

The Effectiveness of Small Group Discussion to Increase Student Reading Comprehension in 10th Graders in Narrative Text

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya pemahaman membaca siswa kelas X pada teks naratif di SMAN 4 Sidoarjo, yang menuntut strategi pembelajaran inovatif. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui efektivitas diskusi kelompok kecil dalam meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa pada teks naratif dibandingkan dengan metode pengajaran tradisional. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen dengan kelompok kontrol dan eksperimen. Penelitian dilakukan di SMAN 4 Sidoarjo dengan subjek siswa kelas X. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi pre-test, post-test, dan observasi, dengan instrumen berupa soal tes dan lembar observasi. Analisis data dilakukan secara kuantitatif menggunakan uji statistik untuk membandingkan hasil pre-test dan post-test kedua kelompok. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa yang mengikuti diskusi kelompok kecil mengalami peningkatan signifikan dalam pemahaman membaca, yang ditunjukkan oleh skor post-test yang lebih tinggi dan keterlibatan aktif dalam diskusi. Simpulan penelitian ini adalah diskusi kelompok kecil efektif dalam meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa pada teks naratif. Disarankan agar guru menerapkan strategi diskusi kelompok kecil untuk mendukung pembelajaran membaca, khususnya pada teks naratif di tingkat sekolah menengah.

Kata Kunci: diskusi kelompok kecil, pemahaman membaca, teks naratif, siswa kelas X, pembelajaran kolaboratif, strategi pengajaran

Abstract

This research is motivated by the low reading comprehension of 10th-grade students in narrative texts at SMAN 4 Sidoarjo, necessitating innovative instructional strategies. The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of small group discussion in improving students' reading comprehension in narrative texts compared to traditional teaching methods. This research employs a quasi-experimental design with control and experimental groups. The study was conducted at SMAN 4 Sidoarjo with 10th-grade students as subjects. Data collection techniques include pre-tests, post-tests, and observations, using test items and observation sheets as instruments. Data were analyzed quantitatively using statistical tests to compare pre-test and post-test results of both groups. The findings indicate that students who participated in small group discussions showed significant improvement in reading comprehension, as evidenced by higher post-test scores and active engagement in discussions. The study concludes that small group discussion is effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension in narrative texts. It is recommended that teachers implement small group discussion strategies to support reading instruction, especially for narrative texts at the secondary school level.

Keywords: small group discussion, reading comprehension, narrative text, 10th graders, collaborative learning, instructional strategy

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that underpins academic achievement and lifelong learning. It involves decoding written symbols and constructing

meaning from texts, a process that requires the integration of cognitive, linguistic, and metacognitive abilities (Kendeou et al., 2016). Among various text genres, narrative texts are particularly significant in

education, as they not only entertain but also transmit moral values and cultural knowledge (Dhillon et al., 2020). However, research has consistently shown that Indonesian secondary school students face persistent challenges in comprehending narrative texts, often due to limited vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, and inadequate reading strategies (Fitri et al., 2022).

The secondary school students is a crucial stage especially the 10th grade, they represent a pivotal period for students' cognitive and socio-emotional development. At this stage, students transition toward more abstract and complex reasoning skills essential for academic success (Kim et al., 2017). Narrative texts, which form a substantial component of the high school curriculum, require such advanced comprehension abilities. Improving students' reading comprehension in narrative texts supports critical thinking and broader learning goals. Exploring the effectiveness of Small Group Discussion (SGD) in this context is therefore crucial, as it offers a collaborative learning environment aligned with social constructivist theory. By fostering peer interaction and active engagement, SGD can enhance students' understanding and problem-solving skills. This study's findings aim to provide educators with evidence-based instructional strategies tailored to the developmental needs of 10th graders, ultimately supporting improved literacy outcomes in secondary education.

