Students' Perceptions on the Use of Group Discussion Method towards English Speaking Proficiency

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ABSTRACT

The researchers place a great deal of emphasis on the Group Discussion Method since it is necessary for students towards their communication proficiency. Communication is an important element to achieve better understanding among communicators. Therefore, this present study aims to discover students' perception of using the Group Discussion Method towards their proficiency in English speaking. This research relays on a quantitative descriptive research design using a questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire was distributed online to thirty-four participants. The participants are fifth-semester students of the English Language Education Department of Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta who has learned English speaking using the Group Discussion Method. Data were analyzed using a quantitative descriptive approach. The research findings indicate that using the Group Discussions Method in the learning-teaching process enhances students' understanding of the lesson, enriches English speaking skills, increases enthusiasm, builds up interaction to practice English, and develops confidence in speaking English. This research is limited to small-scale participants; thus, further researchers are recommended to conduct research with wide-scale respondents.

Keywords: Group Discussion Method, English, speaking proficiency, perception.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Nature of English Speaking Proficiency

English language as a tool of communication has been widely used worldwide. It has been lauded as the most 'successful' language ever, with 1,500 million speakers worldwide (Crystal, 2005). To have good communication in English, one needs to have better English speaking

proficiency. Speaking another language is simply the minimum and primary condition for being alive---Julia Kristeva (Cook, 2007). It shows how important another learn such as English as a global language to have good communication as human beings. Therefore, teachers and educators worldwide have been trying hard to facilitate students with the most efficient method of learning English speaking.

In Indonesia, the government realizes that mastering another language such as English as a foreign language is a necessity for Indonesian students. It forces the government to work, share, and discuss smartly with teachers and educators to improve the teaching quality in acquiring English proficiency. Indonesian English curriculum and its supplement require students to learn and communicate in English by learning all skills. However, mastering all English skills, i.e., listening, reading, writing, and speaking, is not simple. There are several challenges in achieving a better understanding of all skills. Argawati & Syahrizal (2016) states that speaking is one of the hardest skill of learning English as a foreign language for Indonesian students.

English speaking is an important aspect of communication and one of the language skills that students should develop. According to the behaviorists, a language learner should master speaking before writing; "speech is a precondition of writing" (Broad & Columbia, 2020). It is like representing all behaviorists emphasizing the significance of speaking in second language acquisition. Furthermore, Gass (2013) justifies that "children without cognitive impairment learn to speak before they learn to write. Many societies have no written language, although all societies have oral language; there are no societies with only written but no spoken language systems."

As the most basic form of human communication, most people associate the capacity to speak a language with the understanding of that language (Dewaele et al., 2019). According to Brown, Rogers, and Rogers, speaking is a productive talent that can be directly and experimentally seen and colored by the correctness and effectiveness of listening skills (Suzukida & Saito, 2021). Speaking may be defined as an action involving two or more persons in which the participants serve as both the listener and the speaker. A speaker must utilize language effectively and correctly to express his requirements to a listener (Fulcher, 2015) to communicate effectively.

Speaking has many aspects, such as public speaking. Public speaking is the ability to speak in front of people, convey ideas, and be understood and trusted by the public audience (Grieve et al., 2021). Furthermore, public speaking is a form of verbal communication about something or a topic conveyed by many people (Pontillas, 2020). The aim is to influence, change opinions,

teach, educate, provide explanations and provide information to certain people in a certain place. Leadership or personal development, business, customer service, large group communication, and mass communication can use public speaking skills in presentation (Gallego et al., 2020).

The language learners need to apprehend that speaking involves three areas of expertise, particularly mechanics [pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary] (Khoiriyah et al., 2019), features [transaction and interplay], social and cultural rules and norms [turn-taking, rate of speech, duration of pauses between audio system, relative roles of participants] (Molino, 2018). Speaking is gaining knowledge about the term of understanding approximately speaking but large than that. Talking prefers to how the beginners produce the sound and practice it. Therefore, we recognize the period of talking as a production skill. It matters that mastering talking should be practiced as often as feasible to attain the target of skill; this is capable of producing the talking itself (Ellis, 2021).

