Improving Students' Ability in Reading through Group Discussion

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Reading, Reading Comprehension, Group Discussion,	This study aims to assess whether group discussions can enhance students' reading abilities. The research involved 23 students from class IX A at SMP Negeri 2 Tondano and employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using pre-test and post-test methods. Data were collected through multiple-choice tests consisting of 15 items each for the pre-test and post-test. The findings revealed a significant improvement in student performance, with the highest pre-test score being 60 and the highest post-test score reaching 90. These results indicate that group discussions positively impact students' reading abilities at SMP Negeri 2 Tondano. Furthermore, students reported that participating in group discussions helped them improve their reading skills. This study suggests that group discussions can be an effective alternative teaching method for enhancing reading skills, particularly in English, in school settings.

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a medium for humans to express feelings, emotions, ideas, and desires to others (Mogea, 2019). English, in particular, has become a globally recognized language used across numerous countries. Learning a language requires mastery of four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Wahyu et al., 2023). Among these, the ability to write in English is strongly interconnected with reading proficiency, as reading is a vital component of the English learning and teaching process. According to Tarigan (1983:7), reading is a method employed by readers to comprehend material that may not be explicitly detailed by writers, often using unfamiliar words or foreign language media. Proficiency in reading opens pathways to acquiring new knowledge, enjoyment, and opportunities to engage with modern life, such as accessing English books and magazines. As a result, reading plays a pivotal role in English education. The ultimate goal of English teaching is to enhance students' ability to communicate effectively in both spoken and written forms, enabling them to navigate daily life contexts such as understanding books or manuals. In essence, students are expected to comprehend English texts to gain knowledge, ideas, and concepts. However, for many junior high school students, reading remains a challenging skill to master due to their generally low proficiency in this area.

The ability to communicate effectively in written English is closely tied to reading proficiency, one of the four essential language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—integral to the process of learning and teaching English. According to Johnson (2008:110), reading comprehension involves employing strategies to retrieve information and construct meaning from texts. Proficiency in reading enables students to access new knowledge, gain enjoyment, and engage in various aspects of modern life, such as reading English books and magazines. As Pratama (2013) notes, readers obtain information through interaction and engagement with written texts. Therefore, reading holds a critical role in the English teaching and learning process. The primary goal of teaching English is to enhance students' ability to communicate in both spoken and written forms, equipping them to navigate daily life contexts, such as understanding books or manuals. Ultimately, students are expected to comprehend

English texts to acquire new knowledge, ideas, and concepts. However, for many junior high school students, reading remains a challenging skill to master due to their generally low reading

According to Klingner et al., (2015) students tend to have learning disabilities in their reading comprehension. Furthermore, Harmer (2001:203) identifies several issues that can arise in a reading class. One major problem stem from the text's language. If students are unfamiliar with half of the vocabulary, they will struggle to comprehend the overall text. Additionally, longer sentences and words are harder to understand compared to shorter ones. The topic and genre of the text also play a significant role in reading success. If the topic is not suitable for the students, their interest will decrease. Similarly, if students are not familiar with the genre, it can lead to difficulties in reading. Consequently, students may be less inclined to participate seriously in the reading activity, which negatively impacts their reading comprehension success.

Reading ability has an important role in English language learning, and the development of this skill is especially emphasized in Curriculum 2013, because by mastering reading ability, students will be able to obtain more information to advance them in knowledge, technology, arts and culture. For that reason, the group discussion method was chosen to encourage students to be more active in reading English. The importance of reading in the Curriculum 2013 lies in its role as a gateway to acquiring knowledge, technology, arts, and culture, aligning with the framework's emphasis on preparing students for the demands of the 21st century. Reading is not only a foundational language skill but also a tool for lifelong learning and global competence. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2013), the curriculum highlights literacy as a crucial component in fostering critical thinking and enabling students to access diverse sources of information.