Despite the recognized importance of reading comprehension, traditional teacher-centered instructional methods remain prevalent in Indonesian classrooms. These methods often limit student engagement and provide few opportunities for active learning or collaborative problem-solving. In contrast, contemporary educational theory, particularly Vygotsky's social constructivism, emphasizes the role of social interaction and collaboration in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning is most effective when it occurs within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where students can accomplish more with peer or teacher support than independently (Bunge, 2010). Small group discussion (SGD) is one instructional strategy grounded in this theory, promoting dialogue, peer support, and shared meaning-making.

Empirical studies in international contexts have demonstrated the effectiveness of small group discussions in enhancing reading comprehension. For example, Kamps et al., (2012) found that elementary students in the United States who participated in small group interventions showed greater gains in reading comprehension compared to those receiving traditional instruction. Similarly, Gasser et al., (2025) reported that

small group literary interventions in Switzerland improved the quality of socio-emotional and instructional interactions, leading to better comprehension outcomes. These findings suggest that collaborative learning environments foster deeper engagement and critical thinking, both of which are essential for understanding complex texts.

In Indonesia, research on small group discussions has produced promising results. Arisman & Haryanti (2019) observed significant improvements in reading achievement among students taught using SGD compared to conventional methods. Nasuha Daema, Burhanuddin Yasin (2024) also reported that small group discussions led to notable gains in reading comprehension scores among junior high students. However, most existing studies have focused on primary or lower secondary students, and few have specifically examined the impact of SGD on 10th-grade students' comprehension of narrative texts. Previous research often prioritized socio-emotional outcomes or lacked rigorous experimental designs, leaving a gap in understanding the direct effects of SGD on reading comprehension in high school settings.

Additionally, previous studies explored the effectiveness of Small Group Discussion (SGD) mainly with younger students in simpler text genres, leaving gaps regarding its application with older learners and more complex narrative materials. This study addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on 10th graders, a critical developmental stage characterized by advancing cognitive and socio-emotional abilities. Additionally, this research incorporates culturally relevant materials and explicit role assignments within discussion groups, which have been rarely included in earlier studies. Methodologically, the present study enhances rigor through random assignment of participants, validated instruments, and structured observations, overcoming limitations found in previous research that often lacked such robustness. While prior work has confirmed positive outcomes of SGD among younger learners, this study distinguishes itself by targeting more mature students engaged with complex narrative texts, thereby expanding our understanding of SGD's effectiveness across different educational contexts.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating the effectiveness of small group discussion in improving reading comprehension of narrative texts among 10th-grade students at SMAN 4 Sidoarjo. Employing a quasi-experimental design with control and experimental groups, this research compares the outcomes of students taught using SGD with those taught through traditional methods. The study utilizes validated pre-tests, post-tests, and structured

observation checklists to assess both cognitive gains and engagement levels. By focusing on a critical stage of cognitive development and employing robust methodological controls, this research aims to provide new insights into how collaborative learning strategies can be tailored to the Indonesian high school context.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on 10th graders—a group transitioning to higher-order thinking and more complex texts—and its use of rigorous quantitative methods to isolate the effects of SGD on narrative text comprehension. Furthermore, the study explicitly considers cultural and contextual factors that may influence the effectiveness of collaborative strategies in Indonesian classrooms. By filling a notable gap in the literature, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on innovative instructional practices and offers practical implications for educators seeking to enhance reading comprehension through collaborative learning.

METHODS

The research employed a quantitative quasi-experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of small group discussion (SGD) in enhancing reading comprehension among 10th-grade students in narrative texts. The study was conducted at SMAN 4 Sidoarjo and involved a total population of 71 students from two 10th-grade classes. Participants were randomly assigned to either an experimental group (36 students) that received instruction through small group discussions or a control group (35 students) that was taught using traditional methods. Both groups were comparable in terms of reading ability and motivation, as confirmed by their midterm test scores and teacher assessments.

