

Teachers' Perception on Group Formation Method in Group Discussion

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Aulia Pradestian Nauli Tanjung

20140810178

English Language Education Department

Language Education Faculty

Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta

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Abstract

Group discussion is one of the methods used by teachers in the teaching and learning activities. It is an activity which can help students finish tasks by learn together. In making group discussion, usually the teachers divide the students into some group discussion using the method. Actually there are two common methods used by the teacher in forming group discussion. They are randomly-formed groups and student-formed groups. This research aims to find the kinds of group formation method in the group discussion activity, and also the teachers' considerations in forming group discussion. This research used qualitative research and adopted descriptive qualitative research design. This research was conducted at English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This study involved three ELED teachers as the participants. The researcher used interview in collecting the data. The research found group formation methods namely randomly-formed groups, teacher-formed groups, and student-formed groups as the method in forming group discussion. The findings also showed that there were some considerations of the teachers in forming group discussion. The considerations are the purpose of group formation, students' ability, group size and duration, the level of difficulty of the task, fairness of the task distribution, classroom condition, and students' participation in group discussion.

Keywords: Group formation method, randomly-formed groups, teacher-formed groups, student-formed groups, and teacher considerations in forming group discussion.

Background of the Study

Group discussion is one strategy applied by the teacher to support the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Group discussion is considered one of the important factors to improve learners' communication. According to Pham (2011), group discussion is a teaching approach that used small group discussion to complete the goals. Small group discussion engaged the students to share aims and responsibilities to complete a task given by the teacher in group or pair. It means that in a group discussion, students learn to listen to different ideas, learn to discuss and to negotiate.

To facilitate the group discussion activity, the students will be grouped into a small group consists of 3-5 students. In making group discussions, teacher takes the role in it. Teachers apply method to group students. To determine the member of the group discussion, teacher usually uses a way (method) to group students. Usually teacher asks students to make some group discussions by counting or choosing their partners by themselves. It depends on the requirements. According to Waluyo (2017), there are three common group formation methods that often used by the teacher in the classroom, they are counting, list of attendances, and self-decision.

In making of group discussions, the teacher is the role in it. Usually every teacher has their own method to group students. Usually teacher asks students to make some group discussions by counting or choosing their partners by themselves. It depends on the requirements. According to Weimer (2013), there are three common methods in forming group discussion such as randomly-formed groups, teacher-formed groups, and student-formed groups. The method that often used in the classroom is randomly formed groups and student formed groups. In randomly-formed groups, usually teacher divide students into some

group discussions randomly by counting, list attendance, etc. So, the students will get their partners randomly.

While in student-formed groups, the students will determine the group members by themselves. They usually will choose the students who close with them. The students may prefer to have the members of the group discussion who closer with them like their close friends in the classroom or in the school. If they are placed in same group can give good performance on their group work. Sometimes some students feel less of confidence when the teachers ask them to make some group discussions by randomly-formed groups, for example the students asked to count until certain number so they get their partners. In this method, students who get the same number should join being one group.

The researcher ever asks some students about group formation method they like. There are students who prefer to choose their group member by themselves and there are students who prefer to be selected by the teacher itself. As we know that using randomly-formed groups give students justice because there is no unilaterally treatment for each student. There is student who argues that group discussion is a boring learning.

Many students who feel fed up if their teacher asks them to make group discussion, moreover if the formation method used is randomly-formed group, that is generally teacher ask students to count until certain number to get partners who has the same number with them. Sometimes students feel lazy to move from their chair to their friends' chair to join with their group member. Sometimes students feel more enjoy and confident when they are placed with their group member that they choose by themselves because they have known their friends' abilities each other.

By interview the researcher ever asks some students about group formation method they like. They said when they allow choosing their own group members, they feel more confident doing discussion with their friends. They become more confident to express their opinion about the group work because they already know their friends' abilities. While if the group formation method determined by the teacher, automatically the students would get random friends, they might have more ability so it can make the level of their self-confidence be reduced.

