

## Unleashing the Power of Words: Group Discussion for EFL Students' Speaking Skills

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### ABSTRACT

*Speaking English is a crucial skill that EFL students need to master. One effective way to develop speaking skills is through group discussions, where students can freely express their ideas, thereby enhancing their speaking abilities. Several studies have examined the factors and challenges that hinder students' speaking skills, but the exploration of how group discussions impact speaking skills remains limited. This research aims to analyze how an English teacher implements group discussions to improve students' speaking skills and address the challenges they face. The study was conducted through library research and analyzed qualitatively, using data from nationally and internationally accredited journals. The findings show that group discussions, as an innovative teaching method, significantly enhance students' engagement and improve their speaking skills. Implementing group discussions plays an important role in helping students increase their speaking proficiency. Most students face similar challenges in speaking, including both linguistic and non-linguistic problems, such as poor pronunciation, limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and reliance on their native language. Future research should further explore strategies and their implications for teaching English as a Foreign Language, particularly in improving adult learners' speaking skills.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Beginning English language instruction at an early age has become increasingly popular since the late 20th century. As English has become one of the key international languages, learning it from a young age is considered essential. Teaching and learning English early can offer students opportunities to engage in global networks in the future. The phrase "the younger, the better" has been widely accepted but also occasionally met with criticism (Larsen & Long, 1991; Saez, 2001; Nikolov, 2002). The advantages of early English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning are still debated. Some argue that young learners should start learning English earlier because they can experience certain benefits that older learners may not. According to Paradis (2004), young learners find it easier to memorize vocabulary and can rely on natural acquisition processes, making language learning more effortless and implicit, especially when it comes to the sound system. Additionally, they have more time to learn the target language, fostering cultural awareness

and identity. Finally, starting earlier allows for more time to make improvements (Espmaker et al., 2020).

Young learner actively imagines and create their own learning engaging based on their environment and like to exploring something new that challenging and make them interest, (Piaget, 1970). According to Vygotsky (1962), young learner delivered the knowledge in social interaction with people. In this case, as an educator, teacher should know about the students before design the learning activity and make a lesson plan. In classroom activity, main problem face in implement EFL is student engagement. Many students still too shy to speak English or even interact with teacher, tired of studying and feeling bored. Most students use their lack of grammar to not responding teacher questions which make them less practice in English and less improve their English language skill. In addition, this also supported by Musthafa (2001), that states teacher who teaching EFL mostly focus on grammatical and knowledge of syntax. Because of that, students sometimes too afraid to speak and try to avoid criticism by others and affect to the four skills in learning English which are reading, writing, listening, and speaking cannot be improvement. Then, when student keep not responding and doesn't give active participation, it can impact the student performance in learning outcomes (Anderson, 2008).

Group discussion is one of many activities that can be conducted by the teachers. This can be categorized as one of strategies implemented as a part of innovative teaching method. Group discussion is an action that consist of more than one person and can be consider as a team. Teachers can implement the group discussion to make students doing a collaborative learning (Paragae, 2023). Through group discussions, students will speak a lot. This supported by Uma and Ponnambala (2001), state that group discussion is very important to students' speaking skills. Speaking is one of productive skills in speaking English. Speaking will help students to communicate to many people. According to Brown (2000), speaking skills can be observed directly and empirically. When students speak English fluent, it means they are good at English. In doing group discussion, it can encourage students' skills in speaking since they have to speak a lot such as expressing ideas, sharing opinions, saying agreements and disagreements, and many more.

Speaking skills is one of the most important skills in this world. By speaking, it means we can communicate with others. In speaking English, it helps us to have a chance to speak with people from other country. This is a good way to having a relationship with foreigners in this globalization era. For students, speaking skills can be done by practices especially when students have a class for speaking course. This can be implemented by teacher through group discussion in order to promote students' communication for educational field (Brown, 1994).

Unfortunately, most students at school have difficulties to show their speaking skills in English. This happened since English is not their first or second language and most of them are not speak English at all in their daily life when communicate with others. It makes their activeness in the class during study are passive while their active responds are very important in speaking course. On the other hand, sometimes the method that teacher used is not very suitable for students to learn. Students with many different learning styles have their own way to understanding material given by teacher. This is why teacher can teach English using group discussion since it's very important for students' speaking to express, learn, and adapt in many social conditions (Kayi, 2006). Additionally, group discussion also a method that many students familiar with, so that it will not very difficult to apply it. In previous study, another reason for applying this method is not only for encourage speaking skills, it

also helps to develop students' creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, reflective, and self-evaluation (Putri et. al., 2017).