To achieve these goals, the group discussion method has been identified as an effective approach to teaching reading. This method aligns with the principles of cooperative learning, as proposed by Kagan (1994), who asserts that group discussions encourage both cognitive engagement and communicative skill development. By participating in collaborative discussions, students actively process the information they read, analyze content critically, and articulate their understanding, which promotes deeper comprehension and interaction with the text. Additionally, the Curriculum 2013 integrates Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) into reading instruction, enabling students to analyze, evaluate, and create based on the texts they read. This approach reflects the revised Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), which emphasizes the importance of tasks that go beyond rote learning, fostering learners' critical and creative engagement with reading materials. By applying these principles, reading instruction under Curriculum 2013 equips students with essential skills to thrive academically and in real-world contexts.

Group Discussion is a technique of inferring the meaning of familiar words based on only seeing the relationship between unfamiliar words with other words, sentences paragraphs. Supported by Tohirin, (2007:291) in Sila et al., (2020) whom said that group discussion is a way in which students get the opportunity to solve problems together. Furthermore, Usman (2008:94) in Sutika et al., (2020), Romlah (2001), Kamdhi (1995) and Sukardi (2008) argued that group discussion is a type of a face-to-face meeting of a group of people, usually consisted of three or more people that debate about certain problem that is needed to be solved.

Group Discussion is one of the learning strategies often used by junior high school students. Group discussion is a learning method that is used to achieve effectiveness in learning by grouping four to six students in a small group to discuss about certain topic together (Suhendar & Rambe, 2023). Furthermore, according to (Ismail: 2008) group discussion is a learning method that involves engaging in small group conversations to help students develop problem-solving skills related to academic subjects and everyday issues. In addition to helping students learn, group work can also make learning time more efficient. Group work activities that are widely practiced today are the method of dividing group work consisting of several students to carry out learning activities that take place at home, one of the groups works. The implementation of group discussion is to solve reading problems, namely vocabulary, knowledge, sentences. And also, to improve students' reading ability. Group discussion provides an opportunity for student initiation, to meet face to face, give and take, to practice in negotiating meaning for longer conversational exchanges. This technique puts students in a situation where they will try to unite their different opinions with other members to understand the text. In addition, group discussion will help students to understand difficult words, sentences, topics, and by

requiring them to share and discuss their thoughts and problems and improve each student's skills with existing group members.

The novelty of this research lies in its distinct approach compared to previous studies. Rizal Arisman and Irda Sriyanti Haryant's research focused on comparing Small Group Discussions with conventional methods using a semi-experimental design, while this study uses a pre-experimental design to measure the effectiveness of group discussions as a single intervention for improving students' reading abilities. The differences in sample, setting, and objectives also highlight this study's uniqueness. Similarly, while Nova Simorangkir's research explored group discussions through a qualitative design, this study adopts a quantitative approach to provide measurable evidence of its impact. Additionally, unlike previous studies, this research aligns directly with the Curriculum 2013, emphasizing Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and connecting cooperative learning with real-world applications, offering a fresh contribution to understanding how group discussions improve reading skills in a structured and curriculum-driven context.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how group discussions influence students' reading abilities. By exploring this teaching strategy, the research aims to determine its effectiveness in enhancing reading skills while fostering collaborative learning among students. This research holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of how group discussion strategies can improve students' reading abilities and encourage the exchange of ideas among group members. This insight is valuable for advancing language learning and pedagogy. Practically, the study offers benefits for various stakeholders. For students, it provides an opportunity to enhance their reading skills and develop their ideas through group discussions. For teachers, it presents a practical teaching strategy that can enrich their knowledge and improve their English instruction methods. Finally, for researchers, it offers innovative insights and inspiration for exploring effective teaching strategies, particularly as they prepare to enter the education field.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative research design, specifically a pre-experimental design utilizing pre-tests and post-tests to measure the effectiveness of group discussions on students' reading abilities. According to Sugiyono (2016), quantitative research is rooted in positivist philosophy and emphasizes examining the relationship between variables through structured data collection and analysis. Sulistianingsih (2018) further explains that pre-experimental designs often involve pre-tests to establish a baseline and post-tests to evaluate changes after an intervention. This approach is suitable for the study as it allows for measuring the direct impact of the group discussion method on students' reading performance.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Tondano, focusing on Class XI students. The population consisted of all Class XI students, defined as a group of individuals sharing similar characteristics (Sugiyono, 2018). From this population, Class XI A, comprising 23 students, was selected as the sample. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This method ensures that the sample accurately represents the population under study and aligns with the goals of the research.

