STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF A SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION IN IMPROVING THEIR READING COMPREHENSION AT SMP NEGERI 1 KABARUAN

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Abstract: The purpose of this research was to find out the students' perceptions on the use of group discussion in teaching reading. In terms of purpose, this research was a survey research. In this research, the researcher asked students' opinions about the use of group discussion in the teaching of reading in English by using questionnaire. In terms of the nature of data, since the data collected using questionnaire were put into frequency distribution, this survey was categorized as a quantitative research. The data obtained in this study reveals that (1) 94% of the students strongly agree and agree that group discussion is interesting and effective technique that can be used to increase and motivate the respondents to engage in in reading session; (2) 79% of students strongly agree and agree that being engaged in group discussion is useful for them. They had already interested in engaging themselves in in group discussion and follow all group discussion activities; (3) 92% of the students strongly agree and agree that their engagement in group discussion is aimed at developing and improving their reading in English; and (4) 87% of the students (respondents) enjoyed being involved in group discussion in reading session and had positive perceptions toward the technique. It can then be concluded that the students positively consider group discussion an interesting, effective and useful technique for it can be used to increase their engagement, motivation and reading skills in English.

INTODUCTION

English language have four skills that we need to master, reading, writing, speaking and listening. In order to understand, students need to read first the materiel of English study. According to (Finocchiaro and Bonomo, 1974:119), "Reading is bringing meaning to and getting meaning from printed or written material." English language as a foreign

language is difficult to be learn in Indonesia because it is not our mother tongue (Paranduk and Karisi, 2020). As (Harmer, 1998: 68), mentioned that there are some reasons why the teacher should get the students to read English text. First, many students want to be able to read English text either for their career, for study purposes or simply for pleasure. Second, reading is also useful for other purposes: any exposure of English is a good thing for language students.

(Murphy, et al, 2009) in their meta-analysis study revealed that several discussion approaches produced substantial improvements in text comprehension. Few indicated that discussion was effective at increasing student's literal or inferential comprehension and critical thinking and reasoning. Some others were moderated by study design, the nature of the outcome measure, and student academic ability. This finding is in line with teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the technique (Hasib, 2017). Discussion is effective when use increase students speaking skill, develop students' critical thinking and adjust the students with teamwork. Similarly, as revealed by (Yanse, 2016), most students believed that group discussion was an interesting technique used by the lecturer in the classroom activity. Group discussion was also (1) an effective technique to increase their engagement in developing their English speaking skills, (2) they positively considered on their engagement during the implementation of group discussion, (3) increases their engagement in order to develop their English speaking skills, and (4) the students tended to have positive perception on their engagement during the implementation of group discussion, and participate well in group discussion and felt motivated to engage themselves.

So far, the advantages or effectiveness of discussion is viewed from research data, experts and teachers. In real classroom practices, the methods/techniques applied in the classroom are determined by subject matter teachers. Student involvement in determining how a given material should be delivered is rare. It is for this reason, what perceptions students have about methods/techniques of teaching is considered important to be studied.

The main purpose of reading is comprehension. According to (Tatipang et al, 2021), reading comprehension is a thought process through which readers became aware of an idea understand it, in term of experimental background and interpret it in relation to their own needs and purposes. It means reading comprehension is the process of understanding the idea in a text and using it in our needs and purposes.

Reading comprehension is important for students in learning English as foreign language. The ability of the students is needed in comprehending a text. (Kalangi et al, 2019) reading is a receptive skill in that reader is receiving a massage from a writer. (Nuttall, 1982: 22) says, "Reading comprehension is an active thinking process that depends not only on comprehension skill but also on the students' experience and prior knowledge". It means, the students' the experience and the knowledge are also affecting the understanding of the students about the text that is being read.

(Snow, 2002) defines reading comprehension in slightly different ways. Snow categorizes the component which is interacting and involving in reading comprehension into three components. Those components are the reader, the text and the activity. Snow includes the capacities, abilities, knowledge, and experiences of the readers as

the part of the reader components. Snow explains the text as any printed and electronic text while for the activity Snow includes the purpose, processes, and results of any attitude in reading. (Tangiduk et al, 2021) state that comprehension is making sense of what someone reads and connecting the ideas in the text to what he already knows. Based on the explanation above, we can say that reading comprehension is about the process of understanding a written text. The process includes three important things they are skill, experience and knowledge. However reading comprehension will be done if the reader master tall kinds included in the reading text.

