Benefits and Challenges of Group Discussion as Creative Learning Strategies in Speaking Class

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ABSTRACT	

Creative learning strategy has turned out to be an important issue in foreign language learning. This article is aimed to investigate the benefits and challenges of group discussion as creative learning strategy to improve speaking's proficiency. The research was conducted in an Islamic Senior High School. The research applied qualitative approach by using interviews and Focus-Group Discussions with 8 students as the source of data. Based on the analysis results, it was found that Group Discussion as creative learning strategy were beneficial during the speaking class because of it promote interaction and learning, motivation encouragement, and develop respect to another's' idea. Meanwhile, during the group discussion several issues arouse namely the individual learning preference, the problems with language aspects, and the students' self-confidence. The research implies the significance of creative learning strategy to improve the English speaking successfully.

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A. INTRODUCTION

English as an international language inevitably becomes a lingua franca that connects people worldwide. Hence, though they come from different countries, they still be able to communicate one another in English. Furthermore, its significant international impact can be seen particularly in the education sphere, where most countries nowadays adopt English as one of their school subjects. The goal of learning English is to assist students communicate their thoughts and feelings, participate in local or global communities, and develop their analytical and creative skills so they can recognize and comprehend the presence of communities' cultures around the world (Syarifudin & Rahmat, 2021). In addition, the major objectives of English class are to assist students in developing their English abilities, to facilitate their academic performance advancement, and to prepare their real employment in the future.

In Indonesia, English is one of obligatory subjects given at junior high and senior high schools, despite its status as a foreign language. Moreover, the government determines that all student should be skilled in it (Mandasari & Oktaviani, 2018). Furthermore, teachers as the prominent guides and classroom facilitators should develop a coordinated plan to advance their students' English proficiency. As the professionals, the teachers also need to reflect their teaching practice

through teaching learning process namely by creatively adapt the use of media, exercises, and the learning contents (Rahmat & Najamuddin, 2019). Regarding this issue, the latest curriculum insisted that they changed the classroom mode from the monotone into a creative instruction. The adjustment provides more opportunities for the students to be more enthusiastically involved along the teaching and learning process.

In the aspect of English language teaching, the students thought that speaking English fluently demonstrated their proficiency in the language (Al Mahmud, 2022). Furthermore, there are four aspects that should be well considered to become a proficient English speaker namely vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation to promote comprehension, and fluency to communicate effectively (Khan et al., 2018). In addition, teachers' role in the teaching English may include provide them the speaking activities which may provoke their speaking ability. The teacher may invite the students to speak in a group, and self-directed learning strategies concerning self-correction to improve their speaking skills (Buitrago, 2017). Another important aspect which may arise by conducting interaction within a group is an opportunity for teacher to present a creative learning condition.

This condition of learning is expected to have a favorable impact on students' knowledge sharing. Besides, many studies have shown that teaching learning strategies have been connected with the use of creative learning strategies to enhance the students' ability (Davies et al., 2013). A creative learning is highly connected with student creativity by fostering students' learning goal orientation, links with their peers, and information sharing (Fan & Cai, 2022). Furthermore, the teachers need to provide more creative learning opportunities in the classroom (Malinin, 2019).

One of the learning strategies which may foster students' creativity through sharing is group discussion. Numerous studies have found that by involving participants in a sharing group may enhance the creativity aspect. Students' connections within a group discussion can enhance the quality of information received since the interactions among groups and/or classrooms may also be embedded in larger social networks (Hommes et al., 2012). Students are more likely to connect one another and to exchange knowledge and experiences when they are learning in a supportive interaction setting. As a result, they considerably enhance their academic performance (Eid & Al-Jabri, 2016). Students must realize that developing a cooperative culture will help them gain experience and skills to cope with complicated problems and to implement contingency learning for acquisition. It allows them to conduct successful creative transfer procedures (Huang et al., 2017). In particular, the shared knowledge can enhance the students' performance to create new knowledge, by improving the existing knowledge, and synthesising additional knowledge in the future. Students can take advantage from collective insight by receiving knowledge that adds to their explicit knowledge and subsequently boosts their creativity.

The researchers specifically pointed out group discussion as creative learning strategy for this study since it is believed to enable the students to speak proficiently and encourage them to be actively involved in the discussion. Based on the description, the research was aimed to investigate the benefits and the challenges of Group Discussion as the creative learning strategy to improve the speaking's proficiency.

