
**Effectiveness of Online Focus Group Discussion on English Reading Skill:
A Classroom Action Research During Pandemic Covid-19****Dewi Tantri Kusuma Rahmadani**

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Corresponding Author's Email: adityo@umm.ac.id**Abstract**

English as international language is being taught at school, establishing a variety of teaching and learning method in improving the four language skills. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is deemed to be suited in improving the aforementioned skills providing discussion as its main benefit in English learning, especially in Reading skill. This research implemented CAR (Classroom Action Research) by employing Focused Group Discussion as the research method. The research process is carried out directly through online meeting as required during the pandemic Covid 19 situation. The research subjects are students of MTs Surya Buana School in Malang who are willing to take a part in this research as the research participants. This research employed interview and questionnaire techniques conducted in one pre meeting and two cycles of Classroom Action Research. The instruments used by authors to collect data were pre-test and posttest, observation sheet and interview guide. Based on the collection of data from this classroom action research, the authors concluded that the students' reading ability by applying the focus group discussion method was very helpful and also can be a good method to improve students' reading skill. Focus group discussions not only improve students' reading skill but also increase students' self-confidence. This method also enhances communication and interaction with other students. The research implied that online FGD is effective to enhance reading skill.

Keywords: *English Language, Reading, Class Action Research, Focus Group Discussion.*

INTRODUCTION

English is established as one of the obligatory international language being taught at both formal and informal education establishing varied method of improving students learning experience of its four skills: Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing. One of these methods is Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that is well suited in improving the aforementioned skills. This special method of FGD eased the students in understand the material and easily improve their English skills. Mancho-Barés & Arnó-Macià (2015) design a research in which proven that FGD can also be used for participant of different degrees as well as sharing their views and experience. In this discussion, students' activity can be more motivated and enthusiastic in learning because they can exchange information and discuss the problem. Therefore teachers must develop discussion methods to improve students' English skills. Annamalai & Kumar (2020) surveyed that group discussion by using mobile devices as a process by which students will get opportunities to contribute to themselves in solving shared problems even though they

are from different states. In this discussion method, students are taught how to characterize responsibility and confidence of being in a group. The teacher must also have a strategy to attract students' attention by creating effective application and good discussion methods for students, so students can follow the learning process comfortably. The discussion also consists of several types, namely small discussion and big discussion. A small discussion is a discussion that discusses a particular subject like discussing about lessons in school or discussing about their experience, then for a big discussion is a discussion that involves several people to solve a difficult problem.

There were some opinions from authorss who were discussing about how to solve certain problems, one of them that related to my research is the focus group discussion method to improve students' reading skill. In this discussion, we can find out how to use effective discussion methods to increase students' knowledge in the field of reading. The results of the authors indicated that the focus group discussion method obtained data or information from a source based on the environment or groups intending to solve certain problems collectively (Lehoux, Poland & Daudelin, 2006). The problem that we can get from the focus group discussion is how to effectively use this focus group discussion method to improve students reading skill in intermediate Junior High Students in groups to find out their perceptions, and knowledge, through their ideas. Discussions also help students to think critically and exchange opinions about something by supporting each other's opinions. However, many students choose to remain silent and do not want to interact with others. The reason is that they cannot adapt and they are not confident with themselves because they feel uncomfortable when discussing among people, so they become more personal and prefer to keep a distance from others. This problem can be found in MTs Surya Buana students who are still studying in junior high school as a process of students communicating with their environment, where current students are still very stable in terms of communicating with each other. All in all, through the discussion method the teacher can see the results of the development of students in improving their English skills and give evidence on how the FGD is an effective method on English reading skill during the online learning.

Online Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is a method that is often used by teachers when learning in schools. Focus group discussions are systematic and focused activities that involve many people. In general, focus group discussions discuss about social events or problems in society that can create a bad stigma for certain individuals or groups. Some of people have a variety of definitions about interaction in group. Interaction is also defined about communication but in this research, we will focus with FGD for improving student reading skill. This improvement is conducted by the authors by using recount text material to make it easier to be studied.