Small Group Discussion

As what (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 1987:7) state, "The necessary practice is thought to be most successful when students are engaged in the meaningful exchange of information rather than repeating a teacher's model. Learners are thus encouraged to be creative and communicative with the language often doing so in small-group activities, in which they can practice communication and learn from one another".

Why should students learn in group? An important aspect of studies in junior high school is the opportunity to work as part of a group. Group working is used at junior high school because it can be an effective and powerful way to learn. The following points highlight the benefits of group learning.

Learning in group can make study more efficient and fun. Working with others enables students to pool their ideas and see problems from different perspectives (Lumentut and Lengkoan, 2021). In a group situation, the students can attempt tasks that could not be accomplished by an individual, combining a variety of skills and expertise to tackle more complex and larger scale problems. If they are working to a limited time frame, group work allows analysis to a greater depth and breadth than if they were working individually (Andries et al, 2019). Furthermore, group work gives them the chance to learn from each other. There are many benefits from analyzing, discussing and exploring their own ideas and questions and gaining feedback from their peers.

Organizing Small Group

During discussion, the teacher does not dominate the class. However, the teacher's role is still important such as in giving and instruction and directing. Both the teacher and the students take their own roles in the activity.

In conducting a small group discussion, there are some aspects that should be taken into account seriously by teacher. The first aspect is the teacher's role in carrying on the discussion. The success of small group discussion depends on how well those aspects are organized.

Dividing a large class into small groups can be done many ways. (McGreal, 1989:17) states, "Students can be divided according to many criteria. The most are randomization, ability, friendship and mixed ability."

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to find out the students' perceptions on the use of group discussion in teaching reading. In terms of purpose, this research was a survey research. A survey research, according to (Liando et al, 2021), is a study which enables the researcher to collect the information from a group of people to describe abilities, opinions, beliefs, and/ or knowledge and aimed at describing the characteristics of a population". In this research, the researcher asked students' opinions about the use of group discussion in the teaching of reading in English by using questionnaire.

Research Participants

The participants of this research were the second and third grade of SMP Negeri I Kabaruan in the academic year 2020/2021. These two grades were selected because they have been taught reading in English using the technique several times.

Table 1. Population and Sample

Grade	Number of students	Sample
8	34	33
9	32	

Of this population, 33 students were selected the survey participants.

Data Collection

As pointed out before, this is a survey research. (Ary et al, 2010) state that survey method uses instruments such as questionnaires and interviews to gather information from groups of individuals. Data concerning opinions can be collected using either questionnaire or interview or both. In this study, questionnaire was the data collecting instrument. The questionnaire was used in order to find out the answer of both questions of the formulation problem. The questionnaire covered: (1) the use of group discussion (Slavin, 1995 & Amy, 2007), (2) students' their effort in group discussion (Katzell & Thompson, 1990), (3) the purpose of their engagement (Coates, 2005), and (4) their feelings after engaging themselves in group discussion (Bong, 2004 & Patrick, 2007).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study were obtained from the questionnaires which were distributed to 26 third grade students of SMP Negeri Kabaruan, Talaud. It contains twenty close-ended questions/statements. In this part, the researcher presented the data which were obtained in forms of frequency distribution and percentage distribution. The frequency distribution presented all respondents who chose the same degree of agreement. The researcher got frequency distribution by adding together the number of the respondents who chose at the same degree of agreement.

Students' perception on the use of group discussion

As shown in Table 1, majority of the students (respondents) perceived group discussion used in reading session is advantageous: 94% indicated that their involvement in the grouped could be increased; 94% considered group discussion an effective technique to increase their engagement; 93% considered it interesting technique; 90% used the technique in reading session; 96% thought that group discussion was an effective technique to increase their motivation; and 97% considered the technique effective for reading. In short, majority of them (94%) strongly agree and agree that group discussion was an interesting and effective technique that can be used to increase and motivate the respondents to engage in in reading session. Only small portion of the respondents, 6%, disagree that it is an effective and interesting technique to be applied in reading session.

