

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION IN
IMPROVING SPEAKING ABILITY**

THESIS

Submitted by

GENARO MUDHAFARSYAH

Student ID Number: 190203109

Student of the English Language Education Study Program

Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Ar- Raniry State Islamic University

Banda Aceh



FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING

AR-RANIRY STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

BANDA ACEH

2025 / 1446 H

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION IN
IMPROVING SPEAKING ABILITY**

THESIS

Has been Approved and Submitted to the Thesis Munaqasyah Defense
As One of the Requirements to Obtain a Bachelor's Degree
in the field of English Language Education.

By

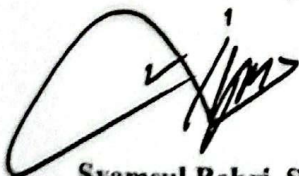
Genaro Mudhafarsyah
Student ID Number: 190203109

Student of the English Language Education Study Program
Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Ar-Raniry State Islamic University
Banda Aceh

Approved by:

Supervisor

Head of Department English Language
Education



Syamsul Bahri, S.Ag., M.A.
Nip. 197711162003121002



Syarifah Dahliana, S. Ag., M. Ed., Ph. D
Nip197504162000032001

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION IN IMPROVING
SPEAKING ABILITY**

THESIS

It has been defended in *Sidang Munaqasyah*
in front of the board of the Examination for the working paper and
has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Bachelor Degree of Education in English Language Teaching

On

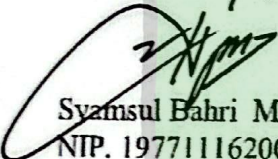
Wednesday,

23 July 2025

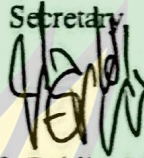
27 Muharram 1447 H

Board of Examiners,

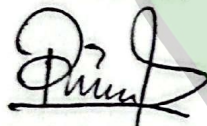
Chairperson,


Syamsul Bahri M. A TESOL
NIP. 197711162003121002

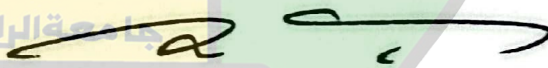
Secretary


Cut Dara Ilfa Rahila, M. Pd.BI
NIP. 198801272014032004

Member,

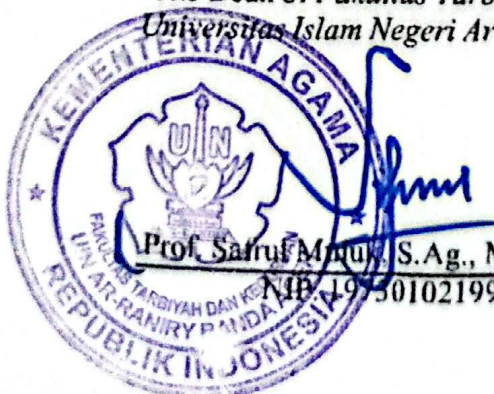

Rahmi, S. Pd.I., M. TESOL., Pd. D
NIP. 198402052006042002

Member,


Rahmi Fhonna, M. A
NIP. 198211132015032004

Certified by:

The Dean of *Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan*
Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh




Prof. Saiful Mujib, S.Ag., M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D.
NIP. 197301021997031003

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY OF SCIENTIFIC THESIS

I, the undersigned below:

Name : Genaro Mudhafarsyah
Student ID : 190203109
Study Program : English Language Education
Faculty : Tarbiyah and Teacher Training
Thesis Title : Students' Perception of Small Group Discussion in
Improving Speaking Ability

Hereby declare that in writing this thesis, I:

1. Did not use the ideas of others without being able to develop and be accountable for them;
2. Did not plagiarize the work of others;
3. Did not use others' works without proper citation or permission;
4. Did not manipulate or falsify data;
5. Completed this work independently and am fully responsible for it.

