



E-ISSN 2528-746X

The Effective Use of Small Group Discussions in Teaching Reading Comprehension of English Texts

Nasuha Daema*¹, Burhanuddin Yasin¹, and Chairina Nasir¹

¹Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh

**Corresponding author: nasuhadaema@gmail.com*

Abstract

Reading comprehension is one of the necessary skills for students to understand the meaning of words and what they have read. The researcher found that most eleventh-grade students at SMA Keberbakatan Olahraga Negeri Banda Aceh had trouble in identifying theme messages and supporting details, summarizing with evidence, making inferences, and interpreting vocabulary aspects about the text based on preliminary research. Therefore, the researcher used small group discussions to increase students' reading comprehension skills. This study aimed to conduct a small group discussion to help the eleventh-grade students at SMA Keberbakatan Olahraga Negeri Banda Aceh improve their reading comprehension using small group discussions. Especially, to find out if small group discussion significantly improves the reading comprehension aspect of identifying theme or the message and supporting details, summarizing with evidence, making inferences, and interpreting vocabulary. This study used a quantitative pre-experimental research with one group pre-test and post-test design. The sample in this research was 20 students using purposive sampling. The researcher used essay questions as an instrument to collect data for the pre-test and post-test. The findings of this study showed that using small group discussions could improve students' reading comprehension. It could be seen from the average mean of post-test (63.1) and pre-test (42.0). It found that using small group discussions enhanced student progress in reading comprehension.

Key Words : English Text, Reading Comprehension, Small Group Discussion.

1. INTRODUCTION

Expert on English reading skills defined the meaning of reading in various ways. According to Aprizani (2005; p. 576), reading is a type of ability that includes making sense and getting meaning from the printed word. According to Steven (2005; p. 9), one of the most important language abilities to develop in children is reading comprehension which is necessary for them to be able to perform well in society. So, it can be inferred that reading is one of the skills necessary for learners to understand the meaning of words and therefore understand what they have read.

Comprehension is connected to content according to Dalman as cited by Ibtida et al. (2022; p. 267), understanding content means a student can explain a reading's content in their own words. Sahara (2018; p. 2) agreed that the purpose of comprehension of a text is for students to understand what is being read; and understanding content means they can explain it in their own words. However, comprehending the text involves a process before the reader can easily understand what they read.

Based on preliminary research using a reading comprehension worksheet at SMA Keberbakatan Olahraga Negeri on February 25th, 2023. The study showed that the majority of students had difficulties in all aspects, namely identifying theme or message and supporting details with scores 72 percent, summarizing with evidence with scores 40.5 percent, making inferences 69, and interpreting vocabulary with scores 61.8 percent about the text. Therefore, the researcher decided to find some techniques, there are small group discussions for increasing these students in reading comprehension.

Some previous studies have investigated the use of small group discussions. According to Sahara (2018) and Maslina et al. (2022) stated that, small group discussion can be an effective way to help students in the reading process by providing them with a clearer understanding of what they read. Based on the discussion above of the discussion of these existing studies, it can be concluded that this research is slightly different from previous research. In addition, the small group discussion technique has never been used in SMA Keberbakatan Olahraga Negeri. Although this is a vocational school, reading comprehension is still very important. The students in this school focused mostly on their non-academic lessons, especially sports subjects. Some lacked interest in academic studies. So, the researcher was interested in researching to improve these student's academic abilities, starting with the most basic skill: reading comprehension.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Small Group Discussion

Small group discussion employs student-centered methodology in the teaching and learning process (Roshni & Rahim 2017; p. 2249). According to Shaffer (2016; p.5), a small group has no ideal set number of members but simply requires a minimum of three people. Christiani and MintoHari (2014; p. 3) stated that small group discussion is an organized process that involves a group of 3-7 students in a cooperative face-to-face interaction. Based on the definition above it can be concluded that small group discussion is a teaching and learning technique that requires students to be in groups, and work together on a particular task given by the teacher.

