

Implementation of Small Group Discussion in Teaching Writing Descriptive Text: Senior High School Teacher's Experience

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Abstract

Small group discussion is a student-centered method that is effective in increasing students' activeness, for example, in learning writing. This research aims to explore teacher's experience in implementing small group discussions when teaching writing descriptive text. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, data was collected by interviewing the teacher was teaching writing descriptive text using small group discussion in senior high school grade 11th. The result shows the teacher's experience in implementing small group discussions in teaching writing descriptive is good, and her opinion about this method is that small group discussions are proven effective when implemented in class and can increase students' activeness, creativity, and confidence. Moreover, small group discussions also have disadvantages; one is that students rely on their friends in the group. So, the solution that the teacher can do is to make students' assessment diagnostic to know better and understand the potential skills that students have.

Keywords: Small Group Discussion; Teaching Writing; Teacher's Experience

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the languages widely used to communicate between countries. Even in Indonesia, English is the foreign language most often used in communication. The Indonesian Ministry of Education has included English in the curriculum, but its implementation has not been optimal. It happens because many teachers still use the teacher-centered method when teaching. Mega & Hermawan (2020) stated that many teachers still use the teacher-centered method when teaching, where the teacher plays a central role in achieving learning outcomes and is the only source of knowledge. She also explained that if the teacher-centered method was no longer appropriate to learning outcomes due to the development of increasingly sophisticated technology, students could not only gain knowledge from teachers. Other learning methods can be used besides teacher-centered, one of which is student-centered, where learning is centered on students. One learning method that uses the student-centered method is small group discussions, and teachers can use this method when teaching, especially for teaching writing.

The application of small group discussions in teaching writing has already been carried out; this is found in Lestari's research in 2019 concerning the application of small group discussions in teaching writing recount text and Nuraini's research in 2018 that focuses on improving students' writing description text skill using small group discussion method. Furthermore, Agustina et al. (2021) completed research about the implementation of small group discussion that focused on students' achievement after implementing small group discussions as a learning method. The gap that distinguishes this study from previous studies is the study focuses on teacher's experience after implementing the Small Group Discussion method in teaching writing descriptive text.

Small group discussion is a learning method where students are divided into groups and share information freely at the direction of the teacher/presenter (Brewer, 1997). In this method, students will be divided into several groups, making presentations and discussions or doing group assignments. This learning method makes students active during the learning process and increases student participation while studying in class. Brewer (1997) mentioned the advantages of small group discussions, such as all students can be a discussion participants during learning process; a good way to increase students' interest at the discussion topic; for students, it is easier to understand their friends' explanation than their teacher's explanation; the teacher can identify the students who need help; the teacher can identify individual opinion about the discussion topic; and it helps the students to understand relation among concepts or ideas that related to the discussion topic.

However, the disadvantages of small group discussion are that too much time is wasted during the discussion, it can cause dependence on groups because they rely on friends, so they are not visible in the discussion; it can cause dominance in certain groups that can explain their opinions well so that other groups do not contribute well; the class atmosphere is difficult to control by the teacher (Agustina et al., 2020). In addition, Lestari (2019) also stated about disadvantages of small group discussion such as, some students who do not participate when doing the assignment, students who need more time to write the task because their lack of vocabulary, the learning process takes a long time, and students' motivation in writing out language is still low. Furthermore, Lestari (2019) also mentioned solutions to overcome the weaknesses of small group discussions that have been explained above. First, for students' lack of vocabulary, the teacher can ask students to bring a dictionary to help them when doing their assignment, especially when they find words that they do not know the English translation. Second, for students who do not participate in the learning process, the teacher can explain the role of each group member. Third, for the learning process that needs too much time, the teacher can explain learning material in a simple way and also give simple activities during the learning process. Last, for low students' motivation in writing out language, the teacher can give humor/jokes/motivation for the students during the learning process.

