

Using Small Group Discussion for English Speaking at Vocational High School (SMKN) 1 Pujut

Ella Nuraini¹, Amrullah², Boniesta Zulandha Melani³, Muhammad Amin⁴

¹⁻⁴ English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Mataram, Indonesia

Received : November 9, 2025

Revised : December 27, 2025

Accepted : December 27, 2025

Published: December 28, 2025

Corresponding Author

Ella Nuraini

ellanuraini896@gmail.com

DOI: 10.29303/jeef.v5i4.952

© 2025 The Authors. This open-access article is distributed under a (CC-BY License)

Abstract

This study investigates the significance of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method in enhancing students' English-speaking performance at SMKN 1 Pujut. The research applied a quasi-experimental design involving two groups: an experimental group taught using Small Group Discussion and a control group taught through conventional methods. Both groups consisted of 34 students. The data were collected through pre-test and post-test to measure students' speaking ability, focusing on four aspects: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. The treatment was conducted in three meetings. During the learning process, students in the experimental group actively participated in group discussions, while those in the control group followed traditional teacher-centered instruction. The results were analyzed using an independent samples t-test. The findings showed that there was a significant difference between the two groups, where the experimental group achieved a higher mean score of 66.76 compared to 53.67 in the control group, with a t-value of -6.717 and a significance level (p) < 0.05. The results indicate that the Small Group Discussion method helps improve students' speaking achievement and encourages more active and confident participation during classroom interaction.

Keywords

Small Group Discussion, speaking skill, English learning, vocational school, quasi-experimental design

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is considered one of the most important and, at the same time, one of the most challenging skills to be mastered in the process of English learning (Pakula, 2019). Speaking has an important role in human communication because, by speaking, individuals can express their ideas, thoughts, and feelings effectively, both in academic and real-life contexts. English plays an important role in global communication and takes a special place in education. English becomes compulsory for undergraduate students in Indonesian higher education, not only for English departments but also for students majoring in tourism, law, economics, pharmacy, and others, since it serves as a very important component of academic and professional development (Firmansyah et al., 2023).

Speaking is predominantly regarded as the most challenging of the four major English skills, which are listening, reading, writing, and speaking, because students are able to use the language in real time as they interact with others. The speech is another important tool of communication in social life, being a direct and important tool of communication with people in a face-to-face form of communication (Rosalia et al., 2022). Developing fluency, accuracy, and confidence in verbal expression is one of the major issues that many English learners face despite years of formal learning. The situation in the Indonesian educational environment is not an exception since learners tend to face obstacles to increasing speaking fluency. They are more inclined towards grammar and writing, and oral communication is not so exercised in the classroom. According to Mukammal et al. (2018), the most common problems that students experience during the process of speaking English are a lack of confidence, poor vocabulary (Melani et al., 2018; Melani et al., 2021), pronunciation, and syntax. These issues cause learners to be nervous or shy to talk,

hence they make minimal contributions in the classroom interaction.

In the first observation made in SMKN 1 Pujut, learners encountered the same difficulties in communicating using the English language. They also had poor vocabulary and were not able to put their ideas across clearly. This fact is aligned with that of Aisyah et al. (2025), who believed that insufficient vocabulary knowledge will normally make the learner passive in English classes and negatively affect the desire to communicate. Further, a number of the students were timid, anxious, and scared of making any mistakes, and some students were so dependent on memorizing instead of actually communicating. They also did not want to talk during English lessons primarily because they did not enjoy a friendly and interactive environment.

To work through all these challenges, the teachers ought to create learning conditions whereby the students are able to express themselves fluently and loosely. Speaking does not just entail the mere production of correct sentences but also the articulation of ideas, opinions, and emotions in real and natural situations that are significant (Nunan, 1991). One of the ways to make students more active and willing to communicate in this situation is speaking classes with the involvement of peers, such as pair and group discussions (Aropi et al., 2022). The Small Group Discussion (SGD) technique is one of the effective techniques that can be utilized in supporting this approach. It allows students to interact with one another by working in small groups and sharing ideas, views, and resolving problems. This strategy, being student-centered, will offer a more relaxed learning atmosphere in which students will have a chance to use English more frequently and become more fluent and confident.