Several studies have been explored the group discussion method for speaking skills. Nawawi (2004) conducted their studies on the implementation of group discussion for speaking skills found that this method is a good strategy and encourage students' skills in speaking, however when student left the school, do the students can do a discussion as good as they did at school. Other study with different findings found that in group discussion some students can have a low interpersonal skill for communication. Some students didn't contribute well and just having fun with their gadget, they prefer to play with their phone instead of being responsive with friends. Additionally, most of them sometimes using 'slang' language to speak with friends and teachers without any intention.

In analyzing speaking skills for students through group discussion, it was found the teacher using a group discussion to teaching English in order to make students have an opportunity to express their opinion freely, however, some students didn't give an active participation during discussion session. When the researcher asked spontaneously, most of them are afraid to speak since they are not fluent enough, lack of pronunciation and vocabulary, and less confidence. Several studies have been examined the factors and problems that caused students in speaking skill, but the exploration of the implementation and analyzing speaking skills through group discussion for students are still limited. Hence, the present study's objective is to develop the conceptual of one strategies of innovative teaching method which is group discussion for students' speaking skill. This research will attempt to describes the definition of group discussion, types of group discussion, and definition of speaking skill followed by the important of implementing group discussion for students' speaking skills and the problems faced by students in speaking English during learning process in the classroom.

This paper is structured as follows: the second section provides the research methodology of the paper. Then, the result of the review related to literature are then discussed. In the last, the paper study will state the conclusion and a discussion with purposes implications for the future researcher and studies.

## II. METHODS

This study is a literature review, meaning that all results, discussions, and findings are derived from collecting various studies, research, and articles from previous authors (Knopf, 2006; Creswell, 2014). The data were carefully filtered to align with the current study's focus and were sourced from accredited websites and journals. Over 20 sources were collected and selected based on relevance to the research topic. The data collection process aimed to gather the most pertinent and high-quality sources for this study. The results were then presented qualitatively, after being summarized and categorized to address the research questions. This approach provides contextualized information about the study's topic and offers researchers a deeper understanding of the complex phenomena being examined (Moloeng, 2018).

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study includes several problems. The definition of group discussion, types of group discussion, and the definition of speaking will be discussed first. Next, the important of implementing group discussion for student speaking skill will be followed. Then, the discussion will be followed by discussing the problem in speaking English faced by students during learning process.

Group discussion can be considered as group guidance. There must be a conversation in the group discussion. But, not all talk from people can be counted as a group discussion. Discussion is planning to make a conversation between more than two people. According to Johnson (1999), group discussion is a process where the members of the group are interacts to each other to achieve the same goals. This is a part of the members are sharing the information, giving ideas, and opinion. Through group discussion, each person has a chance to contribute and participate actively which means they have to speak in expressing something that they have in their head (Crisianita & Mandasari, 2022). This enhancing the important of the social interaction and collaboration to achieve the goals in understanding a specific topic.

There are several types of group discussion such as: 1) Small group discussion, students divided themselves into several part and discuss specific topic then reported the result discussion to a bigger group, 2) Case-based discussion, type of group discussion where students discuss about some cases or specific scenario. This can encourage their problem solving, 3) Topic-based discussion, this is focus on the subject or specific theme where students can express their opinion and giving arguments based on their perspective. This practice their critical thinking, 4) Structured group discussion, this type of discussion where students followed the format or rules that have been set from teachers. Usually, moderator will guide the process of discussion, 5) Open discussion, this type of discussion where there is no format or rules. Students will free to giving opinions without following moderator instruction and else.

Based on this theory, the teachers can use a group discussion as a teaching method that involve many students in one group to complete the task and solve the problem given. In this part, students are expected to sharing their knowledge related to the topic material that doing to be discuss in the classroom, listening to others' perspective, and collaborate with others to find the solutions for the problem (Slavin, 1995). This is based on the constructive theory that states learning process can be counted when students are active in building their knowledge through social interaction and reflection.

Speaking is one of the skills that students must to have. In learning English, speaking can be considered as an important part since this skill will help you a lot in communicate with others such as asking for something and giving respond and answers. According to Nunan (1991, p.39), "Speaking is the single most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language, and success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the language". On the other hand, speaking can be defined as a process of produce and receive some information to be share. This is an oral skill that not only for talk but also have a systematic verbal utterance and convey the meaning (Susanti et al., 2021)

So, in the study process of teaching and learning English for teacher and students, having a good speaking skill will much easier for teaching in presenting the material in the easy and simple way for make students easy to understand, and much easier to students for understanding the material given and giving answer and responding teachers' questions and not very hard to students to showing their speaking performance in English communication (Affandi & Sukyadi, 2016). Speaking is not only shows about the skills of speaking in spoken language or the way some people sharing their perspcetives but it is also about the way people used language to interact with others, convey the meaning, and building social relationship.

