



Utilizing Group Discussion Technique in Developing Speaking Skill in an EFL Classroom

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Abstract. This study aims to identify students' speaking skills in the English Department at UIN Datokarama Palu that could be developed through group discussion techniques. It was designed as collaborative classroom action research and divided into two cycles. Data came from class observation, field notes, a questionnaire, and a speaking test over six meetings of speaking lessons on the second term of the semester. The research included 22 students. The researcher identified the students' speaking skill development based on the criteria of success established. The findings showed that 11 students (50%) acquired it, and 11 students (50%) fizzled in the first cycle. The researcher continued to the next cycle since the students' speaking achievement did not meet the criteria of success yet. Some improvements were made in order to cover the drawbacks in the first cycle, such as rearranging the members of the group and emphasizing teaching on the use of 'opened-ended questions'. There were 18 students (81.8%) who acquired it, and just 4 students (18.2%) fizzled in the second cycle. Besides, all students felt challenged to participate in group discussions. However, their participation varied greatly among the individual students. An interesting implication of this research was that students' speaking skills could be developed through group discussion techniques.

Keywords: *EFL students, group discussion technique, speaking skill*

Introduction

There are two emphases in developing students' speaking skill in general. Firstly, it emphasizes expressing meaning in daily interpersonal and transactional conversation, and secondly, it emphasizes expressing the meaning of a short and monologs text in daily life context (Rao, 2019; Hussin et al., 2020). A point that can be made in an English classroom is how the target language can be used as a medium to communicate. This is quite reasonable since the assessment of the successfulness of language learning is whether the students can use it or not in their real-life or at least in the classroom when the learning process is taken place (Zyoud, 2016; Yesilçinar, 2019; AL-Garni & Almuhammadi, 2019; Saed et al., 2021).

All lecturers are the agents of change who have to take part and must be responsible for the change. The most essential thing that lecturers can do is to change their paradigm toward their teaching view which is bound closely to traditional points of

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view where lecturers must “all-out” or “show force” in front of their students. The atmosphere of the classroom is getting worse when these lecturers are unable to use various techniques and media to ease their students' understanding in the classroom. All these then raise students' boredom to follow English lessons (Menggo, 2016; Iman, 2017; Hamouda, 2020; Hussin et al., 2020).

Based on the researchers' previous observation, the problems found in the researcher's classroom can be categorized into three main factors. They are the problems that deal with the hesitation of the students to speak which affects an un-dynamic classroom atmosphere, the problem of how students use expressions to signal certain transactional dialogue, and the problem of maintaining students' motivation to follow English class. All these factors can be elaborated as follows: (1) The faltering of the students to speak. To a portion of the students in the researcher's class, the social element is more predominant where students are caught in a conviction development in a general public that learning includes paying attention to the speaker and not effectively making some noise in the class. As a result, a quiet homeroom is an overall peculiarity in some speaking classes; (2) The trouble of the students to utilize a few articulations to flag certain conditional discoursed. They can't utilize a legitimate articulation to flag that they are offering a perspective, saying an arrangement and conflict; making explanations, giving reasons, and some others value-based discoursed; (3) Lack of students' inspiration to follow English class. Pretending and portraying pictures are the most widely recognized procedures utilized in showing speaking in class. Having taken a gander at the strength and systems of the two strategies depicted in some technique references; right off the bat teachers of English are anxious to attempt them. Sadly, the procedures that the researcher applied are not fulfilled at this point since the aftereffect of the speaking test can't acquire the base norm of English.

Having broken down these realities, the researchers choose to lead a CAR (Classroom Action Research) at English Department students of UIN Datokarama Palu. To cover the issues as recently expressed, the researcher utilized a group discussion technique which is accepted can conquer students' concerns particularly in fostering their speaking skill. Then the researchers formulated the research question as follow: “How can group discussion technique develop the students' speaking skill?”