Data collection was carried out using pre-tests and post-tests, designed to assess students' reading abilities before and after the intervention. The pre-test was administered to measure baseline reading skills, while the post-test was conducted after the implementation of the group discussion method to determine its impact. Both tests utilized the same format, ensuring consistency in evaluation. Scores were calculated using a standardized scoring rubric that assessed comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills related to the text. This systematic approach ensured that the results were reliable and reflective of the students' reading progress.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. A normality test was conducted to assess whether the data followed a normal distribution, ensuring the validity of subsequent statistical analyses (Widiyanto, 2013). To evaluate the effectiveness of the group discussion method, a paired T-test was used. This statistical method compares the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test to determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant. The use of SPSS ensured accurate and efficient data processing, providing robust evidence for the study's conclusions.

FINDINGS

The researcher performed pre- and post-tests to evaluate every student in a single lesson. The sample size for this study consists of 23 students. The following data descriptions apply to the pre-test and post-test scores:

Table 1. Table score of students in pre-test (T1) and post-test T2

Student Number	T1	T2
1	55	88
2	59	80
3	54	82
4	48	75
5	60	90
6	48	75
7	40	78
8	53	83
9	56	85
10	54	79
11	59	84
12	50	86
13	52	82
14	60	90
15	46	81
16	49	79
17	53	84
18	57	90
19	54	88
20	48	80
21	55	78
22	59	90
23	60	82

A normality test was performed to ascertain whether the sample's score distribution is normal or not. In this table, the pretest and posttest scores of students in the experimental class are displayed. The prestest score shows the students' abilities before the treatment, while the posttest score shows their abilities after the treatment. The following is the normality test:

Table 2. Pre-test Normality Test (T1) and Post-test (T2) Results Data

Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
Statistics	Df	Sig.	Statistics	Df	Sig.
Pre-test .120	30	.200*	.931	30	.052
Post-test .092	30	.200*	.950	30	.168

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on normal distributed data decision making when:
1. If the significance value >0.05, then the research data was distributed normally
2. If the significance value <0.05 then the research data was not normally distributed.

Based on the pre-test and post-test tables above, the pre-test significant value of 0.052 when it has been >0.05 and the post-test significance value of 0.168 where it has been >0.05 and both data above are distributed normally allow us to draw the conclusion that the data was distributed normally.

The paired sample involved the same subject but underwent various treatments. These various test models are examined both before and after research models. The Paired sample statistics is as follow:

Table 3. Paired Sample Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	53.5333	30	5.04964	.92193
	Post-test	82.6667	30	4.49009	.81977

Based on the paired sample T test guidelines, namely:
1. If the significance value (2-tailed) is <0.05 then there is a significant difference in productivity between before treatment and after training.
2. If the significance value (2-tailed) is >0.05 then there is no significant difference in productivity between before treatment and after training.

So, based on the interpretation of the SPSS output results in the table above, it can be concluded: SPSS output analysis: The average value (Mean) obtained after treatment is greater than before treatment. The initial result before treatment was 53.5333 and after treatment was 82.6667. So, after the treatment it was proven to improve students' reading abilities.

Paired sample correlation is used to check whether there is a significant correlation or relationship between the two data, as follows:

Table 4. Paired Sample Correlation

	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pre-test & Post-test	30	.612	.000

The study of the SPSS output, according to the aforementioned table, resulted in a significance value of 0.000. Since the value was less than 0.05, it was determined that there was a substantial correlation between the two sets of data.

