

## GENRE Journal of Applied Linguistics of FBS UNIMED Vol.14 No.3, 2025 (10-20)



ISSN (Print): 2301-5160 ISSN (Online) 2986-1551 Available online at: https://jurnal.unimed.ac.id/2012/index.php/jelt/index

# THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TECHNIQUE IN TEACHING SPEAKING SKILL

Tania Yosvi Tamara Sinaga <sup>1</sup>, Maya Oktora<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> English Education, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Medan Correspondence E-mail: taniasinaga0205@mail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed to analyze the implementation of the small discussion technique in teaching speaking skills to eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi and to find out the challenges of implementing small group discussion techniques in the classroom. The research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative method involved the English teacher. The teacher implemented this technique in meetings. In the first meeting, the teacher divided the students into several groups and gave them time to discuss the topic that had been determined. In the second

meeting, each group presented the results of their discussion in front of the class. During the implementation process, the teacher faced three main challenges: time management, classroom management, and student participation. However, although the teacher faced these challenges, the learning process went very well. This showed that the small group discussion technique could be an effective and enjoyable way to improve students' speaking skills

**Keywords**: Small Group Discussion Speaking Skill

#### INTRODUCTION

English speaking skills are a vital part of education that need more focus. Although English is compulsory in schools, many students still struggle with speaking due to factors such as teaching methods that emphasize theory over practice and an environment that rarely supports real language use. Speaking is more than just grammar and pronunciation; it is an interactive process involving turn-taking and collaboration (Thornbury, 2005). It allows people to express, exchange ideas, and communicate thoughts and emotions (Mart, 2012; Argawati, 2014). Among the four language skills, speaking is often seen as the most crucial

because it directly reflects a person's language proficiency and is the skill most foreign language learners want to master (Ur, 1995). Mastery of speaking helps learners achieve intellectual equality in communication (Davison, 2009). However, many students feel reluctant to speak English due to lack of confidence, limited opportunities to practice outside the classroom, and fear of making mistakes. In Indonesia, English is rarely used in daily life, which further limits students' ability to practice and gain fluency.

Reluctance to speak often stems from students believing their vocabulary and grammar are insufficient, making them afraid to participate. When prompted, many students choose silence over speaking. Since speaking skills are often the primary measure of language ability (McDonough & Shaw, 1993), this hesitation significantly affects their overall proficiency. At SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi, students face these challenges, indicating the urgent need for better support in developing their English-speaking skills. Addressing this problem requires improving teaching methods, enhancing teacher quality, and creating a learning environment that encourages practical use of English. One effective technique used in SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi is small group discussion, a cooperative learning method that gives students more opportunities to share ideas and practice speaking together. This method aims to boost student participation and help them express their opinions in a supportive setting.

However, initial observations reveal that small group discussions at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi have not fully resolved the speaking difficulties. Students still find it hard to express ideas in English and often remain silent during class discussions. Factors such as low motivation, lack of encouragement, and confusion over grammar and pronunciation continue to hinder their progress. While teachers have implemented small group discussions to promote interaction, the conditions have not yet fully replicated real-life communication contexts, which are essential for improving speaking skills. Small group discussion is more than just dividing the class into smaller groups; it is about creating an environment where students can focus, enjoy learning, and engage actively. According to Djamarah (2006), this technique enhances concentration, problemsolving, teamwork, and communication, all of which lead to better learning outcomes and greater student involvement.

English speaking proficiency includes different skills like dialogue and monologue, each with unique characteristics and challenges. Group activities help develop general speaking abilities and also improve students' capacity to deliver monologues effectively. Thus, small group discussions are an effective tool in enhancing students' oral communication in English. Supporting this, research by Rosadi et al. (2020) found that using small group discussion techniques significantly improves students' confidence and speaking ability. Students who practiced through these discussions were better able to present their ideas confidently. This suggests that with proper implementation, teachers at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi can achieve similar positive results. In

conclusion, small group discussions have great potential to overcome speaking skill challenges if applied effectively. This approach encourages students to be active learners who exchange ideas and experiences, helping them improve their English skills in a collaborative and engaging environment.

