

The Benefits of Group Discussion for Students' Interpersonal Skill

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Abstract

Group discussion is one of the common teaching techniques used by the teacher. Almost all of the teachers of English Language Education Department at a private University in Yogyakarta used a group discussion in the classroom. This study aims to explore the benefits of group discussion for students' interpersonal skill. The data were gathered from the students of English Language Education Department at a private University in Yogyakarta. Four third-year students became the participants of this study. A descriptive qualitative research design was used as a research method of this study. The data were gathered through the interview. The result shows that the students obtain some benefits from discussion for their interpersonal skill. Most of the students also stated that group discussion helps them to develop their interpersonal skill. There are eight findings of this research that is: Being able to improve oral communication skill, learn nonverbal communication, respect others by listening, do assertive communication, open toward students' diversity, collaborate with others, adapt with others, build trust in others, and influence others. Moreover, interpersonal skill has various types. In summary, group discussion in EFL classrooms helps students to develop their interpersonal skill.

Keywords: benefits of group discussion, interpersonal skill, EFL classroom

Background of the Study

Group discussion is one of the classroom activities in teaching and learning language. Group discussion is a teaching technique used by the teacher to facilitate students' interaction in the classroom. According to Rahman, "Group discussion is where two or more students declare, present, explain and refuse their knowledge, experience, opinions and feelings" (as cited in Mutrifin, Degeng, Ardhana, & Setyosari, 2017, p.204). Group discussion facilitates students to exchange their knowledge and experience together. Group discussion can be done through an online class and offline class. However, group discussion in online discussion has limited interaction which makes students hardly develop interaction skills with other students. This evidence is in line with Baskoro (2018) who argues that online discussion makes students barely experience the ambience of the classroom discussion during learning.

Offline group discussion is important because it can help students socialize with other students in in real-life. Offline group discussion requires students to interact face-to-face with other students when discussing particular topics. By training students in face-to-face interactions, the teacher provides opportunities for the students to build interaction among other students in learning time. This means that the teacher needs to make sure that group discussion does not only focus on the topic, but also focus on how the students discuss it in their social interaction. This practice helps the students perform discussion skill in real life (Tevdovska, 2015).

In the group discussion, there are many types of individual differences of students. Learning in a discussion requires the students to discuss a topic (Cheruvellil, Soranno, Weathers, Hanson, Simon, Filstrup, & Read, 2014). It makes them connect with other students in learning together as a team. They mention interpersonal skill as a skill where students connect with other students using emotional engagement as human beings.

However, based on the researcher's preliminary observation, there were students who barely participate in a group discussion. Septaviana (2016) stated that students in English Language Education Department (ELED) in one private university in Yogyakarta have a lack of confidence in speaking during the group discussion. Based on the researcher's observation, there were students who have more confidence who express their opinion more often and dominate the discussion, while some of them who were less confident stayed silent during the discussion. The reason is that they do not know the importance of active participation in a group discussion. They do not get actively involved in it and it makes it difficult for the students to cooperate and get the benefits of group discussion for their interpersonal skill. Based on the explanation, the researcher wants to explore the benefits of group discussion for students' interpersonal skill. The researcher wanted to see if group discussion might increase the students' confidence, communication skill, and knowledge of a particular topic.

Literature Reviews

This study focuses on the benefits of group discussion for students' interpersonal skill. Group discussion is a part of cooperative learning where the students can share their ideas through communication with other friends. It facilitates the students in learning not only hard skill but also in soft skill aspect (Kato, 2016). In other words, group discussion helps the students not only in cognitive aspects, but also in social aspects such as interpersonal skill as a part of soft skills. It means that group discussion provides the students the opportunity to interact to develop their interpersonal skills. Alghamdi (2014) states that EFL students use verbal communication in group discussions to communicate their opinions with other students in small groups. Forsyth (2014) mentions that group discussion consists of mutual relationship in which the students have interdependence or the need of the presence of someone else to discuss a certain topic.

The Group discussion in EFL classroom in higher education, group discussion is one of method of introducing soft skill in ELT context. The purpose of this method is to promote communication skill, critical thinking skill and problem solving skill (Tevdovska, 2015). It also made the students are dealing with diverse backgrounds of students who they can improve their communication skill, social sensitivity and emotional engagement with (Cheruvellil et al., 2014). Social sensitivity comprises of empathy and integrity. Emotional engagement involves trust towards other students. EFL teacher uses group discussion to deal with diversity of students' backgrounds. As a part of an EFL country, Indonesia uses English in limited areas, such as only in educational fields (Harmer, 2007).

The implementation of English as Foreign Language in Indonesia, the students focus on the use of English as a communication in oral language. The Sybing's (2016) study found the following:

English as a foreign language (EFL) education is arguably the least defined of the three most common types of interaction (the others being conversation, typically an exchange between two people, and speech, where one speaker presents to an audience). (p.221)

EFL students need to practice their communication skill using target language in front of many people through group discussion. According to Cahyono and Widiati (2006), group discussion provides the opportunity for Indonesian students to speak to other students in a small group discussion. The students would be more comfortable to express their ideas in a small number of students than in larger number of students. They can improve their speaking fluency. It is useful for the students to socialize with other students in EFL classrooms.

The researcher concluded that interpersonal skill can help students to develop human interaction skill with other students. Interpersonal skill helps students to improve their social interaction skill.