To implement small group discussion as a learning method, Brewer (1997) stated that three steps must be taken. The first step is the introduction; the teacher must prepare the things needed for the discussion, such as determining the topic to be discussed and preparing materials and assignments to be discussed in class. The second step is directing the discussion; the teacher can ask questions to start the discussion or ask students to share information about the discussion topic from their life experiences; also, if students start discussing topics that are not following those that have been determined, the teacher can direct the discussion back to the original topic. The last step is summarizing the discussion; the teacher can write the conclusions and summary of the discussion results on the board.

Writing is a communication activity that people often do. In English, the ability to write is one of the skills that must be learned. According to Hanafiawi et al. (2020), the ability to write is a way to express oneself correctly through an unnatural process, namely turning unspoken expression into a sentence. In addition, writing is also an activity where a person finds ideas, organizes and arranges them into paragraphs that are clear to the reader (Nunan, 2003).

Descriptive text describes an object that is seen, heard, experienced, or felt by the writer. The object described in the text can be a place, location, person, or event (Putri et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Oshima and Hogue (2007) explained that descriptive text is a text that deals with the senses. The structure of descriptive text uses spatial order, namely the arrangement of objects based on spatial order sequentially, as when describing a building, it is better to order the objects or rooms in the building from right to left or left to right rather than describing them randomly (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Meanwhile, Marsada (2010) stated that the structure of

descriptive text is divided into two parts, namely identification and description. The identification section explains an object or phenomenon in general, and the description section explains an object or phenomenon in detail, such as the quality of the object or the characteristics of the phenomenon to be explained. Language features in the descriptive text include using simple present tense, adjectives, and classification in nominal groups (Knapp and Watkins, 2005).

METHOD

Research design used by the researcher in the study is qualitative research. According to Creswell (2009) qualitative research is a research focus on exploring and understanding human problem or the meaning individuals or group ascribe to a social. Participant in this research was the English teacher who taught 11th grade high school students that studied writing about descriptive text. The researcher chose participant who taught writing descriptive text using small group discussions by using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is "a nonprobability sampling technique in which subjects are judged to be representative of the population included in the sample" (Ary, 2010). Researcher used interview to collect data from participant. The type of interview used by the researcher is a semi-structured interview where the researcher will read the questions asked of the respondent directly and record the respondent's answers using a phone. If the respondent's answer can still be explained in more depth, the researcher will ask again for further information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The data was obtained by interview and the researcher asked 6 questions to the respondent.

a. Teacher's knowledge about small group discussion method

At this point, the teacher describes about her knowledge about small group discussion and also explains her opinion about implementing this method in Indonesia's curriculum. The teacher knows about small group discussions, and she thought this method would be good to apply in Indonesia because this method is designed so that students can collaborate with their friends in teams. In order for the discussion to run smoothly, the group formed must consist of several variations of student abilities with the aim that students with lower skills can collaborate with students with upper skills and can also ask questions if they have difficulties. In addition, students in upper skills can also share knowledge with their friends in lower skills.

b. Teacher's opinion about implementing small group discussion method

In this point, teacher explains the steps that will be done by the teacher in implementing small group discussion in the class. The teacher implemented small group discussions as a learning method before. When implementing small group discussions, the teacher divided the steps into three stages: introduction, main-activity, and post-activity. The introduction is a stage that focuses on opening the class. The teacher will open the class with a salam, check the students' attendance, prepare the lesson material, and review the previous lesson. The second stage is the main activity that focuses on the learning process. In this stage, the teacher will explain the lesson material and divide the class into small groups, which are adjusted to the number of students in the class, usually consisting of 3-5 students for each group. Then, the teacher distributes the discussion topic and explains the rules and tasks that students must do, as well as the time limit for the discussion. After that, the teacher allows the students to start the discussion. During the discussion process, the teacher will

ensure that each group discusses well and that all students contribute to the discussion. After the discussion time is up, all groups will do the presentation, and the teacher will evaluate each group. The last stage is post-activity, which focuses on the activities after the discussion and presentation finish. In this stage, the teacher will conclude and make a summary of the discussion and presentation. Then, the teacher will review today's lesson material and evaluate the group's performance when doing a presentation in general. After that, if there is still lesson time left, the teacher will explain a few lessons for the next meeting, and the last step is to close the class by praying together.