2.2 Reading

Reading skills when used give many benefits such as gaining new information, developing understanding, and solving new problems through this understanding. Reading is a method of interpreting symbols in words by looking at them (Ardana 2020; p. 3). Rizal (2018; p. 5) identified reading activities as essential for people to gain the knowledge needed for successful development in life and in their professions.

2.2.1 Reading Comprehension

According to Gilakjani (2016; p. 230), reading comprehension is defined as the

practice of creating meaning from text. Reading comprehension can be further explained as the process of producing meaning as a result of combining the text's content and message with the reader's prior knowledge and abilities (Şahin, 2013; p.58). The purpose of reading, therefore, is to comprehend the whole text rather than to find the meaning of individual words or sentences.

2.2.2 Aspect Reading Comprehension

1. Identifying theme or message and supporting details

According to Fleming (2019), the theme of a story is rarely stated in any passage. It is usually implied in a hidden lesson or the specifics of the story. According to Nurdiana (2017; p. 63), 'supporting details' are the details and ideas that prove or explain the core idea of the paragraph.

2. Summarizing with evidence

A summary is compact, provides only relevant information, and is free of unnecessary or irrelevant information (O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011; p. 234). According to Harvey and Goudvis (2007), as cited in Sucita and Hukom, (2022; p. 34), summaries are essential for the reader to determine the main points of texts by condensing the information in the text and stating it in their own words.

3. Making inferences

Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004; p. 150) stated that to making inferences, the reader needs to search for clues and attempt to determine the passage's topic because the topic of a text is not always mentioned directly in the text itself.

4. Interpreting vocabulary

Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004; p. 49) stated that when readers do not know the meaning of a word in a sentence, they try to guess the meaning from the context. Interpreting vocabulary in reading comprehension refers to the process of understanding and finding the meaning of word.

3. METHODS

The researchers used quantitative approach to deal with data collection and analysis. Quantitative research deals with relationships, causality, and research problem that can be solved by obtaining and analyzing quantitative numerical data (Ary et al., 2010; p. 39). The researcher used pre-experimental research with the one-group pre-test and post-test designs.

The population consists of all persons who mentioned the object of the research (Arikunto, 2020; p. 173). The population comprises of forty-five students from all eleventh-grade classrooms at Keberbakatan Olahraga Negeri. Arikunto (2006; p. 131) described the sample as a half or representative of the target population. So, this study's sample size was twenty students. In this study, the researcher employed purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, as defined by Narbuko and Achmadi (2018; p. 116), was based on a collection of qualities or characteristics that are expected to be strongly related to traits or characteristics previously known to exist in the population. In this technique, the researcher chose the class that students who were weak in reading comprehension.

According to Paudel (2018; p. 16), Testing is a method for assessing a person's capabilities. A test measures a person's ability or knowledge to reflect what were their experience and background or how well students understood and what the teacher thought (Brown, 2007; p. 385). In this research, the researcher conducted a

pre-test and a post-test. The researcher gave pre-tests and post-tests to the students about narrative text with 10 essay questions.

In this research, the researcher collected the data by giving tests before and after teaching. The number of meetings carried out in this study was six meetings. The first meeting was a pre-test. Then, the experiment was continued to the treatment in the second up to the fifth meeting, and the post-test was given in the sixth meeting. In analyzing the data to determine the hypothesis, the researcher used the paired-samples t-test technique. A paired-sample t-test examines the means of two matched groups of persons or a single group at two different times (Ross & Willson, 2017; p. 17). The basis for deciding to accept or reject H_0 in this test if the significant value > 0.05 then H_0 is accepted or H_a is rejected. If the significant value < 0.05 then H_0 is rejected or H_a is accepted.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

The study was conducted in SMA Keberbakatan Olahraga Negeri, from the 5th of September until the 3rd of October, 2023. The sample was twenty students of the eleventh grade. The data collection process involved six meetings, the first meeting commenced data collection with a pre-test that consisted of ten essay questions and continued with provided treatments in reading learning with small group discussions in the second until fifth meetings, and the sixth meeting facilitated a post-test with ten essay questions.