In this study, the experimental group taught using small group discussion method, while the control group was taught using traditional instructional methods characterized by teacher-centered approaches. These methods primarily involved direct lectures, where the teacher explained narrative text elements such as plot, characters, and themes to the whole class. Students listened passively, took notes, and completed individual exercises with minimal peer interaction or collaborative activities. This conventional approach emphasizes memorization and passive reception of knowledge rather than active engagement or dialogue among students. Contrastingly, the experimental group engaged in Small Group Discussions (SGD), which promote collaborative meaning-making and critical analysis through structured peer interaction. Defining the traditional method clearly highlights the differential

instructional strategies used to evaluate the impact of SGD on students' reading comprehension.

Data collection was carried out over a series of instructional sessions within a single academic period. The primary data collection instruments included pre-tests and post-tests, each consisting of 10 multiple-choice questions targeting key elements of narrative text comprehension, such as social function, structure, language features, main ideas, and character analysis. These tests were administered before and after the intervention to establish baseline and post-treatment comprehension levels. Additionally, an observation checklist was used to systematically record student engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking during small group discussions. The checklist was rated on a 5-point Likert scale and completed by a trained observer familiar with the instructional strategies.

To ensure the validity of the data collection instruments, content and format were reviewed by educational experts specializing in reading comprehension and assessment. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a resulting value of 0.698, indicating moderate internal consistency. The data analysis process involved descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation) to summarize test scores, followed by normality testing using the Shapiro-Wilk test and homogeneity testing with Levene's Test. The main statistical analyses included independent t-tests to compare post-test scores between the experimental and control groups, and paired sample t-tests to assess pre- and post-test differences within the experimental group. Observation checklist scores were also analysed using independent t-tests to determine differences in engagement and collaboration between groups.

The study's procedures and instruments were designed to allow for reproducibility, with clear documentation of participant selection, group assignment, intervention implementation, and statistical analysis. The research was conducted entirely within the school's regular instructional schedule, and all data were collected in real classroom settings to ensure ecological validity. The validity of the findings was further supported by expert review of instruments and objective, structured observation methods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated the effectiveness of small group discussion (SGD) in improving the reading comprehension of 10th-grade students in narrative texts compared to traditional teaching methods. The research question—how effective is SGD in increasing students' reading comprehension relative to conventional instruction—was addressed through a quasi-

experimental design with pre-test and post-test measures, as well as observation checklists to assess engagement and collaboration.

The quantitative analysis revealed significant improvements in reading comprehension among students taught using SGD. The experimental group, which participated in small group discussions, achieved a mean post-test score of 92.50, while the control group, taught through traditional methods, scored 80.88. The difference of 11.62 points was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), as confirmed by an independent t-test. Within the experimental group, the mean score increased from 73.06 (pre-test) to 92.50 (post-test), indicating a substantial gain of 19.44 points. This improvement was also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), as shown by the paired sample t-test.

Observation checklist data further supported these findings. The experimental group received a mean engagement score of 4.78 (out of 5), compared to 3.33 in the control group, with the difference again statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that SGD not only enhanced cognitive outcomes but also fostered higher levels of student engagement and collaboration.

Table 1
Post-Test Scores Comparison

Group	N	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Experimental	36	92.50	10.52	1.75
Control	34	80.88	11.11	1.91

Table 2
Observation Checklist Score

Group	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Experimental	4.78	0.43	0.10
Control	3.33	1.03	0.24

The results demonstrate that SGD is significantly more effective than traditional instruction for enhancing reading comprehension of narrative texts among 10th graders. The marked improvement in post-test scores and engagement levels in the experimental group aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which posits that learning is optimized through collaborative interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The findings confirm that peer-supported learning environments foster deeper understanding and critical thinking, echoing similar outcomes reported in both international and Indonesian contexts.

