

The Small Group Discussion Method's Effectivity for Improving the Students of Tenth-Grade Vocational High School 7 Semarang's Speaking Ability

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Abstract

Many Indonesian students realize it terrible to become proficient in English as a second language. One of the essential skills that must be mastered is speaking skill. People who like English must concerted effort to improve their English language skills. In teaching and learning, the teacher has a big responsibility. Teachers must master learning strategies to solve problems faced by the students and help them comprehend their speaking skills to achieve the goal of learning. This research uses experimental methodology to examine the impact of the small-group discussion method on students' ability to communicate verbally. The researchers applied a pre-experimental strategy, which included a pre-test before providing the chosen treatment. A post-test was given to complete the data collection after the treatments. The researchers used thirty-six students from SMK N 7 Semarang as a sample in this research. The research's findings indicates that the post-test score outperformed the pre-test score. On the other hand, at the significant level of 0,05, the t-score result is greater than the t-table. As a result, we can decide from the data analysis that the Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) is suitable whereas the Null Hypothesis (Ho) is unacceptable. In accordance with the findings, conducting small group discussions as a teaching strategy significantly improves students' speaking abilities. As a result, it is suggested that English teachers provide this method as an attempt.

Keywords: *small group discussion method, improvement, students' speaking ability*

INTRODUCTION

Inside the Indonesian education program, English is a necessary course that must be learned. Learning English as a second language is difficult for many Indonesian students—meanwhile, because English is an international language, many people must communicate in it. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are the four components of English abilities. The four language skills have their respective essential functions within the communication technique. Bailey and Savage (in Fitriani, et al. 2015) stated that the most difficult of the four abilities is frequently considered to be communicating in a second language. Fluency in speaking is, therefore, more critical than other language abilities, while the importance of the others cannot be understated.

One of the essential skills that must master is speaking skill. People who like English must concerted effort to improve their English language skills. While someone has proper speakingg abilities, he can construct meaning which involves the production, reception, and processing of information. In the learning process, one of the skills that students should concentrate on mastering is speaking ability.

In learning English, many students need help in improving their speaking

skills. Even pronunciation is an essential factor in speaking fluently. Wrong pronunciation is one problem. That problems may be caused by the English language being a second language for Indonesian students. According to Al Zayed (2017), errors caused by interference would occur more frequently the further variations in sounds between the two mother tongues (p. 86). Most students can pronounce certain sounds in their native languages, according to Ahmed (2017).

It is essential to work on speaking abilities to communicate with others. In learning English speaking skills, students must practice hard either by having direct conversations with other people or with the media provided by the teacher. Besides that, the teacher has a big responsibility, especially in teaching English. Teachers must master learning strategies to solve problems faced by the students and help them comprehend their speaking skills to reach the purpose of learning. Gillies and Andrian (in Cecep Ahmad, 2013) said, "As young children engage a structured school setting for the first time, their evolving social and emotional abilities and in new and complex methods, understandings are evaluated. Youngsters will have to engage and negotiate with a massive variety of unknown classmates who have varying stages of social and emotional skills, hobbies, cognitive capacities, and interpersonal interaction." Richards (2008) also added that talking clearly and effectively is essential for maintaining interpersonal connections.

In actuality, developing speaking fluency is challenging. Fitriani, et al. (2015) mentioned that students must know how to utilize the language and use proper grammar, clear pronunciation, and a good vocabulary. Communication problems occur when learners encounter a word they need help comprehending, a word form they are unfamiliar with or discover they cannot articulate their intended meaning. Insufficient confidence and nervousness can also be seen in students' speaking. They may show emotions such as anxiety, shyness, nervousness, anxiousness, and fear, which could affect their capacity for interaction in English.

According to the statement above, learning in groups may be an effective method for dealing with student problems throughout the teaching and learning process. Brown (in Kusumawaningtias, 2019) mentioned three groups: pairs, small groups, and large groups. The researcher used small group discussions in this study to help students develop their speaking abilities. When students are grouped into smaller groups to discuss a topic or problem, this is known as a Small Group Discussion. In the Small Group Discussion, the teacher can determine a topic of discussion to be given to students through group discussions. Small Group Discussions consisting of three to five students discuss the issues provided. Through Small Group Discussions, students can interact immediately with group members. Each student can share information and experiences from each of them. Because students may discuss in and out of the classroom, this Small Group Discussion method is more effective for teaching and learning.

