

## The Effect of Small Group Discussion on Reading Skill of EFL Junior High School Students

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### Abstract

*This study aims to solve problems related to whether or not there is a significant difference in reading ability between students who are taught using the small group discussion method and students who are not taught using the method. Furthermore, the research method used in this study is a quantitative method and uses an experimental research design. This study focuses on providing treatment in the experimental classroom by applying small group discussions in teaching reading, and then the researcher observes the results of the teaching and learning process with pre-test and post-test. The results of the study explained that there was a significant difference between the two groups, where students who were taught using the small group discussion method experienced a positive improvement in their reading ability compared to students who were not taught with the group discussion method.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, a strong foundation in the English language is more important for students than ever before. Being fluent in English unlocks doors to communication with people from all corners of the globe. English serves as a gateway to a vast reservoir of knowledge, especially in scientific research, technological advancements, and academic resources. Strong English skills equip students to access and understand this wealth of information, keeping them at the forefront of their chosen fields.

Indonesia speaks English as a foreign language. So many techniques and methods are used to learn it. It is universally recognized that English language learners must develop a comprehensive set of skills, encompassing listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are categorized into receptive and productive skills. The separation between those skills requires different way to teach them. According to Sabarun et al. (2024) said that one of the reasons the students could not present ideas effectively was that they did not plan their writing well in advance. Although students have been instructed on the fundamentals of writing, including format and essential elements, their written

work frequently appears shallow and lacks substance, with many learners struggling to come up with ideas to write about.

Besides writing skills, reading skills are another area that requires special attention from teachers. However, developing reading comprehension skills is equally challenging. Reading is a vital means of acquiring knowledge, enabling us to understand written texts and gain valuable insights, information, and even solutions to problems. Sabarun et al. (2024) said that another crucial factor influencing successful learning is learning style, which refers to the individual approach to acquiring and processing knowledge

According to Suriana et al. (2021) "Building knowledge is the phase of reading and finding out." Thus, reading serves as a valuable resource for acquiring extensive information and broadening our knowledge. Furthermore, reading is an essential learning tool that plays a consistent role in classroom activities. Jeremy Harmer in Ningsih et al. (2020) said reading is a key component of receptive skills in the English language curriculum. Receptive skills refer to the processes by which individuals interpret and derive meaning from written or spoken texts.

Furthermore, reading is an essential skill for Junior High School students to acquire. As part of the curriculum, students are introduced to various text types, including descriptive, narrative, and recount texts. Among these, descriptive texts are a fundamental reading skill that first-year Junior High School students should master. According to (Panjaitan et al., 2021), English language learners in Indonesia often struggle with reading comprehension. (Ningsih et al., 2020) attribute this struggle to low reading motivation, which can lead to incompetence in reading.

Teachers who teach these skills need additional resources to facilitate student-centered learning, reducing reliance on teachers as the primary resource. Effective assistance empowers students to take charge of their learning, encouraging a higher likelihood of retaining information in long-term memory. As emphasized by Mukhofifah & Ekaningsih (2023), engaging and unconventional learning materials are essential in engaging students and promoting effective learning. Teachers must find appropriate methods to facilitate the learning process, to make students enjoy learning English, teachers must use appropriate teaching methods and strategies. Students will absorb the material more easily if effective methods or strategies are used in English language teaching.

Several studies on the small group discussion learning model have been carried out such as a study conducted by ((Trisnani, 2020) which stated that there is an increase in students' mathematical communication skills from the very low and low categories to the medium, high and very high categories, so it can be concluded that the application of the small group discussion method learning model can improve students' mathematical communication skills. Then research conducted by ((Angriani et al., 2016) stated that learning the

small group discussion method can improve mathematical problem-solving skills.

Based on observastion held by researchers at MTs Muslimat NU Palangka Raya, there are several challenges students face with descriptive texts and the potential causes: First, reading not seen as engaging: Students don't perceive reading as an exciting activity, leading to a lack of intrinsic motivation to practice independently. Students only read when assigned to do so by the teacher, hindering their overall exposure and development of reading skills. Students lack essential reading skills like identifying the main idea, recognizing text structure, and understanding the purpose or language features of the descriptive text.