Theoretical Framework

Speaking is generally at the center of language instruction since it is such a common form of interpersonal communication. It is essential to social life because individuals use it to convey their ideas, thoughts, feelings, arguments, and points of view in all types of encounters and circumstances. This fact has the interesting implication that most of us speak more than we write, and in some circumstances, people will use speaking to give instructions or finish tasks, to describe things, to complain about other people's behavior, to make polite requests, or to amuse others with jokes and stories. (Hussain, 2017; Zuhriyah, 2017; Krebt, 2017; Kuning, 2019). Speaking might sometimes be more important than writing.

Without a listener, communicating is almost impossible. Commonly, communication took place face-to-face long before technological advancements were made. But today, telephones allow for inter-person conversation even when the listener is far away. In this situation, even though they do not communicate face-to-face, they still need to present the listener's voice (Mulyanah et al., 2018; Rao, 2019).

In oral communication, the listener is extremely significant because, the receiver (the listener) has a critical function to play. As the conversation progresses, the listener shapes it by influencing the speaker's words and delivery. When reading or listening to a text, the listener interacts with it, decodes it, and gives it their own unique interpretation.

Producing coherent phrases, as well as taking in and processing information from others, are all necessary components of speaking (Hanifa, 2018; Rao, 2019).

Giving students plenty of time to practice their English in class is an important aspect of teaching English. This fact has an intriguing significance, which is that English professors should look for an effective method that makes their jobs easier. A group discussion might be an alternative method for improving pupils' speaking abilities. A group discussion is a sort of conversation in which a few people from the gathering participate and share their opinions on a subject. Each participant is free to express their opinions on the subject at hand (Nyumba et al., 2018; Arutmayanti & Astuti, 2023).

The best strategy in a class of many students speaking the same mother tongue is to give them tasks that require them to work in small groups or pairs rather than giving them individual speaking assignments in front of their peers. On the other hand, group discussion is a successful speaking activity in a large classroom because it helps students express themselves verbally and gives them a chance to be more independent during a speaking activity (Bonnet et al., 2018; Pochana, 2022).

Some previous researchers recommend that group discussion is an effective technique to develop students speaking skills. Group discussion can promote comprehension and provide learners with feedback and clarification. Group discussion can urge students to take part effectively in the learning of talking and can work on the capacity of low-level students in talking class and bunch conversation can raise the premium and animate the thinking power about the individuals from the gathering (Pochana, 2022; Arutmayanti & Astuti, 2023).

Materials and Method

The plan of this exploration was Classroom Action Research (CAR). It targets working on the nature of the instructing learning measure and is arranged as subjective examination in which the information ought to be founded on nearby current conditions and introduced as words. Activity exploration can be viewed as a methodology for gatherings of instructive specialists, students' folks, and others to live with the intricacy of genuine experience while, simultaneously, making progress toward substantial improvement (Mirra et al., 2015; Aidinopoulou and Sampson, 2017).

This research employed collaborative action research since it was conducted with a collaborator. However, both researchers and the collaborator had a different role where the researchers employed group discussion technique in their teaching while the collaborator observed the progress of the teaching and learning process. Since the research was designed to be a CAR, it was employed in cycles using the model of CAR, the cycles started with four recommended phases include planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

This research was conducted in the English Department at UIN Datokarama Palu. The class consists of 22 students with various abilities, gender, and learning style. To obtain accurate and reliable data, the researchers carried out field research by employing some instruments, i.e. observation checklist, field notes, questionnaire, and test. observation checklist and field notes were done by the collaborator while the teaching process conducted while questionnaire and test were distributed at the end of each cycle. The data analysis is done through reflection where the researchers collected, selected, categorized, compared, synthesized, and interpreted the data.