4.1.1 The Result of Validity Test

In research, validity is defined as how well a study answers the research question or as the validity of the study results (Sullivan, 2011; p. 119). The following table below showed the validity data from the pre-test and post-test.

Table 4.1 Data Validation of the Pre-Test and Post-Test

Number of Question Essay	Number Item	R calculates	R calculates	R table, 95%	Validity
		(pre-test)	(post-test)	(N=20)	
	X1	0.478	0.581	0.444	Valid
	X2	0.939	0.457	0.444	Valid
	X3	0.857	0.572	0.444	Valid
	X4	0.948	0.456	0.444	Valid
	X5	0.903	0.598	0.444	Valid
	X6	0.883	0.511	0.444	Valid
	X7	0.777	0.768	0.444	Valid
	X8	0.810	0.735	0.444	Valid
	X9	0.779	0.644	0.444	Valid
	X10	0.714	0.667	0.444	Valid

As shown in the table above, all of the values for all the essay questions had R calculate values higher than the R table values (0.444). This result meant that all the statement items were valid.

4.1.2 The Result of Reading Comprehension Aspect

As stated in chapter two, reading comprehension was divided into four aspects. These were: identifying theme or message and supporting detail (IDTMSD), summarizing with evidence (SE), making inferences (MI), and interpreting vocabulary (IV). The pre- and post-tests included ten essay questions including only one question for the aspect of identifying theme messages and supporting details, since the pre-observation score for this aspect as stated in chapter one was close to the KKM score (75%). For the other three aspects, i.e. summarizing with evidence, making inferences, and interpreting vocabulary, each aspect was covered by three questions because the pre-observation score for these aspects as stated in chapter one was lower than the KKM score (75%). Each question had a weight score of ten, so, if all questions were correct, the total score would be one hundred.

Table 4.2 The Result of Mean Score of Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension Aspect	Pre-test	Post-test	Increasing
Identifying theme message and supporting detail	4.6	7.5	2.9
Summarizing with evidence	13.3	20.3	7
Making inferences	10.5	19	8.5
Reading Comprehension Aspect	Pre-test	Post-test	Increasing
Interpreting vocabulary	13.5	16	2.5
Total Score	41.9	62.8	

Table 4.2 described the mean score of students' reading comprehension and showed that all four aspects of reading comprehension skills had improved since the pre-test. However, the improvement was not fairly significant as it was below KKM of 75. It could be seen that the mean score of the post-test was also higher than the mean score of the pre-test, and the most increased mean score was making inferences.

4.1.3 Hypothesis Testing

The paired sample t-test was employed to compare the research data comprised by the students' pre-test and post-test scores. Based on the calculation of the pair sample t-test formula the mean difference between the pre-test and post-test was shown to be 21.10, with a standard of deviation 20.27 and 20 samples. After further calculation, the t score result was 4.65. The data calculation results were found using SPSS statistics 20. In a review of the results of the pre-test and post-test, the average of the student's post-test scores was 63.125, which was greater than the average of the pre-test score (42.025).

Therefore, it could be concluded that this study found that using the small group discussions technique indeed enhanced student progress in reading

comprehension. Following the formulation above, the researcher could infer that the t-table value for this study data was smaller than the t-count ($t_{table} = 2.093 < t_{count} = 4.65$). This meant that the null hypothesis (H_0) could be rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) could be accepted. In summary, the researcher found a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension after using small group discussions

4.2 Discussion

Based on the test results, for all four categories of reading comprehension that were considered lacking, this research has shown that small group discussions could improve students' reading comprehension skills. The improvement of four reading comprehension aspects was not so significant in terms of the whole aspect. This study also showed improvement in reading comprehension according to several other measures. The mean score raised from 42.0 in the pre-test to 63 in the post-test, improving by 21.1 points. It can be concluded that the reading skills of the students studied was more effective after engaging in small group discussions.