#### **METHOD**

This research employed a qualitative descriptive methodology aimed at providing a detailed and accurate description of events related to small group discussions in learning. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research focuses on understanding problems concerning individuals and communities through interpretation. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) explain that qualitative research involves close contact with participants in natural settings to explore real-life conditions. The study involved 11th grade students at SMAN 2 Tebing Tinggi, with primary data collected through observations and interviews. The participants included an English teacher and the students, with the study focusing on how small group discussions promote active and independent student participation.

#### **Instruments**

The instruments used were interview transcripts, field notes, and an observation checklist. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility in questioning based on respondents' answers. Field notes recorded detailed observations relevant to the study focus and interview results. The observational checklist, based on Dhobson's (1981) theory, helped verify the proper implementation of small group discussion techniques by the teacher.

## Data analysis procedures

Data analysis followed four stages from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014): data collection, data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions and verification. Data collection involved gathering information from observations, recordings, and interviews with the teacher. Data condensation meant selecting and summarizing key points while removing irrelevant information. Data display presented the condensed data in narrative form for better understanding. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and providing recommendations based on the analyzed data, presented descriptively.

#### **FINDINGS**

In the Findings section, summarize the collected data and the analysis performed on those data relevant to the issue that is to follow. The Findings should be clear and concise. It should be written objectively and factually, and without expressing personal opinion. It includes numbers, tables, and figures (e.g., charts and graphs). Number tables and figures consecutively in accordance with their appearance in the text.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

No	Activity	Yes/No	Notes
1	Greeting and prayer	Yes	Teacher starts with greeting and prayer
2	Attendance check	Yes	Checked by class secretary
3	Intro to SGD	Yes	Teacher explains use of SGD
4	Group division	No	Groups made of 6 instead of 5
5	Explain roles	Yes	Roles written and explained
6	Give different topics	Yes	Different topic for all groups
7	Discussion time	Yes	Led by group leader
8	Monitor groups	Yes	Teacher helps if needed
9	Close discussion	No	Extra time given
10	Evaluation	No	Skipped due to time
11	Closing greeting	Yes	Closed with greetings

The researcher conducted classroom observations with an English teacher of grade XI at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi to investigate the implementation of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) technique. Observations were carried out on

December 9 and 16, 2024, in class XI-10, using a checklist adapted from Dhobson (1981) to compare theoretical procedures with actual classroom practice.

During the first meeting, the teacher introduced the concept of SGD, confirming students' prior familiarity. She explained that the purpose of the method was to encourage a more comfortable and expressive learning environment, especially for practicing speaking skills. Students were then divided into six groups of six, and each group was assigned a discussion topic. The teacher outlined the discussion procedures and allocated time for group interaction. While monitoring the discussions, she also assisted students in resolving difficulties.

However, the session faced time management challenges. The limited class duration (2x45 minutes) was insufficient for group formation, explanation, and discussion. As a result, the teacher asked students to summarize their group discussion results and prepare to present them in the following session. This highlighted the importance of better planning and time allocation in implementing SGD effectively.

<b>Activity</b>	Yes/No	Notes
Greeting and prayer	Yes	Teacher greets and prays with students
Attendance check	Yes	Checked by class secretary
Review last meeting	Yes	Teacher reminds previous material
Sit in groups	Yes	Students sit according to their groups
Prepare discussion results	Yes	Given 5 minutes to prepare
Present group results	No	All members presented, not just spokesman
Check and correct results	Yes	Teacher checked and corrected the results
Conclude and give appreciation	on No	Teacher summarized and praised students
Closing greeting	No	Teacher ended with greetings
	Greeting and prayer  Attendance check  Review last meeting  Sit in groups  Prepare discussion results  Present group results  Check and correct results  Conclude and give appreciation	Greeting and prayer  Attendance check  Review last meeting  Yes  Sit in groups  Yes  Prepare discussion results  Yes  Present group results  No  Check and correct results  Yes  Conclude and give appreciation No

The second meeting took place on Monday, 16th December 2024, in class 11-X. In the previous meeting, the teacher had instructed students to discuss various topics in small groups and prepare a summary for the next session due to limited time. During this meeting, each group presented their discussion results within a 10-minute timeframe. One member from each group wrote the key points on the board

to help the teacher assess their work. After all presentations, the teacher evaluated the overall discussion outcomes, paying special attention to grammar and spelling errors. The teacher then summarized the entire group discussion process. To conclude the class, the teacher praised the students' excellent collaboration by asking them to clap their hands.

