tool for motivating students by giving them the possibility to be involved in language learning in different ways that could, in turn, leave them feeling that they are the real protagonists of their learning, considering that CPBL learning environments promote the development of individual and group skills through interaction and communication among students, who then begin to take responsibility for their learning.

Group work requires greater effort on the part of students to remain focused on the tasks that they need to complete, which can improve the quality of their efforts [19]. In short, if students can be motivated to explore, investigate, and solve their tasks cooperatively, this may fuel their appetite for further problem-solving and knowledge. As a teaching and learning methodology, CPBL could thus be one of the best means of arming students with much-needed skills and adaptation capacities. Hence, they can keep up with their learning while adapting to unforeseen events, as in the case of the recent global COVID pandemic.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Design

In this research, a quantitative method has been applied to describe data related to the teachers' perceptions regarding CPBL and its use in the teaching and learning of EFL as well as to measure variables, analyse them, and report relationships among them through numerical data. Additionally, it enables the conduction of research scales and compares groups (e.g., by age or gender) to figure out similarities or differences. This, in turn, led to a deeper understanding of the research problem and the relationships among the different factors influencing its usage, including the number of teachers implementing this methodology, why others might be hesitant in applying it, and their perceptions of their students' English language learning outcomes. In testing these results, an exploratory factorial analysis was carried out based on a cross-section of public schools. Descriptive values were applied based on the study's questions and were neither manipulated nor categorised as experimental. Variables were analysed to determine if correlative connections exist and, if so, how they might have influenced each other.

3.2. Participants and Context

This research has taken place in 22 primary and secondary public schools located in the province of Almeria in southern Spain. Seven of these schools are in the city centre; the other fifteen are in the outskirts, a semi-rural area. The selection of the schools was based on their accessibility and geographical closeness for allowing direct contact with teachers when distributing the questionnaires. Participants included 84 teachers, of whom 32 work in Almeria city centre, while the other 52 attend other schools in the outskirts. The teachers were selected at random to guarantee a representative sample for finite populations [30]. All of them were teachers of EFL and 36.9% were CPBL practitioners, capable of providing in-depth feedback on their understanding of CPBL operationally. As this reflected their own field experiences, their feedback provided additional insight into the data, in particular when describing and summarising its main characteristics.

Table 1 provides demographic information concerning the teachers-participants.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample according to their teaching stage, age, and gender.

Inter-Subject Factors			
	Value Label	***N***	**(%)**
Stage of teaching	Primary	58	69.05%
	Secondary	26	30.95%
Age	21–30 years	23	27.38%
	31–40 years	37	44.05%
	41–50 years	24	28.57%
Gender	Women	47	55.95%
	Man	37	44.05%
	Others	-	-

3.3. Instrument for Data Gathering

A questionnaire with 16 items was designed to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem and to register teachers' responses, which were measured using a Likert-type scale to easily operationalise teachers' perceptions. This tool has been recommended by De Winter and Dadou [31] because of its potential to both increase the quality of the survey and the response rate due to the ease and clarity of its scale descriptors. The first block of the questionnaire contained four items for gathering general demographic variables, including age, gender, stage of teaching, and overall experience in teaching. The second block contained 12 items: 4 to assess the level and type of difficulties teachers and students encountered when implementing CPBL; 4 to assess dimensions related to teachers' experience in implementing CPBL, as well as their level of satisfaction with the methodology and its outcomes, and whether or not they would recommend it to others; and the final 4, for the perceived impact on their students' motivation, including how their English language and research skills were impacted.

3.4. Research Procedures and Analysis

Before the process of data collection was initiated, ethical issues were taken into careful consideration. Prior to conducting the research, permission was obtained from school headmasters to gain direct access to these educational institutions and contact the teachers directly. Participants read and accepted the invitation to participate that the questionnaire included. Additionally, they were informed that their responses to the questionnaires would remain confidential. The collected data were then organised in an Excel spreadsheet and processed using descriptive statistics. Tables were used to both present the data and interpret the main findings.

