

The Implementation of Group Work in Teaching Speaking During Covid-19 Pandemic

Cindy Lovely Fatikasari¹, Indah Werdiningsih² and Anita Fatimatul Laeli³

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32528/issn.v2i1.161>

*Correspondence: Anita Fatimatul Laeli

Email: anitafatimatul@unmuhjember.ac.id

¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember; cndlovely@gmail.com

²Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember; indah_andin@unmuhjember.ac.id

³Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember; anitafatimatul@unmuhjember.ac.id

Published: Agustus, 2022



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Abstract: Group work defines as the students working together in a group to complete the assignment or construct knowledge. Group work activities allow students to engage in stimulating conversations about topics that interest them which will help them better understand the topic. As the COVID-19 pandemic has been better, the teaching-learning activities carried out offline with the capacity of fifty percent of the capacity classroom. Returning to study at school or university makes the lecturer probably focus on helping students follow classroom routines, reconnect with their friends and lecturer, and learn to work in peer groups again. This study aims to describe the lecturer implementing group work in speaking class during the COVID-19 pandemic and the task assigned for the group. This study uses a qualitative method in which case study design. The subjects of this study are two lecturers and seventeen students in speaking class. The data was collected through observation and interview. Hopefully, this study could be a useful contribution and a reference in implementing group work in speaking classes during the COVID-19 pandemic in English education field.

Keywords: group work, teaching speaking, COVID-19 pandemic

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on various sectors of life such as the economy, social, including education. COVID-19 pandemic has changed various aspects of human life, one of which is the world of education in Indonesia from kindergarten to university level Herliandry et al [1]. Educational institutions require to carry out teaching-learning activities through online learning. However, the situation of COVID-19 pandemic become better over time. Therefore, in early 2022 educational institutions can carry out teaching-learning activities offline. The activity can be carried out in the number of students in fifty percent at *PPKM* level two area. That is stated in the *Surat Edaran Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Nomor 2 Tahun 2022* concern on discretion in the implementation of a joint decree with four Ministers concerning guidelines for the implementation of learning in the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic period. This regulation makes students feel excited to back to school and see their friends because it has been difficult for students to learn from home.

Online learning became a way of education which implemented in most countries. It inflicts new concerns and challenges for students. The consequences of these changes affect the mental health of students. In addition, the research of Basheti [2] shows that COVID-19 pandemic affected the process of education, career advancement, and students' health. Online learning that is done for

too long causes boredom. Students who usually hang out with friends at school lose physical and emotional closeness. Thus, the familiar feeling of fellow friends turns into a sense of loneliness. In fact, the assignments that are done in online classes are mostly individual assignments in which there is no social interaction with their friends. Applying such methods and assignments, it results in the development of a sense of belonging in the group, the skills of respecting opinions, and understanding oneself and others are neglected during the process of teaching and learning activities. One of the learning models that can contribute to the creation of social interaction between students and one form of innovation is group work. Group work help students develop their teamwork skills and social interactions Payne [3]. Group projects allow students to engage in stimulating conversations about topics that interest them, which will undoubtedly help them better understand the topic. Additionally, they will be able to practice giving constructive criticism and weighing others' viewpoints before putting forward their own opinion. For EFL students, they have limited opportunities to practice the language outside the class. Hence, learning the language in classroom time is the best time for practice. According to Ur in Suban [4] pair work and group work is the best options to use the classroom effectively and efficiently. If group work works well, the teacher can create maximum opportunities for students to negotiate meanings, have a real conversation, and learn to take turns. Speaking as a social activity is also cultivated.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember implemented teaching and learning online. The government issue *Surat Edaran Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Nomor 2 Tahun 2022* so that the teaching-learning activities carried out offline learning in the case the capacity of students is fifty percent and pay attention to health protocols. Students study at home before and they shift back to offline classes after the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, offline classes encourage socialization through group work activities with other students and help students increase their confidence and learn new skills. Conversely, online learning makes students less interaction and interested as they associate with lecturers and their friends only through online chatting and video conference application, without face-to-face interaction. Therefore, group work activities can help them to interact with their friends directly, exploring and discussing their ideas with their friends.

There are some studies that discuss the use of group work in teaching speaking. The study done by Hung & Mai [5] investigated teachers' perceptions toward group work and the implementation of group work in EFL classes. The results showed that the teachers generally understood clearly its benefits, possible problems, and teacher roles. Besides, the study conducted by Madjid [6] investigated to see whether using group work has a positive effect on the academic achievement of the students at Polytechnic ATI Makassar. The result showed that group work plays a positive role in improving academic achievement in speaking and also improves students' motivation in learning English. From these two previous studies which the researcher mentioned above, two studies by Hung & Mai also Madjid have discussed the use of group work. Hung & Mai focused on teachers' perceptions and the use of group work in EFL classes. Besides, Madjid focused on the effect of using group work on academic achievement. Both of them use different techniques to complete the study. While this research has descriptions of how the lecturers themselves implement the group work and the learning task used for the group during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in offline classes during the pandemic.

