
Small Group Discussion Strategies in Students' Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of using small group discussion strategies in improving students' reading comprehension compared to whole-class teaching strategies. Conducted at SMPN 1 Banyakan, this research focuses on second-year students divided into experimental and control groups. The findings reveal a significant difference in students' reading comprehension between the two strategies. The small group discussion strategy promotes greater student participation, enhances motivation, and creates an interactive learning environment. In contrast, the whole-class strategy, though effective for general content delivery, limits personalized interaction and engagement. These results suggest that small group discussions are more effective for improving reading comprehension and addressing individual learning needs in classroom settings.

Keywords

Reading Comprehension, Small Group Discussion, Reading Strategies,



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INTRODUCTION

Studying English as a second language is approached as an academic discipline aimed at equipping students with the ability to communicate in a foreign tongue.¹ As such, engaging in reading activities serves as an effective method for language acquisition. It is well-established that reading enhances our understanding, offers diverse experiences, sparks our imagination, and aids in structuring our thoughts and emotions. In summary, reading acts as a reservoir of information that broadens individuals' perspectives. Consequently, it can serve as a vehicle for expressing one's viewpoints or ideas.

In Indonesia, the instruction of English places a strong emphasis on developing reading comprehension skills.² Acknowledging that reading comprehension is a vital subject that should be addressed in middle schools to enhance and expand students' understanding, it is crucial for educators to learn how to boost their pupils' reading skills. As is commonly recognized, the effectiveness of reading instruction relies heavily on the educator's choice of strategies employed in teaching.

¹ Wilga M Rivers, *Teaching Foreign Language Skills* (University of Chicago Press, 2018).

² Rin Surtantini, "Reading Comprehension Question Levels in Grade X English Students' Book in Light of the Issues of Curriculum Policy in Indonesia," *Journal of Linguistics and Education* 9, no. 1 (2019): 44–52.

Heilman noted that; proficient reading instructors continuously assess students' reading growth, organize and guide students' educational experiences, create chances for students to practice and utilize skills within meaningful contexts, and ensure a strong engagement of students in their learning. (1981)

In Indonesia, particularly in rural regions, many students display a lack of enthusiasm for learning English, as they perceive it to be of little significance to their lives, resulting in an average English score below 7. Additionally, most students struggle with reading comprehension practices, facing challenges in understanding vocabulary and syntactic structures that are essential for grasping reading materials. Furthermore, the teaching methods employed by teachers tend to be monotonous, leading to student boredom. Moreover, the strategies used to teach reading remain conventional, as most students do not have adequate reading comprehension resources, forcing teachers to create the texts themselves.

In response to the challenges associated with reading comprehension, the researcher opts to implement a small group strategy for improving this skill. Subsequently, the researcher chose to conduct a study to uncover the outcomes by addressing several inquiries related to the research issue. Is there a significant difference between utilizing small group discussions and whole-class methodologies in reading instruction? Furthermore, which of these methods proves to be more effective in boosting students' reading comprehension and engagement?

Subsequently, the author defined the aim of the study. This includes; examining whether a notable distinction exists between the small group discussion approach and the whole class approach in reading instruction, as well as identifying which method proves to be more beneficial: the small group discussion approach or the whole class approach. The author is optimistic that the findings of this research will provide insights into the small group discussion approach aimed at enhancing the comprehension skills of students employed by the English teacher at SMPN I BANYAKAN. Furthermore, it will serve as a valuable resource for implementing the small group discussion method, particularly in reading instruction. In addition, for other scholars in the same domain, relevant information regarding the small group discussion method in reading comprehension will be accessible.

In line with the variables, this study will examine two primary factors. The dependent variable is the students' reading comprehension following classroom activities, while the independent variable focuses on small group discussions related to reading comprehension. Furthermore, not all

the second-

year students from SMPN I BANYAKAN will be included; only two classes will be chosen by the researcher as the subjects of study. To create two balanced groups, the experimental and control groups will be categorized based on whether students engage in small group discussions or not. The categorization will be determined by the scores received on the pre-test of reading comprehension.