It has been proven that the use of Small Group Discussion improves the oral communication skills of students and contributes to their increased participation in speaking

activities (Irawati et al., 2024; Suryadi, 2020; Syafaat, 2009). However, the implemented literature in vocational schools remains insignificant, and learners have to be armed with relevant skills in communication in the workplace. In such a way, this paper is going to be dedicated to the application of the Small Group Discussion to improve the speaking skills of the eleventh-grade pupils at SMKN 1 Pujut.

Hopefully, the results of this research will be used to provide useful data about the possibilities of using Small Group Discussion in a bid to enhance the performance of English-speaking students in vocational schools. The method will allow learners to interact and collaborate to gain confidence, expand vocabulary, and express ideas more freely, leading to better communication competence.

RESEARCH METHOD

The bottom line is that a quantitative method was employed in data collection and analysis in this research since the quasi-experimental research design was employed to investigate the impact of small-group discussions on the speaking ability of students. Two groups were used in the research: an experimental class that was delivered by using Small Group Discussion and a control group that was delivered using the conventional method.

This study population comprised 11th-grade students of SMKN 1 Pujut studying in the academic year 2024/2025 in a total of 4 classes. The purposive sampling method was employed to choose the sample as two classes, with XI Culinary 2 being the experimental group and XI Culinary 3 being the control group. The classes had 34 students, and they were seen to be similar in nature in regard to English comprehension and learning history.

The data collection method involved three steps. The initial phase was the pre-test, which was done to evaluate the initial speaking proficiency of the students prior to the treatment. The second was the treatment, which was done in three meetings, wherein the experimental group was taught speaking using Small Group Discussion, whereas the control group was taught doing things the traditional way. The third phase was the post-test, which was conducted at the end of the treatment to determine the improvement of students in the level of speaking performance.

The device that was adopted in this research was a speaking test through oral, which examined four areas of speaking performance, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. The grading criteria were based on the oral proficiency scoring rubric by Brown (2018). Both the teacher and the researcher were used to rate them so that there would be inter-rater reliability in the scoring.

The data obtained were subjected to the SPSS 31 software. A normality test and a homogeneity test were done before the actual analysis to verify that the data were in the requirements of parametric testing. The Independent Sample t-test was then applied to find out whether there was a significant difference in the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. (Bryman & Cramer, 2011).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Under this section, the results that were achieved during the pre-test and the results obtained during the post-test to address the research question are outlined and discussed. The main aim of the research was to ascertain whether or not there was any significant and positive effect of the Small

Group Discussion technique on the English speaking ability of a second-grade student during the 2024- 2025 academic year. The results indicated that the group taught through the Small Group Discussion was better than the group taught with the traditional approach. This difference was the unfailing indication of the positive connotation of the Small Group Discussion strategy, which could be seen in the difference between the two groups that were depicted in the Table.

Data Analysis

Normality Test

A normality test was conducted as a prerequisite before performing the t-test to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution. Since the total number of participants in this study was 68 students, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was chosen due to the relatively large sample size. The interpretation criteria were as follows:

- If Sig. > 0.05, H_0 is accepted, indicating that the data are normally distributed.
- If Sig. < 0.05, H_0 is rejected, indicating that the data are not normally distributed.

Table 1. Test of Normality

		Tests of Normality					
		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
Class	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.	
Result Pre-Test Control Class	.141	34	.087	.938	34	.055	
Post Test Control Class	.139	34	.095	.926	34	.024	
Pre-Test Experimental Class	.147	34	.060	.951	34	.131	
Post Test Experimental Class	.142	34	.078	.940	34	.061	

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

According to the above table, the outcomes of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests indicate that all data elements of the experimental and control classes, both pre-test and post-test, are greater than the obtained Sig. of 0.05. The pre-test of the control class received a p-value of $0.087 \geq 0.05$, and the post-test of the control class received a p-value of $0.095 \geq 0.05$. The pre-test p-value, which is $0.060 \geq 0.05$, was found to be normally distributed, and the post-test p-value is $0.078 \geq 0.05$. The results shown mean that all the test scores of both experimental and control classes are normally distributed. As such, the data satisfied one of the assumptions of the t-test.