Communication between teacher-students interaction found that one form of the teacher-student interaction is through pair work (Liu et al., 2021). The question is about the teacher talk functions. The question consists of utterances teachers commonly use in their foreign language classrooms. The way the teachers ask questions influences the students' attainment and way of thinking (Hershkovzt & Forkosh-Baruch, 2017). They are asking the question that positively influences students' classrooms. Therefore, the teacher must understand and possess the questioning technique to teach English speaking. However, many English students cannot speak English well because they feel afraid and lack confidence. Students often confuse how to practice their English skills, especially in speaking. There are some problems in teaching and learning speaking. The students are afraid to start the conversation or express their idea in English. The students are not confident to speak in front of the class because they do not have many ideas for the speech. The important thing to master the speaking ability is more practice every day.

Group Discussion is one of the keys to dealing with students with various abilities and diverse areas of intelligence, especially in speaking. This approach can also be a place where students learn in groups and individually to explore problems, be active parties in the learning process, and not only be passive recipients of knowledge (Harmon SW, 1996). In practice, student-centered learning environments allow students to take a more active role in their learning by shifting the responsibility for organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing content from teacher to learner (Means, 1994).

There are some techniques that lecturers of ELESP (English Language Education Study Program) usually use in the learning process. One of them is the group discussion technique. This technique is applied almost in all subjects given at the ELESP. Group discussion is needed to see how the students can work together and share their opinions with their friends in the group. Group discussion might be one way for the lecturers to help the students learn (Naibaho, 2019). Every student has a different capability to accept the material that the teacher explains. In groups discussion, the students should be working together to finish their assignments and solve the problem. The students who have good speaking hoped can help their friends who have less speaking or less accept the material that explained by the teacher. Group discussion will help the group members build each other's comments and reactions (Narjes & Ebrahim, 2015). It is a useful technique for teaching because the students can help friends understand the material through group discussions (Sudirman, 2018).

Group discussion can allow students to get knowledge through the face-to-face exchange of information, ideas, and opinions (Aflah, 2017). The discussion is the process of talking things over among two or more persons, preferably face to face (Ying, 2020). He adds that the entire discussion process ideally is a cooperative effort on the part of several individuals to work together as a group, through the exchange of thought orally, toward some group objectives. Risk states that discussion means thoughtful consideration of the relationship involved in the topic or problem under study (Argawati, 2014).

1.2. Research Question

This present study is going answer the following research question: What is students' perception of using the Group Discussion Method towards English speaking proficiency?

1.3. Significance of the Research

This research is expected to be significant for students, English teachers, and further researchers, particularly readers. Firstly, this research is expected to encourage students to enhance their English speaking proficiency since it is used to communicate globally. Secondly, the researchers hope that this present research will be useful for the English teacher specifically in dealing with the English speaking teaching method, i.e., Group Discussion Method to encourage students' motivation, enthusiasm, confidence, and interaction in English speaking learning-teaching process. Lastly, the researchers expect this research to be preliminary research for the next researchers to conduct boarder-scale research and be a reference for those interested

in using Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process to enhance English speaking proficiency. Besides, this research aims to convince the reader that Group Discussion Method can enrich students speaking proficiency since it gives students ample time to be more active in speaking English.

1.4. Group Discussion Method Advantages

Group Discussion Method has several advantages. Therefore, it is recommended to be implemented in the learning-teaching process. After all, students will be able to feel that learning belongs to them because students are given vast opportunities to participate actively. Besides, splitting students into small groups allows students to involve more in learning and allows teachers to better monitor students' progress. Furthermore, it also helps students enhance their collaboration and social skills.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

Research design is a procedure or technique for collecting and analyzing the data. It is the structural concept that the research conducted. It is the planning of the researchers about the technique to carry on an understanding of some associations or some circumstances in its context (Tobi & Kampen, 2018). This research uses quantitative research data with the descriptive statistical approach as the research design. It deals with the data about students' perception of the use of the Group Discussion Method towards students' English speaking proficiency.