From the problem, it is interesting for the researcher to explore teachers' perception on group formation method in group discussion activities. Based on the phenomenon happening at one private university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia which was explained above by the researcher, the researcher was interested in exploring teachers' perception on group formation method and the teachers' consideration in forming group discussion.

Data Collection Method

In this part, the researcher explains the technique of data collection. The technique is use interview. The researcher also did some steps to doing interview process.

Method. The researcher used interview as an instrument to collect the data. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morison (2011), interview is a tool for collecting the information about the object of the study which the question asked by the interviewer and responded by the interviewee to answer the question deeper. In interview, the researcher can ask the question directly verbal or non-verbal to complete the answer for deep issues of teachers' perception on group formation method such as randomly-formed groups, teacher-formed groups, and student-formed groups, so the researcher will be able to get clear data regarding to group formation method in group discussion activities from the participants.

Using interview is suitable for the researcher because she attempt to explore teachers' perception on group formation method in group discussion activities at English Language Education Department in one private university in Yogyakarta. Khotari (2014) stated that the interview method contains communication using oral-verbal incentives and reply using oral-verbal reactions. Then, one on one interview uses in this study as it is best suited for this study. In addition Creswell (2012) added that one-on-one interview are suitable for questioning delicate queries and allowing interviewees to ask or deliver explanations that go further the primary questions.

The researcher used open-ended questions in this research because it could give the participants freedom to answer the questions based on their own perception. According to Creswell (2012), in qualitative research, the researcher asks open-ended questions so that the participants can express their experiences unrestrained by any perceptions of the researcher or any findings have been done before. In the standardized open-ended interview, the participants of this research were asked same basic questions in the same order because the researcher wanted to know the detail information about teachers' perception on group formation method in group discussion from the participants.

Besides, the researcher used standardized open-ended interview because there was no limitation for the participants to answer the questions, which meant that the participants could tell their experience about implementing group formation method, and also the researcher was able to get many information regarding to group formation methods. In short, the interview was suitable because it helped the researcher to get deeper information from the participants since there was no limitation in the interview session. The researcher took ten until fifteen minutes for the interview session in every participant. The interview recorded using recorder which helped the researcher to get accurate data when transcribing.

Procedures. There were several steps in conducting the interview process. First, the researcher made interview guidelines. The interview guidelines are created based on the literature review. The purpose was to keep the researcher asking related to the topic. Second, the researcher made consent with the teachers of English Language Education Department who would be the participants of this research. Third, the researcher made an appointment with the participants on the time and place of the interview process. Finally, the researcher met the participants and did the face to face interview.

The researcher used Indonesian language in conducting the interview to avoid misunderstanding between the researcher and the participants. One of the interview questions was what were the group formation methods applied in the classroom based on the participants' teaching experience. The researcher wanted the participants to have clear understanding about the researcher meant when they were interviewed. Therefore, it could make the participants comfortable in answering the questions from the interviewer. Therefore, the information was detail and clear.

Findings and Discussion

This chapter discusses the finding of this study after collecting the data by using interview. The data develops from the opinion of three teachers who were selected and interviewed. The data is used to reveal two cases which consist of how to do English Language Education Department teachers form group discussion and what are the consideration of English Language Education Department teachers in forming group discussion.

The Kinds of Group Formation Methods Applied by Teachers

In this point, the researcher showed the teachers' experiences in forming group discussion which explained by three participants. It was found that there were some kinds of

group formation method used by the teachers when they made group discussion activities in the classroom, including randomly-formed groups, teacher-formed groups, and student-formed groups. The explanations are presented as follows:

Randomly formed groups. One of the group formation methods applied by the participants is randomly-formed groups. Based on the answer from all participants, there were findings related to the randomly formed groups. When the teacher asks students to make group discussion using randomly formed groups method, all participants have mentioned that they tend to find the group member by counting the number, using attendance list, using games, and based on seating position. According to Chapman (2006), randomly-formed groups are the method used by teachers to apply and give a fair impression to all students in the group discussion. The explanation of the ways in randomly formed groups is presented below:

Counting the number. Counting the number becomes the first finding in randomly formed groups' method. All participants mentioned that they applied counting the number in forming groups. The process of counting the number was the teacher gave instruction to the students to count from 1 until 5 or related to the total of the students in the class, and then the students who get number 1 must join with number 1, the students who get number 2 join with number 2, and etc. So, the students who get the same number must gather become one group. This finding collaborates with Weimer (2018) stated that randomly formed groups method is often implemented by counting the number in selecting group discussion. This method makes the students mingle with others.