Homogeneity Test

Following the normality test, which was done using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the researcher then conducted a homogeneity test to establish whether there were similar variances in the data of the experimental and control groups. This was necessary in order to ensure that the assumption of homogeneity was fulfilled prior to further parametric analyses. The SPSS software was used to conduct the test, and the hypotheses presented to test the homogeneity were as follows.:

H_0 : The data have equal (homogeneous) variances.

H_a : The data have unequal (non-homogeneous) variances.

The decision rule was based on the significance value (Sig.):

- If Sig. > 0.05, H_0 is accepted, meaning the data variances are homogeneous.
- If Sig. < 0.05, H_a is accepted, meaning the data variances are not homogeneous

Table 2: Test of Homogeneity Pre Test

Test of Homogeneity of Variance					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Result	Based on Mean	.028	1	66	.868
	Based on Median	.071	1	66	.790
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.071	1	65.992	.790
	Based on trimmed mean	.037	1	66	.849

As shown in the table above, the significance value based on the mean was 0.868, greater than the 0.05 threshold. This result indicates that the variances of the experimental and control groups were statistically similar. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data from both groups were homogeneous and met the assumption of equal variances required for further parametric testing to determine whether the Small Group Discussion method has a statistically significant effect on students' English-speaking skills at SMKN 1 Pujut.

Table 3: Test of Homogeneity Post-test

Test of Homogeneity of Variance					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Result	Based on Mean	1.932	1	66	.169
	Based on Median	2.126	1	66	.150
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.126	1	65.041	.150
	Based on trimmed mean	1.934	1	66	.169

As presented in the table above, all significance values across the different approaches were greater than 0.05, with p-values of 0.169 (mean), 0.150 (median), 0.150 (median with adjusted degrees of freedom), and 0.169 (trimmed mean). These results indicate that the variances between the experimental and control groups were statistically similar. Consequently, the data met the homogeneity assumption, allowing for further parametric testing. To assess the significant differences between the two groups concerning implementing the Small Group Discussion method for English-speaking skills at SMKN 1 Pujut.

Statistical Hypothesis

To test the hypothesis, the post-test scores of both groups (experimental and control) when the treatment was implemented were compared to determine whether the difference between them was statistically significant. IBM SPSS Statistics version 31 was used to analyze the research hypothesis. The analysis and interpretation of the results were done in terms of the mean scores of each group to find out whether the difference was significant.

Table 4. Groups Statistics

Group Statistics					
Class		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Result	Post Test Control Class	34	53.68	7.104	1.218
	Post Test Experimental Class	34	66.76	8.866	1.521

The statistical outcomes show that N is the number of participants, with 34 students in the experimental and control classes. As indicated by the table, the experimental group got a mean score of 66.76, and the control group got a mean score of 53.68. This difference indicates that the experimental and the control classes performed better than the experimental class when the learning treatment was implemented.

Table 5. Independent Sample T-test

Independent Samples Test									
		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Significance Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Result	Equal variances assumed	-6.717	66	<.001	<.001	-13.088	1.948	-16.978	-9.198
	Equal variances not assumed	-6.717	63.005	<.001	<.001	-13.088	1.948	-16.982	-9.195

Independent sample t-test demonstrated the presence of t-value (t[?]) equal to 6.717 and 66 degrees of freedom (df) and significant value (Sig. 2-tailed) less than 0.001. The t-value of critical victory of t =df =66 at the level of significance =0.05 or two-tailed = 1.996. The outcome is found to be statistically significant as the t-values obtained are greater than the critical t-table value, and the p-values are much less than 0.05. As such, the alternative hypothesis (H[?]) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) rejected. According to the results, a large degree of variance was observed in the post-test outcomes of the experimental and control groups. The difference between the means, -13.088, shows that the obtained results of the experimental group were quite significantly better compared to the control group. The difference in the means has a 95-per cent interval of (-16.978 to -9.198), not including the 0, thus once again, the difference is determined to be statistically significant.