The focus group discussion in this research using a small group that consist of 3 until 6 people. Large discussion groups usually involve more than 15 people, for example, in 1 class 15 students have to solve a difficult problem, and they form groups of 15 people so it can be said to be a large discussion group. While small discussion groups are discussion groups that involve more than 1 person but not as many as large discussion groups, usually small discussion groups are created to discuss learning problems at school or doing practice. Focus group discussions also apply freedom of opinion to exchange ideas or information to achieve common goals. Hollander (2004), Duggleby (2005), and Lehoux et al. (2006) explained that the FGD method is a method for obtaining data or information through interactions with other people so that we can create the social interaction. According to Hollander (2004) when interacting, it can influence each other and can produce data from each other's opinions. Through focus group discussions, students can also feel confident and independent characters. The application of the

focus group discussion method can also improve students' reading skills because when reading the section students will think critically about what to discuss and how to solve existing problems. using the focus group discussion method can make it easier for us to obtain the data generated in a discussion group to increase the depth of information covering various aspects of a live phenomenon so that these phenomena can be defined and explained. Focus group discussions not only for students but can also be applied to people to prevent violence against children. FGD also a learning method for parents to increase knowledge and skill to recognize violence prevention in children (Mashfufa, 2018).

Focus group discussion is applied to form a confident character. Focus group discussions can also help students exchange suggestions in order to achieve common goals. The other objectives of this focus group discussion can help teachers develop independent character in students so that they can solve problems well together. The application of this method can also foster a sense of kinship and cohesiveness with each other. The focus group discussion method has several characteristics, including a method of finding and gathering information for qualitative research types and the data obtained is data that comes from direct observation and social interactions that occur (Lehoux, Poland, & Daudelin, 2006). According to (Streubert & Carpenter, 2003) the FGD method is a practical and economical method. This method can also gather more information easily through respondents in a short time.

This research certainly has advantages and disadvantages side. The problem that usually occurs in groups is the lack of cohesiveness between the leader and the members, which can lead to an ineffective group. In the other side, the authors cannot perfectly ensure the application of the focus group discussion method, because each student has different thinking powers. So, the authors cannot impose children's thinking power if they cannot follow the learning development during the focus group discussion method process. Among other issues that often occur when using the group method is some students do not want to group with friends who don't really know each other. Therefore, to make an effective group must have cooperation between, the teacher, the leader and the members. The advantage of implementing focus group discussions is that it is easier for teachers to see the activeness of students through observation. Focus group discussions are also a learning method that can increase children's creativity and increase children's insight through thinking. This method can also assist teachers in preparing learning media so that teachers can better adapt environmental conditions to the needs of students. According to Susilana (2010) Learning Media always consists of two important elements, elements of equipment and delivery of information. So, learning media requires an intermediary for conveying information.

In this research, there are rules for carrying out discussion activities. The authors will divide students into small groups during the learning process. In the first meeting, the authors will introduce with students to get the attention of the students and talking about the activities. In the second meeting, the authors will carry out the learning process using the FGD method that involves 2 people. In the third meeting, the authors will divide students into small groups that consist 3 to 6 students. Authors divide the groups with the aim that we can easily see student performance during the learning process. On the other side, the group members must use polite and reasonable language in order to be well received. Students also have to respect each other's opinions so that there are no disputes and activities can run well.

This activity involves material that contains elements of text or stories so that authors can see students' reading abilities. During the discussion process, students should not discuss topics that are outside the main topic, so students must be more careful in reading and try to concentrate more on reading. There are several ways to conduct discussion activities; 1.) Students have to study about the material to be discussed by looking the learning video that was uploaded in the YouTube, 2.) Determining the purpose of the discussion, 3.) Describing

the contents of the story, 4.) Explaining the conclusions of the discussion process, 5.) Submit the final task to the Google Classroom. A authors can find out the results of students' reading abilities through the conclusions contained in the text or story. This activity can be done in 1 to 2 meetings a week by using zoom meeting or other applications.