B. METHODS

This research employed qualitative approach to investigate the main focus. In qualitative research one seeks to understand something thoroughly instead of attempting to forecast outcomes as is the case with the positivist paradigm. Similarly, the qualitative approach tries to understand specific people's beliefs, ideas, and actions in an accepted setting (Nassaji, 2015). In addition, qualitative data analysis aims to identify and explain the structures, activities, and practices (Flick, 2013). Meanwhile, the research applied case study design as the researchers intends to investigate a modern phenomenon in real life, especially when the lines separate one element from another are indistinct. As a result, the researchers may clarify the data within the specific context of each situation to produce a description of a specific instance, place, person, or event (Flick, 2013).

Regarding the source of data, the researchers applied the purposive sampling technique. The researchers chose eight students at an Islamic Senior high School. In collecting the data, the researchers applied two instruments namely interviews and Focused-Grouped Discussions (FGD) which was supported by gathering some supplementary documents. The purpose of an interview is to gather as many different responses as possible. Therefore, the data is used to identify these patterns in order to build an analytical framework (Dodgson, 2017). FGD provides a chance to examine unclear problems as it controls the dynamics of the group to examine the issues in context, depth, and detail, freely and without imposing a conceptual framework (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). Furthermore, in data analysis, the researchers applied thematic analysis namely open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Kawulich & Holland, 2012). Finally, the researchers applied an ATLAS.ti software in order to coding, interpreting, confirming, and presenting the data.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Perception of Group Discussion as creative learning strategy

The Group Discussion experienced by the students was conducted by combining the students from various levels of speaking skills which the researchers mentioned as mixed group discussion. After analyzing the data, the researchers found that seven of the students preferred to learn in groups discussion as creative learning strategy. They claimed that the learning strategy was beneficial for three reasons namely entertaining, help their motivation, and encourage respect.

  a. The Group Discussion promote students' interaction and learning

Most students mentioned that they chose group discussion learning strategy because they enjoy the process. Moreover, it helps them to communicate with the other students rather than one class discussion with teacher as the main facilitator. Another idea aroused that learning in a group discussion would allow the students to share their views and, in turn, push one another to raise their academic spirits in more relaxing as well as enjoyable atmosphere. The students' responses are in the following transcription.

"We prefer group study since it is more enjoyable and we appreciate learning with our friends," (S1).

"We prefer group study because it is more enjoyable and we like learning with friends. However, studying alone makes us more likely to become drowsy and bored (S2).

"I enjoy learning with my friends because we can exchange our various thoughts and inspire one another (S7).

The active participation of the students during the learning process is the main focus of the Group Discussion as creative learning strategy technique. It is appropriate with the approach demanded by the 2013 curriculum that the principal aim of classroom instruction is to change teacher- to student-centered. The group discussion showed that the students were more active because they enjoyed following the learning process.

During the group discussion, each students tried to compare their idea whether they agreed or disagreed toward the topic of discussion. This showed that the group discussion helped them to interact freely.

It was obviously clear to the researcher that students held communication. The finding relates to (Hurst et al., 2013) that students in their believed that social interaction enhanced their learning by developing their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities as well as their understanding of reading and teaching. The key element affecting pupils' speaking abilities is the "rule of friends" found in small group discussion techniques. It indicates that implementing small group discussions gives students additional opportunities to participate in speaking class (Antoni, 2014). It means that by using small group discussion has given students more opportunities to involve in the speaking class. The reality that group discussion has significantly enhanced the students' interaction also may become an indicator that group discussion belongs to a creative learning strategy. Hence, it is obviously that chances for students to collaborate with their classmates have a direct impact on their creativity (Davies et al., 2013). Moreover, creativity in learning is the capacity to develop fresh, thought-provoking solutions to problems that arise during peer interaction and discussion (Fan & Cai, 2022).

b. The Group Discussion motivates the students to speak

Additionally, the students' second advantage of learning by using group discussion have encouraged them to speak. In this case, the students were motivated to be able to participate in discussion. As the students found many difficulties in using an English word, they tried to ask the other students. Somehow this affected their willingness to keep in the discussion with their friends.

