

LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS IN THE THIRD SEMESTER OF ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

Collaborative learning remains to be a range that is progressively getting consideration in academic fields. As it has many advantages to individual student learning. One of collaborative learning methods is small group discussion. Furthermore, this study was aimed at describing the result of students' evaluation of the learning experiences in a small group discussion in the third semester of English education students in UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek (SMDD) Bukittinggi based on the Students Experience Questionnaire (SEQ). This study is categorized as a quantitative study. This descriptive quantitative research collected data by distributing a questionnaire to the third-semester students. The issues addressed are students' learning experiences in doing a small group discussion. Based on the data analysis, the result showed that the third-semester students had a good learning experience in all aspects; in the good teaching scale, understanding of learning, assessment, appropriate workload, the skills of affective and psychomotor, motivation, and satisfaction with the module used during the learning process through the small group discussion. However, the teachers still need to improve their ability in managing small group discussions.

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INTRODUCTION

Learning activities provide students with an essential learning experience that can improve their learning achievement. It is defined that learning experiences become a series of processes and events that acted by students in certain discussions to elicit educational knowledge and achieve learning objectives (Sari & Muhartono, 2018; Sofa et al., 2021; Anmigan et al., 2021; Darmawan, 2021; Fazey et al., 2005; González-Ceballos et al., 2021; Hassanien, 2006; Khushnoor et al., 2018; Miller et al., 2011; Syaharuddin et al., 2021). The learning experience can influence students' competence and achievement (Aryanty et al., 2013) because the students will apply their learning experience to face the test. Since shifting the learning method into student-centered, the curriculum is arranged to encourage students to be more active participants. The teachers need to plan various activities to support students' activeness. They also have to boost student-centered learning by giving students space to share ideas and decisions, trusting in their capability to lead, and remembering the impression of the exciting learning experience.

Applying a student-centered in the classroom means including students to plan, implement and assess their teaching and learning (Irawan et al., 2022; Kazemian at al., 2021) because involving them in this decision can activate them in learning, and it creates a good thing. Putting them as the core of their learning need collaboration among fellow students. Teachers must have bright ideas about students' learning experiences to be conducted (Haerazi & Kazemian, 2021). Learning activities enable students actively involved in the

learning process. In this case, a learning experience is a series of activities done by learners to elicit information and attain a learning goal. It is very crucial, thus it can't be separated from the learning process.

Meaningful learning experiences are vital for improving student learning achievement (Sari & Muhartono, 2018; School, 2019). In another word, experiencing learning through some activities is expected so that students can gain information and competencies prescribed by teachers. Of course, it is a student-centered learning activity. The third-semester students of the English department at UIN SMDD Bukittinggi experience collaborative learning activity in form of small-group learning discussions.

Collaborative learning is still to be a range that is progressively getting consideration in academic fields, as it has many advantages (Laal & Ghodsi, 2012; Scager et al., 2016). Meanwhile, small group discussion, as part of collaborative learning, is a common method used in higher education which provides much opportunity for students to be active since the students will act and talk more than lecturers. Moreover, they also interact with fellow students (Ningsih, 2018). Small group discussion is a social interaction between two or more students who give and take information, deliver ideas, and overcomes problems (Agustina et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2014; Christiani & Mintohari, 2014; Ertmer, 2006; Ningsi et al., 2021; Ningsih, 2018; Saputri, 2017; School, 2019; Sulistyowati, 2017). It means in this discussion there will be interaction among fellow students and also students with lecturers. There will be four skills involved in this small group discussion, namely; cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and cooperative (Sulistyowati, 2017). Furthermore, it can be concluded that enjoying the learning experience through small group discussion enable students to master the four domains.

It needs an instrument to enhance and improve the quality of learning activities through small group discussions. The instrument is known as SEQ (Student Experience Questionnaire). It was developed from the research conducted by Tucker et al., (2008) called CEQ or Course Experience Questionnaire. It is to measure the learning experience in general. CEQ is an Australian university survey utilized to know the graduate's point of view and their satisfaction following their course. The finding would show information indicating which part has improved in satisfaction and what part must be increased. However, both CEQ and SEQ are used to examine students' insight and satisfaction with the process of learning.