Media is one of the important things in the world of education because it can help educators in delivering material easily. The media is an intermediary that connects sources and recipients in exchanging information. Media usually used as a message delivery because it can achieve learning objectives and create an attractive learning environment. Media can display material through sound, images, and movement. The learning media used in this study were in the form of images and sounds that were conveyed via the computer online. The authors can explain the material through computers and power points as a delivery of material. According to Munadi (2012), "Media is something that can convey messages from sources in a planned manner so as to create a conducive environment where students can carry out the learning process efficiently and effectively.". There are many types of media, including electronic media and print media. According to Naz & Akbar (2008), there are several types of media, namely;

1. Photographic Media: This media can display multiple images, slides or filmstrips.
2. Audio Media: This media will show material that has voice messages such as radio, records.
3. Computers: This media is used as a tool for students or teachers who want to display some material as a whole.
4. Print Media: This media is a medium that delivers information in the form of Magazines, Newspapers, and Posters.
5. Graphic media: This media is used to convey information in the form of maps or charts.

METHOD

This study implemented CAR (Classroom Action Research) by employing Focused Group Discussion as the research method. The research process is carried out directly through online meeting as required during the pandemic Covid 19 situation, with the aim for the authors can be able to collect the data and information in safe and valid manner. This data collection is taken from activities and meetings within one pre-treatment meeting and two cycles of treatment. The authors used the CAR design to improve students' English reading skills. By using this CAR design, the authors can see directly the development of students in the classroom.

The research subjects are students of MTs Surya Buana School in Malang who are willing to take a part in this research as the research participants. This research employed interview and questionnaire techniques which are carried out in a complete and orderly manner in collecting the data. Interview activities were carried out during lesson time and free hours while the questionnaire is carried out outside of lesson time to get the effective time to collect the data. Due to the research consent involving children, the authors hid the identity of the participants during the observation and interview stages. The participants who are willing to be a part of the interview in this research involved 10 students consisting of 6 boys and 4 girls.

This research focuses on the improvement of the English skills of MTs Surya Buana students in Malang City through discussion methods. The limitations of this research is cannot impose the English skills of students who have deficiencies in the field of reading through this discussion method, because every student has a different capacity, so we made this research evenly without any coercion to students. The limitation of this research is also about the time and schedule that the authors cannot change without the approval of the teacher at MTs Surya

Buana Malang School. The authors explain the number of students who were studied. Participants in this research were 23 students who are giving their consent of being participants from total 42 students. The authors took participants from MTs Surya Buana Malang School because previously authors have internship experience at the same school so that authors can find out the atmosphere and conditions in the school. The results of the data from this research were taken from the participants that were targeted to help students' development in English reading through the focus group discussion method through two cycles of Classroom Action Research. During the treatment, the authors were conducting interviews, the authors collected data from observations, and get the data of the cycles in the form of descriptive text.

Instrument of Research

As research instruments are tools or media that help authors in gathering important data during the research process, there were 3 kinds of instruments used in this research. The main data are taken from a set of pre-test and post-test, while the supporting data in this research were taken from observations and interviews. Therefore, the instruments used by authors to collect data were pre-test and posttest, observation sheet and interview guide.

Pre-test and Post-test

This pre-test was conducted so that authors could see the students' preliminary ability to read without using the focused group discussion method, while the post-test was used to measure the improvement of the students after the treatment. The test is administered to evaluate the improvement of learners to understand the language achievement for an easy and time-saving evaluation (Adityo, 2020). This set of tests were given in every cycle as a requirement in CAR. This pre-test was conducted by the authors before using the focus group discussion with the aim of knowing the students' knowledge in the field of reading so that the authors can easily to develop effective learning strategies and models in improving students' reading skills. For the pre-test the authors gave 4 different recount texts with a total of 20 questions in the form of short messages or essays to 23 students who participated in this study. Meanwhile, the post-test was conducted by the authors during the learning process so that authors could see directly the results of student tests through focus group discussions. Post-test is done by giving tests to students to find events and chronology of a recount text story in short message or conclusion.

Observation.