Discussion

The hypothesis, provisionally stated in this article, is that there was a significant mean difference between the English speaking of the small group of students at SMKN 1 Pujut who were enrolled in vocational high school when a conventional technique and the method were applied. The post-test results analysis showed that the mean difference of 13.08 points in the mean scores of the experimental and control classes in the study taught with the use of the SGD and conventional approach, respectively. It was supported by the independent samples t-test, which showed the t-value of -6.717 with a p-value of less than 0.001, which is much less than the 0.05 mark. Thus, the null hypothesis H 0 was not accepted with the rejection of the alternative H 1. As observed, this means that the fact that the difference between the scoring of the experimental and control classes is statistically significant is valid.

The current study findings are aligned with the findings of Bohari (2020), who conducted a quasi-experimental study on students of the eleventh grade and discovered that the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method demonstrated a positive effect on the speaking performance of students. Similarly, Patricia et al. (2024) found that Grade IX students improved their average score significantly to 71.15, and t-test results revealed a statistically significant difference. These two studies affirm that the routine practice of collaborative speaking tasks is more effective compared to the traditional instruction techniques in vocabulary, grammar, and fluency.

The success of this study may be attributed to the collaborative and interactive nature of such an approach, as Small Group Discussion (SGD), when learners have an opportunity to exchange ideas, negotiate meanings, and practice the target language in a non-trivial environment. Such an approach will allow the students to be more competent in vocabulary, improve grammar, and gain fluency through an exercise phase of speaking. In addition, a small group setting also creates a conducive atmosphere that reduces anxiety and

gives students the motivation to take linguistic risks without fear of making mistakes.

These findings are parallel with those by Brown (2015), who emphasized the reality that sufficient language acquisition occurs when the student is a proactive participant in the process of meaningful communication and not because of the mere repetition of the separated sentences. The boosting of the fluency and command of vocabulary by the students of the experimental group proved this theory. Antoni (2014) also argued that small group discussions could help students become more independent and responsible learners, which also found its reflection in this research because the experimental group was more confident and participatory than the control group. Similarly, Susanto (2020) underlined that SGD provides a secure and supportive learning environment that enables students to speak more freely. This was carried out in the learning experiment class, where students were found to be more willing to share ideas in English as well as learn with peers.

Generally speaking, this study, as the previous literature (Bohari, 2020; Patricia et al., 2024) and theoretical perspectives (Brown, 2015; Antoni, 2014; Susanto, 2020) demonstrated, showed that the influence of the Small Group Discussion approach on the English-speaking skills of students was both significant and positive. It was an effective way of learning to speak because it enhanced vocabulary, fluency, confidence, and general performance better than traditional education.

CONCLUSION

The statistical tests were able to prove that it was a meaningful method to improve the speaking outcome in the students by using the technique called the Small Group Discussion (SGD). The experimental group represented a substantial change in the average score, which was 34.41 (pre-test) and 66.76 (post-test), and the control group was 31.47 to 53.67. The t-test value ($p < 0.05$) revealed that the two groups were significantly different in the outcome, and this demonstrated that the use of SGD is, in fact, a useful tool to enhance the capacity of students to communicate in English. This was attributed to the interactive and collaborative nature of SGD, where the students were allowed to share ideas, get feedback, and practice the target language in a conducive environment. The conditions helped to reduce anxiety, promote engagement, and help learners acquire superior grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Overall, the study demonstrated that Small Group Discussion not only increased the scoring of the students in the speaking test but also encouraged teamwork, self-reliance, and enthusiasm over the effective use of English. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of Small Group Discussion on students' speaking retention and its applicability across diverse proficiency levels or educational contexts.