- c. Teacher's opinion about implementation of small group discussion method in teaching writing descriptive text

In this point, the teacher describes about her opinion about implementing small group discussion in teaching writing descriptive text. The teacher's opinion about implementing small group discussion in teaching writing was very nice and can be implemented in the class during the learning process. Because the teacher thinks the students will be more confident if they can work together with their friends in a group rather than doing the task individually. So, they can develop their ideas more and make sentences more detailed than creating descriptive texts individually.

- d. Teacher's opinion about advantages and disadvantages of small group discussion

At this point the teacher explains about advantages and disadvantages of small group discussion that she found after implemented this method in the class. In teacher's opinion, the small group discussion also has advantages and disadvantages like others learning methods. The advantages that found by the teacher after implementing this method in the class are the students more active during learning process, the student have more ideas when doing the task, the sentences that was made by them more detail and complete, the students can work together with their friends in group when doing the task that was given by teacher, and the task quickly finished. Meanwhile, the teacher also found 2 disadvantages of small group discussion. First. these are few students in lower skill felt insecure with their upper skills' friends. So, they (the students in lower skills) more rely on their friends in upper skills when doing the task or during the discussion process.

- e. Teacher's findings about challenges/difficulties in implementing small group discussion in teaching writing descriptive text

At this point, the teacher explains the challenges/difficulties that were found after implementing small group discussions in the class. The challenge that the teacher found is still related to the disadvantages of small group discussions. The students in lower skills felt insecure with their friends in upper skills and continued to rely on their friends in upper skills, which could be a burden for their group and could cause the group to be uncooperative and lose trust between group members.

- f. Teacher's solution for the difficulties in implementing small group discussion in teaching writing descriptive text.

At this point, the teacher describes the solution for the challenge that she found in implementing small group discussion in teaching writing descriptive text. There are solutions that the teacher can do. First, make a students' diagnostic assessment to find out the abilities of each student. Then, for the next meeting, if the teacher wants to implement small group discussions again, the teacher can make groups with various students' skills, not only one kind of skill. Besides that, the teacher also explains to the students the roles and responsibilities of each member of the group and explains sympathy and empathy, where each group member must understand the other's strengths and weaknesses. With the hope that they can work together and complement each other when doing assignments or discussions.

Discussion

Based on the research findings, the teacher's experience in implementing small group discussion as a learning method in teaching writing descriptive text was good. It is because the teacher knew, understood, and implemented small group discussion groups as a learning method. So, when the researcher asked her to implement this method in teaching writing descriptive text, the teacher did not feel difficult and did not find any obstacle. According to the teacher, small group discussion was good to implement in Indonesia because in this method, the students can learn how to work together with their friends in teams. The teacher mentioned there are few steps must to do to implement this method.

In the finding, the teacher stated the activities must to do in implementing small group discussion were divided into three steps: introduction, main-activity, and post-activity. This finding is in accordance with Brewer's theory (1997), which explains the application of small group discussions, which consist of several steps that have been explained in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, there are a few differences between Brewer's theory and the research findings. In Brewer's theory, each step focuses on the core activities of that step; such step introduction is focused on the teaching activities, the step directing the discussion focuses on the discussion process, and the step summarizing the discussion focuses on activities after the discussion finished, summarize the discussion, and conclude the discussion. Meanwhile, research findings explained that the steps focus on the whole learning process, such as the introduction focuses on the activities before the learning process was started or preparing for starting the learning process; main-activity focuses on the core learning activities where material explanation activities, discussion processes and presentations; and post-activity focuses on the activities after the learning process is complete or the class closing process. Furthermore, in implementing this method, the researcher also found the advantages and disadvantages of small group discussion.