The present research developed a pedagogical method to measure students' experience. The instruments of SEQ elaborated 20 items which were established by NCAAA (National Commission of Assessment and Academic Accreditation) of Saudi. The SEQ instrument consisted of three subpoints of Advice and Support (AS), Learning Resources and Facilities (LR&F), and Learning and Teaching (LT) and was completed with Overall Evaluation (OE) (Khushnoor et al., 2018). Those indicators can be broken down into seven points to measure the quality of collaborative learning in form of small-group discussions conducted at the English department of third-semester students for the tertiary level. The result can be the basis for improvement in conducting small-group discussions.

Measuring Students' Learning Experience

Sari & Muhartono (2018) claimed that to measure students' perceptions and learning experience, the study can use the Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ). This kind of assessment is in form of a questionnaire to measure students' learning experience which is done at the end of the learning process. This questionnaire consists of seven indicators which were developed from NCAAA of Saudi (Khushnoor et al., 2018): Good Teaching (instructor), Clear Outcomes (understanding about learning), Appropriate Assessment (assessment of learning outcomes), Appropriate Workload, Generic Skills (psychomotor & affective ability), Motivation, and Satisfaction with the Module (learning satisfaction).

The first indicator is to examine students' perception of teaching standards, for instance, the teacher's responsiveness, enthusiasm, attention, intellectual capacity toward students' problems, and teaching skill. Meanwhile, the second indicator is to measure students' perceptions of the teacher's clarity in academic communicative skills. The next indicator is the assessment of learning outcomes which measures students' perception of the extent to which the test emphasizes the ability to remember information compared with supplementary intellectual skills. Then, the questionnaire about applicable workload is to know students' perceptions about the appropriateness of students' workload. On the other side, generic skills or psychomotor & affective ability to elicit information about whether students' problem skills, communication skills, planning, and team working skill are improved. The sixth indicator is motivation, and last but not least is students' satisfaction with the module used in the learning process.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study was descriptive quantitative research aimed at describing the result of investigating how the learning experience in small group discussions at third-semester students of English education in UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, Indonesia. The sample included 31 students. The instrument was a questionnaire called the Students Experience Questionnaire (Good Teaching, Clear Outcomes, Appropriate Assessment, Appropriate Workload, Generic Skills, Motivation, and Satisfaction with the Module). It consisted of 24-item statements which were used to have students respond to the learning experience in conducting a small-group discussion. Three experts claimed that the instrument was valid and reliable (content validity) after analyzing it with the Aiken index.

To elicit the data, the questionnaire was distributed to one class in the third semester (31 students) of the English department. The students feel free to give respond about their feeling during the lecture with small-group discussion. They acted in some kinds of small-group discussions in the third semester: presentation, role play, simulation, and jigsaw.

Data Analysis

Students' responses to the questionnaire were analyzed based on the theory of Sugiyono (2013). There were five scores used; very good, good, good enough, bad, and very bad. And the result of the analysis would be very good if the mean ranged between 81 and 100. 61-80 was good, 41-60 was good enough, 21-40 was bad, and the last was 0-20 was very bad. Then continued by concluding the result.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The SEQ results of the third-semester students in small group discussion

Indicator of Good Teaching of English Instructors

The questionnaire for this indicator consists of six statements. It is about good teaching related to teaching standards, for instance, the teacher's responsiveness, enthusiasm, attention, intellectual capacity toward students' problems, and teaching skill. All of these issues are included as the contents of the questionnaire of distributing for students and instructors in English language teaching at third semester students. The following table explores the result of the first indicator.