In this research, by using the Holistic Scoring of speaking assessment of Bailey, the students are assessed in the area of grammar and word order, pronunciation, vocabulary and general speed, and sentence length and comprehension. The point goes from 0 as the lowest to 5 as the highest point. A total point that students can get is derived from the total of students' scores multiplied by four. So, the top score in all five areas would result in 100 or equal to native proficiency. This can be delineated in the accompanying figure:

Table 1.
Holistic Scoring of Speaking Assessment

Aspects of Assessment	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
1 Comprehension					
2 Pronunciation					
3 Grammar and Word Order					
4 Vocabularies					
5 General Speed of Speech and Sentence Length					

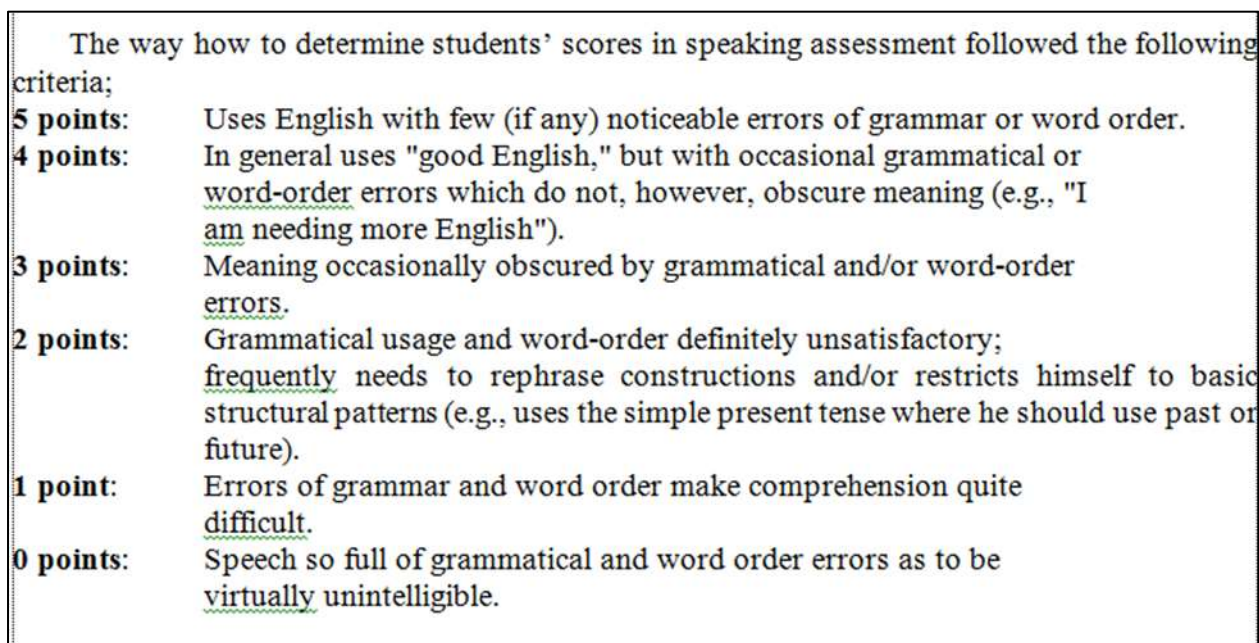


Figure 1.
Holistic Scoring of Speaking Assessment

Results
First Cycle

In teaching the students, the researcher employed three-phased activities. The researchers and collaborator came to the class and welcomed the students. The students were enthusiastic. The researchers checked the students' attendance list but there was nobody absent. The activities continued to introduce the topic to the students and state-specific instructional objectives on the whiteboard.

The focus of the teaching was to train the students to use some expressions of asking and giving opinions in the discussion setting. In pre-activity, the researcher asked students some questions to explore their prior knowledge.

Since the students were divided into five groups, in whilst activity, the researchers asked the students to sit in groups. They assigned two groups to conduct the discussion for each meeting. The first chance was given to group one. The group moved to the front of the class while the other students sat with their group. Student 2 became the speaker. He greeted his friends then continued to elaborate on the topic. After presenting the topic, He gave his friends a chance to ask questions. Here, there were 4 questions (Student 11, student 8, student 18, student 22) that must be answered. They could answer them. After answering all the questions, the first session was ended.

