

Improving Students' Ability to Communicate Interpersonally in English Classroom Discussions through Group Dynamics Implementation

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of group dynamics to students to improve their interpersonal communication skill in doing classroom discussions in English lesson. Using proportional random sampling technique, researchers selected 35 of the 2nd grade students of Odessa Secondary School No. 121. The type of this quantitative research is a pre-experimental research with pre-test post-test one group design model. The experiment was carried out in one group without a comparison group. Based on the research findings and discussion, the application of group dynamics to students was known to be effective in improving their interpersonal communication skill in conducting classroom discussions, especially in English lesson. With the implementation of group dynamics, all students confidently expressed their opinions in class discussions. The application of group dynamics also allowed students to appreciate the opinions expressed by others, and ultimately trained the students' ability to find problem-solving solutions.

Keywords

classroom discussion, group dynamics, interpersonal communication

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INTRODUCTION

Group life is a basic human trait. Humans are social creatures who need other people around them. In group life, humans make communities as a binder to one another, so that it forms certain community groups. However, what needs to be understood is that in a group one must let go of personal attitudes and must be more inclined to follow the nature of the group (Agazarian & Peters, 2018; Chupp et al., 2017; Keblusek, Giles, & Maass, 2017). Therefore, when something happens in the group then all group members must feel the same as the others.

In a school environment with a large number of students and different backgrounds, problems related to interpersonal communication often arise, for example misunderstandings due to inappropriate ways of communicating (Espinoza et al., 2017; Hejazi, Babakhani, & Sadat, 2018; Lu, 2019). In line with that, Kuo, Huang, Sun, and Lin (2019) stated that in some cases, a clash can also be caused by the low ability of students to communicate during discussions. Sharp differences of opinion in a discussion sometimes lead to unhealthy forms of communication resulting in disputes. These disputes are sometimes carried outside the classroom. According to Mwidege and Tangi (2021) cases like these are often found in several schools. This is also known from the results of interviews with several teachers from several schools.

Through group dynamics, every group member is expected to be able consistently as an individual to develop personality in interacting with others. Personal development and group interests must be mutually supportive. Every individual is expected to be able to realize full personal competence but must always remember the interests of the group (Benes & Alperin, 2021; Kalogeropoulos & Hopmann, 2019).

In this case, guidance on communicating and using language should be a means to develop attitudes, skills, self-confidence, and social courage, but still have tolerance (Berkovich & Eyal, 2018; Stutzer, 2019; Talmon, 2017). With group dynamics, students who experience interpersonal communication problems in discussion are expected to become individuals who understand the importance of class discussion in lessons, the importance of working together in groups, and the importance of mutual understanding, so as to create a comfortable and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

From the explanation above, the researchers explore more about this problem. The problem formulation of the present research is how to apply group dynamics to students in English learning to improve students' interpersonal communication skill in classroom discussion activities. Next, the researchers investigate in depth whether the application of group dynamics to students has a significant effect on students' ability to communicate interpersonally in classroom discussion activities, especially in English lesson.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Group Dynamics

Forsyth (2018) stated that grouping have been a human instinct since birth, because humans are social creatures who cannot live without the help of others. That

opinion was supported by a research conducted by Mohanty and Mohanty (2018) that found that group life will form a deeper socialization process in humans as the subject. In a group, each group member is in a comprehensive interaction so that group dynamics occur.

Several concepts of group dynamics have been described by educational experts. The application of group dynamics in the learning process has also been investigated by several researchers in the field of education. From Kreeger (2019), group dynamics is a concept that describes a group process that is always moving, developing, and able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Group dynamics are closely related to mentoring activities. A research conducted by Dhanjal-Adams et al. (2018) found that group dynamics are forces that interact in groups when groups carry out activities to achieve their goals. In line with that, Prayitno stated that a good group is a group characterized by high enthusiasm, solid cooperation, and mutual trust among all members. That is the true meaning of group dynamics.

Group dynamics is a synergy of all the factors that exist in a group. Every activity carried out by group members is the simultaneous mobilization of all the factors that can be moved within the group. Thus, group dynamics is the soul that enlivens and motivates in a group (Samendinger et al., 2019; Weinberg, 2020).

