Students' Perception on Group Work at English Language Education

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20130810189

ABSTRACT

Group work is one of the effective learning models that can improve students' ability in understanding the meaning of words and issues. This study conducted to investigate the ideal criteria of group work based on students' experiences. To answer the research question, this study employed descriptive qualitative research as the approach. The participants of this research were three students of ELED of UMY. This research used standardized open-ended interview to collect the data. Then, in analyzing the data the researcher used open coding, analytical coding, axial coding and selective coding. The result showed that the criteria of ideal group work based on students' perception of ELED of UMY were good participation, group work discussion is continue, focus on the topic, group work having problem solution, group work present the result, sharing each other, getting something new, respecting each other, explaining the material before. Eventually, those criteria could make a group work effective.

Keywords: group work, learning models, ideal criteria of group work.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning process is a formal activity undertaken in educational context that is supported by a teacher to convey materials based on the determined regulations. There are some models of teaching and learning that can be applied by teachers to teach students, such as presentation, games, and group work (Li & Lam, 2013). Those activities are usually done in a group.

Group work is an activity where a group of people who gather together to convey their ideas in solving an issue. Hyams (2004) stated that basically, group work is an effective learning model to produce variety of ideas from students. As a result, students

can share and learn from each other. As Azer (2004) said that collaborative learning or working in groups, broadly refers to students work together and use a variety of practices in order to answer questions, use course materials or to solve problems. One EFL study has been conducted related to this topic of group work by Sofiandi, Salam and Riyanti (2013) which revealed that group work technique can improve students' ability in understanding the meaning of words and mentioning the detailed information from the generic structure of reading text.

Whereas group work is one of the important activities in learning process, there are some problems faced by students in doing group work. The problems can be uncooperative member in a group work such as the students who are just silent and become free rider in a group work. In this case, free rider is a student who is only silent or does not participate in a group, yet she or he get score when a group is assessed. Another problem that commonly faced in a group work is unclear explanation from the teachers. According to Bohnsack (2004), some obstacles in doing group work are teachers' unclear explanation and students do not participate well in group. If teachers can manage those problems, they can arrange a group work effectively. Hence, group work will run effectively in learning process.

English Language Education Department of at one of private universities in Yogyakarta provides a lot of activities done in group works in most of the subjects given by the teachers. Although ELED at one of private universities in Yogyakarta students have a lot of experiences in group works, they still find obstacles in that group. Based on the researcher's experience, some problems commonly faced by students at ELED at one of private universities in Yogyakarta when they do group work can be lack of cooperation in a group work and unclear instruction given by the teachers. From those cases, the researcher is interested in conducting the study about the criteria of effective group work based on the students' perspective.

Based on the researcher's experience on group work, the researcher felt that group work applied by the teachers at ELED at one of private universities in Yogyakarta was not always effective. There were some problems that made group work was not effective, such as the teachers only gave task and left the class immediately in long time. The second problem was lack of cooperation between the members in a group work. As a consequence, one of the students in one group had struggle

in communicating to each other in that group. It was because the student was not comfortable with other students in that group, so the student was just silent in that group. The last problem was that the teachers did not evaluate all works from all groups. The teachers only took some groups and used them as samples. As the consequence, some groups did not get the result of their work. Thus, it made the students lost their passion to do group work in the next occasion.

From the problems above, the researcher wants to focus on the criteria of effective group work applied by the teachers at English Language Education Department at one of private universities in Yogyakarta based on the students' perception.

The aim of this research is to disclose the students' perception of the criteria of effective group work. More specifically, research question in this research is set up as follow:

What are the students' perception on the criteria of effective group works?

This research would like to obtain the criteria of effective group work based on ELED at one of private universities in Yogyakarta students' perception. Thus, it is related to the purpose of the study that is to find out the criteria of effective group work based on students' perception.