One testing technique used to evaluate the efficacy of treatment is the paired t-test sample, which is characterized by a difference between the average before and average after the given treatment. Paired sample test is as follow:

Table 5. Paired Sample Test

	Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Paired 1 Pre-test & Post-test	-29.13333	4.23233	.77271	-30.71371	-27.55295	-37.703	29	.000

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that the analysis of SPSS Output: Obtained a significance value (2-tailed) of 0.000 the value was smaller than 0.05 then the conclusion was that there was a difference productivity of significance between before treatment and after treatment

Based on Figure 1, the pre-test or test administered before receiving treatment, 1 student received a score of 40, while 6 students received a score of 60, with a mean of 53.53.
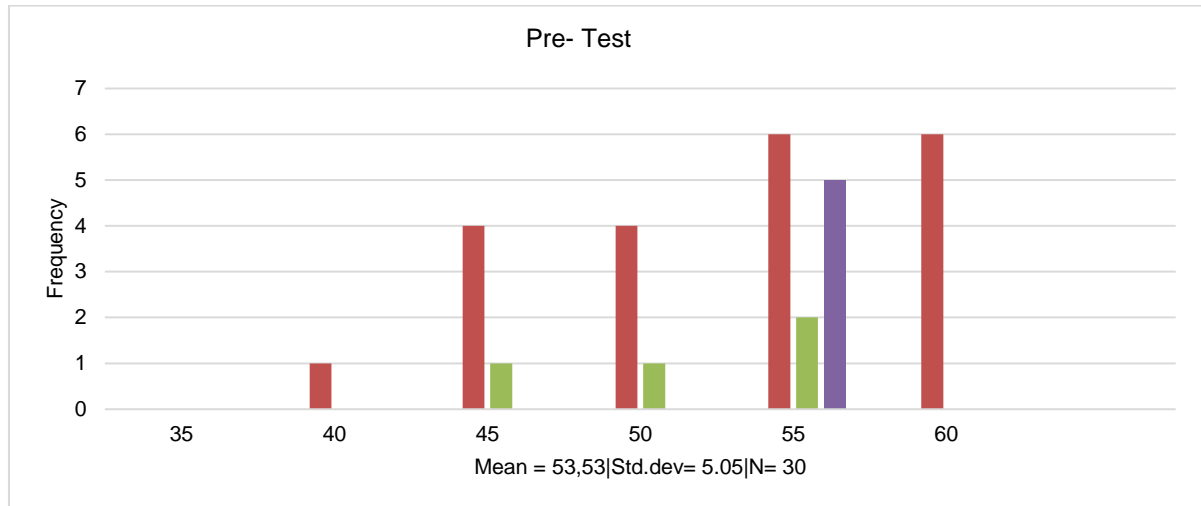
Figure 1. Pre-test Results Frequencies

The pre-test diagram helps in understanding the initial state of students before treatment, including differences between the expremental and control classes. Therefore, the pre-test diagram can be used as a reference for analyzing research results and comparing post-test results with pre-test results.

Furthermore, figure 2 below illustrates how the scores before and after the treatment differ from one another. The two students with the lowest post-test scores each received a score of 75. While 4 students, with a mean score of 82.67, received the highest score of 90. which indicates that following treatment, it increased.
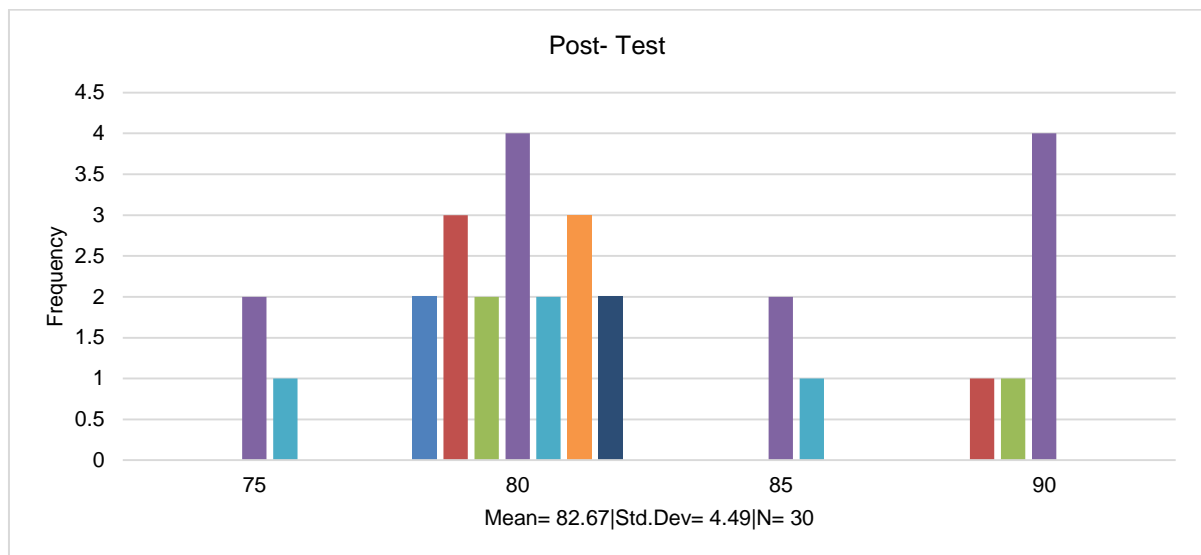