Furthermore, the text identifies the teacher's role as another potential factor: Teacher-dominated instruction: If teachers dominate the reading activity, students become passive learners, relying solely on the teacher's guidance for comprehension. This lack of student engagement and control over the reading process can hinder the development of independent reading skills. Limited Variety in Teaching Strategies: Repetitive methods can lead to student disengagement and decreased participation.

For this reason, the researchers found a solution by using small group discussions as an effective way to help the English teaching and learning process, especially in reading in the seventh grade of MTs Muslimat NU Palangka Raya. Hopefully through this method, students can better understand the material taught by the teacher and students can understand what they are canceling the script. In the implementation of discussions in the small group discussion learning model, discussions are carried out with fewer participants with the aims, among others, of improving students' way of thinking by helping students generate understanding of the content of the lessons, fostering student involvement and participation, and helping students learn communication skills and thinking processes ((Christiani, 2019). It is highly expected that student learning activities will increase with the Small Group Discussion Learning Model The SGD learning model also allows students who are more shy to speak in small group discussions. Small group exercises can be very beneficial for active and reflective students. One of the goals of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) learning model is to identify students' potential and responsibilities in solving the problems that are the subject of discussion.

Then, the researchers made an experimental research entitled: "The Effect of Small Group Discussion on Reading Skill of EFL Junior High School Students". Based on the explanation of the study, the hypotheses are as follows:  
Ha : There is a significant difference between students who are taught using small group discussion and those who are not taught using it on reading skill of seventh grade EFL Junior High School Students.

H0 : There is no significant between students who are taught using small group discussion and those who are not taught using it on reading skill of seventh grade EFL Junior High School Students..

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a quantitative research methodology, which involves testing the theoretical framework by examining the relationships between variables. These variables can be measured and can be measured using standard instruments, resulting in statistically analyzeable numerical data. The final research report follows a structured format, consisting of an introduction, a literature review, a theoretical framework, methodology, results, and a discussion of (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This research uses an experimental design. According to Creswell, experimental design involves systematic manipulation of variables to assess their impact on outcomes. By controlling for foreign variables, researchers can isolate the effects of the manipulated variables, allowing them to determine whether the treatment affects the outcome. The type of experimental design used in this study is a quasi-experimental design. In quasi-experiments, individuals are not randomly assigned to groups, researchers use control groups and experiments. In this study, the researchers used an experimental design, in which one group received a particular treatment and the other did not, to evaluate the effects of the treatment on outcomes.

The study concentrated on giving treatment to the experimental classroom by incorporating small group discussions into reading instruction, and furthermore, the researchers assessed the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process using pre-test and post-test evaluations. The researcher will conduct the study at MTs Muslimat NU Palangka Raya, academic year 2024/2025. Studying English lessons related to descriptive text. The population of the research will be the first grade of junior high school. There will be 4 classes of first grade. The total number of population is 120 students. The selection of a purposive sample is often accomplished by applying expert knowledge of the population to select in a non-random manner a sample of elements that represents a cross-section of the population. Klar & Leeper (2019) argue that purposive samples can be useful for answering many research questions in the domain of intersectional identity, particularly when using experimental methods. Additionally, the selection will adhere to the following criteria:

- a. Seventh-grade students of MTs Muslimat NU Palangka Raya
- b. Currently studying English focused on descriptive texts
- c. Similar student characteristics
- d. Average class score of 80

After the researcher consults with the English teacher to select the classes that have similar proficiency, the researcher will select two classes to be the

experimental and control class. The seven-one class will become the control class and the seven-two class will become the experiment class. The sample will be 58 students, both of those classes will consist of 29 students. The researcher will implement small group discussion in the experiment class and the whole class teaching method that is currently used by the teacher will be implemented in the control class.

After collecting the data, the preliminary analysis is first done to see if the data are qualified for hypothesis testing. The preliminary analysis consists of two tests which are the normality and homogeneity that are done by SPSS 27.0 with the significance level of 0.05. The data can be said normally distributed and homogenous if the Sig. Displayed is higher than 0.05.

1. Normality

A normality test is to determine whether the data from population spread normally or not. The purpose of the normality test is to ensure the distribution data taken from the population has normal distribution or not.

2. Homogeneity

Homogeneity test is to know whether the variance in population of the research is homogenous or not. Homogeneity test is used to measure the data of population whether it is homogenous or heterogeneous. In addition, the writer analyzes the data which is taken from both classes seven-one and seven-two. Analyzing the data is the last step of the research to get the result of the research.