Teaching and learning are connected and completed each other. It means that when someone is asking about 'what is learning?', he or she should look closer on the definition of teaching. According to Dessus, Mandin and Zampa (2008), teaching is an activity to deliver particular materials which is done by a teacher and it requires some models to be used to make the teaching process become effective. Fenton and Szala-Meneok (2010) also stated that teaching involves all faculty, instructors and graduate students engaged in teaching activities. Besides, Dessus, Mandin and Zampa (2008) defined that learning is an acttivity done by students to acquire particular material which is explained, showed, delivered, and led by a teacher. It can be conluded that teaching and learning are the process of giving and acquiring the materials or knowledges. However, either teaching or learning, they need some models to make it become effective, especially in teaching process. According to Harmer (2001), some models of teaching and learning process are like group work, role play, games and debating. It means that one of the teaching models is group work.

Group work is a model in teaching and learning used by the teachers to gather some students to share their ideas to each other. Vidal (2004) stated that group work is a group of people who are working in the same place for doing a particular project. It means that every group consists of more than one person. Besides, Vidal (2004) also stated that group in group work, everyone is provided to learn on how to communicate, cooperate, coordinate and commonly understand procedures of group work with the people in a group. Besides, Ibtissem (2013) contended that the teachers should group the students in order to make the students become active to speak up in the classroom. It aims to reduce the amount of teachers' talk in the classroom, and it will increase students' talk time with their group members.

Effective criteria of group work. According to Smith (1996), group work will run effective if there are some criteria in that group such as promote positive interdependence, promote students to interact each other, students' personal responsibility, teamwork skills and students' participation. These are stated and explained below:

Group work should promote positive interdependence. According to Smith (1996), the main important point of cooperative learning is positive interdependence. Positive interdependence is an aspect of cooperative and collaborative learning where all members of a group determine the success of a group work. It means that the success depends on the participation of all the members. Furthermore, the students should know that they cannot

succeed if they do not want to cooperate with their members. By this case, it shows that students must believe that they are linked with others in a way that one cannot succeed unless the other members of the group succeed (and vice versa).

Group work should promote students' face-to-face interaction. According to Smith (1996), promoting students' face to face interaction means the teacher should make sure that students interact to help each other to help another student to complete the assignment. It shows that every student in a group is required to explain orally to each other how to overcome problems, discuss with each other the nature of the concepts and strategies being learned, teach their understanding to classmates, explain to each other the connections between present and past learning, and help, encourage, and support each other's efforts to learn. Besides, Smith (1996) contended that students who are not active should be grouped with the students who are active. The reason why the active students should be grouped with not active students is that the active students can help to explain about particular topic and issue to the students who are not active.

Group work should have individual accountability or personal responsibility. According to Smith (1996), the purpose of group work is to create each member a stronger individual in his or her own right and in his or her own point of view. It means that each student is deserved to speak up to explain and deliver his or her own opinion. Then, they together collaborate to decide how to solve the problems depending on which opinion that they want to take.

Group work should have teamwork skills between students. Contributing to the success of a group work requires teamwork skills. Smith (1996) argued that students are required to have and implement leadership skill, decision-making skill, trust building skill, good communication skill, and conflict-management skill. These things should be taught just as significantly and explicitly as academic skills.

Group work should make students participate to ensure group processing. Teachers need to ensure that all members of each group work discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships. Group should describe and show what things in group are helpful and unhelpful. Afer that, the members are required to decide about what things to be continued or revised. It aims to make sure that every member in a group will get a feedback on their participation. Besides, it is also to remind the

members to practice collaborative skills consistently.

Besides, there are five effective criteria that support in a group work processing. According to Riggio (2013), good work in a group work at least has five characteristics such as Honest and straightforward, shares the load, complements others' skills, good communication skills and positive attitude. Those are clearly explained below.

Group work members should be honest and straightforward. According to Riggio (2013), a good team member is up front. He or she does not play games, or leads other on. It means that every group member should lead and encourage each other to achieve particular objective as the reason why the teacher makes the group work. You can count on a good team member to tell you what's what, regardless of whether it is good news or bad news.