Observation is an activity to collect the data through observation of events, behavior, or other objects. In the first stage, observations were made in general, such as collecting as much data or information as possible about improving students' reading skill at the MTs Surya Buana Malang school. The information taken during the observation activity is how students develop when using the focus group discussion method in the class together. In this observation, the authors also acts as a teacher so that the authors can observe the development of students directly. Considering that this research used online video conference during the Covid-19 pandemic, the authors observed the learning process through online method. This observation is carried out so that authors can measure the improvement of students' reading skills by using the discussion method. This observation is also carried out with the other purpose of being able to see the progress of students during class. On the other side, the authors can also see directly the progress of students in online class using the zoom meeting and Google classroom applications.

Interview

At this stage of the interview, the authors had the opportunity to collect data in the form of an interview by involving 10 students who are willing to join the interview and to communicate between authors that discuss students' skill in the reading field through the focus group discussion method. The main advantage of these interviews is the authors can easily collect as much data as possible during the free hours.

Research Procedure

The research is conducted in one pre-meeting and two cycles of Classroom Action Research. each cycle consists of:

1. Planning

The planning was as the first step concerned with the preparation design by the authors. The steps can be described as follows: Designing a model of teaching, preparing lesson plan, teaching materials and media, observation, and result.

2. Implementing the Plan

In this activity, authors taught recount text and provide material to students. The authors taught recount text material because it contains story elements that can be assessed based on students' reading knowledge. The material was given before the learning process so that students can understand the material prior to the treatment. Material is provided in the form of video learning.

3. Observing

At this stage, the authors began to observe the learning process during teaching in the classroom conducted by using video conference.

4. Reflecting

At this stage the authors reflects and analyzes during the learning process carried out. Authors found more problems and weaknesses in the learning process before using the focus group discussion method. Then, the results of this reflection were taken into consideration as feedback for strategy improvement using the focus group discussion method. Authors were use the information that collected to develop strategies using focus group discussions. From those, the authors will analyze the weaknesses and strengths of the strategies that have been used.

Data Analysis

This data analysis was carried out by comparing the pre-treatment before using the focus group discussion method and the cycles follow. The authors have compared the results of students' reading skill before using the focus group discussion method with after using the focus group discussion method. After that, the authors compared the score with the standard that have been set in schools, namely KKM. KKM is an abbreviation of the Minimum Completeness Criteria which is used as a reference to declare students complete in learning, KKM itself must be established at the beginning of the learning year based on the results of the educators' deliberations and educational institutions that have the same characteristics. For students who have succeeded in getting a score by KKM, it was declared successful. The authors determines that students who have reached 70% of the previous grade are entitled to pass. This research were used CAR to measure and compare the English language skills of students at MTs Surya Buana Malang through observational actions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The authors obtained data from observations for 3 meetings, one meeting for introductions and 2 meetings for the learning process in the classroom. From the observations

of authors, students only got a score of 53.6 % in pre-test score without using the focus group discussion method. It can be concluded that students still have not passed because they still did not reach the KKM standard with a score of 75 or still below 70% of the expected average score. For the first cycle, the authors conducted the focus group discussion by training focus group discussion that involves 2 students in partners. In the first cycle, the students only got 66.1% and it is still not a pass score because they still did not reach the KKM standard with a score of 75 or still below 70% of the expected average score. To improve students' skill in the field of reading, authors changed the way of teaching by using the focus group discussion method that included 6 students. The authors still used the focus group discussion method in the second cycle. By using focus group discussions in the second cycle, it can be seen that students are more active and enthusiastic. Using the focus group discussion method got results above the previous value from 66.1% to 87.6 % of the average value.

The authors conducted interviews with several students by online. Based on interviews with students, 3 out of 10 children felt that the focus group discussion method was a bit complicated and difficult. While from questionnaire, 50% of students liked the focus group discussion method while teaching process, 21.4% of students did not like focus group discussion learning and 28.6% of students felt they could do it stably. Some students felt that they did not like learning using the focus group discussion method because of bad networks and signals, so they had to adjust accordingly. However, they are still trying hard to keep up with the lessons. It can be concluded that using the focus group discussion method can help students improve their English language skills. Therefore, focus group discussions can still be a good alternative to learning methods.