"In addition, we typically learn alongside companions to boost our spirits in learning." (S8)

"I got the spirit because my friends also got spirit to discuss" (S3)

Moreover, in this approach, teachers were responsible for directing the discussion and making sure that each student got an opportunity to speak. They subsequently allowed the pupils to speak about a particular topic, encouraging them to express their thoughts and opinions. In particular, the capacity to articulate points of view became a concern that was thought to help the pupils improve their speaking skills. Additionally, since students were trained to actively participate in English-speaking practice during the session, having this method would boost their confidence.

Group Discussion can be beneficial as it changed classroom activities in more ways than the teachers' usual instruction. It also taught students to give more appreciation one another regardless the different opinions(Wu & Liu, 2019) . Similarly group discussions also help students to become more proficient speakers as they could frequently practice speaking skills by participating in the discussion course (Bohari, 2019). Consequently, the availability of specific topics supplied by the teachers would be useful training for students' speaking abilities (Pakula, 2019). In addition, delivering or comparing ideas and soliciting opinions from the class is essential for encouraging students' participation in discussions. Consequently, students would have more chances to practice speaking.

Considering the conceptual and empirical evidence, we propose that the ability of group discussion to motivate the students to speak as an indicator of creativity. The situation is accordance to the idea that a favourable setting can foster creativity by affecting a variety of individual motivation and actions (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Moreover, the manifestation of the creative process has been viewed as creative behaviour. The creative attitude is supposed to start with the awakening of motivation and finish with the final product (Liu et al., 2012).

c. The Group Discussion grows the respect for another students

As elaborated previously, some activities could be explored, such as delivering divergent perspectives regarding the topic given, assisting and believing each other, and cooperating to achieve the primary idea of the topic given. Therefore, it indeed promotes additional speaking exposure. During the group discussion, the teacher intended to establish a supportive situation in which every student could help one another. As the result, students who had not yet mastered the material could consult from another knowledgeable students.

This finding shown to be relevant to the idea that in group learning that peer guidance played a significant role, notably in students' speaking improvement and self-efficacy (Chen et al., 2021). Moreover, during the group interaction some students have applied positive values such as revealed and gave respect toward the learning culture in the way they experienced discussion (Sujariati, 2020). Discussion activities can also be seen as a crucial element that helps and motivates students to communicate successfully with their teachers and with one another in the classroom (Mohammed & Ahmed, 2021).

It is clear that a conducive classroom environment helps creative thinking process. The nature of the interaction between teachers and students, which includes high expectations, mutual respect, modelling of creative attitudes, flexibility, and conversation, is a crucial component of the pedagogical environment that can foster creativity (Davies et al., 2013). Moreover, students who study in a conducive creative classroom are more motivated to share with their classmates. Therefore, students have more access to a wider range of knowledge and information, which spark their creative ideas (Fan & Cai, 2022).

2. The Challenges of Group Discussion as creative learning strategy

It was found that during the discussion, there were just three students did not encourage to follow the lesson. Some students tried to speak up, they helped the other students to speak their idea. Yet, for the unmotivated students, they still felt shy to speak yet listened to their friends. Furthermore, the researcher found that some students argued that group discussion exposed them with difficulties namely individual learning preference, problems with language aspects, and These problems are described below.

a. The preference of individual learning

Students frequently have different approaches to learning a language, affecting their learning outcomes and comprehension. Regardless its great atmosphere offered toward the learning, that some students claimed that they somehow preferred individual learning. These students considered that it is still better for numerous reasons relate to greater concentration, comfort, and peaceful learning environments. The students individual learning was perceived as below.

"Learning in a group is also enjoyable, but sometimes learning alone helps me to have greater attention." (S2)

"It helps us when we speak. I believe that speaking practice requires a companion at all times. Nevertheless, I occasionally like to be alone because it's more relaxing and quieter." (S6)

The preference of individual learning may come from the students' lack of collaborative skill. These students seem to ignore the value of social interaction in favor of pursuing individual learning (Le et al., 2018). Moreover, the individual learning preference was in contrary to collaboration benefit. According to the Baron research from 2003, people who prefer individual learning in groups are less likely to listen to others' perspectives, interrupt them, or accept alternative recommendations which inhibits group functioning (Le et al., 2018). Finally, a comparation toward the students' learning styles, it was discovered that EFL students preferred group learning styles over individual ones. The

students who claimed to choose doing things by themselves or working on projects alone had the least portion of the cohort (Ariani et al., 2021).