Banda Aceh, 15 Juli 2025

Saya yang membuat pernyataan,


Genaro Mudhafarsyah
190203109



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Alhamdulillah, all praise be to Allah SWT, the Almighty God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, who always gives me health, strength, ease of knowledge, and blessings to complete this thesis. Blessings and greetings are continuously poured out to the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his family and friends, who have enlightened human life.

On this occasion, I would like to express my most profound respect, admiration, and gratitude to my respected supervisor, Syamsul Bahri, S.Ag, M.A. I am grateful and indebted for his invaluable help, advice, support, and suggestions. I want to express my deepest gratitude to the lecturers and teaching staff of English Education who have provided inspiration, guidance, and assistance during my academic journey in this department.

I greatly appreciate my parents, who have been the most influential in shaping my personal and intellectual development, and my first loves, my father, Drs. I want to thank Khairil Ashadi and my mom, Maryamah, who always encouraged me to face obstacles without fear and supported me throughout my life. I thank them for their unfading affection, their role as my closest people with whom I can freely discuss my thoughts and experiences, and the gentle treatment they always give me. I express my sincere affection to my sisters, Tia Talitha Adiyama, Geubri Nabila, Cut Inayatsyah, and Genari Naqiatsyah, who have always given me endless support during my formative years. And last but not least, I want to thank Dhia Ninda Dwi Afifah for being my best support system in any situation. The affection that has always been shown me is never conditional. May Allah grant them eternal paradise in Jannah due to their extraordinary acts of kindness, unwavering steadfastness, boundless affection, and eternal provision of material, moral, and emotional sustenance.

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude to all my friends from the PBI batch of 19. Also, my best friend Rizieq Eriansyah helped me complete this thesis. Their unwavering presence has provided positive social support, constant motivation, and encouragement. At this point, I would like to thank myself. I want to express my gratitude for my resilience in facing challenges and persistence, which eventually brought me to where I am today.

Finally, the limitations of this study and my limitations necessitate the importance of receiving recommendations and comments. It is important in addressing the weaknesses of the research and enhancing understanding and proficiency in academic writing. This thesis is expected to contribute significantly to students, lecturers, and literature enthusiasts in the Department of English Education at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.

Banda Aceh, 26 May 2025

The Researcher,

Genaro Mudhafarsyah



ABSTRACT

Name : Genaro Mudhafarsyah
Reg. No : 190203109
Faculty : Tarbiyah dan Keguruan
Major : Department of English Language Education
Thesis' Title : Students' Perception Of Small Group Discussion In
Improving Speaking Ability
Supervisor : Syamsul Bahri, S.Ag., M.A.
Keywords : Small group discussions, speaking skills, student
perceptions, English as a Foreign Language, and thematic
analysis.

This study explored students' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of participating in small group discussions as a method to improve their English speaking skills. Using qualitative data collected from ten participants through open-ended questions, a thematic analysis was conducted based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Findings revealed that students perceived small group discussions as beneficial for building confidence, improving speaking fluency, and developing vocabulary in a low-pressure environment. However, challenges such as limited vocabulary, unfamiliar topics, group dynamics, and anxiety were also highlighted. The study concluded that small group discussions are effective for improving speaking practice. Appropriate facilitation is also essential to ensure inclusive and productive interactions. Recommendations are offered for educators, learners, and future researchers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL	i
ORIGINALITY	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF APPENDICES	viii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	
A. Background of the Study.....	1
B. Research Question.....	5
C. Research Aim.....	5
D. Significance of The Research.....	5
E. Terminology.....	6
BAB II LITERATURE REVIEW	
A. Speaking.....	9
B. The Concepts of Perception	14
C. Small Group Discussion.....	17
D. Previous Research	20
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
A. Research Design.....	22
B. Population and Sample.....	23
C. Instrument for Data Collection.....	23
D. Techniques of Data Collection.....	24
E. Data Analysis	25
CHAPTER IV FINDING AND DISCUSSION	
A. Finding	27
a. Increased Confidence in Speaking.....	28
a. Anxiety and Fear of Making Mistakes.....	35
B. Discussion	41

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Conclusion	47
B. Recommendation.....	49
REFERENCES.....	51



LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1	List of Questions
Appendix 2	Transcript of Interviews
Appendix 3	Decree
Appendix 4	Autobiography



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is designed to introduce the main idea of the entire content within this research, including the background of the study, research question, research aim, significance of the research, and terminology.

