

Chapter One

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher has some points to discuss. Firstly, the background of the research which points out the basic problem of the study and describes the reasons why the researcher is interested in conducting this research. Secondly, the identification of the problem which explains the current issues based on this research is also included in this part. Moreover, the researcher limits the discussion by providing delimitation of the research to make this study clearer. The researcher also mentions research questions and research objectives. Lastly, the significances and organization of this research are included in this chapter; it presents the benefits for several parties and shows the structure of this research.

Background of the Research

Group discussion is a common activity in teaching and learning English. Pollock (2017) stated that discussion is one of strategies that make students to elaborate, defend, and extend their positions, opinions, and beliefs. Moreover, group discussion is conducted by making group to achieve the goals of learning to improve students' understanding. Discussion also affects students to be more active in learning processes because it contains an active interaction between students. Based on Perkins and Murphy (2006), group discussion is a type of group learning where the students share their opinion answering questions (as cited in Fela, 2018). Furthermore, group discussion implements a technique of

problem solving, teamwork, communication, and increase students' participation in taking decision. Asari, Ma'rifah and Arifani (2017) stated that group discussion is a communication process when each participant shares their idea or opinion in turn.

Based on the researcher's experience as college student, many teachers used group discussion activities in most of classes. In college level, students should be more active in learning process. It is different from English learning process held in senior high school which is teacher-centered. Teacher-centered means every activity in English learning process is mostly conducted by teacher. In this level, the knowledge mostly is delivered by teacher. Learning English in senior high school level is different from English learning in college level, especially in English education department and the difference comes from the technique in delivering the material. Li and Lam (2013) said that group discussion is an activity that locates the students as the center (as cited in Miller, 2017). The student-centered principle obliges students to generate more initiative to participate actively in class. Group discussion encourages students to give more initiatives in learning process through communicative activities. Thus, the knowledge does not only come from lecturer. By conducting group discussion, they can simply exchange the knowledge each other. In other words, the understanding is in student's hand, the lecturer is just a facilitator.

Group discussion is one of methods in teaching and learning English because it contains skills supporting communication skill especially speaking skills. Speaking is a basic skill that must be mastered by students. Barker (2012)

emphasized that speaking skill is effective tool that affect understanding.

Meanwhile, learning English will never be perfect without practice. As a freshman college student, group discussion becomes a way to integrate their speaking skill. Speaking skill is essential to be improved as early as possible in learning English. Thus, it is crucial for students to actively participate in group discussion.

Group discussion periodically is used at English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in Yogyakarta. It is implemented from the first semester until the sixth semester. Based on the researcher's experiences as student, group discussion at ELED of a private university in Yogyakarta partially consists of variety activities such as speaking, listening, explaining, questioning, and responding. It is relevant to Brown and Atkins (2002) who stated that speaking is the most important thing to activate group discussion. The researcher highlights that there are at least two points concerning group discussion implemented at ELED of a private university in Yogyakarta. First, students should frequently use English when they get involved in group discussion activity. Second, every student has equal opportunity to enhance their communication skills especially speaking skill.

Therefore, students will get more benefits if they can participate actively in group discussion. According to Lee (2006), group discussions can lead to cognitive benefits for students in English learning process. It can benefit their English as Foreign Language (EFL) improvement especially speaking skill. This statement is emphasized by Tevdovska (2015) who said that group discussion gives positive impact for student's interpersonal skills especially speaking skills.

The improvement of speaking skill will lead to better communication skill.

Wichadee as cited in Taqi and Al-Nouh (2014) stated that the group discussion encourages the students' interaction with other students by working together in group to intensify their learning. In addition, studies have found that discussions can improve students' learning. By doing group discussions, students can develop new perspective and maximize the understanding, and they can also be more cooperative (Pollock, 2017). In addition, group discussion can improve student's confidence. Hassan (2009) mentioned that learning in group is more effective to improve the students' motivation, confidence and diligence. Students can express their ability and perform freely through group discussion. It is because students can be more comfortable to express their ability in group discussion. Those benefits can obviously affect freshman's speaking skill improvement.