The Small Group Discussion method is unique enough to be applied in teaching learning compared to the lecture or demonstration method (Abdul, 2013: 200-201). It is unique because the students themselves organize the material learning process. The Small Group Discussion method encourages students to develop their communication abilities and understanding of information. This motivation is intended to motivate students to compete positively. Working in small groups also allows students to learn from one another and make more progress in

understanding what is being explored.

Putra conducted previous research (2019) about the improving students' writing descriptive text skill through applying the small group discussion technique. The result showed that the Small Group Discussion method increased students' descriptive text writing skills, as shown by post-test scores that were better than pre-test findings. Accordance with Putra's finding, Usu and Adi (2021) carried out a research about the effectivity of using small group discussion in teaching reading comprehension of narrative text. According to Usu and Adi (2021), employing Small Group Discussion as a teaching strategy may significantly improve students' reading ability. They suggested English teachers to use this method in the teaching and learning process.

In this research, the researcher focuses on The Small Group Discussion Method's Effectivity in Improving the Students of Tenth-Grade Vocational High School 7 Semarang Speaking Ability. The researcher encouraged to experiment with the small group discussion method of teaching and learning following these statements. Small Group Discussion is employed in English teaching and learning to improve student's speaking abilities. To teach and learn English more effectively, the researchers were interested in finding how effectively the small group discussion method worked with students. Students are divided into groups of three to five for the Small Group Discussion learning process. The student grouping aims to discuss each group member's information or knowledge. Students can express their thoughts and opinions in Small Group Discussions.

Furthermore, this strategy can create a friendly environment for teaching and learning. As a result, the entire procedure might be more enjoyable and less monotonous. This research uses an experimental methodology to examine the small-group discussion method's effect on students' verbal communication ability. The researchers applied a pre-experimental strategy, which included a pre-test before providing the chosen treatment. A post-test was given to complete the data collection after the treatments. The researcher then writes the conclusions and recommendations based on the results.

The Concept of Speaking Skill

Speaking skill is the ability to convey thoughts orally to other people. Scott argues that speaking is an ordinary, taken-for-granted component of life because the average human produces thousands of words daily. Meanwhile, speaking is a useful ability that may be directly and objectively assessed using spoken production accuracy and effectiveness assessments, according to Douglas (Putra, 2019). Born and Yule (in Efrizal, 2012) explained that the complexity of communicating information affects speaking skills. It is often difficult for speakers to clarify what they want to say. Speaking is one of the most crucial aspects of learning a second language, according to David and Nunan (in Marriam Bashir, 2011:5). How well we can communicate in that language provides a measure of our level of expertise.

Brown and Yule's (in Kusumawaningtias, 2019) divided into three parts of versions of the speaking function, such as: a) Talk as Interaction, talk as interaction means that our communication is interactional with other people in everyday life, which refers to what we say as a conversation. Talk as interaction is how insiders try to convey messages to other people, in which interactive communication is

carried out spontaneously by two or more people. b) Talk as Transaction, talk as transaction usually emphasizes the message conveyed so that other people understand what we convey precisely and clearly. In teaching and learning, students and teachers usually focus on the meaning or talk about what they understand. c) Talk as Performance, in talk as performance, the focus of speaking activities is on monologues rather than dialogues. It is usually used in performances such as speeches, public talks, public announcements, a retelling of stories, and so on.

Speaking has several purposes, such as: 1) Informative, The aim is for the listener to comprehend what is being said in the same manner as the speaker. 2) Invitational: The invitation aspect extends an invitation of approbation or evaluation to the listener. 3) Dispositional talks are more persuasive than solicitations because they seek to agree on attitudes, values, or beliefs. 4) Activation, Actuation seeks to make people act and appear in a certain way.