2.2. Samples/Participants

The subject of this research was all fifth-semester students of the English Language Education Department of Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta. The subject or participants consisted of thirty-four students, twenty-one females and thirteen males, who had studied English speaking using Group Discussion Method. The researchers took all populations as the sample because the class only consisted of thirty-four students.

2.3. Research Procedures

The research procedure is a standard set of activities carried out by the researcher to achieve the research objective (Crocco, 2021). In this research, the researcher conducted some steps to get the data. The first step was for the researchers to collect and read related studies to

find the research gap. After getting the research gap, the researchers formulated the research objective and designed an instrument to collect data. Since this is quantitative research, the researcher used the questionnaire to collect data. The researchers asked respondents to fill out a distributed questionnaire using google form. Collected data then analyzed quantitatively using SPSS statistics for home windows, model 16.0.

2.4. Instrument

This research used a questionnaire--validated using criterion validity test--as an instrument to collect data. The criterion validity test is a validity test that performs a test by comparing the research instrument with other research instruments that have been declared valid and reliable by correlating them (Taman, 2019). It was used to determine students' perceptions of the Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process towards students' English speaking proficiency. In collecting data, the researchers asked students to fill out the questionnaire through *Google Form*, which the link of the questionnaire was shared by social media, i.e.*, WhatsApp* Group.

2.5 Data Analysis

The researchers analyzed questionnaire data using the following formula, then presented and discussed using a quantitative descriptive approach.

Formula: $P = F/N \times 100\%$ Where:

P = the percentage of participant(s) responses

F = the number of participants' responses (indicator-based)

N = the total number of participants

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

Each question is connected with the student's answer in the questionnaire form, which is expressed in words: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA) to know students' perceptions on the use of Group Discussion Method towards students' English speaking proficiency, as explored in the following table:

Table 1 Students' Perceptions on the Use of Group Discussion Method

No.	Items	Participants' Responses			
		SA	A	D	SD

No.	Items	Participants' Responses			
		SA	**A**	**D**	**SD**
1.	I can understand the lesson if the teacher in the learning-teaching process uses Group Discussion Method	29%	53%	12%	6%
		Positive (82%)		Negative (18%)	
2.	Group Discussion Method help me enrich my English speaking proficiency	26%	50%	21%	3%
		Positive (76%)		Negative (24%)	
3.	Group Discussion Method increases students' enthusiasm in English speaking learning-teaching.	18%	44%	26%	12%
		Positive (62%)		Negative (38%)	
4.	Group Discussion Method allows students to practice English speaking within the group.	35%	35%	21%	9%
		Positive (71%)		Negative (29%)	
5.	Group Discussion Method increases students' confidence in speaking English.	35%	47%	9%	9%
		Positive (82%)		Negative (18%)	

The table above shows five items that indicate students' English speaking proficiency through Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process. The first, item number one, indicates that most students agree if they can understand the lesson better when teachers use Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process. It is proved by 53% (18 participants) Agree, and 29% (10 participants) Strongly Agree that the use of the Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process make them understand the lesson. Meanwhile, 12% (4 participants) Disagree, and 6% (2 participants) Strongly Disagree about it. The data conclude that 82% (28 participants) have positive perceptions of the lesson understanding using the Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process, and only 18% (6 participants) have negative perceptions.

The second, item number two, indicates that most students agree if they can enrich their English speaking proficiency by implementing Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process. It is proved by 50% (17 participants) Agree, and 26% (9 participants) Strongly Agree that the use of the Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process enriches their English speaking proficiency. On the other hand, 21% (7 participants) Disagree, and 3% (1

participant) Strongly Disagree about it. The data conclude that 76% (26 participants) have positive perceptions of using the Group Discussion Method to enhance their English speaking proficiency, and only 24% (8 participants) have negative perceptions.

