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## Enhancing Speaking Skills By Using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Technique to Eighth Grade Student of SMP Swasta Budi Murni 2 Medan

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### Abstract

This research was conducted to find out how Focus Group Discussion can improve the speaking ability of class VIII students with the research subjects as many as 60 students at SMP Budi Murni 2 Medan. This research was conducted using quasi-experimental method to compare the speaking ability of experimental class and control class using traditional method. The data was sourced from 30 eighth grade students, both from pre test, post test and questionnaire. The results showed a high appreciation of the improvement from before and after the application there was an increase in learning scores obtained by students. Before the implementation of FGD in the learning process students obtained an average score of 49.83. While after the implementation of FGDs students obtained an average score of 90.00. This shows that the implementation of FGDs is considered very appropriate for the English language learning process in class VIII students of SMP Swasta Budi Murni 2 Medan.

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### INTRODUCTION

English is the language of international communication, and it is helpful in communicating with people from different countries backgrounds. It is an essential tool in many fields of study and also useful for speakers of other languages (Masuram & Sripada, 2020). The primary aim of teaching and learning is to equip students with fluency in four key language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Speaking, being a crucial aspect of daily interaction, is essential for all students to master. While achieving proficiency in speaking can be challenging, consistent practice and dedication can lead to success. It is important for students to effectively communicate with both their teachers and peers.

A major challenge in learning languages, especially English, is that even individuals with strong knowledge of English vocabulary and syntax often struggle to communicate effectively. In Indonesia, one reason for students' difficulty in speaking English is the lack of an English-speaking environment. Since English is a foreign language in Indonesia and not used in daily conversations, students may feel uncomfortable and self-conscious when using English in everyday situations. They

often face issues with pronunciation and are hesitant to express their feelings, thoughts, ideas, and facts due to fear of making mistakes. Cooperative learning techniques such as jigsaw, role play, think-pair-share, and focus group discussions can help students improve their speaking skills by providing opportunities for active practice in the classroom. Despite these methods, students frequently encounter challenges when speaking English (Munir, 2021).

In fact, the time spent by the students to learn these skills is thought to be long enough. Furthermore, although there had been a variety of language teaching methods introduced at schools which emphasize the use of the English language in real life situations and for social interaction in order to develop the students' skills, the outcomes are still not satisfying. The issue lies not just in the teaching methods used but also in the students' motivation. It can be inferred that some of the problems stem from the students themselves, as their motivation is a crucial factor in language learning. Students often blame teachers, the learning environment, and teaching materials for their difficulties in becoming proficient in speaking. However, the most significant factor contributing to their lack of success may actually be their own approach and attitude.

Based on the experience of the writer in the internship at SMP Swasta Budi Murni II Medan, the writer found factors that showed why this condition happened. The students did not have a good motivation to speak. Psychologically, it happens because of a lack of confidence and courage when students try to speak. In this study, the writer aimed to offer convenience to learn English by using Focus Group Discussion. FGD technique can assist students enhance their speaking abilities. Focus groups are an excellent approach to gather feedback from a group of people who share similar backgrounds or experiences on a given issue (Viji & Benedict, 2014). Usually, all students have the opportunity to speak English which increases their confidence in utilizing the language. Students should come to class to speak out, because this will help them overcome their fear of speaking in front of others.

Focus group discussions are an effective strategy for training speaking abilities (Eeuwijk, 2018). This strategy provides advantages for developing communicative abilities, including the ability to talk. A classroom should be a space where students can discover and produce their own knowledge. The teacher's role should be to facilitate instruction by assisting students in finding the knowledge they require and guiding them through the learning process. This was an ideal situation for the usage of focus groups. The teacher facilitates the discussion, but does not participate. It is the student responsibility to hold these discussion.

The previous study conducted by Magfirah, et al. (2023) entitled "The application of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for the eleventh-grade students of MAN 1 Makassar enriches students' speaking abilities." After using focus group discussion (FGD), the students' talking capacity is way better. They are more likely to speak up within the lesson. FGD makes the circumstances of the lesson more dynamic. It is revealed by the pre-test and post-test increments. The pre-tests is 24.90. In the interim, the post-tests is 51.40.

The second research was conducted by Muhsin (2019) entitled "The Use The Group Discussion Focus Technique to Improve The Speaking Ability Of Students of SMK Ahlu Suffah Muhammadiyah Bantaeng". Based on the research's findings, it is possible to draw the conclusion that teaching speaking fluency through Focus Group Discussions can help students become more proficient speakers. Additionally, FGD can increase confidence during speaking exercises. In the

course of the FGD teaching and learning process, students demonstrated an increased level of activity and enthusiasm for their English language studies.

Based on two previous research experiences, the study conducted with differences that could be summed up in the methods used. This research focused on the application of the FGD with Mini Focus Group in which students discuss in a group several students working on a selected interactive topic according to the study of the speaking material, but students will present the results of their discussion in class.