Since language is a communication instrument, a language learner has no reason to be unable to speak a foreign language. Fitriani *at al.* (2015) stated that speaking refers to more than simply mouthing words. It denotes communicating a message or idea verbally. Students in the classroom need to pay more attention to this speaking ability, giving them no chance to improve their English outside the classroom.

Speaking requires a great deal of practice and effort. By simply listening and repeating, we can pick up our mother tongue. Similarly, imitation and reproduction are used to acquire a foreign language. Speaking requires suitable word and sentence choices based on social context, audience, circumstance, and subject matter. A fluent speaker needs an extensive understanding of the language being learned and how it will be used in communication. These issues could limit the students' capacity to develop and advance their speaking skills.

English as the second language in Indonesia makes many Indonesian students have difficulty to learn it. Learning a second language is more challenging than learning our mother tongue and requires much effort, especially in English speaking skills. Several problems when students speak English as a second language make students lack speaking ability. The students' poor grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are the leading causes of their speaking difficulties. These issues fall under the category of linguistics issues. According to Xinghua (2007), psychological issues frequently affect your mental and physical health, relationships, ability to work productively, or ability to adjust to life, such as feeling anxious, lacking self-confidence, or being scared to speak. Students' speaking abilities may be affected because of these problems.

Weir (2005: 195-196) classifies five analytics-speaking criteria as follows:

1. Fluency assesses how well students or language learners do with their studies, mainly speaking. Encouraging speaking fluency by focusing on students' speech quality is possible. A speaker is said to be fluent in speaking if the speech is significant or can be understood by the listeners. The speaker has the capacity or skill to speak at an acceptable speed without any hesitation caused to repetition action.
2. Pronunciation, in learning a foreign language, pronunciation can be as crucial as learning vocabulary or syntax. To improve a person's speaking abilities, proper pronunciation is crucial. Moreover, listening and even grammar are

closely related to pronunciation in other academic disciplines. For instance, when a person can pronounce word endings correctly, he can also provide grammatical information.

3. The vocabulary contains several meanings for each word or combination of words. Vocabulary issues arise when a person needs more words for conversation and is unable to put those words together effectively in a phrase. Students know exactly what they will say in the target language. Even yet, when students must transition to the target language, such as English, they usually require instruction on combining and applying the essential vocabulary.
4. Grammar is the study of how sentences are arranged and constructed, making it tedious to focus on learning proper grammar even though it is crucial. Learners can only speak successfully in English if they are familiar with grammar rules.
5. Interactional strategies include starting the conversation, clarifying a point, extending the subject, flipping the conversation, and wrapping it up.

Table 1. Analytic Speaking Standards

Aspect	Category	Indicators
Fluency	4 (excellent)	Natural materials delivery; only occasionally pausing to find the right words or expressions.
	3 (Good)	Although occasionally pausing and repeating himself, the student can often keep a smooth conversation going, even if they sometimes need a suggestion.
	2 (Adequate)	Speaking is slower and hesitant, maintains address passively, and requires frequent.
	1 (Fair)	There is no "fluent" speaking among the students.
Pronunciation	4 (excellent)	Some pronunciation problems and a few errors in rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation, but understanding are unaffected.
	3 (Good)	More attentive listening is required for rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation.
	2 (Adequate)	Regular rhythm, intonation, and pronunciation errors make understanding what is being spoken difficult.
	1 (Fair)	The words are incoherent.
Vocabulary	4 (excellent)	The students used vocabulary appropriately for the task with minimal incorrect occurrences.
	3 (Good)	Effective vocabulary use for the task, with occasional instances of inappropriate use, for the most part.
	2 (Adequate)	Vocabulary usage is limited and frequently inappropriate
	1 (Fair)	Short and inappropriate vocabulary.
Grammatical Accuracy	4 (excellent)	There are very few grammatical mistakes.
	3 (Good)	Occasionally there are grammar and sentence construction problems, but these do not limit understanding.
	2 (Adequate)	Errors frequently interrupt and disrupt the speech.
	1 (Fair)	Need guidance in constructing understandable statements
Interactional Strategies	4 (excellent)	Interacts effectively and quickly engages in and follows the topic.
	3 (Good)	The use of interactive strategies is typically appropriate. However, there is some difficulty in sustaining consistent interaction.
	2 (Adequate)	Interaction ineffective. The development of a conversation is rare.
	1 (Fair)	Comprehension and interaction are low.