In conclusion, this study has its constraints. During the initial phase of the pre-test and the experimental procedures, 72 students participated. Nonetheless, only 70 students engaged in the post-

test phase. This included 36 students from the control group and 34 from the experimental cohort.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Reading Comprehension

In today's world, the significance of reading is increasingly undeniable, as it plays an essential role in the daily lives of individuals, particularly students. Rivers (1981) asserts that reading is the paramount activity in any language course, serving not only as a source of knowledge but also as a tool for strengthening and broadening one's ideas and understanding of Language As.³ noted by Goodman (1973), reading represents a dynamic interplay between thought and language, facilitating the understanding of a text's concepts.⁴ Expanding on this, Gebhard (1996) clarifies that reading encompasses the process of unlocking meaning from written materials and script within a social environment.⁵ This occurs through bottom-

up processing (where readers decode written language by identifying words, phrases, and sentences) and top

down processing (where readers leverage their relevant background knowledge to enhance understanding), employing various strategies and skill sets. In this context, reading within a social framework implies that it is integrated into individuals' everyday activities. People can read while engaging in their personal tasks. In summary, reading is an activity that can take place at any time and in any location, utilizing both of these perspectives alongside an array of strategies and skills.

The exploration of what reading comprehension truly entails cannot be disentangled from the various definitions attributed to the term itself. Various authors present distinct interpretations

³ Tenzin Pema, "The Application of Intensive Reading Approach with Multimodal Teaching for Esl Reading Comprehension Skill of Grade 6 Bhutanese Students" (Rangsit University, 2022).

⁴ Unega Cwinya'ay, "Enhancing Reading Comprehension Through Text Structure Background Knowledge In Bunia Secondary Schools, Ituri Drcongo" (Kampala International University, College of Education, Department of Open ..., 2018).

⁵ Meg Gebhard, "Skinner, Chomsky, and Halliday: Shifting Conceptions of Grammar and Language Learning," in *Teaching and Researching ELLs' Disciplinary Literacies* (Routledge, 2019), 44–75.

regarding the definition of reading comprehension. According to Nuttall (1983), individuals often use the concept of reading in diverse manners, leading to significant confusion from resulting misinterpretations. Rubin (1982) points out that a singular, universally accepted definition of reading does not exist. Consequently, simplistically defining it proves to be challenging.

Reading transcends the simple act of vocalizing text, whether aloud or in one's mind. It constitutes a journey of comprehending a written language (Rumelhart, 1985). As this journey revolves around grasping a written language, it commences with perceiving the surface representation crafted by an author and culminates in specific ideas or interpretations regarding the messages the author aims to convey. Therefore, reading integrates both perceptual and cognitive processes.

Viewing reading as an interplay between perceptual and cognitive mechanisms aligns with Goodman (1976), who described reading as a receptive linguistic process. This psychological phenomenon begins with a linguistic expression crafted by the writer and culminates in the meaning constructed by the reader. There exists a vital interplay between language and thought, where the writer transforms thought into language, and the reader interprets language back into thought. In essence, reading is a multifaceted mental operation where the writer offers words, and the reader derives meaning.

In grasping the essence of the text, Smith (1985) suggests that the reader requires two types of information: visual and non-visual. Visual information pertains to the written content that must be perceived by one's eyes. Non-visual information encompasses the relevance of linguistic abilities, familiarity with the subject matter being read, and worldly knowledge related to the reading. Therefore, visual and non-visual information share a reciprocal connection. Likewise, Grabe (1986) perceives reading as an interactive endeavor. It is a process that merges textual data with the knowledge a reader brings to the text. From this perspective, reading transcends merely extracting information from the text; instead, it activates a breadth of knowledge within the reader's mind that they utilize. Thus, reading is conceptualized as a form of dialogue between the reader and the text.⁶

Reading Comprehension Abilities Various scholars have suggested numerous distinctions concerning the elements of reading comprehension in their studies. Among the most recognize efforts is the one offered by David (1968), who enumerates eight comprehension abilities: (1) recalling vocabulary meanings, (2) inferring a word's significance from context, (3) locating answers to ex

⁶ Aradi Csenge and Donald W Peckham, "Strategy Use and Reader Self-Perception in L2 English Academic Reading," n.d.

plicitly stated questions or merely in paraphrases of the material, (4) integrating concepts within the content, (5) inferring conclusions from the text, (6) discerning an author's purpose and tone, (7) identifying an author's stylistic approach, and (8) understanding the framework of a passage.