The study aimed to describe how the lecturers implement group work in teaching speaking and group work activity that is assigned to the group in offline classes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHOD

Research design

Qualitative research was used to achieve the goals of this study. The researcher used a case study as one descriptive method to investigate the phenomenon during the implementation of group work in teaching speaking activities.

Population, Sample, Sampling

The sample in this study was two lecturers who teach the speaking subject. The inclusion criteria were lecturers who implemented group work in speaking classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualification in choosing the sample was they are certified lecturers and also have the competence and experience in implementing group work in speaking class.

Intervention Procedure

In collecting data, the researcher follows some steps to ease the process of collecting data. First, the researcher created and prepared the field notes and interview guide. Second, the researcher conducted the observation with the lecturers to gather data or information related to the research problems in order to answer it. Third, the researcher observed teaching and learning speaking activities that implemented group work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Forth, the researcher conducted interview with lecturers to gather data or information related to the research problems in order to answer it. Last, the researcher transcribed the field notes, interview records, and questionnaire.

Instrument

This research applied non-participant observation which means the researcher was not directly involved in the situation observed. The researcher only watched and record the teaching-learning process in the classroom. The researcher used field notes to obtain information related to the research problems. The researcher used an interview guide which structured interview. In addition, the researcher interviewed two lecturers and the interview was recorded. There were fifteen questions that were asked the interviewee.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher would like to present the description of data concerning problem statements. There were two objectives in this research. The first was to describe the implementation of group work by the lecturers in teaching speaking during the COVID-19 pandemic. The second was to find out the learning tasks assigned to the group. The data was collected through observation and interview.

The Implementation of Group Work in Speaking Class During COVID-19 Pandemic

The finding for the first problem was gained through observation and interview. In observation, the researcher used field notes as the instrument to collect the data. Besides, in the interview, the researcher used the interview guide as the instrument to collect the data.

The observation was done with two lecturers. The observation used field notes to collect the data. The researcher act as a non-participant observation which means the researcher is not directly involved in the situation observed. Based on the observation that the researcher did, the lecturers have implemented group work in speaking classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are four stages in implementing group work; planning, action, monitoring, and assessment. From the two lecturers, there were several similarities in implementing stages of group work which are planning and monitoring. In the planning stages, lecturer 1 and lecturer 2 have planned group work activity and described it in RPS (*Rancangan Pembelajaran Semester*). Then, in the monitoring stage, lecturer 1 and lecturer 2 monitored students by group and individual activities throughout the semester. Both of the lecturers explain the instructions first to students before they did their tasks. They also asked the students if they had any questions or not in order to ensure that the student understood the instructions. The lecturers watched the students observe that they really give a contribution to work together with others.

However, there were differences in implementing group work in speaking class during the COVID-19 pandemic which is in the action and assessment stages. In the action stage, lecturer 1 implemented a group activity and assigned students to a group. There were twenty-one students in a class. Lecturer 1 assigned the students to a group using a randomly assigned method in which the students are grouped without any criteria. Lecturer 1 asked the students to count numbers one to five. There were five groups. Otherwise, lecturer 2 implemented a group work activity and assigned students to a group. There were twenty-one students in a class. Lecturer 2 assigned the students to a group using the instructor assigned method in which students are grouped based on the criteria that is gender. There were two groups, boys and girls. Besides, in the assessment stage, lecturer 1 assessed students by the oral review and attitude on the vocabulary, fluency, content, and detail of the subject matter. Meanwhile, lecturer 2 assessed the students based on rubric speaking assessment which are quality of presentation, voice inflections, eye contact, and prepared.

The other method to gather the data in this research was the interview. The interview was done after observation of the classroom. The interview is structured interview. The lecturers asked by using some questions face-to-face and recorded on a mobile phone.

1. Lecturers' understanding of group work

Based on the interview with two lecturers, they have the same understanding of group work. Group work defines as students work together with their friends in a number of two to four students in a group. This understanding could be seen below:

L1: I think this is where you ask a student to do collaborative work in a number of together with the third of members about two or four in my class.

L2: Group work is that when students doing activity with their group or friends. So, it should be like three four or more than that. So, it different from individual group it depends on how many person in that work.