Table 1
Students' Learning Experience on Instructors' Aspect

No	Statements	Scale	F	Perce ntage	X	f.x	M= $\Sigma f.x/N$
1	The lecturer motivates students to conduct small discussions well	Very good	11	35.5	5	55	123/155
		Good	10	32.2	4	40	
		Good enough	8	25.8	3	24	
		Bad	2	6.5	2	4	
		Very bad	0	0	1	0	
	Total					123	79,3
2	The lecturer comments on small discussions if there is a difference in comprehension among students	Very good	12	38.7	5	60	113/155
		Good	6	19.4	4	24	
		Good enough	6	19.4	3	18	
		Bad	4	12.9	2	8	
		Very bad	3	9.6	1	3	
	Total					113	72,9
3	The lecturer explains to clearance the difficulty faced by a small group	Very good	14	45.2	5	70	129/155
		Good	9	29	4	36	
		Good enough	7	22.6	3	21	
		Bad	1	3.2	2	2	
		Very bad	0	0	1	0	
	Total					129	83,2
4	The lecturer gives respond to small group discussion	Very good	11	35.5	5	55	119/155
		Good	8	25.8	4	32	
		Good enough	9	29	3	27	
		Bad	2	6.4	2	4	
		Very bad	1	3.2	1	1	
	Total					119	76,7
5	There is a prior explanation before the small group discussion conducted	Very good	13	41.9	5	65	120/155
		Good	11	35	4	44	
		Good enough	3	9.6	3	9	
		Bad	2	6.4	2	4	
		Very bad	2	6.4	1	2	
	Total					120	77,4
6	The lecturer has a high motivation to create an interesting small-group discussion	Very good	9	29	5	45	112/155
		Good	5	16.2	4	20	
		Good enough	13	41.9	3	39	
		Bad	4	12.9	2	8	
		Very bad	0	0	1	0	
	Totality					112	72,2
	Amount						76,9

The mean score for the first indicator was 76,9. It was in a good position. From the six statements distributed, the statement “teacher explains the clearance of the difficulty faced by a small group (attention)” got the highest score 83,2. On contrary, the statement “The lecturer has a high motivation to create an interesting small-group discussion (teaching skill)” stayed at the lowest with 72,2 points.

Understanding on learning

The second indicator was about an understanding of learning measures students' perceptions of teacher's clarity in academic communicative skill which involved four statements. The students' perception is described in Table 2.

Table 2
Students' learning experience about understanding on learning aspect

No	Statement	Option	F	Percentage	X	f.x	M= $\Sigma f.x/N$
7	I do understand what I am going to do in the small group discussion	Very good	9	29	5	45	111/155
		Good	6	19.4	4	24	
		Good enough	12	38,7	3	36	
		Bad	2	3.2	2	4	
		Very bad	2	3.2	1	2	
TOTAL						111	71,6
8	I can comprehend the material easily through learning in small group discussion	Very good	12	38.7	5	60	124/155
		Good	10	32.2	4	40	
		Good enough	7	22.6	3	21	
		Bad	1	3.2	2	2	
		Very bad	1	3.2	1	1	
TOTAL						124	80
9	I often get difficulty studying through the small group discussion method	Very good	7	22.6	1	7	88/155
		Good	5	16.1	2	10	
		Good enough	6	19.4	3	18	
		Bad	2	6.4	4	8	
		Very bad	11	35.5	5	55	
TOTAL						98	63,2
10	The lecturer explains about learning objective before the lesson begins	Very good	15	48.3	5	75	125/155
		Good	8	25.8	4	32	
		Good enough	4	12.9	3	12	
		Bad	2	6.4	2	4	
		Very bad	2	6.5	1	2	
TOTALITY						125	80,7
AMOUNT							73,9

The mean score for the second indicator was 73,9. It was also in a good position. From the four statements spread, the statement “The lecturer explains about learning objective before the lesson begins” got the highest score 80,7. On contrary, the students still get difficulty studying through the small group discussion method.

Assessment of learning outcomes

The assessment of learning outcomes is aimed at measuring students' perception of the extent to which the test emphasizes the ability to remember information compared with supplementary intellectual skills. The result is in following table 3:

Table 3
Learning Experience of Students on Appropriate Assessment Aspects

No	Statement	Option	F	Percentage	X	f.x	M= $\Sigma f.x/N$
11	It needs a good comprehension in conducting small group discussion	Very good	11	35.5	5	55	107/155
		Good	4	12.9	4	16	
		Good enough	7	22.6	3	21	
		Bad	6	6.4	2	12	
		Very bad	3	9.7	1	3	
Total						107	69,3
12	The lecturer assess me on what I understood	Very good	7	22.6	5	35	100/155
		Good	5	16.1	4	20	

No	Statement	Option	F	Percentage	X	f.x	$M = \frac{\sum f.x}{N}$
	about the topic I presented in the small group discussion	Good enough	11	35.5	3	33	
		Bad	4	12.9	2	8	
		Very bad	4	12.9	1	4	
Total						100	65,5
Amount							67,4

The mean score for the third indicator was 67,4. It was also in a good position. But this score is also close to the lowest point in good criteria (61-80).