The Concept of Small Group Discussion

An easy and efficient way to include students in the teaching and learning process is through small group discussions. Baker (in Putra, 2019) explained what a Small Group Discussion means: a group consisting of three or more people with face-to-face interaction in the Small Group Discussion with or without a leader who can influence and be influenced by group members. The main goals of using this method are solving a problem, answering questions, adding to and understanding students' knowledge, and making decisions. In achieving agreement and conclusions, small group discussions seek to contribute and transfer knowledge on specific subjects and examine and evaluate facts to support facts. Based on the explanation above, a Small Group Discussion is a group of three to five students who discuss topics, knowledge, and experiences to solve an issue.

As Ernest noted, adopting Small Group Discussions has both opportunities and obstacles. These are as follows:

1. Opportunities of using Small Group Discussion

- All group members participate in the conversation.
- It is a fantastic technique to stimulate participants' interest in a topic.
- A participant's explanation may be understood faster than a anchor's.
- The anchor can recognize those who need help.
- The anchor can recognize the participant's point of view.
- This Small Group Conversation assists participants in recognizing the connection between ideas or concepts relevant to the issue under discussion.

2. Obstacles of using Small Group Discussion

- It took a long time.
- Some participants may talk about something other than the topic of discussion.
- In comparison to other methods, the presenter is less active.
- The conversation can easily get off topic.

Ernest claims that there are specific guidelines for small group discussions, and they are 1) Introduction. In this step, the teacher gives an introduction and more materials, giving the students a basis for discussion. After the introduction and materials, the teacher instructs the students to start the discussion. 2) Directing the discussion. In the second step, the students summarize their discussion and deliver it to other groups after presenting it to their group. The other group members give opinions or comments and criticize to clarify the discussion results. 3) Summarizing the discussion. The last step is summarizing what was conveyed by the presenter. It is essential to summarize the discussion topic to ensure all participants agree on the issue.

METHOD

The researchers in this study conducted quantitative research. Creswell (in Wahyudi et al. 2022) stated that testing objective theory by examining the relationships between variables is called quantitative research. Arikunto (2010: 173) states, "All the components that have one or more interesting qualities are

grouped together as a population.” The researcher selects the participants for this research as the thirty-six male tenth-graders from Vocational High School 7 Semarang in the academic year 2022–2023. This decision was made based on the study's purpose and other considerations.

It is essential to have specific ways to conduct research activities to get good results. Data collection techniques are needed to support research. According to Brown (2003:3), a test assesses someone's skills, knowledge, or performance in a particular field. To assist the researchers in gathering data and information about small group discussion effectiveness in improving the students' speaking abilities, the researchers took two activities of collecting data: pre-test and post-test. The researchers used three stages to analyze the data obtained. Before the researcher starts treating the students, the first step is to determine the average pre-test. After delivering the treatment, the second step is to conduct a post-test. The final step involves calculating the average variation in the middle of the pre-test and post-tests.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research population, which was done in SMK N 7 Semarang, consisted of students in the tenth grade during the academic year 2022/2023. According to the research problems, the study's findings were assessed. Based on data analysis, the findings and discussion of this study proposed various items that were in accordance with the research problems, including;

1. Pre- Test

In the pre-test stage, the researcher distributed a pre-test to the students to assess their level of speaking competence before getting treatments. The following is the value of the students' Pre-Test results:

Table 2. The Pre-Test Results

No	Student	Score
1.	S 1	70
2.	S 2	68
3.	S 3	68
4.	S 4	70
5.	S 5	69
6.	S 6	73
7.	S 7	60
8.	S 8	70
9.	S 9	70
10.	S 10	65
11.	S 11	66
12.	S 12	69
13.	S 13	63
14.	S 14	64
15.	S 15	65
16.	S 16	70
17.	S 17	65

18.	S 18	69
19.	S 19	74
20.	S 20	73
21.	S 21	65
22.	S 22	75
23.	S 23	60
24.	S 24	75
25.	S 25	60
26.	S 26	65
27.	S 27	70
28.	S 28	75
29.	S 29	60
30.	S 30	60
31.	S 31	65
32.	S 32	70
33.	S 33	60
34.	S 34	65
35.	S 35	65
36.	S 36	60
	SUM	2411

The Pre-Test had a mean score of 66. It may be classified as sufficient or acceptable according to the results. The greatest score is 75, and the lowest is 60, as shown by the statistics above.