2. Lectures' perception of group work

Group work gives students opportunities to learn from others, build their confidence, and their readiness to speak up. Through using group work, students show positive interaction with each other because most of the students like to have group work. But, group work does not really make a significant result in students' speaking fluency. When they do group work, they can get ideas from

their friends and help each other. But, it is not really helpful for individual performance. It still needs individual practices and efforts. Below are the opinions:

L1: I don't think so. You know group work in speaking especially helps to give them a lot of insights. When they do group work they can get ideas from their friends or maybe they can help each other when finding unfamiliar words. But it is just not necessary helpful for individual performance. So, because individual performance in speaking requires practice a lot of practice. Therefore, if group work is seriously done continuously with the same persons in the group and they help each other to practice I think it will give significant effect. But, if not you know just group work like doing task in my class. I don't think it is that helpful it still needs individual practices and efforts.

L2: It is not really improving in that significant improvement. But, I think it really helps them to build their confidence. But not really helping to improve their speaking directly.

3. Lecturers experience of group work

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching and learning activities were carried out online. The situation of the COVID-19 pandemic become better over time, and the teaching and learning activities can be carried out offline or face-to-face learning. The group work activity in offline class during the COVID-19 pandemic usually is a discussion or adjusted with teaching material. The lecturers found some obstacles during the learning process using group work activities. The obstacles are every group has its own characteristics and students are not really engaging with their friends. It could be seen from the quotation in the interview below:

L1: I think the challenge is that you know every group has their own characteristics. One group might be they you know they just go straight forward that task is quickly done and that's it. But, other group especially those who are you know they are very close each other they took so long answer one question and although I have given them time limits they doesn't work they just take so much time.

L2: So far in the class right now I find it quite hard when I give the task or the students work together, but them some of students are not really engaging with their friends. So, you know even when ask them to discuss some students are not really discussing, so like they just stay on their own with their phone and not really enjoying the discussing.

Group Work Activity in the Class During COVID-19 Pandemic

The finding for the second problem was gained through observation and interview. In observation, the researcher used field notes as the instrument to collect the data. The researcher acted as a non-participant observation which means the researcher was not directly involved in the situation observed. Group work activities that had been implemented in speaking classes were different. Lecturer 1 implemented discussion in her class. Besides, lecturer 2 implemented debate in her class.

The instruction in this discussion as they have to draw a map to get a favorite place in Jember and added some details like an arrow. The students had a discussion and worked together. Each student had their own job. One student drew a map, the other helped to find the way and direction, and other found the arrow. They shared their ideas with others and all students in the group worked together. The lecturer checked each group and asked them if they found any difficulties or not and gave some suggestions to students. The lecturer also made a list of unfamiliar or difficult words related to a map that they have made and discussed it together. During teaching-learning activities the students mostly spoke in English.

The motion in this debate practice was ban homework. The number of students that attended was eight students. The negative team consists of three boys. The positive team consists of three girls. Two girls as judges. The lecturer was also judges. Therefore, there were three judges. Before the debate began, the two teams prepared themselves and had a discussion to decide what to talk about for the first, second, and third speaker. The lecturer also explained the rules and procedure of debate. Each person from both teams uttered their argument. Most of them spoke not fully in English sometimes they spoke in Bahasa and often looked at their note when they presented their arguments. After all, students have presented their arguments, it was time for the judges to decide who was the winner and the reason. When the students performed in class the lecturer also gave her assessment based on their performance. The lecturer also told them what are their strengths and weaknesses.

The other method to gather the data in this research was the interview. The interview was done after observation of the classroom. The interview was done with two lecturers. The interview was a structured interview. The lecturers asked by using some questions face-to-face and recorded on a mobile phone.

1. Group work activity

Group work activities that are implemented in speaking classes are role play, debate, and discussion. In group work activity the lecturers were not using media to facilitate the students. The lecturers just gave students instructions and assignments. The outcome that the lecturers expect from using group work is they have the ability to discuss which this skill helps students to not be dominant in the group and respect other people's ideas. In addition, teamwork also needed in the working environment and job. Here are the opinions below:

L1: For discussion the outcome that I expect that they have the ability to discuss because I think discussion is need skills. So, discussion mostly I expect them to become more familiar with discussion skill. It will help them to not dominant in the group and respect other people's ideas.

L2: On the long term I hope the students can you know be familiar with can get discuss with their friends. Because team work it is not only going to end in the class, but when in the working environment and job later. They will also need to work with their team. So, group work and team work in their job will still going.

2. Students' response toward group work activity

The atmosphere in the class while having group work activity was good. The students enjoyed the class, were active, and focused on the task. The lecturers had different responses from the students. If the activity was fun and easy to do, the students enjoyed and focused on the task. But, if the task was difficult for them, they have a long time to finish it and could not focus on it. It could be seen from the quotation of the interview below:

L1: I get different responses. If the task is fun like we had today I think drawing map is fun so they just go straight to the task. But, if the task if difficult for example I had ones asked them to analyze the paper you know they don't focus on the task. So, if it is difficult task they will not focus on the task. If it is easy they focus on the task. So, I think it is very important to for the teacher to break down the task into smaller ones. Even though it is group work.