The findings of this research show that treatment with small group discussions improved reading comprehension of narrative texts by eleventh-grade students at SMA Keberbakatan Olahraga Negeri Banda Aceh. As the t-table value was smaller than the t-count result, there was an improvement in all aspects of reading comprehension. This happens because, whether in previous research or this study, small group discussions tend to build social skills through interaction with friends, improve self-confidence to share opinions, encourage the expression of student ideas and provide opportunities for feedback and reactions from their classmates, regarding their comprehension of English readings. The findings of this study were similar to those of previous research conducted by Rury (2018), where the small group discussion method was found to be more effective in teaching reading recount texts than the alternative technique employed by a teacher at SMP Attaqwa 02, Bekasi Utara.

Maslina (2020) also found a positive effect on student reading skills after learning reading comprehension through small group discussion. In that study, students also found greater enjoyment in the learning process and an easier understanding of English texts through small group discussion. Kasiha et al. (2022) stated that using small group discussions had a positive effect on teaching reading comprehension as their average post-test scores were greater than their average pre-test scores. Siregar et al. (2020) showed that small group discussion had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension at SMK Swasta Panca Dharma Padangsidempuan, grade ten. Meisy and Sari (2022) also concluded that small group discussion had a significant effect on the reading comprehension of 11th-grade TITL-A students at SMKN 1 Padang.

Based on findings from research by Handayani et al. (2022), it was acceptable to conclude that the small group discussion approach resulted in a considerable improvement in students' reading comprehension abilities. This aligned with the statement by Brawer (1997) as cited in Silalahi (2017) that the objectives of a small group discussion are to offer and distribute knowledge on a certain issue, as well as assess and analyze information for supporting evidence to achieve an understanding of an overall conclusion.

6. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The mean score for 'identifying theme messages and supporting details' and 'summarizing with evidence aspects' was higher in the post-test than in the pre-test, indicating that small group discussions improved student ability to identify themes messages and supporting details. The mean student score for 'summarizing with evidence' increased as well, even though the improvement was not so significant. For the sub-skills, 'making inferences' and 'interpreting vocabulary', the mean scores of the post-test were also higher than the pre-tests, indicating that small group discussion gave a positive effect on improving both 'making inferences' and 'interpreting vocabulary'. Although the improvement was not so significant, when these four aspects are taken together however, it can be said that the small group discussion technique is beneficial for teachers in improving students' English understanding and skills to eleventh-grade students of SMA Keberbakatan Olahraga Negeri Banda Aceh.

The finding of this research showed that small group discussions can enhance student reading comprehension of narrative text in particular. For further researchers: The researcher should identify student's reading comprehension levels before implementing small group discussion techniques to optimize group planning, promote collaboration, and facilitate learning from one another. For teachers: the teacher should clearly outline the discussion process, divide students into small groups, and manage time effectively for each section, aiming to improve the teaching and learning process. For students: Students are expected to actively participate in class, pay attention to teacher instructions, and work in groups, avoiding reliance on one member.

6. REFERENCES

- Aprizani. (2005). Language Assessment: Assessing reading Comprehension on beginning Level. *National Seminar Proceeding*, 576–584.
- Ardana, A. H. D. (2020). *The Importance of Reading Activity for Young Generation. Visual Communication Design Department Faculty of Creative Design and Digital Business*. (Unpublished bachelor thesis), Sepuluh November Institute of Technology, Surabaya.
- Arikunto, S. (2020). *Prosedur Penelitian Suatu Pendekatan Praktik*. Rineka Cipta.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L., C. (2010). *Introduction to Research in Education*.
- Brown, D. (2007). *Teaching by Principles an Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. San Francisco State University.
- Christiani, A. (2016). Penerapan Metode Small Group Discussion dengan Model Cooperative Learning untuk Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Siswa Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*, 2(2), 1–11.
- Fleming, G. (2019). *How to Find the Theme of a Book or Short Story*: July 11, 2019.
- Gilakjani, A. P. (2016). How Can Students Improve Their Reading Comprehension Skills? *Journal of Studies in Education*, 6(2), 229.
- Handayani, R., Musarokah, S., & Budiman, T. C. S. (2022). *Small Group Discussion. Method to Improve Reading Comprehension of Eighth-Grade Students of SMPN 5 Semarang. The 2nd Undergraduate Conference on Applied Linguistics, Linguistics, and Literature*, 2(1), 204–224.
- Ibtida, A. L., Pendidikan, J., Mi, G., Training, T., Madiun, P., E-mail, I., Training, T., Madiun, P., & E-mail, I. (2022). The Effectiveness of Pop-Up-based Animation