The researchers then invited the next group to come in front of the class to begin the next presentation. Student 6 became the speaker. She presented it then continued to give a chance to the other group to ask questions. After answering the questions, the presentation was ended.

In post Activity, the researchers corrected several mistakes did by the students when they asked questions, answered, or gave clarification during the discussion. Before ending the lesson up, they asked the students to clarify the materials have been studied and reminded the group to prepare well their presentation for the next meeting.

Based on the data from observation, some students were eager to join a group discussion. The condition of the class was cheerful where some of the students were often asked how to ask someone's opinion and give an opinion. When the researchers asked "What do you think about technology, do you think it is important or not? There are two students (student 1 and student 10) who gave their opinion. It seems that the other students could respond to the researchers' questions.

The condition of the class was relaxed when the researchers asked students to sit with their group. The students did it. It seems that the students understand researchers' instruction. In groups, students could use English but they mostly used Bahasa Indonesia to talk. When the speaker gave them the time to ask a question, they delivered them in English. Students could answer the questions arouse even with a limited sentence. Three students asked questions. In answering the question or giving a comment, they spoke clearly but still mispronounced some words. Furthermore, the students gave examples to support their opinion and use gestures and facial expressions.

Like the previous meeting, the steps of presenting the materials were almost the same as the previous one, but the teaching was emphasized on introducing the expressions of agreement and disagreement. The researchers opened the class by greeting the students then continued to check the attendance list. Only one student was sick. Afterward; they introduced the topic and wrote the objective of the lesson on the whiteboard. They continued to attract students with some questions to get their prior knowledge about the topic that would be discussed.

In whilst Activity phase, the researchers asked the students to sit in a group then assigned groups three to report the topic. The group moved in the front of the class while others sat with their group. The presentation started and Student 11 became the speaker. He greeted the class, introduced his friends, and elaborated on it. After presenting the topic he asked his friends in the other group to ask questions. At this stage, there were four questions aroused which were directly answered. After answering all the questions, the session was ended. The next group presented the topic. Student 15 became the speaker to present the topic. She elaborated it nicely. On this occasion, there are four questions aroused. The researcher still jotted down students' mistakes in grammar and pronunciation when the first and second topics were presented.

In post Activity, the researchers corrected both from the presenting group and the participants then the activities continued to give the students chance to clarify some unclear points dealing with the materials that had been learned. After that, they reminded the groups to prepare the next presentation well and closed the meeting. Even though the condition was still the same at the first meeting, the students were enthusiastic to join the speaking class. The presented group was ready to present the topic because the members had prepared them.

In the discussion, they could deliver and answer their opinions in English even with limited sentences. Even they could share the ideas in discussion but fast learner students still dominated speaking in the group. According to the notes, five students asked questions. Three students answered actively. The discussion was getting better; however, the researchers still reminded the students to use the proper expression of asking and giving opinions and the use of gestures and eye contact in a conversation.

Like the previous two meetings the researchers opened the class, checked students' attendance list, then introduced the topic to the students. They wrote the objective of the lesson on the whiteboard. According to the lesson plan, teaching was focused to learn about the way how to ask for satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

In whilst Activity phase, the researchers explained broadly and gave some examples of how to use the expressions. Some students trained them. The activity continued to ask students to sit in a group. The first presentation was performed by group four to present their topic. The group moved in front of the class and student 17 began the presentation. He greeted his friends, introduced the topic, and elaborated it then asked his friends to ask some questions. There were three questions aroused at the time. The group could answer them then the first session was closed.

The fifth group came in front of the class to present their topic. The speaker was student 20. Still the same as the previous presentation, she greeted his friends, introduced the topic, and elaborated it then asked her friends to ask some questions. At this stage, there were four questions aroused and they could answer them. The group closed. To end up the meeting, the researchers corrected mistakes did by the students and asked the students to clarify some unclear points then this third meeting was closed.