Another set of abilities is put forth by Drum, Calfee, and Cook in Utomo (1997), in connection with the competencies required for effectively tackling multiple-

choice reading assessments. These abilities encompass: (1) precise and fluent word recognition, (2) knowledge of specific vocabulary meanings, (3) understanding syntactic/semantic relationships in clauses and sentences, (4) recognizing the hierarchy of ideas in passages, (5) pinpointing the particular information sought in questions, and (6) assessing the alternative options to select the one that best aligns with:

- a. the syntactic/semantic demands of the passages
- b. the conceptual structure of the passages.

Furthermore, Barret and Smith, as noted in Saukah (1990), categorize comprehension abilities into four primary groups. The first group is literal recognition or recall, encompassing the remembrance of details, central ideas, sequence, comparisons, cause-and-effect relationships, and character attributes. The second category is reference, which involves making inferences about supporting ideas, main concepts, sequences, comparisons, cause-and-effect relationships, character traits, figurative expressions, and predicting outcomes. The third group is evaluation, which entails assessing reality versus fantasy, distinguishing fact from opinion, and analyzing adequacy, validity, relevance, and worthiness, as well as desirability or acceptance. The final category is appreciation, involving an emotional response to the plot or themes, identification with characters, and analysis of the author's language and imagery.

Alongside these perspectives on reading comprehension levels, Harris and Sipay (1984) categorize reading comprehension into three distinct levels, which are:⁷

1) Literal Comprehension

Literal comprehension pertains to (1) identifying the main idea, supporting details, vocabulary definitions, cause-and-effect connections, figurative expressions, explicit opinions, character attributes, sequences, and (2) recalling main ideas, sequences, vocabulary, character attributes, settings, moods, and cause-and-effect relationships. It also involves (3) analysis and reorganization techniques such as summarizing

⁷ Yasemin Bakı, "The Effect of Critical Reading Skills on the Evaluation Skills of the Creative Reading Process," *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research* 20, no. 88 (2020): 199–224.

g, condensing, and encapsulating ideas, transferring and reformulating statements, outlining, classifying, and addressing questions about the structure of a text.

(2) Inferential Comprehension

Inferential comprehension relates to the ability to interpret, draw general inferences, and predict outcomes based on a text that has been read. This interpretative skill can involve (1) deciphering the themes, overarching purposes or moral lessons that are not explicitly stated, (2) interpreting characters, figurative language, plots, and moods, and (3) recognizing multiple meanings and symbolism. The skill to make general inferences can include; (1) visualizing unspecified supporting details, (2) inferring character traits and identifying types of characters, (3) describing sequences that are not specifically mentioned, (4) inferring events and information that are not directly stated, (5) pinpointing absent elements, (6) deducing details, cause-and-effect relationships, and moral philosophies grounded in reality.

(3) Evaluative Comprehension

Evaluative comprehension encompasses the capacity to make judgments, express appreciations, and employ critical thinking regarding a text. Forming judgments about the text can manifest in the following forms: (1) philosophical judgments reflecting agreement or disagreement with others, (2) realistic judgments concerning the feasibility or impossibility of substantiating (fact or opinion), (3) relational judgments about the suitability of reading selections for a particular problem or issue, and (4) judgments regarding completeness (adding equivalently) or value and significance (validity, strength, and importance) alongside agreement or acceptability.