Workload appropriateness

The questionnaire about applicable workload is to know students' perceptions about the appropriateness of students' workload. Four statements had been distributed to students and the result is explored in Table 4 as follows.

Table 4
Learning Experience of Students on Workload Appropriateness Aspects

No	Statement	Option	F	Percentage	X	f.x	$M = \frac{\sum f.x}{N}$
13	I find difficulty studying through small group discussion	Very good	9	29	1	9	76/155
		Good	5	16.1	2	10	
		Good enough	13	41.9	3	39	
		Bad	2	6.4	4	8	
		Very bad	2	6.4	5	10	
Total						76	49
14	I need sufficient time to be able to comprehend the lesson when implementing the small group discussion method	Very good	5	16.1	5	25	95/155
		Good	8	25.8	4	32	
		Good enough	9	29	3	27	
		Bad	2	6.4	2	4	
		Very bad	7	22.6	1	7	
Total						95	61,2
15	There are some obstacles I feel in conducting small group discussion	Very good	7	22.6	1	7	106/155
		Good	2	6.4	2	4	
		Good enough	7	22.6	3	31	
		Bad	11	35.5	4	44	
		Very bad	4	12.9	5	20	
Total						106	68,4
16	I feel bored so often since many activities should be done in small group discussion	Very good	7	22.6	1	7	92/155
		Good	2	6.4	2	4	
		Good enough	11	35.5	3	33	
		Bad	7	22.6	4	28	
		Very bad	4	12.9	5	20	
Total						92	59,4
SUM							59,5

The mean score for the fourth indicator was 59,5. It was also in good enough classification. From the four statements spread, the statement "I find difficulty studying through small group discussion" got the lowest score 49. It means the students admitted they still get difficulty studying through the small group discussion method.

Psychomotor & affective ability

Psychomotor & affective ability or generic skills are to elicit information about whether students' problem skills, communication skills, planning, and team working skill are improved. The following table 5 explores concern on generic skill which consisted of six statements.

Table 5
Students' Learning Experience on the Generic Skill Aspects

No	Statement	Option	F	Percentage	X	f.x	M= $\frac{\sum f \cdot x}{N}$
17	Conducting learning with small group discussions can develop my problem-solving skill	Very good	17	54.8	5	85	131/155
		Good	8	25.8	4	32	
		Good enough	3	9.6	3	9	
		Bad	2	6.4	2	4	
		Very bad	1	3.2	1	1	
Total						131	84,5
18	The lecturer will comment on students' ideas and differences	Very good	9	29	5	45	123/155
		Good	15	48.4	4	60	
		Good enough	4	12.9	3	12	
		Bad	3	9.6	2	6	
		Very bad	0	0	1	0	
Total						123	79,3
19	Studying through group discussion can develop my collaborative skill	Very good	17	54.8	5	85	127/155
		Good	5	16.1	4	20	
		Good enough	4	12.9	3	12	
		Bad	5	16.1	2	10	
		Very bad	0	0	1	0	
Total						127	81,9
20	Conducting small group discussions enables belief to solve a problem found during the learning process	Very good	18	58.1	5	90	125/155
		Good	5	16.1	4	20	
		Good enough	3	9.6	3	9	
		Bad	1	3.2	2	2	
		Very bad	4	12.9	1	4	
Total						125	80,6
21	Small group discussions increase my skill in oral and written communication	Very good	19	61.3	5	95	137/155
		Good	7	21.9	4	28	
		Good enough	4	9.6	3	12	
		Bad	1	3.2	2	2	
		Very bad	0	0	1	0	
Total						137	88,3
22	Small group discussion helps me to develop my skill in planning my future work	Very good	9	29	5	45	113/155
		Good	8	25.8	4	32	
		Good enough	10	32.2	3	30	
		Bad	2	6.4	2	4	
		Very bad	2	6.4	1	2	
Total						113	72,9
Amount							81,2

The mean score for the fifth indicator was 81,2. It was classified as good. From the six statements spread, the statement “Small group discussions increase my skill in oral and written communication” was the highest score 88,3. And, the statement “The lecturer will comment on students’ ideas and differences” got the lowest point.