L2: I think the students enjoyed the class. I can see it from the way they follow the class like they never play with their mobiles like ignore the teacher they never do that. When I asked them to discuss with their friends they do it. so, I think it is a good response from the students.

In the previous research that has been done by Mallipa [7] states that there are four stages in implementing group work, such as planning, action, monitoring, and assessment. It seems to be in line with the result finding by the researcher. In the planning stage, the teacher planned group work activities and describe it in syllabus which the lecturers describe it in RPS (*Rancangan Pembelajaran Semester*). In the action stage, the teacher implemented group work in teaching-learning process in which the group work activities were discussion and debate. In this stage, the teacher decided how to assign students to a group. There are three methods of assigning students to a group, namely random assigning, instructor-assigned, and self-selected group. Lecturer 1 used a randomly assigning method which students are grouped without any criteria. Meanwhile, lecturer 2 used instructor assigned method in which students were assigned to a group based on the criteria that is gender. In the monitoring stage, the teacher monitored the group's activities and progress throughout the semester and assessed the level of involvement of each member. The teacher also needs to ensure that all students follow the instructions and ensure that students know the learning objectives. The teacher may observe and record the progress that students make in the classroom or give students weekly progress reports. In this stage, based on the result finding the lecturers monitored students by group and individual activities throughout the semester. Lecturers in teaching-learning process ensured students that they followed their instructions by asking if they have any questions or not. Lecturers explained what are they studied. Lecturers observed the progress of students by themselves. In assessment stage, the teacher evaluates the process and the result of group work. It consists of what will be assessed, how it will be assessed, and who will conduct the assessment must be informed to the students. The lecturers evaluate the process and the result of group work based on criteria. Lecturer 1 assessed the students' performance based on criteria, like the oral review and attitude on the vocabulary, fluency, content, and detail on the subject matter. Besides, lecturer 2 assessed the students' performance based on the criteria of rubric speaking assessment which are quality of presentation, voice inflections, eye contact, and prepared.

Based on the result finding, there were two kinds of group activities in speaking classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were discussion and debate. In the discussion activity, the students had a discussion together. They shared their opinion toward each other. Each person had a role, for example, one drew a map and the other searched for the arrow. They helped each other. On the other hand, in the debate activity, the students were assigned into three groups. They were positive, negative, and judge teams. Positive and negative teams consist of three students in each team. Before they presented their statement in front of the class, both of positive and negative teams had a discussion in order to decide what statement would present by speakers one, two, and three. Each person both in positive and negative teams presented their arguments in front of the class. Besides, the judges team consists of two students and a lecturer. The task of the judges team was to decide the winner and stating the reason. The debate in group work activity seems to be in line with Karim [8] which the learning task or group work activity was game, role play, project, information gap, jigsaw, think pair and share, debate, prioritizing, and fishbowl technique. According to Karim [8] debate is one of activity to improve speaking skills in form of discussion or arguing ideas between pros and contras. Students are given a controversial proposition related to current issues. The motion that was given by the lecturer was ban homework. Students were not divided into two groups, but into three groups. They were pros, contras, and judges teams. Each group had to provide their arguments. There were no students appointed as a moderator or a secretary. The moderator was the

lecturer herself. Each group did not draw a conclusion based on their arguments. The lecturer controlled, monitored, offered help, and ensured each student give a contribution to the discussion. But, the discussion was not included in Karim's theory about group work activities was implemented in speaking class.

According to Wilkinson [9] the discussion is a forum in which between a teacher and students or among student exchanges ideas for the purpose of advancing student thinking, learning, understanding, and problem-solving. Students present their points of view, respond to other people's ideas, and reflect on their own ideas in order to build their knowledge, understanding, and interpretation of problems. Discussion can be implemented among small group or the whole class led by the teacher or students. In addition, group work defines as the students working together in a group to construct knowledge or complete an assignment from the teacher. Group work help students to pool their ideas, discuss or explore ideas, see problem from different perspectives, get a chance to learn from each other, and gain feedback from their peers. Hammar Chiriac [10] stated that when working interactively with others, students learn to inquire, share ideas, clarify differences, problem solve, and construct new understanding.

The characteristics of discussion have similarities with group work characteristics. Discussion and group work help students exchanging ideas, responding to other people's ideas, advancing learning and understanding, building knowledge, and solving-problem. Therefore, it can be concluded that discussion is one of activity that can be implemented using group work concept.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the lecturers have their own way in implementing group work in speaking classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were two kinds of group work activities, discussion and debate. From group work activities, the students can share their ideas with friends, help each other, build their confidence, and build their social relation with their friends after online learning.

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