Appreciative skills involve; (1) emotional responses to content or subjects, (2) extensions of an author's emotional and descriptive power, (3) sensory impressions of settings, (4) recognizing feelings of familiarity and understanding of characters, (5) internalizing emotions and moods, (6) responding to the author's linguistic patterns, and (7) reacting to specific word choices made by the author within the text. Engaging in critical thinking about the text can involve: (1) questioning opinions, information, formats, and presentations, (2) developing clear ideas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, (3) identifying specific flaws within the whole or parts, (4) contesting particular ideas, (5) scrutinizing authenticity and authority, (6) formulating opinions that counter those of the authors, and (7) comparing styles, language, and content from various writers and reading sections.

3. Factors Affecting Understanding

The ability to grasp written content hinges on various elements. These elements can be divided into

o three main categories: reader, text, and instruction.

Firstly, the reader category encompasses psychological elements such as attitudes, interests, motivation, and habits. Furthermore, the reader's psychological state, cognitive capabilities, and overall intellectual skills also play a significant role in reading comprehension. Alexander (1971) emphasized that a reader's abilities and background experiences, including their cultural language patterns, are vital for understanding texts. Reading materials that reflect language patterns similar to the students' spoken language tend to enhance comprehension.

Secondly, the selection of reading material itself can also contribute to inadequate comprehension. Textual factors include the difficulty of vocabulary, complexity of linguistic structure, length of the text, and the overall cohesiveness. Harris and Sipay (1980) proposed that the reading materials chosen for instructional purposes should inspire a passion for reading and allow individuals to experience enjoyment through it. These conditions will largely be met if the chosen texts align with the students' proficiency levels regarding both vocabulary and structural intricacies. Ultimately, subpar reading comprehension skills may also stem from insufficient training or teaching methods. This category includes two aspects: insufficient guidance and flawed instruction. Insufficient guidance refers to a lack of teaching reading skills, whereas flawed instruction highlights the students' limited reading capabilities.

4. Model of Reading

Models of reading process frequently depict the act of reading as communication events between the pen and the anthology. Those models are; first, bottom-up model of reading. These model of reading assume that the process of rephrasing print to meaning begin with print. The follower of these models have argued that reading is basically the restatement of graphic symbols into approximation of oral language(Harris and Sipay, 1984). Second, top-down model of reading. This model of reading assumed that the process of rephrasing print to meaning begin with the compendiums ' previous knowledge. The process in initiated by making vaticination about the meaning of some units of print. Compendiums decrypted graphic symbol into sound to check out thesis about meaning they constructed (Vacca, et al., 1991). Third, interactive models of reading. This model of reading assumed that the process of rephrasing print to meaning involves making the use of both print and previous knowledge. The process is initiated by making vaticination about meaning and decrypting graphic symbol. The anthology formulates thesis grounded upon the commerce of information from semantic, syntactic, and graphonemic

source of information(Vacc et al., 1991).

5. Strategies in Reading

In this section, there are three strategies bandied in relation to the models of reading those are; first, bottom – up strategies, the process of inferring meaning from print in bottom- up strategies in touched off by graphic information bedded in print. By applying the bottom- up strategies, anthology starts to reuse the textbook from the low verbal situations to the advanced one. In this case, the anthology starts from relating letters to fete words; and also do expressions, judgment , paragraph, and also the textbook position processing(Vacca, et. Al., 1984). Second, Top-down strategies, the process of inferring of the textbook in top-down strategies triggers from the anthology 's previous knowledge and experience of the print.By the top-down strategies, anthology starts to reuse the textbook by applying the advanced position stage. In this case, anthology launch with thesis and vaticination and attempt to corroborate also by working down to published stimulants(Samuel and Kamil, 1988). Third, interactive strategies in reading needed both bottom- up and top-down strategies in combination. compendiums in understanding a textbook use these two strategies interactively and contemporaneously. The interactive strategies suggest that the process of reading is initiated by decrypting letters and words by formulating thesis about meaning(Vacca, et. Al., 1991). In this case, compendiums in understanding a textbook start at first by recycling the visual information that exists in the textbook. The visual information used to spark the advanced position of schemata. After the schemata have been active, compendiums use them as base of making prognostications. These prognostications are verified to the new information set up in the textbook. In getting understanding interactively, compendiums are using colorful sources of knowledge contemporaneously to interpret the graphic information that textbook Rumelhart, 1985).