Shares the load. A good team member does his or her fair share of the work (Riggio, 2013). There is a sense of equity and fairness in the good team member. It aims to avoid free rider in group work. When the group is given a task or case, every member should share their thought, idea, and ability to finish the task.

Complements others' skills. Riggio (2013) stated that an important characteristic of effective work teams is the shared capacity. Every member has areas of strength and some weak spots. The reason why group work should be implemented is because, in a group work, students complete each other. It means that every group member sometimes is given their own task based on their skills. The unique skills and knowledge of the member will move the team forward.

Good communication skills. Teamwork is social, so good team members need to be skilled, and tactful, communicators.

Positive attitude. No one would ever follow a pessimistic leader, and the same goes for team members. A positive, "can-do" attitude is critical for the good team member.

According to Li and Lam (2013), there are some benefits of adopting group work learning model in teaching and learning process, such as learning for all, academic achievement, skilled communication and psychological health.

Learning for all. According to Li and Lam (2013), group work makes sense in inclusive classrooms because it builds upon heterogeneity and formalizes and encourages peer support and connection. It means that group work makes students learn on how to cherish others' opinions.

Academic achievement. According to Li and Lam (2013), in experimental-control comparison studies of the achievement effects

of cooperative learning, most found significantly greater achievement in cooperative than in control classes. It means that group work is more impactful than individual's learning model in gaining knowledge or material.

Skilled communication. Researchers found that students who joined in group work activities were readier in having interpersonal communications than students who are in the classroom setting. According to Li and Lam (2013) Students more concern on others' feelings when they are often involved in group work because they often work in cross-cultural. Last, it means that the students who often join particular group work will be able to cherish others' opinions.

Psychological health. According to Li and Lam (2013), students who are often involved in a group work were psychologically healthier than students who are rarely involved in particular group work. Besides, students who are often involved in particular group work will have higher self-esteem than who are not. Self-esteem is a term on how someone believes and thinks about his or herself. In addition, self-esteem refers to someone's confidence. By this point, students who love being involved in group work will have more positive feelings about themselves than students who love working individually.

There are seven problems which commonly happen in group work. Those are student antipathy towards group work, the selection of the groups, a lack of essential group-work skills, the free-rider, possible inequalities of student abilities, the withdrawal of group members, and the assessment of individuals within the groups. These problems are clearly stated and these problems are clearly quoted from Roberts and McInnerney (2007) by the researcher.

Student antipathy towards group work. Some students sometimes do not concern with the idea from the member in their group work and can be apathetic, or sometimes even actively hostile to the whole idea. Roberts and McInnerney (2007) argued that some EFL students dislike to do group work when they learn English. Thus, it is relatively unusual for students to join in a group and share their ideas to others.

The selection of the groups. According to Roberts and McInnerney (2007), the selection of the groups is one of the biggest problems which commonly happen in group work. Sometimes some students feel embarrassed when they are grouped with a student who is smarter than them. However, when the students are grouped with same level, for example smart students with smart students or vice versa, the group cannot work well.

Furthermore, Roberts and McInnerney (2007) also contended that one of the biggest problems in group work is about the inequalities of students' abilities. Inequality of student's ability here means that students are not grouped with the same level. This case can be a problem in a group work because there is a diversity in students' abilities or knowledges which means that sometimes some students are not actively participating in a group because they are grouped with students who have more knowledge than them.

A lack of essential group-work skills. Grouping and telling the students that they have to work together do not mean that they obey to work cooperatively. According to Roberts and McInnerney (2007), sometimes group work become unuseful for some students, especially for students who do not understand about the instruction in a group work. This case leads the students to have lack of group work skill and it may impact students become traumatic and uncooperative in a group work.

The free-rider. Free-rider commonly occurs in group work. The student only joins the group work without participating or contributing anything in a group. Roberts and McInnerney (2007) argued that this case leads bad impact for the student who is free-rider and for the group where this student joins. First, the free rider student will not get anything from the group which means that group work will not become useful for this kind of student. Second, this case can damage the morale of the other members of the group. Third, it lowers the reputation of the educator and the institution for fair dealing and justice in assessment.