2. Post-Test

After the treatments, the researcher assigned the task to the students in the post-test. The following is the value of the students' Post-Test results:

Table 3. The Post-Test Result

No	Student	Score
1.	S 1	80
2.	S 2	75
3.	S 3	80
4.	S 4	75
5.	S 5	85
6.	S 6	75
7.	S 7	75
8.	S 8	80
9.	S 9	85
10.	S 10	80
11.	S 11	80
12.	S 12	80
13.	S 13	75
14.	S 14	75
15.	S 15	80
16.	S 16	85
17.	S 17	85
18.	S 18	75
19.	S 19	75
20.	S 20	80

21.	S 21	75
22.	S 22	80
23.	S 23	80
24.	S 24	85
25.	S 25	75
26.	S 26	75
27.	S 27	75
28.	S 28	80
29.	S 29	75
30.	S 30	75
31.	S 31	85
32.	S 32	85
33.	S 33	75
34.	S 34	75
35.	S 35	80
36.	S 36	85
	SUM	2480

The Post-Test had a mean score of 78. It may be classified as good according to the results. The greatest score is 85, and the lowest is 75, as shown by the statistics above.

3. The Pre-Test and Post-Test Differences

Table 4. The Pre-Test and Post-Test Differences

No	Student	Pre-Test (x)	Post-Test (y)	D (x-y)
1.	S 1	70	80	10
2.	S 2	68	75	7
3.	S 3	68	80	12
4.	S 4	70	75	5
5.	S 5	69	85	16
6.	S 6	73	75	2
7.	S 7	60	75	15
8.	S 8	70	80	10
9.	S 9	70	85	15
10.	S 10	65	80	15
11.	S 11	66	80	14
12.	S 12	69	80	11
13.	S 13	63	75	12
14.	S 14	64	75	11
15.	S 15	65	80	15
16.	S 16	70	85	15
17.	S 17	65	85	20
18.	S 18	69	75	6
19.	S 19	74	75	1
20.	S 20	73	80	7
21.	S 21	65	75	10
22.	S 22	75	80	5
23.	S 23	60	80	20
24.	S 24	75	85	10
25.	S 25	60	75	15
26.	S 26	65	75	10
27.	S 27	70	75	5
28.	S 28	75	80	5
29.	S 29	60	75	15

30.	S 30	60	75	15
31.	S 31	65	85	20
32.	S 32	70	85	15
33.	S 33	60	75	15
34.	S 34	65	75	10
35.	S 35	65	80	15
36.	S 36	60	85	25
	SUM	2411	2480	429

In the middle of the Pre-Test and Post-Test, the mean differed by 11.9.

4. Test of Normality

Table 5. Tests of Normality

	Kelas	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
hasil	Pretest	.133	36	.107	.924	36	.016
	Posttest	.280	36	.000	.779	36	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

$sig = 0,107 > 0,05$. Subsequently, the data has a normal distribution.

The value of $sig(2 - tailed) = 0,00 < 0,05$, As a result, the findings of the pre-test and post-test differ significantly.

Based on the statistics presented above, it is possible to conclude:

1. The Alternative Hypothesis (H_a) was accepted and the Null Hypothesis (H_0) was rejected when the value of $T_{count} > T_{table}$ in df with a significant level of 0.05 was found. That suggests that the Small Group Discussion method improves students' speaking abilities.
2. The Null Hypothesis (H_0) was accepted and the Alternative Hypothesis (H_a) was rejected when the value of $T_{count} > T_{table}$ in df with a significant level of 0.05 was found. The Small Group Discussion approach is ineffective in improving students' speaking abilities.