The researcher also conducted interviews with an English teacher (DP) to identify challenges in implementing the Small Group Discussion (SGD) technique in speaking classes. The main challenges highlighted were time management, classroom management, and managing students' participation. Time management is a significant obstacle as the teacher has only 90 minutes per day (2×45 minutes) to organize group division, discussions, and presentations. This limited time often makes it impossible to complete the SGD activities in one meeting, requiring them to be spread over several sessions. Despite SGD's effectiveness in fostering collaboration and critical thinking, it requires more time compared to traditional lecture methods.

Classroom management poses another difficulty. The noise generated by simultaneous group discussions can make the classroom environment chaotic and less conducive to learning. With six groups discussing at the same time, it is challenging for the teacher to monitor all groups effectively. The lack of structured management regarding timing and behavior during discussions contributes to this issue. Managing student participation is also a challenge. Often, only one or two students dominate the discussion, while others remain passive and do not contribute ideas. This inequality undermines the goal of SGD, which is to encourage active involvement from all students. The teacher must actively guide students to ensure everyone participates and shares their ideas. Factors such as varying confidence levels and communication skills influence participation, making the teacher's role crucial in managing group dynamics and encouraging equal involvement.

## **FINDINGS**

First, the study provided an overview of small group discussions as a cooperative learning method involving a limited number of participants who engage in in-depth discussions on specific topics. This method allows every member to express their opinions, ideas, and views. Since this technique cannot be completed in one session, the researchers conducted two meetings. In the first meeting, the teacher focused on dividing groups, distributing tasks within each group, and facilitating discussions among members. During this session, group members shared their opinions, which contributed positively to their later work. At the end of the discussion, students summarized their results to be presented in the next meeting.

In the second meeting, the teacher asked students to prepare and present the previous discussion outcomes. Each group was given 10 minutes for their presentation, and all members were required to participate. After presentations, the

teacher evaluated each group member and ensured that all members contributed. Observations showed that students had a high level of satisfaction with the small group discussion method. It also helped students develop better cooperation skills and significantly improved their overall learning performance.

Second, based on interviews with the teacher, three challenges in implementing the small group discussion technique for teaching speaking skills were identified: time management, classroom management, and managing student participation. The first challenge was time management. Although the method has many benefits, managing the time during discussions is difficult. Groups vary in their ability to understand material quickly or slowly, with some groups struggling to stay on topic. Additionally, dividing members into groups and distributing materials took a considerable amount of time. Many students also asked questions to clarify instructions, which further extended the process. Since learning time was limited to 2×45 minutes per day, the teacher found that at least two meetings were necessary for the method to be effective. Therefore, despite its effectiveness in improving student skills, careful time management strategies are essential to optimize learning.

The second challenge was managing the classroom environment. Since each group worked and spoke simultaneously, the resulting noise made it hard for the teacher to maintain order. The final challenge was managing students' participation. It was difficult for the teacher to monitor the contribution of each member individually within the limited time. To address this, the teacher assigned specific tasks to each member to ensure participation. Overall, teachers struggled to manage the learning process effectively with this method, and often the planned schedule was exceeded.

#### **DISCUSSION**

This study reviews two important findings: the steps for implementing the small group discussion method in English language learning for 11th grade students and the obstacles encountered by teachers when applying this method. The researchers first examined the small group discussion process used by teachers to teach speaking skills. The study revealed that teachers trained students' speaking skills by implementing small group discussions in three stages: dividing the class into several small groups of five students each, assigning each group a different discussion topic that required outlining key points, allowing groups to discuss their topics, and finally, having all group members present their discussions. This process aligns with Siswanti's (2022) research, which found that teachers used all the procedures of teaching speaking English through small group discussion techniques.