In implementing group discussion in the classroom for students, the suits discussion for students to improve student engagement can be done through several types of discussion.

The first one is small group discussion, this involved four until six students to discuss a specific topic. This can make the members of the group participate active, develop the skill of communication and skill of listening also encourage team work. For the example students will discuss about social function of story, the orientation, climax, re-orientation, and implied message that state implicitly. The second is panel discussion, where student act as a panelist in front of the class and the rest students will act as an audience who can ask a question. This gives an advantage in public speaking, improve critical listening, and the way asking relevant questions. For the example, the topic being discuss can be environment issues, social topic, or trend for young learner to make it them easier in understanding the topic. The third one is debate discussion. In this case, student will try to maintain their opinion about controversial topic from opposite team who has different perspective from them. Thorough this discussion, students will be able to develop their critical thinking, try to give a logic arguments that can support their statement, and debate skills. For the example in implementing debate discussion can be done by discussing the technology impact to daily life, students' homework, or other global issues such as climate changes and else.

In addition, there are many importance things that teacher and students get by applying this method during learning process. According to Vygotsky (1978), social interaction through group discussion is a fundamental for cognitive development. In the Vygotsky's social development theory, students may learn from peer's collaboration. They can build their deeper understanding when they sharing the ideas and see each other perceptions, developing the concept of zone of proximal where students can achieve a higher understanding from help and support from others. Slavin (1996), found that group discussion can facilitate students in the teaching and learning process. This come from their theory called cooperative learning, where students learn through group discussion, they may be explained and be able to maintain their ideas and opinion to their members of the group. Besides that, in implementing group discussion, students' motivation can be improving a lot and developing communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skill.

Based on the Social Interdependence Theory and Cooperative Learning, group discussion helps to improve students' learning outcomes and students' emotional. In this case, students learn how to believe to each other, showing supportive side, and their engagement related to the learning process. It also improving speaking skills and self-confidence in which during the learning process students must speak a lot in sharing information, giving opinion, solving the problem, and more without afraid of getting any criticism (Johnson, 2009).

As a one of the tools to communicate to others, speaking is very important to daily life. According to Lingua Franca theory by Crystal (2003), English language is a main communication tools between language speaker form diversity such as business, technology, education, and many more. In educational context, for teaching and learning English language, speaking is a part that is very important for curriculum (Luoma, 2004). For instance, teacher need communication ability to explain or deliver the information related to the material given for students, asking questions, giving instructions and complete the task and more. On the other hand, students also need the ability to speaking English to be able to understanding teacher explanation, responding the questions, asking something that students still don't understand, even sharing knowledge in collaboration learning through group discussion (Sabirova et. al., 2019).

In language teaching and learning English, there are several problems that influence students' ability to speak. According to Sadtono (1997), the two main problem in speaking English are classify into linguistic and non-linguistic problem and affects students' performance during classroom. The two problems as follows.

1) Linguistic Problems, this is the difficulties faced by students in the aspect of language. The first problems are: Pronunciation. This is the most important things that students must mastering. According to Fangzi (1998), understanding phonetic structure of language is important since some words produce same sounds in different meaning. If students can't able to catch the meaning, the interpretation must be wrong. The incorrect pronunciation in some sounds will make conversation hard to understand. For the example the word 'ship' as 'sheep' atau 'think' as 'sink' and many more.

Second is Vocabulary. Vocabulary is part where students need to understand the structure of the as they practice the sound system of the word itself (Laufer, 1997, p.54). When students limit of vocabulary, they are not be able to speak as free as they want to express something they want. Lack of vocabulary will hinder the ability to speak. In this case, students will hard to find the suitable words to express their feelings, thoughts, opinion, and more.

Third is Grammar. According to Jeffrey and Stacy (2003) grammar determine how the words are structured or arranged to have a meaningful sentence. If the student arranged the words in a wrong way, the meaning may be change and hard to understand. The error or mistake in the words structure, the used of tenses, or rules in grammar will impact to the sentence which make the sentences not accurate, convey the wrong meaning, and caused misunderstanding for the listener or reader. For the example in the incorrect of the used of past tense such as 'I go to the school yesterday' not 'I went to the school yesterday.

2) Non-Linguistic Problems. According to Ur (1996), here are four main problems faced by students.