Based on the research conducted by Hashemzadeh, Javadi, and Darvishi (2020) a group dynamics model is applied by combining several techniques such as games, group discussions, observation, giving feedback on group processes, and group decision making. These techniques are widely used in training groups for developing interpersonal communication skills. From this process, each individual's language skills can be developed.

According to Taves (2020), a good relationship between group members will be realized if the members treat each other like friends in the truest sense. If all members can understand and accept positively the goals of the group, are loyal to the group, are willing to work hard for the group, then interpersonal relationships between them will run well. The various positive qualities that exist in the group move actively to encourage group life. The forces that drive group life are known as group dynamics.

Interpersonal Communication

Espinoza et al. (2017) suggested through their research that communication is the process of transferring understanding in the form of ideas or information from one person to another. The transfer of ideas and information involves not only the words used in conversation, but also facial expressions, intonation, and vocal continuity. Wiryanto stated that interpersonal/interpersonal communication is communication that takes place in a face-to-face situation between two or more people, either in an organized manner or in a crowd of people.

Another research by Hatfield (2018) elaborated that interpersonal communication is a two-way interaction from person to person, carried out verbally and non-verbally. In line with that, research conducted by Cox, Malone, and Winke (2018) found that

interpersonal communication is intertwined by sharing information and feelings between individuals with other individuals. The research suggests that interpersonal communication between two people is communication from one person to another, a two-way verbal and nonverbal interaction involving the sharing of information and feelings. And the main characteristic of interpersonal communication is that each member is aware of the existence of other members, has the same interests, and works together for a purpose.

According to research conducted by Loreto (2020), some of the benefits generated by interpersonal communication in relation to language skills are as follows:

- Interpersonal communication helps the intellectual and social development of each individual.
- Interpersonal communication strengthens student identity through communication skills with others.
- Interpersonal communication makes it easy for students to understand the reality around them, test the truth of their understanding of the natural environment, and compare it with the understanding of others.
- Interpersonal communication determines the quality of students' mental health.

A person's circle of communication becomes wider as the individual ages. Along with that, the intellectual and social development of individuals is also determined by the quality of communication with other people around. Consciously or unconsciously, individuals pay attention and remember all responses from other people. By communicating with others, individuals can find their true self. Interpersonal communication develops individuals from the social dimension (Al-Obaydi, Doncheva, & Nashruddin, 2021).

Socializing with other people indirectly shows the uniqueness of yourself, so that person finds it easier to find their identity. Lopez (2021) proposed that mental health conditions are also influenced by the quality of interpersonal communication with other people. Therefore, interpersonal communication is very important for the lives of individuals who live in the midst of a social environment.

Anca (2021) found that interpersonal communication is communication made to other parties to get feedback, either directly (face to face) or indirectly (through media). Based on this definition, the type of group communication is divided into virtual group communication and real group communication. An example of virtual group communication is a communication established through internet media, such as facebook chatting, email, and others. Examples of real group communication are conversations between two people in one place, discussions in class, and so on.

Another research by Perryman, Sandefur, and Morris (2021) on interpersonal communication reveals the communication process that is arranged on social objects to determine the meaning of a stimulus. Therefore, the researchers proposed the functions of interpersonal communication as follows.

1. To get a response or feedback

This is a sign of the effectiveness of the communication process. If there is no feedback, then the communication will not run smoothly. It is the same when someone sends a message via SMS or WhatsApp to another person but the person who sent the message does not reply.

2. To anticipate after evaluating the response or feedback
After someone says something to the interlocutor, the person wants to know how the speech partner responds.
3. To control the social environment
A person can modify the behavior of others by means of persuasion.

RESEARCH METHOD

The location of this research was in Odessa Secondary School No. 121. The type of this quantitative research was pre-experimental research with pre-test post-test one group design model namely the experiment was carried out in one group without a comparison group. There are two variables in this study, namely x variable (group dynamics), and y variable (interpersonal communication in discussions). The research design is described as follows.



Note:

- O1 = The first measurement of research subjects before the treatment
- X = Treatment of the research subject
- O2 = The first measurement of research subjects after the treatment

To prevent misinterpretation and to limit the scope of the research, an operational definition of research is made as follows:

1. Group dynamics are activities carried out in groups that can stimulate the activity of members in the group.
2. Interpersonal communication in discussions is a form of face-to-face communication carried out in student discussion activities.