No	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	I was able to effortlessly boost my reading session involvement through group conversation.	12 (39%)	17 (55%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
2	Group discussion was an effective technique to increase my engagement in the reading session.	11 (36%)	18 (58%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
3	Group discussion was an interesting technique used in the reading sessions of class.	10 (32%)	19 (61%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
4	I usually used group discussion in the reading session.	9 (29%)	19 (61%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)
5	Using group discussion could motivate me to engage myself in reading class.	14 (46%)	15 (48%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
6	Group discussion was an effective technique used in the reading session in class.	13 (42%)	17 (55%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
	Total Frequency (Σf) of SA, A, D, & SD	69	105	12	0
	Total Percentage (Σ%) of SA, A, D, & SD	37%	57%	6%	0%
	Total % of SA/A & D/SD	94%		6%	

Table 1. Students' perception on the use of group discussion

Note:
SA = strongly agree
A = agree
D = disagree
SD = Strongly disagree

Students' perceptions on their effort in group discussion

The data related to students' engagement in group discussion indicate that there are almost half of the respondents (48%) work by themselves because the other members of the group could not understand the topic discussed. 90% considered their involvement in group discussion is useful; 84% indicated that before joined the group discussion, they have already interested in the technique; and 93% indicated that they followed all activities in group discussion. Overall, 79% students strongly agree and agree that being engaged in group discussion was useful for them, had already interested in engaging themselves in in group discussion and followed all group discussion activities.

Table 2. Students' perceptions on their effort in group discussion.

No	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	I was able to effortlessly boost my reading session involvement through group conversation.	12 (39%)	17 (55%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
2	Group discussion was an effective technique to increase my engagement in the reading session.	11 (36%)	18 (58%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
3	Group discussion was an interesting technique used in the reading sessions of class.	10 (32%)	19 (61%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
4	I usually used group discussion in the reading session.	9 (29%)	19 (61%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)
5	Using group discussion could motivate me to engage myself in reading class.	14 (46%)	15 (48%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
6	Group discussion was an effective technique used in the reading session in class.	13 (42%)	17 (55%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
	Total Frequency (Σf) of SA, A, D, & SD	69	105	12	0
	Total Percentage (Σ%) of SA, A, D, & SD	37 %	57 %	6 %	0 %
	Total % of SA/A & D/SD	94%		6%	

Students' perceptions on the purpose of their engagement

As shown in Table 3, the data dealing with the purpose of the students' engagement in group discussion indicate that 90% of the students strongly agree and agree that their engagement in group discussion is aimed at developing their reading skills in English; while 94% strongly agree and agree that their involvement is also aimed at improving their reading skills in English. In general, 92% of the students involved in group discussion to develop and improve their reading in English. Only 13% students disagree or have different purposes of their engagement in group discussion.

Table 3. Students' perceptions on the purpose of their engagement

No	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	In order to improve my English reading skills, I could participate well in a group discussion during class reading sessions.	10 (32%)	18 (58%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)
2	In order to improve my English reading, I felt confident enough to express myself in a group discussion in class.	11 (36%)	18 (58%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)
	Total Frequency (Σf) of SA, A, D, & SD	21	36	5	0
	Total Percentage (Σ%) of SA, A, D, & SD	34%	58%	8%	0%
	Total % of SA/A & D/SD	92%		8%	

Students' perceptions on their feelings after engaging themselves in group discussion

The data related to students' feelings after being engaged in group discussion indicate that 84% students felt motivated to engage themselves in group discussion in reading session; 83% indicates that they were satisfied after being involved the discussion; 87% revealed that they did not feel underestimated in the group discussion; 90% indicate that they were disappointed if their ideas were not used by the group members; 80% students find it easy to engage in group discussion; 91% state that they were happy to engage the discussion group in reading session; 90% students do not feel shy to engage themselves in group discussion, and 87% did not get bored in group discussion in reading session. In short, majority of the students feel motivated, satisfied, happy, and neither feel shy nor get bored when being involved in the group discussion.