However, based on the researcher's observation at ELED of a private university in Yogyakarta, not all students can participate actively in group discussion activity. There were students who can express their opinion confidently, and the rest of them just agreed with their friends' opinion. The discussion is always dominated by prominent student. Nevertheless, just because they keep silent during the discussion, it does not mean that they do not have opinion or do not understand the material. In college level, group discussion is used by lecturer in various classes. Thus, it is important for students to participate in group discussion actively. Based on the researcher's experiences, this phenomenon happened because the group discussions do not use an effective method. According to Tevdovska (2015), group discussion will be effective if it is

conducted in small size of group. It will ease student to be cooperative in group discussion when they are in smaller circle. In addition, the effectiveness of group discussion is affected by the responsibility of students during group discussion. Exley and Dennick (2004) stated that when the discussion is held in a small group circle, the students will easily accept their responsibility for the progress and direction of their own learning. Student's responsibilities will make group discussion could be working as expected and effective. The meaning of responsibility is students' awareness of what they should do and should not do during their involvement in group discussion.

Group discussion has clearly given a lot of benefits. After knowing the problem of group discussion implementation, it is important to raise the awareness of freshman students to be more cooperative in group discussion activity. Based on the explanation, the researcher tried to analyze the benefits and the challenges of group discussion done by freshman or first-year student at ELED of private university in Yogyakarta. The researcher tried to find out that group discussion might give benefits for freshman student's speaking skill improvement. Based on the background, the researcher was interested in conducting a research to investigate students' benefits and challenges in using group discussion to improve speaking skill.

Identification of the Problem

Group discussion is implemented by most of lecturers in various classes, because it can help students to improve their speaking skill. As students, it is important to practice English through group discussion. Group discussion is an

effective method to improve students' speaking skill because it requires students to have oral communication with their friend directly. However, learning English can be new thing for them who learning English in higher educational. Therefore, there are several problems about group discussion in English as a foreign language (EFL). First, some of students are afraid to use English in learning activity. Second, the students feel difficult to communicate using English. Third, the discussion always is dominated by outstanding student that limited other students chance to express their opinion and the last some of lecturer used group discussion almost in every meeting that make students feel bored, unmotivated and just keep silent during group discussion because they feel that they cannot accept the material well.

The problems above cause differences students' perception toward group discussion used by the teachers. The differences were investigated by researcher through this research. Therefore, the researcher felt necessary to conduct this research in the context of English as a foreign language at Indonesia University. Thus, the researcher conducted this research in English language education department at one of private university at Yogyakarta.

Delimitation of the Problems

In order to make the discussion of this study more specific and detailed, the researcher focused on student's perception on the benefits and challenges of using group discussion in English classes to improve speaking skill. The reason of this limitation is because group discussion gives some challenges and benefits in the same time and speaking skill is basic skill for students should master in

English learning. The research was conducted at English Language Education Department of private university in Yogyakarta and the researcher used qualitative approach to collect the data.

Research Question

There are two research questions underlying this research:

1. What are the benefits of group discussion for students' speaking skill improvement?
2. What are the challenges of group discussion for students' speaking skill improvement?

Significance of the Research

This research aims to give benefits and positive contributions for students, teachers, and future researchers. The explanation is presented below:

Students. From this research first-year students can find out about the benefit of group discussions, especially speaking skill improvement. It will link to the awareness and motivation for them to take initiatives in group discussion activities. Then, when students in English classes they will anticipate the challenges in doing class assessment especially speaking assignment.

Teachers. After the researcher presented the findings, teacher can adjust their methodology or strategies in implementing group discussion in English classes. From the findings, teacher can get more understanding about freshmen's

difficulties or benefits of group discussion and then teacher will give more motivation for first-year students to be more active in group discussion activities.

Future Researcher. This research can become a reference to the next researchers who want to examine the benefits or challenges of freshmen's perception on group discussion in English classes for improving speaking skill in order to improve the next researcher's findings.