The population in this study were all students in the 2nd grade in Odessa Secondary School, namely 354 students. As the sample of this study were 35 students. To collect data, the researchers applied test, observation, and interview. The data analysis technique used by the researcher was descriptive statistical analysis.

To calculate the average variable score, the formula used is:

$$Me = \frac{\sum Xi}{N}$$

Note:

- Me : Mean
- Xi : Score of X from i to n
- N : Number of subject

To get an idea of the relationship between students' interpersonal communication skill in discussions before the treatment and after the treatment, frequency and percentage distribution table was made using the percentage formula, namely:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

Note:

P : Percentage

f : Frequency

N : Number of subject (sample)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following are the results of research conducted at Odessa Secondary School No. 121 to describe the application of group dynamics and students' interpersonal communication skill in conducting class discussions. Students' understanding of group dynamics and interpersonal communication is presented in the following table regarding the frequency distribution which is classified into 5 categories, namely very high, high, moderate, low, and very low.

Table. Students' understanding of the application of group dynamics and interpersonal communication skill in discussions

Interval	Category	Pretest		Posttest	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
120 - 134	very high	0	0%	2	6%
105 - 119	high	0	0%	17	49%
91 - 104	moderate	5	14%	15	43%
76 - 90	low	16	46%	0	0%
62 - 75	very low	14	40%	1	3%
Number		35	100%	35	100%

The table shows that before the treatment, students' understanding of the application of group dynamics and the interpersonal communication skill in classroom discussions in Odessa Secondary School No. 121, none are in the very high category and the high category, 5 students are in the medium category, 16 students are in the low category, and 14 students are in the very low category. This indicates that students' understanding of the application of group dynamics to improve the interpersonal communication skill in class discussions is in the low category.

After being given treatment for 4 group dynamics meetings, it is seen that students as research subjects experienced an increase. This can be seen from the data presented in the table. Two students whose understanding is in the very high category, 17 students are in the high category, 15 students are in the moderate category, there are no students who are in the low category, and 1 student is in the very low category. This indicates that after the treatment, students' understanding of the application of group dynamics to improve the interpersonal communication skill in class discussions is in the low high.

The researchers observed the process of the treatment given to the research subjects. The activities carried out during the treatment are described in the following.

1. Beginning stage

Researchers and English teachers started this activity by building a rapport. The activity of building a rapport here is carried out by introducing the researcher to the students. In addition, students are given an explanation of the purpose of this activity. This is so that students are not confused. Then the researcher explained to the students the rules they needed to know in implementing the group dynamics of interpersonal communication skill in discussions. Next, the researchers gave a questionnaire to the students to fill out.

2. Implementation stage

a) Meeting I

- Students gather by sitting in a circle, each student tells the problem he is experiencing.
- The teacher asks students to discuss with each other about the common problems that occur
- The teacher asks students to be more open to the main issues discussed.

b) Meeting II

- The teacher forms a discussion group.
- Students distribute problems to each group then each group writes answers on the prepared manila cardboard
- All group members give answers, and the answers are pasted on the cardboard that has been prepared on the blackboard
- All group members are active in discussions
- Each teacher gives a signal, then one person from each group runs a race to paste the answer on the manila cardboard
- The teacher ended the session by asking for reflection from each group

c) Meeting III

- The teacher created a new group
- Every group leader was called to the front and given a message by the teacher, given 2 minutes to memorize the message
- Every group leader called his members and whispered the message, and so on until the chain message reached the last group member and then the last group member wrote the message on the blackboard
- The teacher ended the session with reflection from group members

d) Meeting IV

- The teacher asks the client's opinion about what has been done so far.
- The teacher asks students to improve their communication skills in groups
- The teacher thanked him, and distributed the questionnaire

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that understanding the application of group dynamics significantly improves students' ability to communicate interpersonally in classroom discussions. This can be seen from the data before treatment where students' understanding was in the low category, while after the treatment was given, the understanding of the application of group dynamics to increase students' ability to communicate interpersonally in discussions was in the high category.

Furthermore, based on the research findings and discussion, it can be seen that there is a significant influence in the implementation of group dynamics on students' ability to communicate interpersonally in classroom discussion activities, especially in English lesson at Odessa Secondary School No. 121. Hence, this research can be used as a study material for the development and implementation of group dynamics to students in learning activities. In addition, this research is expected to be a reference for researchers in conducting relevant study.

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