According to the statistical calculations, the value of $sig(2 - tailed) = 0,00 < 0,05$, indicating a substantial distinction among the pre-test and post-test outcomes. The Small Group Discussion method effectively improves students' speaking ability. This result is aligned with Putra's (2019) research on teaching writing comprehension using Small Group Discussions. The results showed that the Small Group Discussion method improved the students' descriptive text writing skills, as indicated by post-test scores better than the pre-test results.

The scores of the students before and after treatment demonstrate a significant difference in Table 4. For the first result, student number 36 significantly increased his score from 60 to 85, which means he raised his score after getting the treatment. In the treatment process, he was excited and actively responsible in his group. He also asked the teacher if he needed help understanding. He could string

together a lot of vocabulary to become a good sentence with minimal grammar errors. He could also carry out interactional strategies as if he was telling a story directly to the listeners.

In the second result, students numbers 23 and 31 also increased their scores from 60 to 80, indicating their scores increased after the treatment. They were very active and responsible in their group. In the post-test, they conveyed the speech very well. They have excellent fluency because they generally did naturally in delivering their speech. However, his pronunciation sometimes needs to be corrected, although he uses lots of adequate vocabulary.

In the third result, student numbers 7, 9, 10, 15, 16, 25, 29, 30, 32, 33, and 35 obtained a 15-point distinction between the pre-and post-test results. In the treatment process, they were active in their group. They try to be responsible with the questions or answers from their friends. In the post-test, they got a good score. Although they occasionally need a suggestion, they usually maintain a smooth speaking pattern despite moments of hesitation and repetition. They also used adequate vocabulary but still had some pronunciation and grammatical errors. But, in the interactional strategies, they try to interact with the listeners.

The fourth result, student number 5, got 69 from his pre-test score, and after the treatment, he got an 85 score. In the treatment process, he was excited and actively responsible in his group. He also was brave to respond to questions or answers from his friends, and he always asked the teacher if he did not understand. Besides student number 5, there were student numbers 1, 8, 11, 12, and 14 that were very responsible for their group, and they were active to respond their friends' questions or answers. The last example was student number 3, who scored 80 after getting the treatment. He was always active, highly confident, and responsible for responding to his friends' answers and questions.

It also could be seen in student numbers 2 and 20. They obtained a 7-point distinction between the pre-and post-test outcomes. Within the treatment process, they try to be active and brave in responding to questions and answers from their friends. But in the post-test, they still made some pronunciation and grammar errors. It also happened to the student numbers 4, 6, 18, 19, 20, 22, 27, and 28. Their pre-test and post-test scores did not increase much because they still had difficulty pronouncing and implementing interactional strategies even though they had many ideas they wanted to say. The researcher employed small group discussions to develop the students' speaking skills and make the students better understand the subject speaking and motivated to learn English because small group discussions make students more interested in learning and comprehending the subject.

Additionally, as the post-test scores were higher than the pre-test results, the researcher concluded that the students' speaking abilities improved due to the above description. Almost all students were active in the question and answer session. As the researcher explains the materials to the students, they become more self-sufficient, responsible, and caring. Most improved their fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and interactional strategies. The researchers discovered that the Small Group Discussion method improved students' speaking abilities throughout the teaching and learning process. This method can assist students in solving their speaking ability problems.

CONCLUSION

Small Group Discussions can be classified as a successful method for improving students' speaking ability based on those findings. The difference between the means of the two tests, 78 for the post-test and 66 for the pre-test, indicated how well the small group discussions had improved the students' speaking abilities. The T-test formula revealed that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test findings, with the value of $sig(2 - tailed) = 0,00 < 0,05$. It recognized that T_{count} was greater than T_{table} . The Null Hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, while the Alternative Hypothesis (H_a) was accepted.

According to this research findings, small group discussions were a successful teaching method for English, especially for improving the students' speaking skills. Yet to achieve successful implementation, everyone involved must work together. The researcher advised all stakeholders to use this method to support the teaching and learning process because small group discussions can motivate students during the teaching and learning process. The school should upgrade the grade of educational facilities to enable instructors and students to use them efficiently. Also, the educator needs to be as innovative as feasible.

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