The third, item number three, indicates that most students agree if they can increase enthusiasm in learning English speaking through the utilization of the Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process. It is proved by 44% (15 participants) Agree, and 18% (6 participants) Strongly Agree that using the Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process increases their enthusiasm in learning English speaking. In contrast, 26% (9 participants) Disagree, and 12% (4 participants) Strongly Disagree about it. The data show that 62% (21 participants) have positive perceptions of using the Group Discussion Method to increase their enthusiasm for learning English, and only 38% (13 participants) have negative perceptions.s

The fourth, item number four, indicates that most students agree if they can practice their English speaking skills within the group members since Group Discussion Method is applied in the learning-teaching process. It is proved by 35% (12 participants) Strongly Agree, and 35% (12 participants) Agree that the use of Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process motivates them in practicing English speaking skills. On the contrary, 21% (7 participants) Disagree, and 9% (3 participants) Strongly Disagree. The data show that 71% (24 participants) have positive perceptions of using the Group Discussion Method to motivate them in practicing English speaking ability, and only 29% (10 participants) have negative perceptions.

The fifth, item number five, indicates that most students agree if they have confidence in speaking English through the use Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process. It is proved by 47% (16 participants) Agree, and 35% (12 participants) Strongly Agree that using the Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process burnout their confidence in speaking English. However, 9% (3 participants) disagree, and 9% (3 participants) Strongly Disagree about it. The data show that 82% (28 participants) have positive perceptions of using the Group Discussion Method to build up their confidence in speaking English, and only 18% (6 participants) have negative perceptions.

3.2. Discussion

This research finding shows that most participants have several positive perceptions of using the Group Discussion Method to enhance English speaking proficiency. Those positive perceptions are: 1) students can understand the lesson well if the teacher in the learning-teaching process uses Group Discussion Method, 2) Group Discussion Method help students enrich

English speaking proficiency, 3) Group Discussion Method increases students' enthusiasm in English speaking learning-teaching, 4) Group Discussion Method allows students to practice English speaking within the group, and 5) Group Discussion Method increases students' confidence in speaking English. Those five perceptions are discussed further in this section.

The use Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process help students understands related to English speaking skill. It can be seen in the following figure 1:
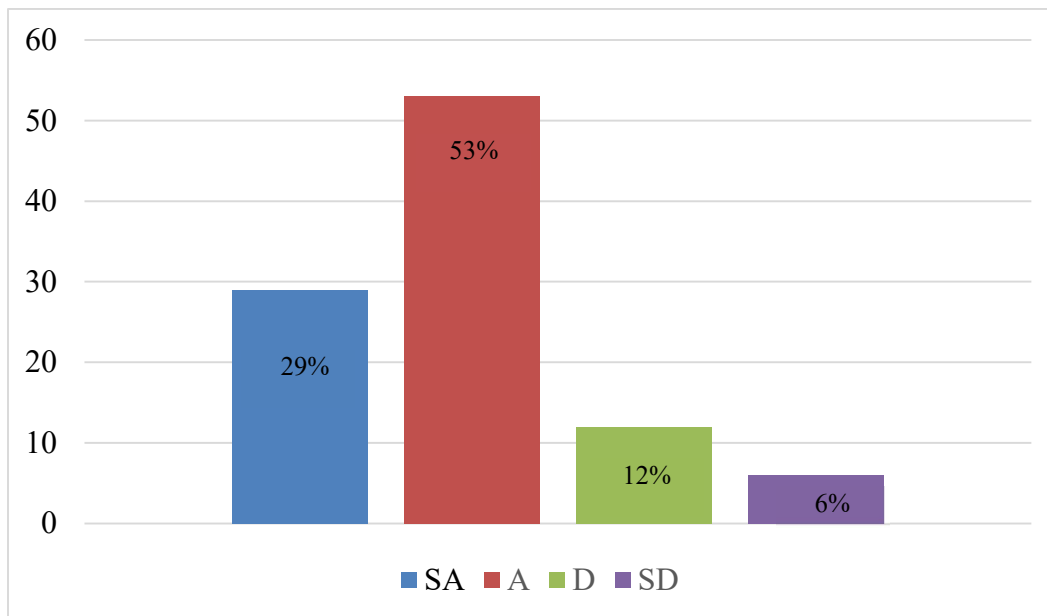
Figure 1 Lesson Understanding Using Group Discussion Method