The withdrawal of group members. In individual work, student's score will not impact others' scores. One of the rules in a group work that becomes a problem is that every member in a group work is connected each other. It means that a member's score in a group work will impact others' scores. Roberts and McInnerney (2007) contended that sometimes in a group work, the teachers or assessors do not grade the students by seeing on what every student gives for the group, yet the teachers grade the students by seeing on the quality of the group. It means that if one member in a group work is missing, it will decrease students' scores because it will impact the quality of group work.

The assessment of individuals within the groups. The teachers or assessors get difficulties in assessing and grading the students in group work. It also sometimes has bad impacts for the student who is active but they get student who is not active or free rider student. It means that this kind of student is getting unfair because the teacher sometimes

grades the student on how the group work works not on how each student is struggling.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is a method to study about people's experiences and feelings. According to Lewis (2015), qualitative research is a research process in identifying patterns about the meaning of participants' feelings. Besides, Creswell (2012) contended that qualitative research is a research in identifying and exploring a problem from participants' experiences. The result of qualitative research should be in a description. It was similar to this research that observed the criteria of effective group work, so qualitative approach was suitable for this research. In this case, the researcher used descriptive qualitative as the research design. According to Creswell (2012), descriptive qualitative design is suitable to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the participants' experience.

Therefore, this research described the criteria of effective group work based on the students' perception on their experience. The participants of this research are three students who have been studying at English Language Education Department at one of private universities in Yogyakarta for more than 2 years. According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), there is no rule for selecting the number of participants in qualitative research and it can be one participant if the result of the research is sufficient. Thus, the researcher chose three participants to conduct this research. To select the participants of this research, the students should have been studying at ELED at one of private universities in Yogyakarta more than 2 years. It was because they had more experiences about group work than the earlier batch. Hence, the researcher focused on batch 2014. In addition, the researcher selected three participants who were active in the class.

This research was conducted at English Language Education Department at one of private universities in Yogyakarta. There were some reasons in choosing ELED at one of private universities in Yogyakarta as the setting. The first, there were some subject courses that used group work in the teaching and learning process. The second, there was a phenomenon that some of ELED at one of private universities in Yogyakarta students who had problems in doing group work. The third reason was because the researcher was currently studying at ELED at one of private universities in Yogyakarta, so it was easy and accessible to collect the data through interview.

This research used standardized open-ended interview as a data collection method.

Standardized open-ended interview was used to find further data of research and it was suitable for this research. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), standardized open-ended interview is structured questions to be asked to participants. Thus, the researcher needed to have interview guidelines when interviewing participants. Furthermore, the researcher used open-ended questions in order to allow the participants' answer deeply. The reason why the researcher applied this data collection method was to give the detailed information about the criteria of effective group work from the participants' feeling.

The researcher had some procedures in conducting the interview. First, the researcher made an interview guideline which consisted of some list of questions to be asked to the participants. Second, the researcher made an appointment with the participants before the interview. The appointment consisted of time schedule and place. The interview used *Bahasa Indonesia* for participants' to ease and to avoid bias. The interview used audio-recorded.

The last step after conducting the interview was analyzing the data from the recording. This step is called data analysis. According to Ritchie and Spencer (2002), data analysis is the process of defining, categorizing, theorizing and mapping which are fundamental to the analysis's role. Before

the researcher analyzed the data, the first thing to do was transcribing the recording into the written form. It enabled the researcher to analyze the data easily.

After transcribing the recording into the written form, the researcher did to do member checking with the participants to measure whether the data accurately capture or not. According to Harper and Cole (2012), member checking is the researcher gives the opportunity to participants to recheck for accuracy. Doing member checking was essential in order to make sure the validity of the data gathered. Thus, in this research the researcher had to do so.

After doing a member checking, the result was the participants said that there was nothing to change. It means that the researcher did not add any information on the participants' answers.