Using attendance list. The second finding in randomly formed groups is using attendance list. Sometimes the teachers use attendance list to form groups in order to make vary group formation method. One of three participants mentioned that in finding the group

member, attendance list can be used. Bacon, Steward, and Anderson (2016) stated that sometimes randomly formed groups is applied in forming groups activity based on attendance list, because it will give chance to the students to be a member of a group with different ability and skill.

Using games. The third finding in randomly formed groups is by using games. One of three participants stated that games can be used to form groups. The game used by the teacher is a figure. This game begins with the teacher call one of the figures, and then the students have to do the games with some people in accordance with the figures mentioned by the teacher before.

Based on seating position. The last finding in randomly formed groups' method is based on seating position. This method usually used in the classroom activities. Actually this method done because the reason those more shorten the time of the group formation. Two of three participants in this study mentioned that seating position is the other way to form groups. Usually the ways used by the teachers is line by line. So, the teacher just need to give instruction that the group members are based on the line that students sit.

The process of making group by using seating position was the teacher gave the instruction for the group members like by row, and then the students must follow the row for the group discussion. This formation can make the students easier to do the discussion without having moved place. This finding was in line with Agustin (2018) who stated that one of the methods in group discussion is the teacher sets the students related to their seats line in the classroom.

Teacher-formed groups. The other group formation method implemented by the participants is the teacher formed group method. Based on the answer from the participants, there were findings related to the teacher formed groups. Teachers using this method, they

usually choose the group members for the students based on students' ability or based on a selected group leader. The explanations are presented below:

Based on students' ability. In forming groups based on students' ability, surely there will be students who have high and low abilities. When the teacher puts the students with low abilities in one group, it can make the discussion activities become less effective. The process to form a group based on students' ability is by determining the number of the group member will be made in that class, but before that, the teacher should already know their each student's ability. Then the teacher can put students with mixed abilities as expected by the teacher itself.

Weimer (2013) explained that usually before forming groups, the teacher makes some criteria needed for students' projects. In forming groups using teacher formed groups method, the teacher should already know the abilities of each student before forming groups. According to Weimer the criteria used to form groups include abilities, skills, previous experiences, and background knowledge. Those are some questions that can help the teacher to form groups. Weimer added that this is needed to complete the project assignment successfully.

Based on a selected group leader. The other ways in forming groups using teacher formed groups is based on selected group leader. In forming groups based on a selected group leader, the teacher already knows the ability of each student well. The process to form groups using this way is by selecting who students are suitable to be group leaders for each groups later, for example the students who have more abilities in the class. Mirani and Chunawala (2015) stated, the students allowed to choose their own group leaders help them learn team work and embrace their academic and social differences in a better manner.

Student-formed groups. The last group formation method implemented by the teachers is student- formed groups. In student formed groups, the students can choose the group members by finding the partner and using pair work. In finding the partner, the students usually choose their close friends. In using pair work, the students usually choose their chair mate. In implementation student formed groups, this research showed that the teacher using some ways in forming groups which is include in student- formed group methods.

The process of finding the partner was the teacher asked the students to make group discussion. Then the students asked to find their partner consisted of two people by their own like their chair mates to make an effective group discussion. Usually if the students allowed choosing their own group members, they will choose their close friends.

The process of choosing close friends was the teacher asked the students to make group discussion. Then the teacher just mentioned that for example the group consists of 5 students, and then the students chose the group members by choosing their close friends. Based on the data above, the participants created a group based on students' choice. All participants showed that the finding the partner and using pair work in student formed groups method was one of the kinds of group formation method used in the teaching and learning process.