The purpose of small group discussions is to encourage all group members to contribute ideas, analyze, and evaluate their topics in order to reach conclusions. Students needed to express opinions and share information to build meaningful discussions. Preliminary data showed that students' speaking skills were lacking mainly because they rarely practiced speaking, felt shy to express ideas, and habitually used their native language. By applying small group discussions, students had the opportunity to practice speaking, share opinions, and collaborate with peers, which made the learning process more enjoyable. The observational checklist, developed from Dobson's (1981) theory and cited by Antoni (2014), highlighted that many teachers did not provide enough opportunities for students to speak English creatively during conversation classes. Dobson suggested that rather than waiting for knowledge acquisition from books, teachers should actively build students' confidence in using the language.

Observation results showed that the teacher conducted small group discussions in two meetings. In the first meeting, the teacher ensured students understood the purpose of the activity, formed six groups of six students each, and assigned roles such as group leader and notary. Each group received a different discussion topic, encouraging collaboration to unify the opinions shared by members. The group leader was responsible for guiding the discussion, encouraging quieter members to contribute, and collecting ideas. Meanwhile, the notary recorded ideas and summarized main points. The teacher monitored groups to prevent misunderstandings and keep discussions on track. Due to time constraints, presentations could not be completed in the first meeting; therefore, students were instructed to prepare presentations for the next meeting. During the second meeting, each group presented their results one by one, with every member given a chance to speak within the allotted time. After each presentation, the teacher provided brief evaluations and feedback, and the class applauded as a form of appreciation.

According to interviews, teachers faced several challenges in implementing the small group discussion technique to teach speaking skills. The first challenge was time management, as each meeting was limited to 2×45 minutes. Teachers had to carefully plan to align learning objectives within the available time. This aligns with Fadjarahi et al. (2020), who explained that small group discussions require more time because discussions often deviate from the given topic. Additionally, some students grouped with higher-achieving peers tended to rely on them, which led to unequal participation during discussions. The second challenge was classroom management, specifically maintaining quiet during discussions. The noise generated by multiple groups speaking and defending arguments simultaneously made it difficult for the teacher to monitor the class. To address this, the teacher continued to oversee each group and ensured discussions stayed on topic. The final challenge was managing individual student participation. The teacher struggled to ensure that every member contributed equally and ultimately gave equal scores based on the group's final results.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concluded that the small group discussion technique was implemented by the teacher in two sessions to improve the speaking skills of 11th-grade students at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi. In the first session, the teacher introduced the method, divided students into six groups, and assigned different discussion topics. Due to limited time, the presentation of discussion results was postponed to the next meeting. In the second session, each group presented their discussion outcomes, followed by the teacher's evaluation and student applause. The teacher faced three main challenges during the implementation: limited time (only 90 minutes per meeting), managing a sometimes noisy and unconducive classroom environment, and difficulty monitoring individual student participation in the discussions.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that teachers apply the small group discussion technique according to students' needs to help them overcome weaknesses in speaking and encourage active learning. Students are encouraged to participate actively and practice regularly to improve their speaking skills. Lastly, this study can serve as a reference for future research on small group discussions in speaking classes, with suggestions for other researchers to explore different research designs to enrich findings in this area.

#### THE AUTHOR

Tania Yosvi Tamara is the name of the author. She was born on April, 2002 in Penggalian. She graduated from high school at SMA Negeri 2 Tebing Tinggi in 2020. After graduating from high school, she enrolled in UNIMED and took the English Education Program. She studied there from 2020 and earnd her Sarjana Pendidikan degree in 2025.

#### REFERENCES

Achmadi, N. (2009). Metode penelitian. Bumi Angkasa.