The SPSS statistical package (v27.0) was applied to test the validity and reliability of this questionnaire to ensure that its overall trustworthiness was satisfactory (Cronbach's alpha = 0.803). The internal consistency also provided a good trustworthiness coefficient based on standardised items: alpha = 0.787. Furthermore, SPSS was employed to perform the following analysis:

1. The univariate (descriptive), to provide an overview of the approved sample and to also reduce and summarise the main features of the data set;
2. The multivariate, to determine how many and what kind of components are required to sum up the points observed in major variables [32]; an exploratory (data or factorial) analysis is applied to extract the major variables;
3. The variation of factor structure, to ensure optimum testing and the significance of the extracted factors or components; in this case, Bartlett's test and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy Description was applied [33]. 4. For trustworthiness, the Cronbach's Alpha test was applied. Moreover, for comparison of averages, an Anova statistic was used to measure and assess the differences in significant averages between dependent and independent variables. The results give

rise to whether the implementation of CPBL would be influenced by variables such as gender, age, the stage of teaching (primary, secondary), and so forth.

The applied test thus assessed if there would be any significant differences in the data based on these variables. A factorial analysis was first conducted to extract the most credible data and to group the most correlated variables, and then the Varimax normalisation rotation method with Kaiser was applied to formulate the resulting factorial matrix. Indeed, the data analysis emphasised three factors, which were summarised in the variation of 53.220%. The combined weight of these three factors was above 0.50.

4. Results and Discussion

Overall, the results highlight that, out of 84 teachers, 31 (36.9%) were implementing CPBL in their EFL classrooms. On the other hand, 53 teachers, representing 63.1%, said that they had never used it before. Remarkably, 79.76% of all respondents indicated a positive appreciation for the methodology as a powerful constructional tool.

Concerning the information on teachers' overall experience in teaching service as well as their experience regarding the implementation of CPBL methodology in their (EFL) classrooms, Table 2 introduces a brief outline of these findings.

Table 2. Teachers' overall experience in teaching and in implementing CPBL.

The Overall Time of Teaching Service (Item 4)				
			N	**(%)**
	<10 years		47	55.95%
	11–20 years		30	35.71%
	>21 years		7	8.34%
Teachers' experience with the implementation of CPBL (item 6)				
Never	Sometimes	<1 year	2–3 years	>3 years
53 (63.09%)	9 (10.71%)	10 (11.90%)	8 (9.52%)	4 (4.76%)

According to this study, most teachers have less than 10 years of experience in language teaching, followed by those with experience in teaching between 11 and 20 years. Teachers with more than 21 years of experience constituted the smallest proportion of the sample. Perhaps this indicates that the age group of young teachers in Spain represents the largest number. According to Sercu et al. [34], the average teacher age in Spain is 36.69. Furthermore, López et al. [35] find in their study that teachers in the age range of 29–49 represent 42% of the total. On the other hand, the age group 40–59 represents only 23% of the whole sample of 619 teachers (Mean = 39.86, SD = 10.49).

Relative to the factorial matrix and factorial weights reached for the dimensions in the implementation of CPBL, Table 3 displays the results obtained.

The sample adequacy analysis and the sphericity test both demonstrated the reliability of the factorial structure tested: (a) the correlation matrix reveals influencing factors of E.037, which produces values close to 0; (b) the Chi-square value (see Table 4) has a $p < 0.001$ significance; (c) the same worthiness discloses punctuation, indicating that the factorial structure is sufficiently accurate; (d) the sphericity analysis indicated the appropriateness of the applicability of the research variables (574.094; gl: 78; $p < 0.001$).

After the former, the conclusions drawn from the Anova analysis help to determine the presence or absence of mean differences. When the factors formed by the analysed variables are contrasted, the occurrence of statistically significant differences can be confirmed (IC 98.94).

Based on the results of this study, there is a significant difference regarding the independent variable "age" and its influence on CPBL implementation within EFL classrooms. Table 5 illustrates these differences.

Table 3. Matrix and factorial weights based on the use of CPBL.

Factors	Items	α
1. Teachers' experience with and perceptions of CPBL and students' outcomes	5. Implementation of the CPBL. Scale: Yes (0); No (1); Sometimes (2)	0.759
	11. CPBL and students' motivation. Scale: Yes (0); No (1); Sometimes (2)	0.779
	12. Students' use of English. Scale: Strongly disagree (0); Disagree (1); Neutral (2); Agree (3); Strongly agree (4)	0.777
	13. Students' research skills. Scale: Strongly disagree (0); Disagree (1); Neutral (2); Agree (3); Strongly agree (4)	0.777
	14. Teachers recommend CPBL to others. Scale: Yes (0); No (1)	0.789
2. Difficulties faced by the teachers and their overall satisfaction with CPBL's results	6. Duration of CPBL implementation. Scale: Never (0); Sometimes (1); Less than a year (2); Between 2 and 3 years (3); Over 3 years (4)	0.788
	8. Teachers' satisfaction with CPBL results. Scale: Very dissatisfied (0); Slightly satisfied (1); Satisfied (2); Quite satisfied (3); Highly satisfied (4); No idea (5)	0.776
	9. Teachers' level of difficulty with the implementation of CPBL. Scale: Very difficult (0); Difficult (1); Neutral (2); Easy (3); Very easy (4); No idea (5)	0.768
3. Students' difficulties and creativity	7. Difficulties encountered by students. Scale: Group dynamics (0); Research skills (1); Lack of engagement (2)	0.809
	15. Students' creativity. Scale: Always (0); Sometimes (1); Never (2)	0.809