Figure 1 above shows that 82% of participants have positive perceptions (29% Strongly Agree and 53% Agree) on using the Group Discussion Method towards English speaking proficiency. Only 12% of participants (12% Disagree and 6% Strongly Disagree) have negative perceptions. It is in line with the research conducted by Yulianti & Sulistyawati (2021). They state that the Group Discussion Method aims to discover information about students' understanding of the material provided in the learning-teaching process. Through this method, besides understanding the lesson, students can think critically, creatively, and innovatively in preparing group presentations and discussions. Furthermore, students also fell easier to understand the lesson, e.g., English speaking by asking questions, exploring ideas, and responding to the questions.

Furthermore, Group Discussion Method also helps students enrich their English speaking proficiency. The following figure 2 shows that 76% of participants (26 Strongly Agree and 50% Agree) have positive perceptions on the use of Group Discussion Method to enhance students'

English speaking proficiency, and only 24% participants (21% Disagree and 3 Strongly Disagree). This finding is supported by Safarnejad & Montashery (2020) statement that a discussion is an excellent form for learning to think like a specialist by giving students a chance to practice analyzing the world through the lens of a particular field. Furthermore, dividing students into small groups seems to allow students to become more actively engaged in learning and for the teacher to monitor students' progress better (Bohari, 2020).
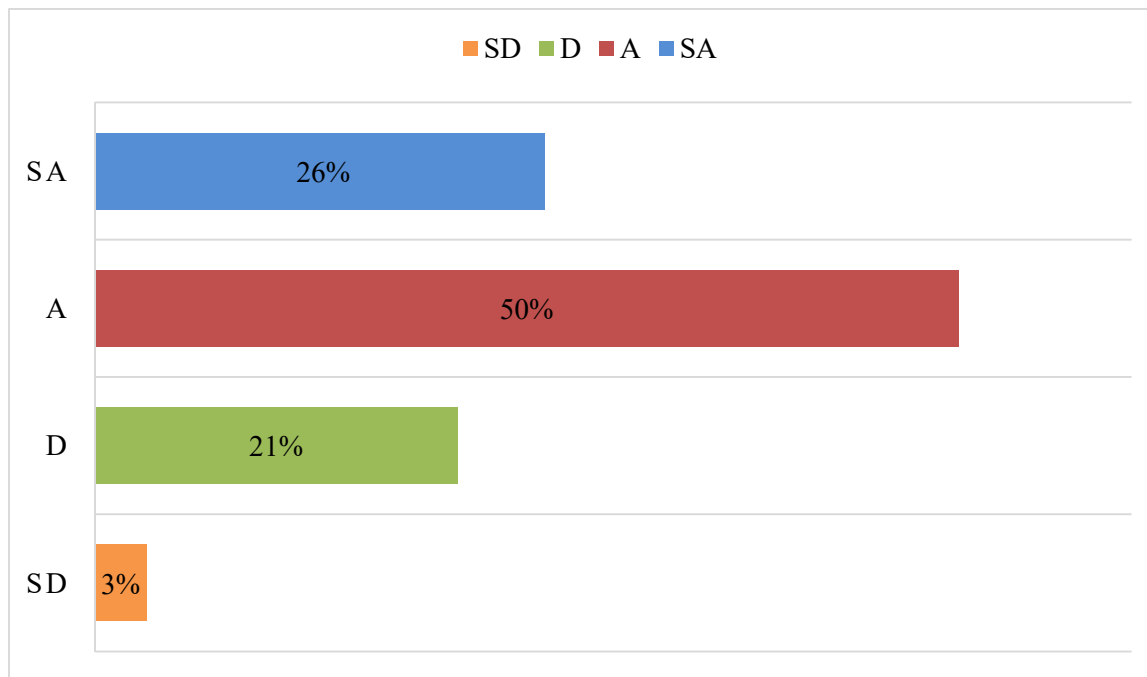

Figure 2 English Speaking Proficiency Enrichment Using Group Discussion Method

Besides, it can also develop students' cooperation and social skills and some aspects of speaking skills, i.e., fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Khoiriyah et al., 2019). These aspects are very important since they impact the development of students' English speaking proficiency.