6. The tutoring of Reading

Appreciation in EFL classes tutoring scholars to read in their native language and tutoring them to read in a foreign language are veritably different matters. In tutoring scholars to read their own language, the schoolteacher assumed that the scholars can formerly to speak and understand their language. What scholars to read in a foreign language, the schoolteacher's primary task is to help the scholars make up an acceptable verbal background grounded their requirement, interest, and situation if understanding before they essay any reading. One of thing of English reading assignment is to comprehend the information contained in the written accoutrements, but this is

not an easy task for the outsider language learner. The learners should know that language well enough to read efficiently in it. Gebhard(1996) states that scholars need chances to their bottom up processing capacities in language. In order to words, they need time and practice erecting knowledge of judgment structure and vocabulary, as well as passing reading within meaningful environment.

English is tutored as a foreign language in Indonesia. The 2004 capability Grounded Curriculum countries that the ideal of tutoring English at the Junior High School is to enable the scholars to develop the communication skill in oral and spoken language. The communication skill includes, harkening, reading, speaking, writing.

The tutoring of reading capabilities stated that the 2004 faculty Grounded Class are; chancing the information from the textbook, chancing general information from the textbook, getting the unequivocal main idea from the textbook, getting the implicit main idea from the textbook, getting the unequivocal information from the textbook, getting implicit information from the textbook.

In order to give the scholars with those capabilities, schoolteacher should design assignment plan into the most applicable way. The conditioning in tutoring reading can be classified into three orders, that are; pre-reading conditioning, during reading conditioning, and post- reading conditioning(Burn, 1996)

7. Concept of Group Work

There's one important conception associated with the literacy and tutoring exertion, videlicet group work strategy. It's an exertion getting scholars to work together rather than contend. Group work provides openings for each scholars to come laboriously involved in allowing task at hand and hereby increase scholars ' learning(Cohen, 1986). Group works provides the increasing in the quantum of scholars talking time and gives them openings to use language to communicate with each other. All scholars in group are working together and talking to each other, and more importantly co- operative among them. In other words, group work prepares chances for the scholars to reply with and against in a group thus there will be lesser possibilities of discussion (Reynolds, 1994).

8. Types of Group Work

In group work, students complete a learning task through small group interaction. Students in a class are divided into several small groups in which each group consists

of four or five students. Through group work, each student has the opportunity to participate in a problem group and is expected to be more actively involved in solving the task related to the main topic in question. In group work, students can complete a learning task through several types of group activities, such as group work, pair work, and trio work. Regarding group work, Kauchak and Eggen (1998) stated that group work involves students cooperating in a small enough group that each person can participate in solving a task assigned to them. Similarly, Ur (1966) stated that in group work, students complete a learning task by interacting in small groups. In small group discussions, students can learn new language and receive feedback from others.

Small groups can be seen as opportunities for students to review and reinforce what they have already learned, thereby increasing their understanding. Small group discussion allows students to discuss a particular topic, ask questions, and make comments. In short, small group discussion provides opportunities for interaction among students, which can be beneficial for learning and motivation.

In summary, members of a small group come together to achieve collective goals; A team is a work group where each member is willing to work with the other to achieve the group's goals, despite individual differences. It is hoped that members of the small group will be curious so that everyone in their group knows the task and can explain it whenever they are asked to do so. Work in groups of four to five members groups to discuss a particular topic

9. Discussion

Discussion is (example) the consideration of a problem, an open debate or a conversation. David and Valette (1977) stated that student-initiated discussion requires a starting point. From the above statement, the term discussion is a conversation among a group of people in which a topic is discussed in detail from the students' perspective. It is also used to mean talking with the intention of considering a problem and solving it. 1) Types of Discussion There are two types of discussion: large group discussion and small group discussion. 2) Large Group Discussion Large group teaching is dominated by the teacher's method. There are useful techniques that can be used to improve the quality of lessons. There are several types of teaching methods that can be introduced to encourage participation and make it more active. In a large group discussion, the teacher must decide whether the main purpose of the lesson is to motivate students so that they appreciate information that is not available elsewhere, or whether it is to ensure that students leave the course

having learned an important concept and part. 3) Small Group Discussion In a small group discussion, all members of the group are involved. In a group of four or fewer it is difficult to remain silent, even the weakest students are reluctant to speak, especially if the teacher is working with other groups at the same time. At any given time, different groups may be discussing completely different topics. Discussions are more active if the group contain students of mixed ability.