Note. Extraction method: maximum plausibility. Rotation method: Varimax normalisation with Kaiser.

Table 4. Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett measure of sampling adequacy description.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
KMO Measure of Sampling		**0.697**
0Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. Chi-square	574.094
	gl	78
	Sig.	$p < 0.001$

As shown in Table 5, factor 1 has significant differences in five items that corroborate it and hence demonstrate a high correlation among the group of variables. As such, item 5 was designed to measure the dependent variable "implementation" of CPBL by teachers and consequently identify which age group most often implements it.

In this respect, the analysis confirmed that the responses of the youngest teachers (21–30 years) were the closest to value 0 (0.098 ± 0.115) (Table 5), followed by the range age 31–40 years (0.482 ± 0.102), and last (41–50 range), whose value was 1.028 ± 0.127. This means that young teachers are those who are most inspired and motivated to implement this methodology. These findings align with those found by Aksela and Haatainen [36], who discussed the views of active teachers on the advantages as well as the challenges of PBL and how these perceptions could promote its implementation and enhance teaching practice.

Moreover, the items related to students' motivation, use of English, and research skills were 11, 12, and 13, respectively. According to the analysis, it was highlighted that the youngest teachers (21–30) reached the highest score (Table 5) since they strongly agreed with items 12 and 13, followed by the age group of 31–40, and then the 41-plus range. This

finding was logical since the results demonstrated that younger teachers implemented CPBL more frequently when compared with older educators.

Table 5. Average punctuation (M), typical deviations, and Anova of average differences of the factorial structure of CPBL implementation based on teachers' age.

	Items	21–30 Years	31–40 Years	41–50 Years	F	gl	Sig. *
		Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD	Mean ± SD			
Factor 1	5	0.098 ± 0.115	0.482 ± 0.102	1.028 ± 0.127	17.924	2	0.000
	11	$2.220 \times 10^{-16} \pm 0.101$	$-4.302 \times 10 \pm 0.090$	1.278 ± 0.121	62.300	2	0.000
	12	3.777 ± 0.109	3.016 ± 0.097	2.222 ± 0.121	49.259	2	0.000
	13	3.631 ± 0.110	2.977 ± 0.097	1.694 ± 0.121	78.011	2	0.000
	14	0.119 ± 0.050	0.038 ± 0.045	1.000 ± 0.056	129.477	2	0.000
Factor 2	6	1.607 ± 0.232	0.764 ± 0.205	1.388 ± 0.257	12.451	2	0.000
	8	0.833 ± 0.215	3.714 ± 0.215	4.147 ± 0.191	8.381	2	0.001
	9	2.961 ± 0.250	3.933 ± 0.222	5.000 ± 0.277	16.170	2	0.000
Factor 3	7	0.637 ± 0.159	0.692 ± 0.141	0.833 ± 0.176	0.458	2	0.634
	15	0.333 ± 0.109	0.541 ± 0.096	0.278 ± 0.120	2.463	2	0.092

* Bonferroni: The difference of averages is significant at level $p < 0.05$ (bilateral).

CPBL requires more time to design and implement than traditional ways of teaching. Furthermore, the approach stipulates more ICTs' inclusion in almost all stages of projects approved for English language teaching and learning. In this regard, Paul [37] found that the age of the teacher negatively affected learning technology integration, with younger teachers more likely to use ICTs than older teachers. Thus, it is commonly believed that as teachers' age and designation advance, their enthusiasm for teaching diminishes, as they become bored after teaching the same content for years and years along with the increased responsibilities [38]. A study by López et al. [35] concluded that young teachers obtained the highest scores in digital competence and the creation of digital content. However, it should also be recognised that there are teachers who, as they grow older, tend to gain more experience, become more innovative, and care about what they do.