Figure 2. Post-test Results Frequencies

A post-test diagram is a graph used to illustrate the distribution of post-test scores in the experimental and control classes. This diagram helps in understanding the distribution of post-test scores and comparing the results between the experimental and control classes.

DISCUSSIONS

This research focuses on the effect of group discussion assignments on improving students' reading abilities in class IX A of SMP Negeri 2 Tondano. The odd semester of the 2023–2024 school year is used to conduct research focusing on class IX A. Pre-test and post-test are two events used in this research. This involves a number of steps. To measure student talent, a pre-test is first carried out. Next, provide treatment by teaching about what group discussions are and narrative texts and stories and the questions that will be given. The next step is, the author gives a post-test as a final test

to see whether there is an effect from group discussions with the questions given to improve each student's ability to read.

The research results indicate that the post-test (T2) scores were significantly higher than the pre-test (T1) scores. The highest score achieved in the pre-test was 60, while the highest post-test score reached 90. These findings suggest that students' reading abilities were initially below standard but improved markedly after the implementation of the group discussion method. The significant improvement in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores highlights the positive impact of this teaching approach. Based on these results, the researcher concludes that the group discussion method is an effective alternative for enhancing students' reading abilities. This method not only improves their ability to understand texts but also helps them solve questions accurately and effectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that the group discussion method has a significant effect on improving students' reading skills.

This study is effective for improving students' ability to read, as evidenced by previous research conducted by Arisman & Haryanti (2019) with the title *Using Small Group Discussions to Improve Students Reading Achievement on Narrative Text*. There are similarities and differences in these are similarity is that both studies use the group discussions method to improve students' ability to read, while the difference is in the sample and place of research. Both of these studies, the previous study and the current study have proven to be effective for students in improving their reading skills, and it is also effective for teachers to conduct group discussion methods in class. Simorangkir, Nurmanik & Yuliwati (2019) conducted a research with the title of *Improving Students' Reading Ability and Skills Through Group Discusssions*. Both of these studies use group conversations to help students become better readers; the sample and research location differ. These are the similarities and differences between them. These two studies the prior study and the present study have demonstrated that group discussion techniques in the classroom are beneficial for teachers as well as for students looking to improve their reading abilities. Drawing on the previously provided explanation, the researcher posits that the group discussion approach may serve as a substitute for traditional teaching methods in enhancing students' reading comprehension, text reading comprehension, and problem-solving skills. We may conclude that the group discussion method has a positive impact on students' reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data from the research conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Tondano, it can be concluded that group discussion can improve students' reading skills. Compared to the pre-test score, the post-test score is higher. The highest score of the post-test was 90, while the highest score of the pre-test was 60. The pre-test result of 0.052 and the post-test result of 0.168 showed that both sets of data were normally distributed because both were greater than 0.05. Although the difference in productivity between pre- and post-treatment was significant in the paired sample test as the significance value (2-tailed) was 0.000, the value was smaller than 0.05. If the test result is 0.05, then the test data in the paired sample can be considered significant. These overall findings lead to the conclusion that the group discussion method has an effect on improving students' ability to read.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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