Anwar, Y., Setyaji, A., & Ambarini, R. (2023). Small group discussion method's effectivity for improving the students of tenth-grade vocational high school 7 Semarang's speaking ability. *Jet Adi Buana*, 8(01), 15–27. <a href="https://doi.org/10.36456/jet.v8.n01.2023.7080">https://doi.org/10.36456/jet.v8.n01.2023.7080</a>

Argawati, N. (2014). Improving student speaking skill using group discussion. *ELTIN Journal*, 2, 74–81.

Barbara, D. (2009). Tools for teaching (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2019). Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices (3rd ed.). Pearson Education.

- Creswell, J. W. (2012). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.). Sage.
- Cristianita, S., & Mandasari, B. (2022). The use of small-group discussion to improve students' speaking skill. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 3(1), 61–66. <a href="https://doi.org/10.33365/jeltl.v3i1.1680">https://doi.org/10.33365/jeltl.v3i1.1680</a>
- Davison, J., & Dowson, J. (2009). Learning to teach English in the secondary school. Taylor and Francis.
- Djamarah, S. B. (2006). Strategi belajar mengajar. Rineka Cipta.
- Dobson, M. J. (1981). Effective techniques for English conversation groups. English Program Division.
- Douglas Brown, H. (2000). Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy (2nd ed.).
- Douglas Brown, H. (2004). *Language assessment-principles and classroom practice*. Pearson Education Inc.
- Eliyasun, E. R., & U. S. (2018). Improving students' speaking ability through guided questions. *Journal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran*, 7, 1–8.
- Fitrah, A. (2018). Using discussion technique to improve students' speaking skill in English at the eleventh grade of SMAN 2 Camba-Maros. Universitas Negeri Makassar.
- Harmer, J. (2007). The practice of English language teaching. Pearson Longman.
- Haryudin, A., & S. A. J. (2018). Teacher's difficulties in teaching speaking using audio visual aid for autistic students. *ELTIN Journal*, 6, 59–68.
- Hermansyah. (2021). Self talk strategy in improving the eleventh grade students' speaking ability. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 2.
- Khaerunnisa, N. R. (2022). Applying small group discussion technique to develop students' speaking skill (A quasi-experimental study at the seventh grade of SMPN 13 Kota Tangerang Selatan in academic year 2020/2021) [Unpublished thesis]. Department of English Education.
- Kriyantono. (2020). Teknik praktis riset komunikasi kuantitatif dan kualitatif disertai contoh praktis skripsi, tesis, dan riset media, public relation, advertising, komunikasi pemasaran. Pernadamedia Group.
- Luoma, S. (2004). Assessing speaking. Cambridge University Press.
- Mardhiyah, A., Jaya, A., & Uzer, Y. (2023). Students' speaking ability through small group discussion. *Esteem Journal of English Education Study Programme*, 6(1), 81–86. https://doi.org/10.31851/esteem.v6i1.10216

- Mart, C. T. (2012). Developing speaking skills through reading. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 2(6). <a href="https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v2n6p91">https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v2n6p91</a>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis:* A methods sourcebook (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- McDonough, J., & Shaw, C. (1993). *Materials and method in ELT*. Blackwell and Cambridge.
- Purba, J. (2018). Improving students' speaking achievement through the application of small group discussion method to the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 21 Medan. *KAIROS ELT*, 2.
- Rauf, A. (2017). Self and peer assessment in oral presentation. UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah Dan Keguruan.
- Rosadi, F. S., Nuraeni, C., & Priadi, A. (2020). The use of small group discussion strategy in teaching English speaking. *Pujangga*, 6(2), 134. <a href="https://doi.org/10.47313/pujangga.v6i2.992">https://doi.org/10.47313/pujangga.v6i2.992</a>
- Sugiyono. (2015). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D.* ALFABETA.
- Thornbury, S. (2005). How to teach speaking. Pearson Longman.
- Ur, P. (1995). A course in language teaching: Practice and theory. *System*, 25(3). <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/s0346-251x(97)84229-7">https://doi.org/10.1016/s0346-251x(97)84229-7</a>
- Zuhriyah, M. (2017). Storytelling to improve students' speaking skill. *Jurnal Tadris Bahasa Inggris*, 10, 119–134.