Generally the process of finding the partner and using pair work had the same way to do, but the different was in the total of the group member. Weimer (2013) argued that in student formed group method, usually students prefer this method, in the classroom there must be some friends whom they consider close friends (friendship), then they tend to choose their friends to be one group discussion. Weimer (2013) added, when students allowed to

choose their own group members will have higher levels of satisfaction with their group experiences.

In student- formed groups, the students have criteria in choosing their partner and usually they tend to choose those who close to them or those who sit next to them. Bacon, Stewart, & Anderson (2001) found that in the student formed groups method, the students allow to choose with whom they want to collaborate for teamwork and this is one of the most common ways of assigning students to groups.

Teacher Considerations in Forming Group Discussion

The collected data showed that there were some considerations of the teacher in forming group discussion. The consideration in forming groups found in this study were the purpose of group formation, students' ability, group size and duration, the level of difficulty of the task, fairness of the task distribution, classroom condition, and students' participation in group discussion.

The purpose of group formation. It is a goal of the lesson that describes what students will be expected by the group discussion activities. According to McCurdy (2018), the teachers must think about the goals of the group discussion activities before forming group discussion for the students. The teachers need to determine what students can get by their participation from group discussion activities. McCurdy mentioned that the purpose of group formation are the number of questions about why are the students doing discussion, what will they gain from the discussion, and how does it tie into rest of the course.

Students' ability. The students' ability is also become consideration in forming group discussion. When the teacher forms group discussions much as possible in the group must be

mixed, some are smart, there are very smart, some are silent, some are active, so that they can complete each other. According to Weimer (2013), students' ability becomes one of criteria needed and considered in forming groups.

Group size and duration. Actually there are two kinds of discussion activities; they are pair discussion and small group discussion. Group size and the duration of the discussion process can vary. Commonly, in pair discussions, it is need two people to work together to solve a problem. The better duration for pair discussion is 30 seconds or 1 minute while small group discussions, it consists of 3 - 5 people and needs 10 - 45 minute to discuss. The teacher should determine group size appropriately for the discussion activities before forming group discussions. If too many group members can impact on the group work and also make them less participate in the discussion process, and if too small can also cause a large workload for the group. An ideal group size in most instances is three-five people. As said by Mellor (2015), choosing appropriate group size for the task in hand is important; too large and individuals can fall off the radar; too small and the work burden may be too great.

The level of difficulty of the tasks. There are some reasons why the teacher asked students to make group discussion activities. It can be seen from the task/assessment itself. Sometimes the assessment is too difficult if worked individually, so that the teacher decided to make group discussion. The discussion materials become consideration also in forming group discussions. Hassaskhah and Mozaffaru (2015) stated that the difficulty level of the tasks allow students to tackle larger and more complex problems and tasks than they would be able to do individually.

Fairness of the task distribution. The division of the task for each member also be considered in the group discussion activities. It is important to involve all of the group members by distributing the task. Gustafson (2009) said that distributing tasks among group

members fairly and equally may be challenge when projects are multifaceted, a member lacks essential skills or knowledge, or a member slacks off on the work that they agreed to complete.

Classroom condition. Sometimes the teachers decide to make group discussion because of the classroom condition. The teacher makes group discussion so that the students feel not bored. The teacher asks students to make group discussion purposes to make them move. This finding collaborates with McIntyre (2010) mentioned that creating positive classroom environment makes the learning more interesting for the students.

Students' participation in group discussion. The teachers need to think the possibilities will happen during discussion process. Sometimes in some group discussions, there will be students who do not participate on the group task. There will be free rider in the group discussion. Therefore, teachers are asked to anticipate this problem so that it will not happen again. To see the participation between students, the role of the teacher is very important here during the discussion process took place. The teacher as the monitor should observe all students in each group discussion". McCurdy (2018) added, the teacher needs to ensure whether the students doing the group task or not, do they participate or not in the discussion.

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