Pre-meeting

There are 5 classes of 8th grade English students at MTs Surya Buana Malang School. The authors only used 2 classes as research materials with a total of 42 students, but only 23 students were participate in this research. From the 23 students, 12 were boys and 11 girls. The authors also interviewed 10 of the 23 students and gave a small questionnaire to the 2 classes. Considering that this research uses direct classroom action during the Covid-19 pandemic season, authors observed the learning process through online method. Before carrying out the activities in the first cycle, the authors discuss about the next activities by getting acquainted with students and the teacher. The authors discuss about activities that will be carried out during online learning. The authors work together with the English teacher of MTs Surya Buana Malang to compile a learning schedule to create a conducive learning process. The authors discusses about the schedule, time and material that will be held during the learning process. The authors informs to the students that the material to be studied during the treatment is about recount text which still has a relationship with the previous material from their teacher, namely the simple past tense. Before doing the first cycle, the authors gave 4 different texts with 5 questions each to 23 students to see the students' knowledge in reading without using the focus group discussion method. From the pre-test conducted by the authors, students only got an average score of 53.6%.

Observation of reading Test

The authors observed student development through reading test during the learning process. The students were seen to be active in participating in the learning process in class. Even though some of the students still could not understand it well, they still tried hard to understand the material that is being explained. Some students still found it difficult to read independently and difficult to conclude the content of the story. The material presented by the authors was quite complicated because this cycle was the first cycle as well as the beginning

of the provision of pre-test so that some students felt bored and confused. The authors also found it a little difficult to deliver. By the provisions of the values that have been agreed upon together, students are said to pass when they have reached the expected target of 70% or over to the KKM score. The results of the post-test that were carried out resulted in a value of 66.1 % which still did not reach the expected target. The authors can conclude that some students have achieved scores above 75 but there are still 14 students who are still below the KKM. Thus, the action in cycle I needs to be extended in cycle II.

Reflections

In this activity, the authors collected all the data from field notes during observations in the classroom. Based on the results of the previous pre-test, students still have not reached the target that set by the authors. From the pre-test got a value of 53.6 % while in the first cycle only got 66.1 %. So the increase from pre-test to post-test just got 12.5%. Some students still seem to have difficulty reading and difficult to concluding the content of the story. The authors concluded that this first cycle need to be extended in the second cycle.

Observation of Cycle II

This process is the process of collecting data and the results of research activities in second cycle. The authors concluded that the students could understand the material in second cycle than in first cycle and do the test well. Using the focus group discussion method while learning process students become more active and can get to know each other. They discuss well and submit the test on time in the Google classroom application.

The result of the learning process with giving test to each students by recount text material makes them thinking carefully. Based on the results, the authors concluded that focus group discussions are still a good alternative for teachers to improve students' reading skill. This can be seen from the assessment of student test in the Goggle classroom.

Reflection of Cycle II

This activity has been completed. The authors tends to give students motivation and suggestions to students so that they continue to practice reading. Authors want to know students' knowledge of the reading they have learned. Student responses before working on task are very different. This can be seen when students tend to have difficulty explaining the main story. Students become more active and enthusiastic in learning. Students are increasingly familiar with differences of opinion that they have never heard before. Students seem to enjoy learning to speak in the class. The authors concluded that the increase from cycle 1 to cycle 2 got 21.5% that better than the pre-test to the first cycle.

Discussion

This interview was conducted by online. Online interviews were conducted using a zoom meeting to ask students for several questions. This interview also uses little questionnaire as students' perception of the material that has been studied. Based on interviews with students, 3 out of 10 children felt that the focus group discussion method was a bit complicated and difficult, while 7 of them felt that the focus group discussion method was very fun and exciting. On average students like learning with the group method. This is because students consider groups to be very helpful for them in solving problems. With the group discussion method students also learn to respect the opinions of other students. In other side, some students felt that they did not like learning using the focus group discussion method because of bad networks and signals, so they had to adjust accordingly. Students felt enjoyable by story-based online learning. Students become easier to understand and conclude the content of the story together.