It overlooks the facts that there were two points to note at the day, the atmosphere of the classroom and students' braveness to deliver their ideas. This could be recognized from the fragment of the conversation when the researcher asked their felling about the classroom. The students tried to provoke their friends to begin a conversation in English. The evidence that there were some students smile signed that the students understood the conversation which took place at the time.

The presentation of the groups was well-prepared since the students had enough time to enrich the topic, but fast learner students still dominated speaking in groups. In connection to the materials that they learned; students were familiar to use two expressions of asking satisfaction.

In answering the question or giving comments the students did well. They gave examples to support their opinions and used gestures and facial expressions to stress the meaning. They spoke clearly but mispronounced some words. The data said that these two groups elaborated the topic well. According to the field notes, five students asked questions and shared their opinions.

Speaking Assessment

The researchers assessed the students' speaking performance in an interview. They recorded the students' oral exhibitions to keep up with the valid information from the field. Based on the results of speaking assessment, there are only 11 students (50%) whose accomplishments in talking met the criteria of success. There were 11 students (50%) who did not meet the criteria of success. This condition was not in line yet with the established score of speaking since the researchers stated that the gained score of the students must be ≥ 70 and covered 70% of the total number of students in the class. This reflects the fact that the students did not achieve the criteria of success that had been established.

Questionnaire Analysis

Since the questionnaire provides authentic data from students' perspectives about the technique that had been applied, there were six questions that the researchers requested to answer. This was given after completing the first cycle.

Having analyzed students' responses on the questionnaire, the expected response in this questionnaire were mostly in line with students' respond. It can be said that students had a positive view of the utilization of the group discussion technique. It seems reasonable to suppose that group discussion is a meaningful technique in developing students' speaking skill since the technique not only raises

their interest in speaking class but also it raises the students' self-confidence and facilitates them in completing the task given by the researchers.

Reflection

After discussing the data gathered in the first cycle, then, it seems more appropriate for the researchers and collaborator to draw a reflection because it enables us to explain why the students did not meet the criteria of success that have been established.

According to the data, the researchers found three issues to cover. They can be summarized in the following description. To help the groups to be successful; three drawbacks must be covered in the second cycle. These were several things that they did to help them; they were to emphasize the use of 'open-ended questions', to assign students to provide outlines in groups' reports and to employ mixed abilities in grouping the students. The reasons why the researchers emphasized these things can be elaborated as follow:

- 1) To use 'open-ended questions. Since the students were familiar to ask 'yes no questions' which just drove their companions to right away offer yes or no responses, it was basically critical to ensure the questions were open-ended on the grounds that it would lead the plans to should be produced. For example, instead of saying 'Do you think having Android is important?' a good question to ask in the session would be 'What can you do with an Android?' This would be an example of an open-ended question. It did not require a definite answer. Instead, it allowed the students to think among themselves which led them to come up with some different opinions to be generated.
- 2) To provide outlines. In this research, the goal of group discussion is to develop students' speaking skill. To acquire the normal objective, the exercises done may be made appropriately by the researcher by appointing the students to give the blueprints in their show, the students will actually want to effectively take part in bunch conversations to ask, answer questions, and offer their perspectives since they have a few plans to build.
- 3) To mix the abilities of students in groups. By mixing them evenly in a group, students can share knowledge and ideas that help to solve problems. Along these lines, students can figure out how to cooperate with other people, assist students with conveying significant plans to one another, and can work with more regular and clever correspondences.

Second Cycle

Based on the reflection on the first cycle, the researchers revised the plan. If in the first cycle the group just only reported their topic and let other group gave respond to the presentation, in this cycle, they assigned the presented group to provide the outlines of the topic. Besides, the topics that were presented by all groups must be announced early. All students were assigned to gather information on the topics as much as possible to enrich their knowledge.

Since students were familiar to use the 'Yes/No' question in asking questions and clarifications, at this cycle, the teaching was addressed to reinforce how to use 'open-ended questions.' This allowed them to give some alternative answers in the discussion.