Table 4. Students' perceptions on their feelings after engaging themselves in group discussion

No	Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	In reading class, I felt inspired to participate in a group discussion.	9 (29%)	17 (55%)	5 (16%)	0 (0%)
2	In reading class, I was pleased with my contribution to a group discussion.	11 (35%)	15 (48%)	5 (16%)	0 (0%)
3	After engaging in a group discussion, I did not feel underestimated in my group.	12 (39%)	15 (48%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)
4	I would feel disappointed if my ideas were not used by the group members.	13 (42%)	15 (48%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)
5	I found it easy to engage myself in a group discussion in reading class.	11 (35%	14 (45%)	5 (16%)	0 (0%)
6	I felt happy to get engaged in a group discussion in reading class.	12 (39%)	16 (52%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)
7	I was not shy to engage myself in a group discussion in reading class.	13 (42%)	15 (48%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)
8	I didn't get bored to engage in a group discussion in reading class.	10 (32%)	17 (55%)	4 (13%)	0 (0%)
	Total Frequency (Σf) of SA, A, D, & SD	91	124	32	0
	Total Percentage (Σ%) of SA, A, D, & SD	37 %	50 %	13 %	0 %
	Total % of SA/A & D/SD	87%		13%	

Based on the data in Table 1, 2, 3 and 4, it can be briefly said that the students (respondents) enjoyed being involved in group discussion in reading session and had positive perceptions toward the technique.

DISCUSSION

Results of the data analysis indicate that (1) 94% of the students strongly agree and agree that group discussion is interesting and effective technique that can be used to increase and motivate the respondents to engage in in reading session; (2) 79% of students strongly agree and agree that being engaged in group discussion is useful for them. They had already interested in engaging themselves in in group discussion and follow all group discussion activities; (3) 92% of the students strongly agree and agree that their engagement in group discussion is aimed at developing and improving their reading in English; and (4) 87% of the students (respondents) enjoyed being involved in group discussion in reading session and had positive perceptions toward the technique.

The finding is in line with that of Yanse (2016). He found that the students tended to have positive perception toward the use of group discussion, and believed that group

discussion was an interesting technique used by the lecturer in the classroom activity. Group discussion was also an effective technique to increase their engagement in order to develop their English speaking skills, and that the students tended to have positive perception on their engagement during the implementation of group discussion in the speaking sessions of CLS I. The students thought that they could participate well in group discussion and felt motivated to engage themselves. The findings of the present study and that of Yanse (2016) disapprove Eric, Shaw, and Duffy's (2007) findings which revealed that the students' preference for group work was negative. These contradictory findings revealed more studies are needed to explain this phenomenon.

Group discussion is considered as an interesting and effective technique for teaching reading in English. Research in reading revealed that comprehension is strongly affected by reader's linguistic knowledge and their background knowledge. Linguistic knowledge is not enough. Reading texts that readers are familiar with are easier to comprehend compared to those that they are unfamiliar with. Lack of linguistic knowledge is sometimes compensated by background knowledge or vise-versa (see Stanovich, 1984).

Each reader has his or her own linguistic and background knowledge. Similarly, in group discussion, each member of the group has linguistic and background knowledge that is different from linguistic and background knowledge of other members. The technique is considered effective because, in group discussion, one member's lack of linguistic or background knowledge can be compensated by other members' linguistic and background knowledge. This is in line with an idiom, saying 'two heads are better than one,' which means that it is easier for two people who help each other to solve a problem than it is for one person to solve a problem alone.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The data obtained in this study reveals that (1) 94% of the students strongly agree and agree that group discussion is interesting and effective technique that can be used to increase and motivate the respondents to engage in in reading session; (2) 79% of students strongly agree and agree that being engaged in group discussion is useful for them. They had already interested in engaging themselves in in group discussion and follow all group discussion activities; (3) 92% of the students strongly agree and agree that their engagement in group discussion is aimed at developing and improving their reading in English; and (4) 87% of the students (respondents) enjoyed being involved in group discussion in reading session and had positive perceptions toward the technique. It can then be concluded that the students positively consider group discussion an interesting, effective and useful technique for it can be used to increase their engagement, motivation and reading skills in English.

There is an English idiom, saying: 'two heads are better than one. It means that it is easier for two people who help each other to solve a problem than it is for one person to solve a problem alone. This idiom is based on the fact that no two readers have the same linguistic knowledge and background knowledge. Therefore, when

teaching reading, it is important for English teacher t take group discussion into their consideration.

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