The use of the Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process impacts the mental state of students. Students who learn English speaking through Group Discussions Method tend to have the freedom to express their opinions. It is in line with Williams & Svensson (2020), who state that a small group is a small member of humans who works together through interaction whose interdependent relationship allows them to achieve a mutual goal. As observed in our study, group discussion increased students' active participation; it makes it more student-friendly than traditional teaching methods. It also helps self-directed learning and

exchange ideas. So it is true that students will feel happy (enthusiastic) learning English, especially in speaking skills, because their partners assist them. Students will tend to be enthusiastic about learning. Therefore, learning through group discussions with partners improves students' English speaking skills, as seen in figure 3.
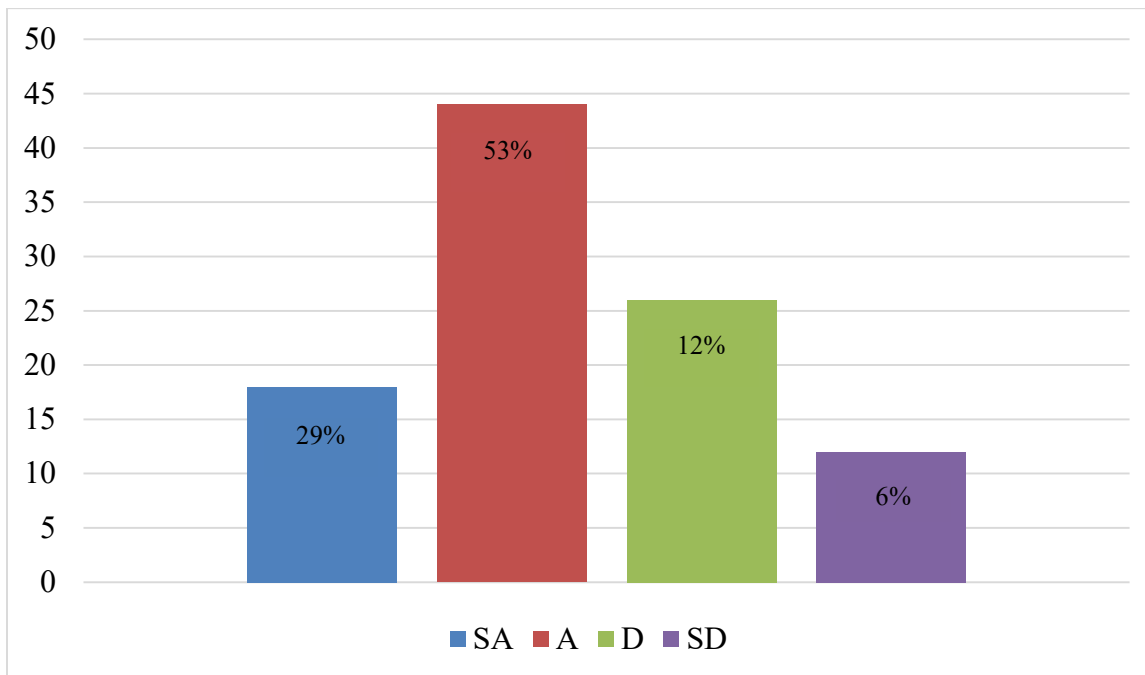