By noting the fact that a random group did not give a significant contribution to the success of a group discussion, the researchers changed the groups by considering students' capability in English because it had been known from speaking assessment done in the previous cycle. Then they rearranged the groups' members by mixing them based on their capability in English.

Speaking Assessment

Speaking skill assessment was needed to draw the achievement of the students and to see their progress after the researchers employed group discussion in speaking class. Based on the result of the speaking assessment in the second cycle, there was an expanding number of students who met the criteria of success. There were 18 students (81.8%) who met the criteria of success. By contrast, the percentage of the students who did not gain the established score was decreased. There were only 4 students (18.2%) who failed to meet it. Classically, it has covered more than 70% of students who passed the test.

Questionnaire Analysis

To develop students' speaking skill in the second cycle, the researchers improved with two activities; switching group members to distribute fast learners evenly and providing outlines in the group's report. There was a need for the researcher to gather students' responses whether the improvements affected students' speaking skill or not. There were ten questions provided that the researcher requested to answer.

Having analyzed students' responses on the questionnaire, it describes us that the improvements did by the researchers in the second cycle brought a positive impact on the development of students' speaking skill since students' respond were mostly in line to the expected response. It seems reasonable to suppose that the improvements made in the second cycle affect students' speaking skill and help them in group discussion activities.

Reflection

In light of the investigation of both, instructing and learning interaction and students' learning bring about the subsequent cycle, it was discovered that students' talking expertise was improved. Considering three criteria of success established in this research, the data showed that the students fulfilled the minimum standard of achievement at school. In six meetings class observation, the data showed that the students could carry out a transactional dialog in the target language and they were involved actively in the teaching and learning process. It indicated that the research must be stopped since all criteria of success established have been achieved.

Discussion

Teaching Speaking through Group Discussion Technique

Based on the finding of this research, it enables me to explain how to employ group discussion effectively. There are five factors that the researchers must consider; providing relevant topics, grouping students, assisting them, assigning group reports, and giving give feedback. First, Providing relevant topics. The topics that were discussed must familiar to the students since the more familiar students to the topic the more knowledge they have and consequently, it will ease them in giving and asking their opinion and they must interest since the topic will attract the student's intention to involve in a group discussion. Second, Grouping students. The member of the group must be not too large since it was difficult for the researchers to control and manage. The capability in English must be delivered evenly. Mix abilities group is recommended since the fast learner can help and share with the slow one. Third, Lecturers' assistance. Even though the students had already been grouped evenly, the assistance of the lecturer to maintain the flow of group discussion is still needed. The lecturer has to assist the group which needs help to keep the discussion running smoothly. Fourth, Group report. Group reports must be arranged as easily as possible. Besides, it should be accompanied by outlines to help the groups to construct their idea in

asking about and reporting the topic. In such conditions, the researchers must receive whatever they said. They have to provide the space where the students feel free to express their ideas and must be familiar with some errors and mistakes are done by his/her students through their sentences production. Fifth, Feedback. Feedback is needed to reflect the students on what they have done during group discussions. In some cases, the students produced some mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. When they do, the lecturer must be wise in correcting them. The researchers should encourage them to speak since students learned from some mistakes they did. This will release students' fear in speaking class. Indeed, they must avoid putting down students' opinions or statements. Once a lecturer puts down one's opinion it can slow down the productivity of the students and can influence other members for voicing their ideas or solutions. Instead, the lecturer must appreciate their hard work.

Based on the data gained in this research, group discussion is effective to develop students' speaking skill. It is helpful since the number of students who participated actively in the discussion was increased from cycle to cycle. However, in the first cycle, some of the students' speaking skill was developed but the classical percentage did not meet the criteria of success established since it must be 70%. Therefore, the researchers continued to the second cycle by covering some drawbacks found in the previous cycle.