It is obvious that the preference to learn individually traits the process of creative learning. When the students work or speak individually, they cannot use the language properly and it means that there is no communication among the students. This negative communication environment surely discourages creative learning atmosphere in the classroom (Malinin, 2019). When the students remain silent during a discussion, they do not communicate in the target language in the classroom. This circumstance runs opposite to the intention of developing creative language teaching(Suwartono et al., 2022). Finally, no interaction with another students in a discussion decreases the creative behavior of learning environment.

b. The students' problems with language aspects

Vocabulary and pronunciation are very important language aspects in English. Since, some students admitted to have a lack of vocabulary in speaking, which in turn affected their effectiveness to convey ideas. Therefore, they could ask the meaning of some words. The case was similar to their pronunciation performance that occasionally they mispronounced some words correctly. The researchers found that some students experienced both lack of vocabulary and mispronounced words during the group discussion. These problems have blocked the discussion as some students still need to consult their group as they encountered any difficult word either to pronounce or mention in English.

The inability to say words appropriately would lead to misunderstandings when students explain a particular topic. Those students were unsure to have a conversation, to express their idea, and to give statement in English. Regardless the issue, the students also experienced problems in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar usage, and lack of self-confidence (Sayuri, 2016). Besides, the students' communication is stuck because they don't have good pronunciation skills (Yudar et al., 2020). It was in contrary to notion that pronunciation mastery may help the students to gain better understanding of specific discussions or topic and to deliver their ideas more broadly (Sihombing, 2014). The issues have affected the students' comprehension and participation in discussion.

Speaking is about using properly the vocabulary and pronunciation. Therefore, the lack of particular classroom interaction with pupils will decrease the teaching for creativity (Davies et al., 2013). Additionally, domain-specific abilities, for example vocabulary and pronunciation, were considered as the cornerstone of creative performance in relation to the task-specific attributes of the supplied tasks (Liu et al., 2012). The poor use of these language aspect may block the fluency and interaction which slows down creative language environment.

c. The students' problems with self confidence

At the end session of the strategy, one person in each group was usually invited to present in front of the class regarding the result of the discussion. In this part, the members who were not presenting could still help their representative when required. The success of implementing the strategy was assumed when all students could be collaboratively involved, particularly in delivering their ideas and opinions. However, one primary challenge the teachers often encountered during the discussion was that the students needed several minutes to select members for one group. Besides, selecting one representative of the students to explain would take a long time since most of them were not brave enough to speak. Consequently, the teachers should control the situation and ensure one team has one representative to present. It was obviously that the students were lack of self-confidence to speak in English.

The issue had proved this mental problem led the students through a difficulty in speaking. Furthermore, the students' courage to conduct a communication was directed by their self-confidence in speaking (Shen & Chiu, 2019). In fact, most students mentioned that they sometimes felt unsure and nervous during the discussion as part of less self-

confidence (Huon & Em, 2022). Furthermore, the students were nervous as the result of their friends' and even teachers' criticism whenever they made mistakes. Therefore, the bad atmosphere negatively affects the students' courage to participate in discussion (Fitriati & Jannah, 2016). Finally, it is a true that self-confidence has a significant effect toward students' speaking ability.

It is obvious that a teacher must encourages students' self-confidence in order to foster creative learning. Meanwhile, fearful pupils frequently struggle to generate innovative work because they are lack of confidence in their abilities(Triningsih & Ghozali, 2018). Moreover, when students demonstrate less confidence to complete the task, it seems that they are not willing to share their ideas with others (Liu et al., 2012).

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the data analysis, the researchers found Group Discussion both shows the advantages and faced some issues faced along the learning experiences, as well as present some creativity features needed as creative learning strategy. It was found that Group Discussion was beneficial during the speaking class because of it promotes interaction and learning, motivates student to speak, and develops respect to another's' idea. Meanwhile, during the group discussion several issues arouse namely the individual learning preference, the problems with vocabulary as well as pronunciation, and the lack of self-confidence. The future topic to be investigated may range about the students' challenges during the learning process along the implementation of the learning strategy.

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