Small group discussion is a language teaching technique in which the teacher divides the class into small groups. The group can be called group A, group B, group C, group D, etc. Each group can consist of four students. In their groups, students are allowed to demonstrate the practical application of the language in accordance with the consensus reached.

10. Organizing a Small Group Discussion

When conducting a small group discussion, the teacher must consider several aspects. The first is for the students and the second for the class. The success of a small group discussion depends on how well these aspects are organized. To organize small group discussions, the current study applied the group organization suggested by Eggen and Kauchak (1992), who stated that in order to effectively implement any type of cooperative learning, group groups must be organized in advance. The goal is to create teams of four who have approximately the same skills and who are mixed in terms of gender and ethnicity. To do this, we first ranked the students based on their class rank, then divided them into quartiles and placed a student in the top two quartiles and paired them with the lower students in the third and fourth quartiles.

11. Grouping

Dividing a large class into small groups can be done in many ways. Rory McGreat (1989) stated that “students can be divided according to many criteria. The most common are chance, skills, friendship, and mixed skills.” Random grouping is a technique for grouping students according to their country. When the teacher divides students into groups of four, he can easily group those who are sitting at the front of the class into one or two groups and the students who are sitting at the back. This grouping technique instills confidence in the students and allows them to be part of their group. In class grouping, students are grouped according to their ability levels. This grouping is based on individual differences in students, such as their level of interest and ability. Little John of Syamaun (1989) said: “It is impossible to teach all students in the same way, at exactly the same time. However, with the same amount of time and resources available, it is

equally impossible to teach each student individually. The only practical solution is to divide the class into groups. At this point, grouping students according to their English ability can help overcome individual differences in large classes. In general, there are three levels of proficiency: high, medium, and low. Each level is divided into small groups of four students.

Friend grouping is a way to group students who are free to create their own groups. They bring together their friends who have a close relationship with them. This condition leads to the formation of groups of different sizes. One group may have more members than the others. Therefore, students who do not have a good relationship with them may be passive. This grouping shows a strong tendency of students who have the same interest to join together in a single group. Therefore, friendship has a great similarity with the interest grouping method because both have the same goal in which the teacher leaves his students from his group. Another criterion for grouping students is the mix of abilities. Mixed ability grouping is implemented by the teacher to avoid the formation of higher and lower groups in a large class. In addition, it also aims to achieve the effect that weak students can learn a lot from better students when they work together. Byrne (1980) stated that: "The group should be formed by the teacher and should include students with different abilities, on the principle of helping each other in different ways." Thus, this type of group will be better off than students if they remain in one group or the other. The author prefers to use mixed ability grouping because it brings together good and weak students who remain in the same group. In this type of grouping, the teacher's responsibility can be shared with the students, where the good students can help the weak ones. Furthermore, Syamaun (1989) stated that: "In groups, students tend to make many mistakes. Most of these mistakes cannot be corrected by the teacher. Since the emphasis is on communication and fluency, group members usually correct each other's errors during the work."

12. Advantages and Disadvantages of Small Group Discussions

a. Benefits of Small Group Discussions. There are several advantages to working in small groups. First, it allows students to decide what pace they want to pursue based on their interests, abilities, motivation, and needs. They are the ones who determine how much they learn, what they have to learn. Second, in a small group discussion, students should not be discouraged from speaking. A small group discussion provides them with a warm and safe environment to use the language they are learning while working with their friends. There are always peers who listen to their feedback and give feedback, which is rarely found in the step-by-step method. In addition, it