- Book to Improve Reading Comprehension Skills of Elementary School Students
Liya Atika Anggrasari. *Al Ibtida: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru MI*, Vol 9 (2) : 265-279.
- Kasiha, G., Hampp, P. (2022). the Use of Small Group Discussion to Improve Students. *Journal of Teaching English, Linguistics, and Literature (JoTELL)*,1(6), 687–696.
- Maslina, Y., Rahmi, R., & Mulyani. (2020). the Use of Small Group Discussion in Teaching Reading Comprehension. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Pendidikan*, Vol 1(1).
- Meisy, A., & Kumala Sari, R. (2022). The Effect of Using Small Group Discussion in Reading Comprehension of Factual Report Text. *JELLT (Journal of English Language and Literature Teaching)*, 7(2), 332–336.
- Mikulecky, B. S., Jeffries, L. (2004). *More reading Power*. The World Language Division.
- Narbuko, C., Achmadi, A. (2018). *Metode Penelitian*. Bumi Aksara.
- Nurdiana, R. amelia. (2017). *Interpretive reading*.Koreksi Edukasi, Pekanbaru.
- Paudel, P. (2018). Use of Test-Teach-Test Method in English as a Foreign Language Classes. *Journal of NELTA Surkhet*, 5(2012), 15–27.
- Rizal, S. (2018). *Reading Skills: Teori dan Praktikum Pengukurannya*. Samudra Biru.
- Roshni, M., & Rahim, A. (2017). Small Group Discussions as an Effective Teaching-Learning Methodology for Learning the Principles of Family Medicine among 2nd-year MBBS Students. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 6(2), 169–170.
- Ross, A., & Willson, V. L. (2017). Paired samples T-test. In *Basic and advanced statistical tests* (pp. 17–19). Brill.
- Rury, D. (2018). *The Effective of Using Small Discussion on Students' Reading Comprehension Of Recount Text*. (Unpublished bachelor thesis). Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta.
- Sahara, A. (2018). *The Use Reading Out Loud Teaching Reading Comprehension*. (unpublished bachelor thesis). Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh.
- Şahin, A. (2013). The Effect of Text Types on Reading Comprehension. *Mevlana International Journal of Education*, 3(2), 57–67.
- Shaffer, T. J. (2016). *COMM 326: Small Group Discussion Methods*. New Prairie Press Manhattan, Kansas.
- Silalahi, D. E. (2017). The Effect of Small Group Discussion Technique on Students' Reading Comprehension Ability. In *Proceedings of Nommensen International International Seminar on Language Teaching (NISOLT)* (pp. 295–300).
- Siregar, Z. F., Harida, E. S., & Zainuddin, Z. (2020). Small Group Discussion for The Students' Reading Comprehension of Senior High School Students. *TAZKIR: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Keislaman*, 6(1), 147–158.
- Steven, S. (2005). *Children's Reading Comprehension and Assessment* - Google Books.
- Sucita, D. P., & Hukom, S. J. (2022). Writing Summary as an Alternative Strategy to Comprehend The Text. *MATAI: International Journal of Language Education*, 3(1), 33–44.
- Sullivan, G. M. (2011). A Primer on the Validity of Assessment Instruments. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 3(2), 119–120.