REFERENCES

- Aisyah, N., Thohir, L., Zamzam, A., & Melani, B. Z. (2025). English vocabulary learning strategies used by the eleventh-grade students of MAN 1 Bima. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 10(1), 40–47. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v10i1.3110>
- Antoni, R. (2014). Teaching speaking skills through the small group discussion technique at the accounting study program. *Journal Education and Islamic Studies*, 5(1), 55–64. <https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/almanar/article/view/4115>
- Aropi, P., Sahuddin, & Lestari, Y. B. (2022). An analysis of adjacency pairs in speaking class at CEC Kampung Pare Mataram 2022. *Journal of English Education Forum (JEEF)*, 2(1), 12–21. <https://doi.org/10.29303/j.v2i1.271>
- Bohari, L. (2019). Improving speaking skills through small group discussion among eleventh-grade students of SMA Plus Munirul Arifin NW Praya. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 7(1), 68–81. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v7i1.1441>
- Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2018). Oral proficiency category. In *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (3rd ed., pp. 184–185). Pearson Education.
- Brown, H. D., & Lee, H. (2015). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Pearson.
- Bryman, A., & Cramer, D. (2012). *Quantitative data analysis with IBM SPSS 17, 18 & 19: A guide for social scientists*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203180990>
- Firmansyah, A. O., Fadji, M., Nurtaat, H. L., & Amrullah, A. (2023). An analysis of civic education students' perception toward their needs in learning English for Specific Purpose in University of Mataram. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 8(1b), 635–646. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v8i1b.1276>
- Irawati, D., Choirunnisa, A. I., Hadijah, S., & Nuraini, A. (2024). The effectiveness of small group discussion on improving students' speaking ability in descriptive text. *Jurnal Cakrawala Ilmiah*, 4(4), 459–468. <https://mail.bajangjournal.com/index.php/JCI/article/view/9349>
- Melani, B. Z., Udin, U., Kurniawan, R., & Junaidi, A. (2018). Diagnosa rentang kosakata bahasa Inggris mahasiswa berdasarkan analisa teks tulisan. *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v3i1.47>
- Melani, B., Willian, S., Apgrianto, K., & Lail, H. (2021). Vocabulary coverage and reading comprehension of university EFL learners. In *Thirteenth Conference on Applied Linguistics (CONAPLIN 2020)* (pp. 65–71). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210427.010>
- Mukammal, M., Priyono, P., & Amrullah, A. (2018). Students English speaking ability. *International Research Journal of Engineering, IT and Scientific Research*, 4(2), 1–13. <https://sloap.org/journals/index.php/irjeis/article/view/46>
- Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: An introduction*. Prentice Hall.
- Pakula, H. M. (2019). Teaching speaking. *Apples - Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 13(1), 95–111. <https://doi.org/10.17011/apples/urn.201903011691>
- Patricia, F. P., Said, M. M., Patmasari, A., & Marhum, M. (2024). Enhancing L2 speaking skills through small group discussion: A quasi-experimental study in Indonesian secondary education. *Pulchra Lingua: A Journal of Language Study, Literature & Linguistics*, 3(2), 155–165. <https://doi.org/10.58989/plj.v3i2.45>
- Rosalia, A., Thohir, L., & Ahmadi, N. (2022). *The effect of videos with subtitles in teaching speaking to the ninth*

- grade students in SMPN 5 Mataram* [Undergraduate thesis, University of Mataram]. Universitas Mataram repository. <https://eprints.unram.ac.id/41445/>
- Suryadi, H. (2020). The effect of using small group discussion on the second grade students' speaking skill. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan*, 4(3), 293–298. <http://dx.doi.org/10.58258/jisip.v4i3.1218>
- Susanto, S. (2020). Efektifitas small group discussion dengan model problem based learning dalam pembelajaran di masa pandemi Covid-19. *Jurnal Pendidikan Modern*, 6(1), 55–60. <https://www.ejournal.stkipmodernngawi.ac.id/index.php/jpm/article/download/125/84>
- Syafaat, A. (2009). *The effectiveness of small group learning in speaking ability: (An experimental study at second grade students of Waskito Junior High School Pamulang, Tangerang)* [Undergraduate thesis, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah]. UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Institutional Repository. <http://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/8164>