Figure 3 Using Group Discussion Method to Increase Enthusiasm

Item number four in table 1 indicates that students who study with their partners through group discussions can improve English speaking proficiency. Group Discussion Method is recommended to use in the learning-teaching English speaking. This method stimulates students to speak English. Students feel free to talk because they speak English with their friends (Naibaho, 2019). It is in line with this research shows that students can improve their proficiency in speaking English because they can practice it within the group; as seen in the following figure 4, 70% of participants have positive perceptions of it.
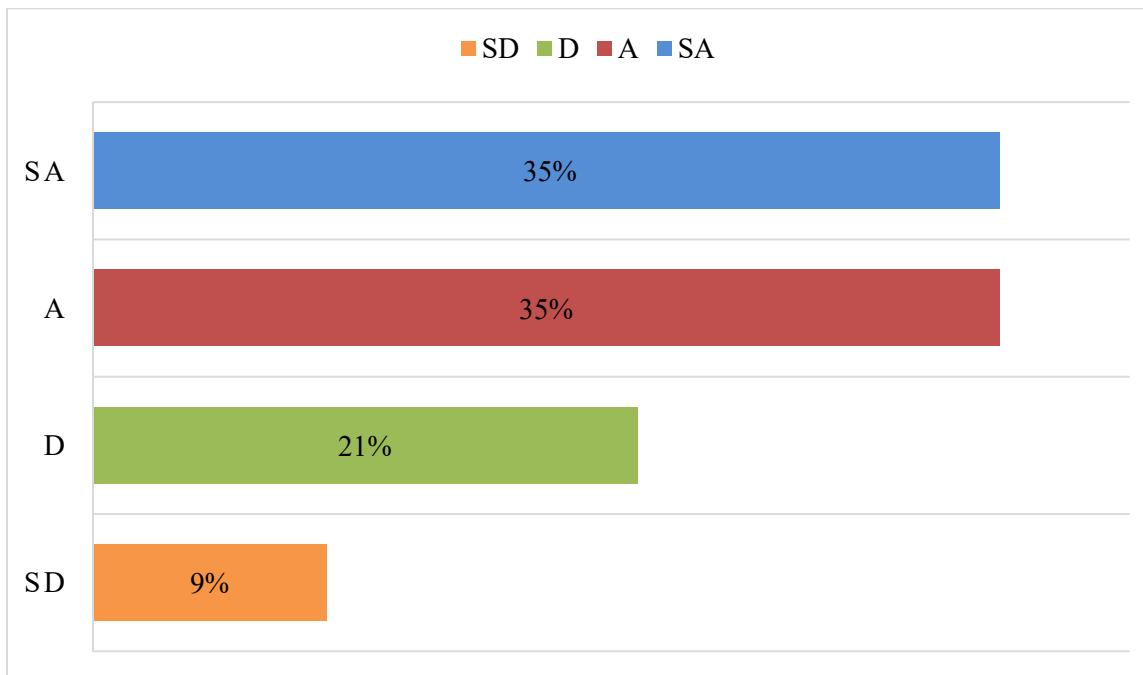
Figure 4 Practicing English Speaking within Group through Group Discussion Method