Research Methodology

The researcher conducted the study in which it used qualitative research because the researcher wanted to explore the students' perceptions of the benefits in joining a group discussion for students' interpersonal skills. This study comprised of the students' feelings and experiences of taking part in a group discussion. According to Cresswell (2012), qualitative research method is an approach to explore the current phenomenon that happens based on in-depth understanding from students' opinions and experiences. The researcher was able to explore in-depth information from the participants by asking several questions in order to know the phenomenon happening in EFL classroom. This approach helped the researcher to collect the information in detail.

This research conducted at ELED at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. Furthermore, . The researcher interviewed one male and three females students batch 2016 at ELED in one private university in Yogyakarta. The participants of this study were four participants. The researcher interviewed one male and three females students who is actively contribution in the group discussion. In this study, the researcher used interview as the data collection method

Finding and Discussion

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From the result of the interview, the researcher found that group discussion is beneficial for students' interpersonal skill. The participants' responses are based on perceptions and experiences they have. The researcher got eight findings. There are two main

categories of the findings that is communication skill and relationship-building skill as explained in literature review.

Improve communication skill.

It helps the students communicate their opinion to other friends, from the result of the interview, all of the four participants of this research argued that group discussion help them in communication skill. There are four categories of communication skill, that is : Oral communication, nonverbal communication, respect others by listening and do assertive communication.

Improve oral communication skill. It helped them to other to communicate their opinion to other friends in spoken language. With oral communication, students can deliver their opinion to their friends in a group. Students can practice their oral communication skill in group discussion. Group discussion changed the students attitude to be more communicative in ELT in EFL classroom.

Learn nonverbal communication. It has been found that group discussion helped the students to learn nonverbal communication by using gesture. It helped the listener understand the information visually. For the example, speakers' hand movement in transferring information to the listener.

Respect others by listening. It helped the students sharing the information to get new information from other students. By giving close attention, it leads the students to practice their respect. From the interview result, the activity in listening is showing empathy where the students concentrate to understand the expressed point of view in listening other students' argument. Active listening is important in communication skill in group discussion because this skill is effective to make the discussion interactive.

Do assertive communication. It helped the students confident to share their arguments in a group. The students can express their agreement and disagreement to the other group members. In conclusion, being assertive means that the students have strong beliefs in their opinions without thinking whether or not their opinion might be wrong. The students can propose their ideas in a group discussion confidently.

Improve relationship-building skill.

Group discussion can not separated in interaction among other students because group discussion consist of two or more of students as team members. Students in group discussion is connected in task or topic of discussion. Building positive relation among other students is important because the students are learning together with other students same task and same group. Group discussion facilitates the students build their social interaction in language learning. There are four relationship building skill, that is :

Open toward students' diversity. It helped the students to tolerate other students' background diversity in a group. Group discussion consists of the different types of students' characters in a group discussion. They explained that the heterogeneity of team member makes the students foster interpersonal practice. Group discussion makes them more open and accepting towards diversity in learning together with their friends.

Collaborate with others. It helped the students learn together in a group as team players. Group discussion promotes cooperative behavior in learning in the classroom. It helps them interact with other students in real-life interactions. Group discussion makes the students responsible to connect and integrate in a group as team players. In other words, students rehearse their teamwork skill by participating in a group discussion. It can be concluded that students are able to collaborate with others in discussing a similar topic after joining group discussions.

Build trust in others. It helped the students to build integrity of trust to other students.

Trust means that the students give the belief to other people to give contribution on their ideas to the task. The students can share the task when learning together with their friends.

Influence others. The students have a chance to support other friends by leading them into certain behaviours. Students can empower each other by supporting other members to speak up. The students can share their opinion and perspectives which will result in other students being more open-minded.

Conclusion

This research is aimed to explore “What are the benefits of group discussion for students’ interpersonal skill in one private university in Yogyakarta?”. The objective of the research is to explore the benefits of group discussion for students’ interpersonal skills. The researcher choose English Language Education Department (ELED) in one private university in Yogyakarta because group discussion is a teaching technique where almost the teacher used it and the researcher has contribution in there. The data were collected by doing interview. The researcher analyzes the data into four step of coding that is: Open, analytical, axial and selective coding.

The researcher found eight findings the aims of the findings. To summarize the findings, the following paragraph presents the conclusion of the findings. The first finding is being able to improve oral communication skill. Based on the participant’ perception, oral communication is a skill where the students transferring their idea or argument to other students by oral language. Students can communicate their communication to their friends orally. The second finding is learn non-verbal communication. The students learned how to use gesture such as hand movement in delivering their argument in group discussion. The third finding is respect others by listening. The students are able to respect others by listening other students’ argument first before they give their own opinion. The fourth finding is conducting assertive communication. The students are confident delivering their argument in

group discussion without feeling anxiety or afraid their argument might be wrong. The fifth finding is open toward diversity. The students are tolerance with other students background such as in ethnic culture. It made the students more adaptive with different background of students. The sixth finding is being able to collaborate with others. The students connect among other students in same topic that being discuss in group discussion. They learn together as a team player. The seventh finding is being able to build trust in others. The students share roles among group member. It made the students have the integrity in same topic or task in language learning in building trust among group member. The eighth finding is being able to influence others. Students have social support from other students in a group discussion, The students who lack of confidence in communication, other member of the group push the students who students to speak up in public. Students lead other students into certain behaviour by following group discussion.

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