The next step after member checking was coding the data. In coding the data, the researcher firstly analyzed the script of the recording. It means that the researcher infers what the participants meant by their answer in each question. This activity was done in open coding. Secondly was analytical coding. In this step, the researcher translated or interpreted the participants' statement. Thirdly was axial coding. In axial coding, the researcher classified each item of statement which had

same meaning from all of the participants. The last was selective coding. In selective coding, the researcher identified the core categories of the text data. After coding the data, the researcher reported the result of the data by using descriptive qualitative.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The members should have active participation. The students thought that the group work is effective when the members have good participation. The students' perceived that the group work will also run well when the every member participates in every task. Participant one stated, "In my opinion, group work run well if the discussion in that group is run well. It can be said that the members of the group have their opinions and those opinions should be accepted". Participant two also stated, "Group work is effective when the group has task and every member participates finishing the task. Group work is effective when every member works together. Group work is effective when every member is active. For example, when they are asked, they want to share their ideas. An effective group work is when every member works together. When every member does responsible to finish the task, it is said as effective group work. The group work is effective when all members are coming when they are asked to come. Every member should be responsible to his or her group".

The discussion in group work should be continuing. Based on the data gotten, the students contended that group work is effective when the discussion is continuing and the discussion has more different topic. Participant one argued that "The discussion on a group work runs continuously and has more different topic to be discussed.

The discussion should focus on the topic. Based on the data collected, the third criteria of effective group work is when the discussion focuses on the topic. The students thought that when the discussion focuses on the topic, it will make the group work runs effectively. The first student echoed that "The discussion is run effectively and do not out of the topic".

The group work should get problem solution. Based on the data gotten from the interview, the next criteria of effective group work is when the group work has problem solution. One of the aims of creating a group work is because there is particular problem to be solved. By this point, having particular problem solving is a must. "The problems in the group work can be solved, so the group work run effectively".

The members of group work should present the result of the discussion. Based on

the data collected, the fifth criteria of an effective group work is when the members present the result of the discussion. The members should be able to present the result of the discussion in order to share what the members have found and solved. Participant one said that "Maybe they can present the result of the group work and give the conclusion from their discussion".

The members should allow members to share idea. Based on the data collected, the sixth criteria of an effective group work is when the members share each other. When the members have some problems, the other members should share ideas for their members. Participant three stated that "Maybe, group work is effective if the members are sharing each other. Second, group work is effective when it trains every member on how to share ideas. Group work is effective when the member shares ideas when other members have problems. Group work is effective when every member helps each other and share their ideas".

The group members should improve students' knowledge. The seventh result of this study was every group member get something new from their learning. Students will have new knowledge and experience when they learn something new. It also happens in a group work situation. Every member of group work will gain a new experience after they did it.

The member should respect each other. One of the contributing to the success of a group work is respecting each member of a group. According to Smith (1996), respecting the members of group work means respect every comment and opinion from every member of the group. On the other hand, the students need to help, encourage and support each other's efforts to learn.

The material should be explained before. The material is the key of learning. According to Shimazoe and Aldrich (2010), material of learning has important role when students start learning. It also happens in a group work learning context. The material in a group work should be explained by teacher as clear as possible, so students can fully understand what they should do (Shimazoe and Aldrich, 2010). Participant two argued that group work will become effective if the teacher explains the topic first in order to make every member understand the material.

CONCLUSION

The researcher got some findings that answered the research question. This research questions is 'What are the criteria of ideal group works based on students' perception'. From the research question about the criteria of ideal group work, there were nine findings which answered the research question. These criteria were the members should have active participation, the discussion in group work should be continuing, the discussion group work should focus on the topic, the group work should have problem solving, the members of group work should present the result of the discussion, the members should allow members to share idea, the group member get something new, the member respects each other, and the material should be explained before. From this point showed previously, it can be concluded that these criteria mentioned before answered the research question. From all of those finding from three participants, being active in a group work is a must. All of the participant mention that good participation in a group work had the biggest effect in successfully of a group work. An effective group work does not depend on the students' score or level. An effective group work depends on its process. Being active member is one of the processes that can make the group work become effective.

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