When investigating which age group recommended CPBL more to other teachers (item 14), it was found that teachers who fall under the group age 31–40 are those who recommended it more, with an average of 0.038 ± 0.045, followed by the youngest teachers, aged 21–30, 0.119 ± 0.050, and then teachers aged 41 years or more, with an average of 1.000 ± 0.056. This result is highly significant because, looking at the result of item 8, one can see the same teachers' age group 31–40 was the most satisfied with the methodology. Hence, it makes sense that the findings have indicated that they are the most likely to recommend CPBL, especially since the implementation produced satisfactory results for this age group. Another reason why this result is important is that this age group possesses a unique combination of qualities: strength as a youngster and experience as a professional.

Regarding teachers' implementation of CPBL in the teaching of EFL and their perceptions of CPBL on students' outcomes (factor 1), two significant differences were found: first, young teachers were more willing to implement CPBL in their classroom and showed more positive attitudes towards it. Second, even though teachers over the age of 41 did not show high interest in the implementation of CPBL, their responses generally reflected that they had positively valued the methodology. Undeniably, there is considerable enthusiasm on the part of younger teachers for implementing CPBL, which is associated with motivation and rigorous preservice or in-service training in the most active paradigms for teaching and learning EFL.

On the other hand, data from Table 5 proves that the second factor has an average difference in three items that confirm it. For instance, when it comes to analysing (item 6), through which the study attempts to measure the variable "duration" of CPBL implementation by teachers in their EFL classroom, the results show that teachers who implement CPBL

more frequently in their classroom are those aged between 21–30. As a piece of evidence, the comparative analysis revealed the following average punctuation of 1.607 ± 0.232.

It must be emphasised that the highest value in Table 5 for item 6 refers to teachers who have had more experience implementing this approach from 2 to 3 years. By contrast, the lowest value refers to those who have no experience at all or those who are recent implementors, which means that either they rarely implement it, or have an overall experience of less than 1 year.

Item 8 of the questionnaire pertains to those who implemented CPBL to test the dependent variable, teachers' "satisfaction" with CPBL's implementation results. Concerning this item, Table 5 shows that a significant difference was discovered, which demonstrated that teachers aged between 31–40 years were more satisfied with the results since this group age attained a score of 3.714 ± 0.215, which is close to the value 4 ('highly satisfied'), followed by the youngest teachers with the average punctuation of 0.833 ± 0.215. On the other hand, older teachers selected the value 6, which means 'no idea' since many of them did not implement the approach. Keeping in mind that teachers who are under the age bracket of 31–40 are more satisfied with the results of CPBL than the youngest, this sustains that experience accompanied by motivation are important factors in making the implementation of CPBL successful.

On the other hand, the result obtained from item 9, related to the variable "level of difficulty in implementing CPBL", was carried out based on teachers' age. For teachers aged 41–50 years, the majority selected the value 6, mentioning the scale 'No opinion.' Therefore, the average punctuation of 5.000 ± 0.277 was the nearest to the scale value 6, which indeed does not reflect the level of difficulty faced by this group because they represent the least number of CPBL implementors. On the other hand, teachers whose age is between 31–40 chose value 4, meaning "very easy", which reinforces the previous discussion about this group, which is characterised by its young age, vitality, and activity. On the contrary, the first group 21–30 selected the value 3, meaning "easy", which could mean that they need more motivation or professional experience to strengthen their eagerness. This accounts for why teachers who are flexible and willing to adapt to new circumstances of the CPBL approach in their classrooms also need ongoing guidance on how to put it into practice [39].

Additionally, the results achieved from item 7 (factor 3) sought to search for teachers' points of view regarding the type of challenge or difficulty students may encounter when working cooperatively on a project. In this regard, the youngest teachers demonstrated more concern regarding "group dynamics difficulty"; meanwhile, the younger teachers (31–40) selected "research skills difficulty". However, the answers of the third age group signalled the "lack of engagement" difficulty. When the youngest teachers mention "group dynamics" as a major challenge faced by their students, it can suggest that those teachers lack some essential skills. These skills could be essential in helping students build certain capacities that make them able to be involved successfully within their groups, for instance, tolerating or solving differences, and building agreements that respect the voices of the other members of the group [40].

Students' research skills' difficulty, which was pointed out by the teachers' age group (31–40), could be a signal of students' necessity for tutorial support to enhance their research skills and overcome this difficulty; meanwhile, the last difficulty outlined by the older group of teachers was "lack of engagement". This could probably indicate the existence of a misunderstanding of the topic being investigated by the students, or maybe they lack intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. These two elements, along with others, can cause a feeling of unenthusiastic and dissatisfaction, which can have a negative impact on students' engagement in their teamwork. Indeed, this can be resolved if discovered early enough by the teacher.