3. Testing Hypotesis Using Mann-Whitney U

In this research, the writer uses Mann-Whitney U formula as a technique of data analysis. The Mann-Whitney U test is a statistical method that does not assume a specific distribution. It is utilized to assess the differences between the medians of two datasets. This test can serve as an alternative to the t-test for independent samples when the data do not conform to a normal or t-distribution, or when the distribution of the data is unknown. To apply the Mann-Whitney U test, the values must be measurable on an ordinal scale and comparable in magnitude. The Mann-Whitney U test evaluates all values, making it unique. Additionally, it is employed to test the null hypothesis, provided that both samples originate from the same underlying population or share the same median value.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Researrh Results

Throughout this study, the researchers provided students with instructional materials on descriptive texts, focusing on reading skills. The experimental and control classes received different treatments: the experimental class employed the Small Group Discussion Technique, whereas the control

class did not. Subsequently, the researchers assessed the students' reading abilities using a multiple-choice test.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Score of Control Class

Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain Score
AN	50	75	15
AT	55	85	20
AF	60	60	10
CN	85	90	25
HN	85	85	30
JN	70	75	10
KH	80	80	15
MQ	75	85	30
MA	55	75	30
MZ	60	70	10
MN	60	60	20
MF	45	80	25
MI	55	80	20
ML	85	95	20
MY	65	75	15
MS	45	50	10
NA	40	60	30
NR	50	55	10
NN	60	70	25
RN	55	65	5
RJ	50	70	20
RA	75	80	20
RM	65	70	15
SZ	80	85	15
SL	55	80	5
WA	60	75	10
ZA	55	65	20
ZD	60	85	15
AF	65	70	20
<b>SUM</b>	1800	2150	350
<b>AVERAGE</b>	62,07	74,14	12,07
<b>MAX</b>	85	95	
<b>MIN</b>	40	60	

As indicated by the score description for the control class, the scores of the 29 students in this class ranged from 40 to 85 on the pre-test. Following the administration of instructional materials on descriptive texts using traditional teaching methods, the students were given a post-test. The results showed a range of scores from 60 to 95.

Table 2. Pre-test and Post-test Score of Experiment Class

Students	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain Score
AB	70	85	20
AZ	65	75	5
AR	75	85	0
AN	60	75	10
AM	65	80	0
AS	70	80	5
AH	75	90	0
FZ	70	80	10
GD	70	80	5
MH	75	80	10
MA	65	75	0
MF	80	95	35
MY	75	95	5
NS	65	75	10
NH	75	85	10
ND	75	80	5
NF	70	90	20
PN	75	95	5
RH	80	85	0
RS	85	90	10
RL	75	80	20
RK	70	75	5
SA	70	100	5
SL	80	100	5
TN	75	80	25
ZG	75	80	15
YN	70	75	10
NY	80	100	25
AZ	70	85	5
<b>SUM</b>	2105	2450	345
<b>AVERAGE</b>	72,59	84,48	11,90
<b>MAX</b>	85	100	
<b>MIN</b>	60	75	

As shown in Table 2, the pre-test scores of the 29 students in the experimental class ranged from 60 to 85. Following the implementation of the Small Group Discussion Technique, the students were administered a post-test.

The results revealed a significant improvement, with the lowest score increasing to 75 and the highest score reaching 100.

### Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

#### Normality Test

Table 3. Normality Test

	Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Result	Pre Test Experiment Class	,184	29	,014
	Post Text Experiment Class	,226	29	,001
	Pre Test Control Class	,186	29	,012
	Post Test Control Class	,121	29	,200*

The normality test revealed that the experimental group's pre-test data were normally distributed ( $p = 0.091$ ), whereas the control group's data differed. In contrast, the post-test data failed to meet the normality assumption ( $p = 0.004$ ). In contrast, the control group's pre-test data was non-normal (Sig. = 0.012), while the post-test data was normally distributed (Sig. = 0.566). Given that some data groups exhibited non-normality, the study's results cannot be considered entirely normal. Consequently, the Mann-Whitney statistical analysis method was chosen, as it is suitable for data that does not meet the normality assumption.