The positive impact of SGD on both cognitive and socio-emotional aspects of learning is consistent with prior research. For instance, Kamps et al. (2012) and Gasser et al. (2025) found that small group interventions enhance reading comprehension and interaction quality in diverse educational settings. Indonesian studies by Arisman & Haryanti (2019) and Nasuha Daema, Burhanuddin Yasin (2024) also reported that SGD leads to higher reading achievement and engagement compared to conventional methods.

This study extends previous work by focusing specifically on 10th-grade students, a group at a critical stage of cognitive and socio-emotional development. The robust methodological approach—including random assignment, validated instruments, and objective observation—strengthens the reliability of the findings and addresses gaps in earlier studies, which often lacked rigorous design or focused on younger students.

The present findings reinforce and extend established theories of collaborative learning. The observed gains in reading comprehension support the assertion that SGD provides scaffolding opportunities, enabling students to bridge gaps in understanding through peer interaction. The results also suggest that structured group roles and targeted discussion prompts can mitigate challenges such as unequal participation or off-task behaviour, as highlighted by Pollock et al. (2011).

Moreover, the study confirms that SGD is particularly effective in contexts where students face challenges with vocabulary, text structure, or motivation. The higher consistency and performance in the experimental group indicate that SGD may help reduce achievement gaps, supporting the notion that collaborative strategies can promote equity in learning outcomes.

The research offers new insights by demonstrating that SGD is not only effective for younger or primary-level students but also for high school learners dealing with more complex narrative texts. The findings suggest that integrating culturally relevant materials and providing explicit roles within groups enhance the effectiveness of SGD.

In light of these results, educators are encouraged to adopt SGD as a core instructional strategy for reading comprehension, especially in narrative text contexts. Future research should explore the long-term effects of SGD, its applicability to other text genres, and its impact across diverse educational settings.

In direct response to the research question, the study concludes that small group discussion is significantly more effective than traditional teaching methods for

improving reading comprehension in 10th-grade students. The findings are robust, statistically significant, and supported by both cognitive and engagement measures. These results confirm and extend existing theories of collaborative learning, offering practical and theoretical contributions to the field of English language education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, this study concludes that small group discussion (SGD) is significantly effective in improving the reading comprehension of 10th-grade students in narrative texts at SMAN 4 Sidoarjo. The research objective—to determine the effectiveness of SGD compared to traditional teaching methods—was clearly achieved, as evidenced by the higher post-test scores and increased engagement observed in the experimental group. Students who participated in SGD not only demonstrated better understanding of narrative texts but also showed more active involvement and collaboration during the learning process. These findings reinforce the value of collaborative learning strategies, supporting Vygotsky's social constructivist theory and aligning with previous research that highlights the benefits of peer-supported instruction (Kamps et al., 2012; Gasser et al., 2025; Arisman & Haryanti, 2019).

The essence of this research is the empirical confirmation that SGD can bridge gaps in students' reading comprehension, particularly in contexts where traditional, teacher-centered methods have proven less effective. The study also offers new insights by demonstrating the applicability of SGD at the high school level, where students are expected to engage with more complex texts and higher-order thinking. This supports the development of a more student-centered, interactive classroom environment, which is essential for fostering both cognitive and socio-emotional growth.

However, this study has several limitations. The sample was limited to two classes from a single school, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The duration of the intervention was also relatively short, and the study focused exclusively on narrative texts, leaving the effectiveness of SGD for other genres unexplored. Additionally, factors such as group dynamics, student motivation, and teacher facilitation skills may have influenced the outcomes but were not examined in depth.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to involve a larger and more diverse sample across multiple schools and regions to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal studies could be

conducted to assess the sustained impact of SGD on reading comprehension over time. Further research should also explore the effectiveness of SGD in different text genres and investigate the role of group composition, teacher training, and classroom culture in optimizing collaborative learning outcomes. Practically, it is suggested that educators receive professional development in implementing SGD and that curriculum designers consider integrating structured group activities into reading instruction to maximize student engagement and achievement.

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