First is Inhibition, Ur (2000) in their book states that students often inhibited to say something in a foreign language classroom, afraid to make a mistake, getting criticism, and shy to speak up. This condition cause lack of responses from students during learning. Inhibition refers to psychological barriers which caused someone to feel afraid, anxiety, even too much nervous when they are speaking in English or foreign language. in this case, students will feel that they are afraid in making mistakes, getting criticism, and people's perspective about them. For the example, a students might be nervous when they speak in front of the class because the other friends will laugh at them if they make a mistake in grammar or pronunciation.

Second is Nothing to say, beside of being inhibited, in fact, some of students basically could not think anything to say something. They have no ideas to express themselves and just being quiet until the rest of study time. This happened when students feel they do not have any ideas or relevant topic to be talk with. It can happen also because student itself lack of knowledge or understanding related to the topic being discuss even the topic is not interesting. For the example, students might confuse and don't know what to do when they have to speak about the topic which is not familiar for them such as international politic or international problems that very unfamiliar for the young learners.

Third, Low or uneven participation, some students may have a low or uneven participation during learning process. This can happen when some students are too domineering during study until the rest of student doesn't have a chance to speak. The low participation refers to the situation where only some students are being active in learning process while the rest of them are passive or even didn't participate at all. This is can caused by some factors including student self-confidence, language and communication skills, and interest in the topic. For the example, in the discussion group, only few students who keep

talking and the rest students didn't contribute at all, playing with their gadgets, even talking unrelated topic with their partner.

Fourth, Mother tongue use, in some cases, some of students will tend to use their mother language since it easier to say something. Even though they are learning English, the use of mother tongue is still done by students since they're not very common in using foreign language such as English. This basically happened where student propensity to use mother language instead of target language throughout speaking activities. Due to this problem, the ability to speak and develop the skills of communication in target target will be decrease and never be practice in any chances. For the example, student in the class of English have to use the target language in discussion session, but they often used the mother language which is Bahasa Indonesia in asking and mostly in explaining the material and giving answers.

Based on those theory above, it shows that group discussion is very helpful for students' speaking skills. And teachers can conduct this as one of an innovative teaching strategy in teaching and learning English in the classroom.

Rayes (2014) and Battacharya (2017), found the similar findings about students' speaking skills in group discussion that students prefer to speak with their mother tongue inside or outside the class since its more comfortable and there is no pressure for them to mastering their oral skills in using English for their communication language. factors that influence students' speaking skills, most students have a low motivation in speaking and have a problem with linguistic skills to interpret the meaning of the words and sentence. As a result, students got some problems such as: a) they didn't speak at all, b) they could not think very well, c) low participation, d) fearful of others criticism, and e) the habit of always translating English words into mother tongue use. Even in the group discussion, students still didn't give any responses and let the others students to dominate the learning process.

Another similar study about problems and affects of students from Yaseen (2018) and Die (2017), students faced many difficulties that caused of several factor such as anxiety, less motivation and encouragement and afraid of peers' comments make students act to be passive and just listening to the teachers' explanation. Other result indicate that teachers may doesn't have an enough task for showing students' English in speaking skills.

Based on several studies above, it shows that all students mostly faced the same problems in speaking skills from same factors. This affects students' performance during study and caused to their less participation and there is no engagement in classroom. In this case, teacher implemented group discussion for students' speaking skills in order to make them be brave to express their opinion among peers, however, many students still didn't contribute well and less active during learning process.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

From the explanation above, it can be counluded that group discussion as one of innovative teaching method can be implement from teacher to student in encourage their speaking skills. The used of group discussion can helps to improve student engagement during learning process in. The impact of group discussion for enhancing speaking skills found that the significant different in speaking skills in group discussion is due to fluency, vocabulary and coherence aspects in speaking. This increased their confidence in expressing their knowledge trough discussion, ability to think critically, and social skills. As an English as a Foreign Language students, it is important for them to be able to speak English. Speaking will make them have a better performance outcome and increase the value of learning outcomes. However, many students faced several problems in speaking due to their low of

linguistic skill and non-linguistics skill. Most of students faced the same problem in showing their speaking English skills which are: they don't use English in daily communication, lack of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the most important is mother tongue used when they have to speak English in the learning process.

This study is still limited of literature review that aimed at exploring of the implementation and analyzing speaking skills through group discussion for 10th grade students' speaking skills. In this case, further researcher is still needed. Future researcher may explore more the implementation of student speaking skills through others strategies and its implications in the context of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia, especially for Balinese students and may explore more the strategies and its implications in teaching English as a Foreign Language especially for adult learners' speaking skills.

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