#### Homogeneity

Table 4. Homogeneity Test

Tests of Homogeneity of Variances					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Result	Based on Mean	14,394	1	56	,000
	Based on Median	9,190	1	56	,004
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	9,190	1	41,007	,004
	Based on trimmed mean	14,072	1	56	,000



Table 5. Anova Test

Result	ANOVA				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1603,879	1	1603,879	16,767	,000
Within Groups	5356,897	56	95,659		
Total	6960,776	57			

Based on the results of the variance homogeneity test presented, the analysis shows that there was a lack of variance homogeneity between groups. The Levene Statistic value of 14.394 with a significance (Sig.) of less than 0.001 indicated that the variances between groups are not equal, which means that the homogeneity assumption is not met. In addition, in the ANOVA analysis, the F value obtained also shows a significant difference between groups, with a very low significance value ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### Mann-Whitney Test

Table 6. Mann-Whitney Test

Result	Ranks			
	Class	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
	Post Test Experiment Class	29	37,07	1075,00
	Post Test Control Class	29	21,93	636,00
	Total	58		

  

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Result
Mann-Whitney U	201,000
Wilcoxon W	636,000
Z	-3,461
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,001
a. Grouping Variable: Class	

The results of the Mann-Whitney test indicated that the experimental and control groups differed significantly in terms of reading ability after receiving instruction. In this test, the experimental group had a mean rank of 37.07, which was higher than the control group, which only achieved a mean

rank of 21.93. The Mann-Whitney U value obtained was 201.000 with a significance (Asymp. Sig.) of less than 0.001, which indicates that the difference between the two groups is highly significant. These findings indicate that the application of the small group discussion method in teaching can have a greater positive effect on improving students' reading ability compared to traditional teaching methods. Therefore, these results support the use of more interactive and collaborative learning strategies in the context of English language education.

## Discussions

Based on research in experimental class using the small group discussion method, it has an influence on reading skills. This can be seen from the average experimental score which is higher than that of the control class, the difference occurs because in the experimental class students' reading skills are developed through the use of small group discussion methods.

The results of this study are in line with a number of previous research findings by (Yousaf et al., 2023) in their journal that the small group discussion technique can improve students' reading skills, because this technique is an effective way to apply to students. The study's findings on the impact of the small group discussion method on students' speaking skills in English lessons suggest that this approach has a positive effect on reading skills in the experimental class. Specifically, incorporating small group discussions into English language instruction can enhance students' reading abilities.

In addition, the small group discussion method according to Djamarah quoted by Hutahean (2019) is a way of presenting lessons, where students are faced with a problem that can be in the form of statements or problematic questions to be discussed and solved together. Students need to use various ways to solve the problems they face during the learning process. Thus, the small group discussion method is a method that can be sought to increase cooperation between students and help each other by giving students a problem that they can discuss together. In the discussion activities, students can exchange thoughts and information to get answers.

For this reason, the results of the analysis calculation using the Mann-Whitney in the results section obtained in accordance with the basis of decision-making can be concluded that  $H_a$  is accepted and  $H_o$  is rejected which means that there is a significant influence between the average score of speaking skills in the experimental class and the control class, it can be interpreted that the small group discussion method has an influence on the reading skills of students in class in English lessons.

Consistent with this finding, Radebe & Mushayikwa (2023) found that learners relied on cumulative talk to resolve understanding tasks and exploratory talk to address application tasks. The use of small group discussions with tasks that require higher-order thinking skills can be an

effective approach to promote conceptual learning and engagement in the teaching and learning process

## CONCLUSION

The research findings suggest that the small group discussion method has a significant impact on the reading skills of students in class XYZ. This conclusion is supported by the results of the hypothesis testing, which align with the decision-making criteria of the Mann-Whitney test. Consequently, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted, while the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) is rejected. Therefore, it is proven that the discussion method has a substantial influence on the reading skills of students in class XYZ.

Through this research, it is recommended that schools and teachers implement small group discussions as an effective method to improve students' reading skills in EFL classrooms. This teaching strategy can serve as a valuable correction to traditional teaching methods, providing teachers with an evidence-based approach to enhance students' reading comprehension and engagement in the learning process.

Furthermore, teachers should regularly evaluate and adapt their small group discussion techniques to ensure optimal learning outcomes. Schools are encouraged to provide necessary support and resources for implementing this method effectively, including teacher training and appropriate reading materials that cater to different student levels and interests. This systematic approach will help create a more conducive learning environment for developing students' reading abilities.

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