A. Background of the Study

Speaking is the fundamental skill of English, which plays a vital role in the language learning process. It is the verbal use of language as a tool of communication. It is the most important skill that students should master to express their ideas. The ability to speak effectively is a crucial skill in today's globalized world. However, many students struggle to develop their speaking skills, hindering their academic and professional success. Speaking is one of the fundamental skills that someone must develop since they must communicate in real-life situations, most importantly for English Students in university.

According to Brown (2004), speaking is a skill that can be observed directly and empirically. The assessment is usually heard by test participants, which, of course, jeopardizes the reliability and validity of an oral production test. Furthermore, Vandergrift (2004) emphasizes that speaking involves three essential components: speakers, listeners, and utterances. Speakers, as the producers of sound, are necessary for expressing opinions and feelings. Listeners, on the other hand, receive and interpret

these expressions. Utterances, the words or sentences produced by speakers, serve as the medium for communication. Without these three elements, effective speech would be impossible. According to Hermansyah (2021), students often understand grammar but neglect actual speaking practice, focusing instead on grammar knowledge. Students need motivation and encouragement to speak English. It is a problem for every student who wants to learn English. They understand English, but they cannot speak English. Speaking practice with friends can increase our speaking ability. Speaking practice can develop students' self-confidence and help them embrace mistakes as opportunities to learn.

There are some strategies to increase speaking skills, which is one of the keys to dealing with students with various abilities and diverse areas of intelligence, especially in speaking. Small group discussion is one of the strategies that adopt student-centered learning. Every student has a different capability to accept the material that the teacher explains. In group discussions, the students should be working together to finish their assignments and solve the problem. The students who have good speaking skills can help their friends who have less speaking skills or who struggle to accept the material that the teacher explains. A small group discussion will help group members build each other's speaking skills.

Small-group discussions are strategically designed to engage students in meaningful, course-relevant tasks, promoting active participation, critical thinking, and a deeper sense of belonging within the learning process (Arja et al., 2020). Accordingly, it focuses on two points that can help solve problems in speaking.

Enjoyable activities can support students in their learning. Many small group discussions have no specific purpose except the exchange of ideas and opinions. Ultimately, a practical small group discussion is one in which many different ideas and viewpoints are heard and considered. That can allow the group to accomplish its purpose if it has one, or to establish a basis either for ongoing discussion or for further contact and collaboration among its members.

Small group discussion is a learning method that provides opportunities for students to learn more actively by working together in groups to achieve a set goal. In a small group, discussion stimulates students to explore ideas, increase understanding of new concepts and problem-solving techniques, encourage the development of critical thinking and effective communication, improve group cooperation, and enhance student involvement and decision making (Djamarah, 2005). In most small group discussions, leaders who are relatively non-directive make for a broader range of ideas, and a more satisfying experience for participants. As we've already learned, any group member can exhibit leadership behaviors, not just a designated or emergent leader. Therefore, leadership behaviors are important for all of us to understand, even if we don't anticipate serving in leadership positions (Cragan & Wright, 1991).