With this focus group discussion method students become more confident and know each other, even though some students found it difficult to communicate, they still try to interact with each other. Students also work together to help struggling students. Therefore, it can be concluded that the focus group discussion method is still an effective way of learning online.

The authors took a sample of questionnaires from 2 classes that involves 42 students which were intended to see the reactions of students who used the focus group discussion method and those who did not use the focus group discussion method. From the questionnaire above, 50% of students liked the focus group discussion method while teaching process, 21.4% of students did not like focus group discussion learning and 28.6% of students felt they could do it stably. Some students felt that they did not like learning using the focus group discussion method because of bad networks and signals, so they had to adjust accordingly.

Based on the collection of data from this classroom action research, the authors concluded that the students' reading ability by applying the focus group discussion method was very helpful and also can be a good method to improve students' reading skill. Focus group discussions not only improve students' reading skill but also increase students' self-confidence. This method also enhances communication and interaction with other students. This research has findings that are almost the same as (Küçükoğlu: 2017) which states that the results of action research using the focus group discussion method can improve students' skills in the field of reading. During this research process, authors collaborated with teachers in schools to implement the learning media discussed previously. From this study, the authors found that the application of the focus group discussion method in the classroom is still a good solution for teachers and students. Focus group discussions can influence the thinking patterns of students and their surroundings because most students interact with others. Jannah (2015) learning media is a tool to improve the effectiveness and achieve in teaching. This research does not only affect students but also authors. The authors feel that authors can see directly the class situation and develop strategies in the classroom. This strategy can also attract more student interaction, which increases students' self-confidence and interest that can improve their understanding of the text or story (Oczkus, 2003). Apart from feeling comfortable, the authors also concluded that students could maintain unity and integrity during the focus group discussion process. Therefore, students are more confident, and easier to convey information and opinions.

Learning process by using the focus group discussion method does not make students feel bored. Students look very active and enthusiastic about learning the material. Besides, students are also asked to share their experiences. This can improve student creativity to know more about the material being studied. Besides, based on the experience of the authors, the focus group discussion method can improve students' reading skill in the field of reading. From those, it can be concluded that the focus group discussion method was successful in increasing the abilities and knowledge of students in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

According to research can be concluded that Focus Group Discussion (FGD) can improve reading skill in the field of English. After going through several cycles, authors observed students' skill before and after using FGD. In this cycle, a pre-test was conducted before using the FGD. The aim is to determine students' knowledge in the field of reading so that authors can easily develop strategies and learning models that are effective in improving students' reading skills. Authors conducted 3 meetings for observation. The results of the pre-test without using the focus group discussion method were only 53.6%. In fact, students is

declared to have passed if they have reached the score target, which is 70% or more of the KKM score. After the pre-test, followed by a post test in the cycle I. For cycle I the authors started to conduct learning with focus group discussions by training focus group discussions that involving 2 students in pairs. The results of the data from cycle 1 said that it was still 66.1% of the value of 75.

To improve students' reading skill, the authors changed the way of teaching by using focus group discussions involving 6 students. The authors continued the second cycle at the next meeting. In the second cycle, the authors still uses the focus group discussion method. By using focus group discussion in cycle II, the students were more active and enthusiastic. The results in the cycle II obtained higher than the previous cycle, from 66.1% to 87.6% of the average value. Authors obtained the desired result in the cycle II, this research activity has been completed. The authors concluded that the increase from cycle 1 to cycle 2 got 21.5% better than the pre-test to the cycle I. On the other hand, authors tend to provide motivation and advice to students so that they continue to practice reading. The authors wants to know the students' knowledge about the reading they have learned. Student responses before doing the assignment were very different. This can be seen when students tend to have difficulty in explaining the main story. Students become more active and enthusiastic in learning. Students are increasingly familiar with differences of opinion they have never heard before. Students seem happy to learn to speak in class.

Acknowledgments

This research acknowledges the contribution of Dr. Masduki, M.Pd. as the education expert and MTs Surya Buana Malang School as the research location and participations.

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