Compared to the students' development in the first cycle, most students were better in the second cycle. The willingness to speak in group presentations was also increased even though they often made few mistakes in accuracy and fluency. They could construct the sentences and say without feeling nervous or being afraid of making mistakes. As the result, most of the students obtain a mean score of 74.36 more than the established score at school which was only 70. In connection to the implementation of the technique, it was found that, in the first cycle, only fast learner students could express their ideas. By contrast, slow learner students only kept silent because they felt inferior and they did not have enough self-confidence to use spoken language in English. But, mixed group abilities arrangement in the second cycle could work since fast learner students assisted the slow one.

The development of the students speaking skill could also be recognized from the students' self-confidence. Their self-confidence also increased since the data showed that they could speak in front of their friends and elaborate their opinions and comments freely even though there were still many mistakes in pronunciation and grammar. Indeed, group discussion was useful in developing students speaking skill because it allowed students to communicate together in a natural environment and this is in line with research by Moge (2019), Kaharuddin & Rahmadana (2020), Bohari (2020), Weda et al. (2021), Marzuki & Kuliahana (2021). Since there was more than one student involved, it allowed them to speak, share more ideas to be introduced, and present information about a particular topic. If the students were introduced to a certain topic in group discussion, they will know everything about it and have an opinion on it. They will get some ideas and arguments against it. The students will be familiar to defend their views deals with the topic discussed.

The findings of the research showed that group discussion provided a chance for students to talk in a small and unsupervised group. Because of that, they can raise their ideas freely. Consequently, this would release their pain in learning since the interaction that takes place was not under the 'watchful eye' of the lecturer and helped them to become comfortable in a group.

During group discussion, they became independent in learning since they worked together to come up with ideas or solutions by assisting their group. In addition, it could also allow the students to develop their collaboration skill. The evidence showed that fast learner students had a chance to help the slow ones. From this point, students could learn that a single topic presented can be seen from multiple perspectives since their friends have some different ideas and this is in line with research by Namaziandost et al. (2019), Ehsan et al. (2019), Alek et al. (2020), Lin & Wang (2021).

Instead of learning some expressions of transactional dialogues found in text book used at school, group discussion offered students a chance to practice them naturally in a real context. The data showed that students used the opportunity to demonstrate how they used some transactional dialogues learned. And if they were involved in that process, it provided a valuable lesson to practice the materials given by the researchers. In other words, they do not just teach but engages them in a natural transactional conversation.

Group discussion could increase students' motivation to follow English class since it provided space to deliver their contributions to the overall process of learning. The fact proved that in some classroom's interaction, students were positioned as passive listeners who only listened to what the lecturer said. This connection, allowed the lecturer to withdraw from the position which the condition could increase students' participation, reduce classroom anxiety, and lead the process of learning to become less stressful.

Compared to other techniques in teaching speaking, using group discussion increased the learners' self-confidence. It created students' autonomy because they had full responsibility for their success in learning. It very well may be seen from the exercises that the students did. The researchers were only involved to provide the topic to be discussed but how they enriched the topic given, provided the presentation, and assembled the arguments during discussion would be the group's responsibility. It would lead them to be autonomous learners since the learners were involved actively in all activities which took place in the classroom.

Conclusion

Since the motivation behind this investigation was to recognize whether group discussion can be utilized to foster students' speaking skill at English Department students of UIN Datokarama Palu, the researchers found that students' speaking skill were grown economically from one cycle to another. Utilizing the rules of achievement set up, there were 11 students (50%) who acquired it, and 11 students (50%) fizzled in the main cycle. Paradoxically, the pattern was expanded in the second cycle to 18 students (81.8%) who acquired it and just 4 students (18.2%) fizzled. The discoveries of this exploration show in group discussion students not exclusively could foster their talking ability through the chances to talk and to share the plans to their gathering and entire class yet additionally created a sound buzz through a packed air of the class where students included effectively to play out the errands given and encouraged a positive learning climate through the way how all individuals helped each other to play out gathering's assignments. Generally, a fascinating ramification of this exploration was group discussion could foster students' speaking skill.

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