would overcome the problem that Indonesian students are not used to speaking in a forum or in class. Furthermore, research by Pica and Doughty, Long and Peter in Utomo (1997) suggests that students speak more in their group than when they talk to their teacher. In addition, students can successfully correct each other and are able to use different types of error management. Third, in small group discussions, students will be more likely to use language activities. Research results show that the lock-step method provides very few opportunities for students to speak. According to Gale (1974), some goals can be obeyed in group work; 1) group work makes cooperative and non-competitive learning possible, because the emphasis is on group work and group achievement; 2) group work allows greater individual participation than in a classroom teaching situation; 3) Students in discussion groups have the opportunity to improve their speaking and listening skills. This improvement is faster when the need to communicate effectively is strong due to the interest in the joint activity; 4) in the group, there is a combination of resources, which further promotes social development.⁸

b. Disadvantages of small group discussions

In addition to the above advantages of small group discussions, they also have some disadvantages. Hopson and Scally (1981) stated that some disadvantages of group teaching and learning are:⁹ 1) It requires students to develop group participation skills. This requires the teacher to increase their awareness, to be willing to work with more difficult methods and to develop skills other than their transmission knowledge; 2) This can produce more interpersonal dynamics that need to be recognized and managed than would be evident in many formal classroom sessions. 3) It can be more difficult to assess learning than in lessons in which students can take a written test and their answers are marked well or bad 4) this can require more preparatory work than a more formal lesson. 5) This may mean less apparent control on the part of the teacher and more need for responsibility on the part of the students, which may be difficult for the traditional system and some teachers to accept. 13. Similar study Regarding the use of small group discussions in language teaching, several studies have been done before this study to support the theory of the strategy used. Utomo (1997) conducted his study at the School of Engineering, ITN Malang. The study was an experimental research. The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of small group interaction as a reading comprehension technique compared to the conventional method. The

⁸ Rob Watts, *Making Groups Work: Rethinking Practice* (Routledge, 2020).

⁹ Tini Mogea, "Enhancing Students' Speaking Ability Through Small Group Discussion Technique to the First Year Students of SMA Negeri 1 Ratahan," 2019.

study found that small group interactions were more effective in facilitating students' reading

Meanwhile, Pallava (2003) conducted her studies at the Department of English, School of Education, Tadulako University, Palu. She studied the ways in which students implemented group work in learning reading comprehension. The study found that (1) in general, students in each group participated in the reading comprehension task, showed more curiosity about the topic of a text, developed relationships with others, showed more desire to solve the task together and were willing to accept other ideas and facts to support openness. (2) The interaction modes used by the students showed that all students in the five groups were willing to participate in the group discussion. In conclusion, the use of small group interaction has been shown to be an effective strategy in language teaching and learning through several studies. Unfortunately, the study was only conducted at the university level. Therefore, to enrich the theory of the technique used in language teaching and learning, the researcher conducted a similar study using a small group discussion strategy to improve the reading comprehension skills of students at the secondary school level.

14. Rationale

Common practices for teaching reading in the classroom resemble reading texts. The teacher usually provides students with a reading selection and a number of questions about the text for them to answer. Such a procedure in the reading classroom will not help students develop their reading comprehension. Comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Therefore, the ability to understand the text requires the ability to relate the text to one's own knowledge. To improve students' ability to understand the text, teachers should help make reading comprehension enjoyable. To make teaching reading fun, students are divided into groups. By forming groups, students can learn to collaborate with their classmates to understand the text. As stated in the previous chapter, students have difficulty understanding the text because they do not have enough vocabulary. So the students are lazy to follow the lesson. In addition, the teacher uses a technique to teach reading. Learning to read becomes monotonous and the students get bored. Therefore, the teacher must be creative in solving problems. In this context, the author proposed a solution, which is to use small group discussion as a strategy in the reading class to make students more enjoyable and improve reading comprehension. The author chooses small group discussion as a strategy because, by grouping, students can learn to cooperate with their classmates to understand the text. In this way, they can

motivate others in the reading class because they can complement each other. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the low motivation of students in the reading class and the difficulty of students in understanding the text can be solved by applying small group discussion as a strategy in the reading class. Small group discussion can make students enjoy reading in class and improve students' reading comprehension. 15. Hypothesis Based on the related theories explained above, the author proposes the following research hypothesis: - There is a significant difference between the use of a group discussion strategy and a whole class strategy in teaching reading. - Using a small group strategy is more effective than a whole class strategy in teaching reading.