Besides, using Group Discussion Method in the learning-teaching process builds up students' confidence in speaking English. Self-confidence is the confidence of someone toward all of the excess aspects that are owned, and the confidence makes him able to achieve the various targets in his life (Bennett et al., 2010). Students will feel calmer to study because they are with friends they know. Then students will be more confident with their answers because their friends will understand their statements. This finding is further supported by the argument that speaking is defined as saying things, expressing thought aloud, and using voice talk (Hsieh et al., 2021). Figure 5 shows how the Group Discussion Method builds up students' confidence in speaking English. Figure 5 shows that 82% of participants have positive perceptions, and 12% have opposite perceptions.
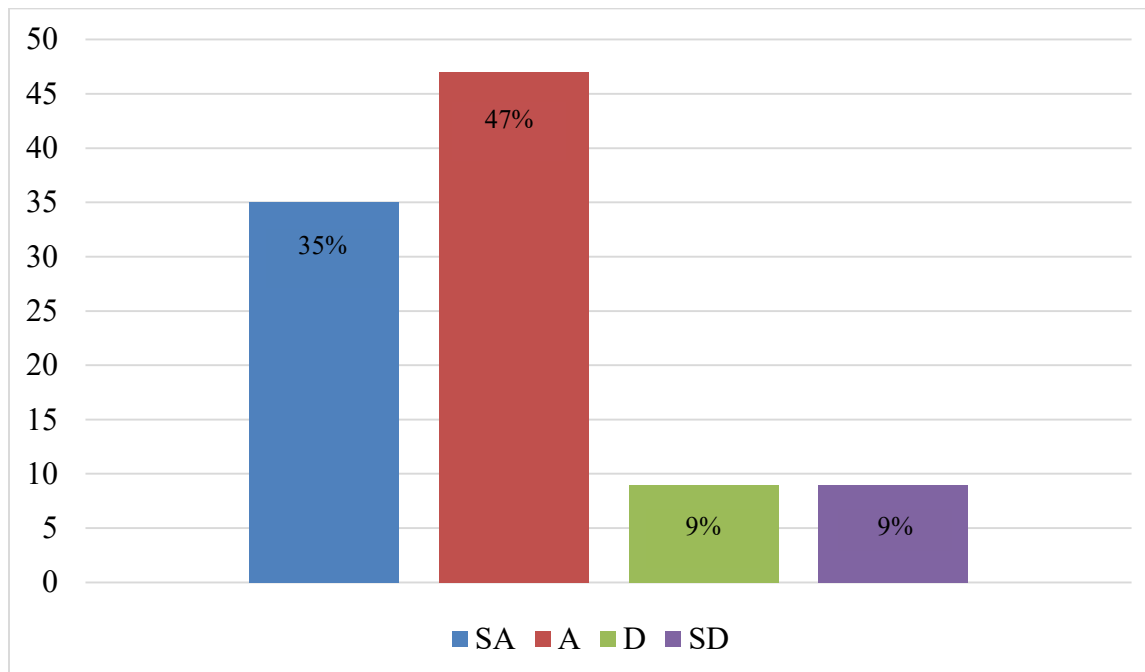
Figure 5 Building up Confidence Utilizing Group Discussion Method

In short, this research shows that students feel free to express themselves when conversing in a group. It may be deduced that group work reduces students' nervousness about speaking out in front of the class and increases students' motivation. Joining the class increases students' motivation by discussing the assignment in groups, making them feel more at ease doing the activity with their group than working alone. They feel more at ease expressing their thoughts. It shows that the use of the Group Discussion Method towards students' English speaking proficiency gets more positive responses than negative responses. According to the findings of this study, small group discussions allow students to speak in front of others and obtain feedback from teachers and peers. Moussaïd et al. (2018) indicate that group discussions may be an effective learning environment where students learn from their teachers and interact with others. In short, group discussions, among others, can increase the active participation of students and make them more friendly. Besides, it also facilitates self-directed learning and the exchange of ideas.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION
4.1. Conclusion

Group discussion can improve student performance in various aspects of speaking skills, namely fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and participation in speaking. With a

learning partner, it is clear that all students become more active in asking questions and discussing in groups to develop their English speaking proficiency. In addition, the students enthusiastically participated in the learning process during the learning-teaching process with the Group Discussion Method because they felt confident and had partners in learning. They can also memorize vocabulary easily, be more confident, and dare to express their ideas. The group discussion is friendly and helps bridge the gap between teachers and students. The students' communication abilities are also enhanced. Therefore, the researchers believe that group discussions are more successful than other teaching method. One of the most effective methods to use in learning-teaching English speaking is Group Discussions Method. It helps students in improving their public speaking abilities. Students in groups can use English among themselves and practice with their friends. Speaking with their friends enhances their confidence in speaking some words without worrying about whether they say any incorrect terms.

4.2. Suggestion

Some recommendations are addressed to the students who love learning English. They should learn how to use the English language in real contexts. One of the appropriate approaches to use in practicing English is group discussion. The keys are to select interesting topics to discuss without thinking a lot about making mistakes. Certainly, they could use group dialogue in regular life, including discussing their problems and locating the solutions with their pals. If those are observed with the aid of communicative English, talking will drift as a river reaches the ocean. Researchers of students' perceptions on the use of Group Discussion towards students' English speaking perceptions from additional perspectives are required to fill the gaps of other studies.

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