The findings explained some advantages of small group discussion found by teacher when implementing small group discussion in teaching writing descriptive text. First is students more active during learning process. This advantages also explained by Lestari (2019) and Agustina (2020) that explained if small group discussion method can increase students' activeness during learning process, and also in line with Brewer's theory (1997) that mentioned all students can be participants during learning process. Then, the teacher explained the students have more ideas when doing the task, and the sentences that was made by them more detail and complete because the students can work together with their friends in group. This opinion in accordance with Brewer's theory (1997) that stated small group discussion is a good way to increase students' interest at the discussion topic. Not only that, it also in line with Lestari (2019) and Agustina (2020) that mentioned small group discussion is an effective technique to teach writing, because this method teaches the students to work together with their friends in group. In addition, during the observation, the researcher found the teacher was able to implement this method and her ways to manage the class was so great. This finding in accordance with Lestari (2019) who stated that small group discussion is a learning method that easy to implement in the class. But, this finding kontras with Lestari (2019) that stated learning process using small group discussion takes a long time. It proven by when the teacher gave 20 minutes for doing discussion, and when the time was up, the students returned back to the class on time.

Not only explained advantages, the research findings also mentioned the disadvantages of small group discussions. Based on findings, the teacher stated if there were some students in lower skills felt insecure with their friends in upper skills then they relied on their friends in upper skills. This finding in line with Brewer's theory (1997) that mentioned when using small group

discussion there are some students talk more than do the assignment. In addition, it also in accordance with Agustina (2020) that stated using small group discussion can cause the dependence on group because of some students rely on their friends. Last, during observation, the researcher also found the disadvantages of small group discussion, it was the students needed more time to translate the text into English because of lack of vocabularies. This finding related with Lestari (2019) that mentioned when using small group discussion, students need more time to write the task because the lack of vocabularies.

On the findings also mentioned the challenge that found by teacher in implementing small group discussion in teaching writing descriptive text. She explained the challenge in implementing small group discussion still related to disadvantages of small group discussion, it was the students in lower skills felt insecure with their friends in upper skills then they relied on their friends in upper skills. So, it can be a burden and can cause the group to be uncooperative and lose trust between group members. Then the solution provided by teacher for this difficulty are make a students' diagnostic assessment to find out the abilities of each student, explains to the students the roles and responsibilities of each member of the group and explains sympathy and empathy, where each group member must understand the other's strengths and weaknesses. The teacher's solution in accordance with Lestari (2019) that stated solution to overcome the small group discussion's challenge is the teacher explains the roles of each member in the group. With the hope that they can work together and complement each other when doing assignments or discussions.

CONCLUSION

The teacher's experience in implementing small group discussion in teaching writing the descriptive text was good because she did not find any obstacles. The implementation of small group discussion in teaching writing descriptive text is divided into three stages: introduction which focuses on activities before learning process started, main activity which focuses on activities during learning process, and post-activity which focuses on activities after learning process finished. However, this method also has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of the small group discussion method found were that the students have more ideas and are more confident when they write a descriptive text, there are more variations of sentences on the descriptive text that students made, and the students can write the descriptive text together with their friends in the team, then the task will be completed faster. Then, the disadvantages of small group discussion groups that the teacher mentioned during the interview were that some students with lower skills are insecure about their friends with upper skills. So, they rely on their friends in upper skills and participate less in the group discussion. Then, the solution that the teacher can do is to make students' assessment diagnostics to learn the skills of each student. So, when the teacher wants to implement a small group discussion method in the next meeting, she can make a group with a variety of students' skills, not only students in upper skills or lower skills, but she mixes all kinds of students' skills in a group. With expectation, it can minimize students' insecurities so they can learn and have a discussion so well and smoothly.

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