Item 15 sought to analyse how teachers perceived the use of active methodologies in the EFL classroom and if they developed creativity in students. In this regard, teachers between the ages of 41–50 years or more were the most convinced that using different active methodologies in the EFL classes improves students' creativity and motivates them to be-

come more participative. The average punctuation proved their contentment 0.278 ± 0.120, followed by the youngest 21–30, then the younger 31–40. Certainly, this result reflected that the third group age of teachers were those with long experience in teaching and, consequently, they were the professionals who had tried multiple methodologies throughout their long journey of teaching. Therefore, they took it for granted that differentiating active methodologies could help their students develop their creativity and achieve better results in their learning of EFL.

It is important to note that the results of the multivariate statistical analysis did not highlight any significant differences concerning the independent variable stage of teaching (primary or secondary) and its impact on the implementation of CPBL. The following result was achieved: F = 635 ^{b}, gl = 60.000, $p < 0.815$. Additionally, the independent variable gender had no significant differences related to the CPBL implementation as found from the factorial data analysis: F = 1.571 ^{b}, gl = 13.000, $p < 0.120$. Hence, they were not interpreted or discussed.

5. Conclusions

This study investigated whether some teachers' individual differences, such as age, gender, and stage of teaching, have an overall effect on the implementation of CPBL in EFL. There were significant differences connected to the study variables, suggesting that the participants' ages played a critical role in how teachers perceived and implement CPBL in their classrooms. That said, the findings showed that only a limited number of EFL teachers were using CPBL on a consistent or regular basis. Although most of its adopters were young educators, 79.76% of all participants indicated a positive appreciation for the methodology as a powerful constructional tool and were eager to incorporate it into their classrooms. Additionally, teachers agreed that CPBL motivates students, enhances their research skills and capabilities in using ICT, and makes their English fluent because their learning happens in real-world situations.

One major reason why some teachers were hesitant to implement CPBL was a lack of prior experience or background knowledge of how to integrate it into their EFL classroom routines. According to Van and Hang [41], teachers' knowledge of how to teach cooperatively through project-based learning is fairly limited and incomplete in most cases. Due to these issues, numerous difficulties surfaced during the implementation phase. Some of these difficulties are attributed to classroom management, as in the case of dysfunctional group dynamics, such as free riding, leadership problems, poor time management, and unresolved conflicts, which frequently compromise learning outcomes. This, in turn, generates teachers' lack of motivation and interest in accepting this teaching approach, even in a general manner. Otherwise, the majority of practitioners who looked favourably upon CPBL usage in their classrooms had previous experience of working either with CL or PBL. Additionally, they were convinced that this approach to teaching can both promote students' learning and develop their English skills in a positive way.

Motivating teachers to use CPBL in their classrooms requires ongoing relevant training, designed in a way that is easily adaptable to existing lesson plans. Likewise, teachers who practise CPBL could also be encouraged to exchange whatever they feel is useful to others in the spirit of community, with the aim that like-minded colleagues or other institutions can similarly gain from their success. Teachers, for example, can share the outcomes of cooperative projects, the methods and timelines, the challenges and difficulties, and their alternative solutions. Good practice models could evolve in positive ways if teachers had professional training or if their projects were detailed in periodical educational magazines that could be shared with others. Correspondingly, the rewarding of outstanding performances, teaching practices, and innovative learning methods can significantly improve teachers' motivation as they feel appreciated. By such means, they can continue with their excellent work.

Finally, it is important to indicate that the study has certain limitations. The first of these lies in the fact that we did not gather quantitative data directly questioning students

about their performance; instead, we focused mainly on teachers' perceptions, and this can be taken into consideration for future research that involves CPBL methodology, including not only teachers but also students. The second limitation is that the small sample may have an impact on the applicability of the results obtained. Similarly, the population was Spanish teachers, and CPBL use may differ from one country to another depending on the level of use. Thus, future cross-country comparison studies may ensure the generalizability of the results while also providing new insights into the development of CPBL in English teaching and learning.

These findings have beneficial implications for course designers, and they may also inspire teachers who work in the field of teaching EFL. In particular, those who are experiencing difficulties or challenges in implementing this methodology, or others who are willing to enhance their capabilities to implement CPBL in their classrooms in the future.

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