The benefits of using small group discussions include increased speaking time, reduced anxiety levels, peer learning and feedback, developing communication skills, enhanced learning progress, and building relationships. Kaharuddin and Rahmadana (2020) found that problem-based group discussions significantly improve students' transactional speaking skills, indicating more fluent and effective participation in

speaking tasks. Besides, it is much easier to talk to a peer in a small-group than to do so in a whole class. Moreover, students felt free to express themselves when interacting in the smaller group. Participating in discussions builds confidence in public speaking and encourages individuals to voice their opinions. Exposure to new ideas expands knowledge, while group consensus aids in decision-making. According to Nezich (2024), discussions provide social interaction, networking, and mutual support, making them an effective tool for personal and professional growth. But other students have their own opinion about group discussion; some agree that small group discussion can expand their vocabulary and speaking levels. Otherwise, some students did not like small group discussion because they were shy about speaking with others. Silent students may avoid contributing in large groups. It is usually preferable to avoid forming large groups for effective small group discussion. Student input can also assist instructors in identifying obstacles, such as group dominance or discomfort with involvement, allowing them to address these concerns for more inclusive conversations.

In a study by Hadijah and Musfirah (2021), students' perceptions of small group discussions were assessed to understand their effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills. This study aimed to determine whether discussion groups can be beneficial to students of English language education, and was conducted on students in the UIN Ar-raniry class of 2019. The researcher wants to know how students' perceptions of small

group discussions can improve their speaking ability. The research examined students' perceptions of small group discussions to improve speaking ability.

B. Research Question

1. What are the students' perceptions of the benefits of small group discussions for improving their speaking abilities?
2. What are the challenges students face in participating effectively in small group discussions?

C. Research Aim

1. To find out students' perceptions on the benefits of small group discussions for improving their speaking abilities.
2. To find out the challenges students face in participating effectively in small group discussions.

D. Significance of The Research

1. Students

The student might expand their vocabulary and enhance their critical thinking. Speaking in a group setting can help alleviate public speaking anxiety as you become more comfortable sharing your thoughts.

2. English Teacher

Forum small group discussion can encourage all participants to contribute and share their ideas. It can also help teachers to analyze information and present their

arguments effectively, and can also solve their students' problems and enhance their critical thinking.

3. Institutions

Small group discussions for everyone can hone speaking skills in a supportive and interactive environment. Also, it can encourage collaboration and teamwork, essential skills for success in academic and professional settings.

4. The researcher

This research can easily facilitate student researchers and teachers in enhancing their English speaking skills. It can also help individuals develop the communication skills necessary for success in both academic and professional pursuits.

E. Terminology

There are some terms used in this research that need further description to avoid confusion among readers.

1. Speaking Ability

Speaking is one of the language-productive skills that goes along with listening. People produce spoken words, and it has to be meaningful. Like communication, we can find the speaker, the listener, the message, and the feedback. Brown (2004) stated that speaking is a productive skill that can be directly and empirically observed; those observations are invariably colored by the accuracy and effectiveness of a test taker's listening skills.

Nunan (1991) states that success in speaking is measured through someone's ability to carry out a conversation in the language. In addition, Gebhard (2000) said that their shyness or anxiety causes the student's problem in speaking. Furthermore, giving students more opportunities to practice speaking, such as through small-group discussions and immersive communicative tasks, is essential for overcoming typical speaking challenges in foreign language learning (Richards, 2006).

2. Perception

Perception is the process by which we interpret and make sense of sensory information from the world around us. It involves receiving stimuli through our senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) and then organizing, identifying, and interpreting that input to form meaningful experiences (Goldstein, 2014). Our perceptions are influenced by factors such as attention, past experiences, expectations, and cultural background, which means that two people can perceive the same event or object differently. Essentially, perception shapes how we understand and respond to our environment.

3. Group Discussions

Group discussion is an activity that involves people in conversation in small groups. Meo (2013) describes how small-group teaching cultivates self-directed learning, responsibility for progress, and improved communication skills. These benefits arise from active student involvement in the learning process and peer-to-peer interaction, common in well-structured small groups. The purpose of small group

discussion is to contribute and circulate information on a particular topic, analyze and evaluate the information, and support it with evidence to reach an agreement on general conclusions. Small group discussion is a more effective strategy for teachers to use with students in class. Some students are unable to do their work individually and struggle to learn at school. For this reason, this activity is carried out so that students can help one another exchange ideas and create an active and interactive learning atmosphere (Fauzi, 2017).