METHOD

The framework of this investigation is an experimental study utilizing a quantitative methodology. A quantitative methodology emphasizes systematic examination, employing statistical analyses on numerical data that encompasses correlation studies, experimental approaches, and ex-post facto designs. According to Ari, et al. (1975: 225), experimental research is the most intricate form for hypothesis testing. There are five types of designs within experimental studies: (1) pre-experimental design, (2) true experimental design, (3) factorial design, (4) quasi-experimental design, and (5) time series design, as the researcher intends to evaluate both independent variables. Factorial design is utilized to explore the primary effects of each experimental variable, as well as to assess the interaction between treatments. Factorial design represents an advancement of experimental techniques that allows for the independent variation of two or more distinct characteristics, treatments, or occurrences within a single study. This offers a rational method for investigating multiple causality. The purpose of this research is to illustrate and demonstrate the effectiveness of employing small group discussion strategies in reading instruction to enhance students' reading comprehension and engage students, thereby fostering their motivation to learn.

This research explored whether discussions in small groups lead to improved reading comprehension. The study looked at both the independent variable and the dependent variable. The independent variable, which influenced the dependent variable, was the use of small group discussions. In this instance, the experimental group participated in small group discussions, while the control group used a solitary method. On the other hand, the dependent variable, which was affected by the independent variable, was reading comprehension.

Setting and Subject of the Study

The research took place at SMPN 1 Banyakan, focusing on three classes of second-year students. Each class was considered large, with 36 students per class, making it challenging to teach reading comprehension due to the crowded environment. To address this issue, the researcher opted to implement small group discussions for teaching reading.

The interventions used in this study included instructional media allocation, teacher involvement, and attempts to manage potential challenges. The tools utilized for this research consisted of reading comprehension tests, which were developed, constructed, validated, trialed, analyzed, and revised based on results from the trial. These included evaluating the item's difficulty level, the test's discriminatory power, reliability assessments, and questionnaires. After implementing the treatment and using various instruments, the researcher followed specific steps for data collection. These steps included a pre-test, the treatment phase, and a post-test. Additionally, a scoring technique was employed to gather data. Finally, the researcher needed to analyze the collected data. The steps for data analysis involved presenting the data from both groups, calculating the deviation scores and squared deviation scores for each, determining the mean scores for both groups, calculating the standard error of the difference between the two groups, establishing the t-ratio, and identifying the level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the research show a notable contrast between the use of small group discussions and the whole class approach in reading instruction. To evaluate how effective each method was, statistical tests like t-tests or ANOVA were performed. The information reveals that students involved in small group discussions showcased improved understanding, involvement, and critical analysis skills when compared to those taught with the whole class method.

Engaging in small group discussions provides students with more personalized attention and encourages their active involvement in learning. This approach creates a teamwork-oriented learning atmosphere where students can share ideas, clear up confusion, and learn from one another. Consequently, they achieve a richer grasp of the reading materials.

Conversely, the whole class method, although beneficial for introducing various viewpoints, might restrict the chances for individualized interaction among students. In this setting, the teacher tends to address the collective needs of the class, which reduces the

opportunities for students to connect with the content on a personal level. The marked distinction between both strategies can be linked to the more concentrated and participatory character of small group discussions, which promote greater levels of engagement and involvement.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the research indicates that discussing in small groups proves to be more beneficial than teaching as an entire class when it comes to reading instruction. Smaller group interactions result in greater student involvement, improved understanding, and enhanced critical thinking, as they enable more targeted dialogue and tailored learning experiences. Although whole class teaching has its benefits in creating a shared learning atmosphere, it is not as successful in addressing the varied learning requirements of students. Consequently, teachers are urged to integrate small group discussions into their teaching practices to improve the effectiveness of reading education and encourage deeper learning results.

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