## **METHOD**

This study employed an experimental research design, specifically a pretest-posttest control group design. In this approach, the experimental group received a treatment using the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method, while the control group was taught using traditional teaching techniques. This design allowed the researcher to compare the effectiveness of FGD on improving speaking skills between the two groups.

The population for this study was eighth-grade students from SMP Swasta Budi Murni 2 Medan that consists of 6 classes. For sample, the researcher only took 64 students that divided into two classes: VIII-2 (30 students) as the experimental class and VIII-3 (30 students) as the controlled class.

Data were collected through a combination of pretests, posttests, and questionnaires. The pretests and posttests assessed students' speaking skills before and after the treatment, focusing on fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. Questionnaires were distributed to gather students' perceptions and experiences during the learning process, particularly in the experimental group.

The data analysis consisted of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data from the pretests and posttests were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically the paired t-test, to determine the significance of the differences between the experimental and control

## **FINDINGS**

### **Pre-Test Results**

The pre-test results showed that both groups had similar speaking abilities before the intervention. The experimental group had an average score of 49.83, while the control group had an average score of 47.33.

### **Post-Test Results**

After the treatment, the experimental group showed a significant improvement in their speaking abilities, with an average post-test score of 90.00. In contrast, the control group, which did not receive FGD instruction, showed a more moderate improvement, with an average post-test score of 86.00.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The paired sample t-test showed that the improvement in the experimental group was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The independent sample t-test also confirmed that there was a significant difference between the post-test results of the experimental and control groups ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## **Student Responses**

The questionnaire results revealed that students had positive responses toward the FGD technique. Approximately 80% of students agreed that FGD helped them feel more confident in speaking English, and 73% stated that it improved their pronunciation.

**Table 1. Paired Sample t Test Results**

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PreTest Eksperimen - PostTest Eksperimen	-40.16667	9.78064	1.78569	-43.81882	-36.51452	-22.494	29	.000
Pair 2	PreTest Kontrol - PostTest Kontrol	-38.66667	9.64305	1.76057	-42.26744	-35.06589	-21.963	29	.000

**Table 2. Independent Sample Test Results t Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Hasil Keterampilan Berbicara	Equal variances assumed	.343	.560	2.593	58	.012	4.00000	1.54250	.91235	7.08765
	Equal variances not assumed			2.593	57.293	.012	4.00000	1.54250	.91154	7.08848

**Table 3. PostTest Data Independent Sample t Test Experiment Class and Control Class**

Group Statistics					
	Kelas	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Hasil Keterampilan Berbicara	PostTestEksperimen	30	88.0667	6.07955	1.10997
	PostTestKontrol	30	84.0000	5.15284	.94077

**DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study demonstrate that Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is effective in improving students' speaking skills, as evidenced by the significant improvement in the experimental group's post-test scores (90.00) compared to the control group (86.00). This aligns with the research conducted by Triana et al. (2022), which found that interactive discussion-based methods can enhance language proficiency by fostering active participation and reducing learners' anxiety. Similarly, a

study by Wahyuni (2021) highlighted that group discussions promote collaborative learning and help students build confidence in using English, particularly in speaking contexts.

The increase in students' confidence and pronunciation ability, as reported through questionnaires, supports previous findings by Putra and Wulandari (2020), who emphasized that speaking-focused group activities significantly improve pronunciation accuracy and self-esteem. Furthermore, this research corroborates the work of Rahmawati (2023), which noted that structured discussion activities help create a supportive learning environment conducive to skill development and learner engagement.

Despite these positive outcomes, the limitations of this study—such as the small sample size and short duration—should be addressed in future research. Previous studies, such as those by Nugroho et al. (2021), suggest that extending the duration of interventions and increasing participant diversity can provide more comprehensive insights into the long-term effectiveness of discussion-based teaching methods.

These findings reinforce the growing consensus that FGD is a valuable tool in English language learning, particularly for enhancing speaking skills. However, its broader application across different contexts and language skills warrants further investigation to maximize its potential impact on learners.

## CONCLUSION

After conducting the research, presenting the data, analyzing the data, and discussing the results, the writer is going to present conclusion and suggestion, as follows:

1. The research confirmed that Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was an effective method to enhance speaking skills among eighth-grade students at SMP Swasta Budi Murni 2 Medan. The experimental group showed significant improvement, with an average post-test score of 90.00 compared to 86.00 in the control group.
2. Statistical analyses validated the results, highlighting the effectiveness of FGD over traditional methods. Most students reported increased confidence and better pronunciation, supported by questionnaire findings. FGD also fostered a supportive learning environment that encouraged participation and reduced anxiety. Despite its success, the study's limitations, such as a small sample size, short duration, and focus solely on speaking skills, suggest the need for further research to explore long-term impacts, applications in other language skills, and broader contexts. These findings underline FGD's potential in creating interactive and engaging English language learning experiences.

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