Aspect of motivation

The result of students’ perception related to the learning experience on motivation on small group discussion can be gotten as following table 6:

Table 6
Students’ Learning Experience on the Motivation Aspects

No	Statement	Option	F	Percentage	X	f.x	M= $\frac{\sum f.x}{N}$
23	I need motivation from teamwork to grasp lessons during small group discussions employed	Very good	17	54,8%	5	85	131/155
		Good	8	25,8%	4	32	
		Good enough	3	9,6%	3	9	
		Bad	2	6,4%	2	4	
		Very bad	1	3,2%	1	1	
Amount						131	84,5

The mean score for the sixth indicator was 84,5. It was classified as very good.

Aspects on module satisfaction

There was only one statement asked students related to module satisfaction and the result as in table 7 as follows.

Table 7
Students Learning Experience on Module Satisfaction Aspects

No	Statement	Option	F	Percentage	X	f.x	M= $\frac{\sum f.x}{N}$
24	The module can ease me to understand the material being learned in small group discussion	Very good	11	35.5	5	55	131/155
		Good	7	22.6	4	28	
		Good enough	7	22.6	3	21	
		Bad	2	6.4	2	4	
		Very bad	4	12.9	1	4	
Amount						112	72,2

The mean score for the last indicator was 72,2. It was classified as good. This finding showed that the students need the particular module to assist their studying through small group discussions.

Discussion

Conducting collaborative learning and small group discussion provide benefits to the learning process and the students as stated in the research result of Laal & Ghodsi (2012); Padugupati et al., (2017); and School (2019). For instance, it can improve learning, students’ remembrances, and student's performance in the examination. After conducting SEQ, however, the findings of this research also need much attention especially for the lecturers before holding the small group discussion for a third-semester student at the English department of UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, since it has positive and negative

of students' point of view. Even though, the mean score for whole indicators was in good criteria. The followings are the explanation for each indicator used in this research.

The first indicator is Good Teaching. It covers teaching standards, for instance, the teacher's responsiveness, enthusiasm, attention, intellectual capacity toward students' problems, and teaching skill. The mean score was 76,9. It was in good criteria. The statement "teacher explains to clearance the difficulty faced by a small group" got the highest score of 83,2. It means that the lecturer can overcome the obstacles faced by the student in conducting the small group. This finding was in line with School (2019) statement that the lecturer has to give clear information from the start that the class will hold small-group work, and avoid ambiguity about the way small-group work will meet learning objectives. Ertmer (2006) stated that meaningful group discussion might take students to cognitive advantages by engaging them in proper reflections on student ideas. It means by mastering the procedure of conducting small group discussions, the students can be self-confident to exchange ideas, reflect their background knowledge as well as collaborate with new ideas.

The second indicator was about an understanding of learning. It measures students' perceptions of the teacher's clarity in academic communicative skills. The mean score for this second indicator was 73,9. It was also in good criteria. From the four statements spread, the statement "The lecturer explains about learning objective before the lesson begins" got the highest score 80,7. Referring to the first indicator finding is that the lecturer needs to explain clearly how to conduct the small group discussion to achieve the course objective. One of the ways is to explain to the students about the learning objective before the class begins. The objective will guide the students in focusing on the topic. Agnihotri & Ngorosha (2018) explained that in small group discussions, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator who can manage the learning process. Teachers must be able to promote discussion and inspire them to think and share ideas among students through a series of activities. To smooth this activity, the teacher manages the lesson plan including explaining the learning objective before small group discussion begins. On contrary, the students still get difficulty studying through the small group discussion method. It indicated that the teacher has not played the role well. Nevertheless, Lestari (2019) advises the teacher to give a precise and simple explanation about what should do in small group discussions.

The next discussion is about the assessment of learning outcomes. It was aimed at measuring students' perception of the extent to which the test emphasizes the ability to remember information (memory skill) compared with supplementary intellectual skills. The result shows that after experiencing group discussion, the students feel need a good comprehension in conducting small group discussions. Quoted from the Cambridge dictionary, comprehension means students' ability to completely understand and be acquainted with a condition, facts, and so on. To comprehend a thing, students need to have more than a good memory. Since small group discussions can expand students' critical thinking, communication skill, and many other advantages (Agnihotri & Ngorosha, 2018; Lestari, 2019; School, 2019).

The fourth indicator was about applicable workload. It is to know students' perceptions about the appropriateness of their workload. The mean score for the fourth indicator was 59,5. It is in good enough criteria. From the four statements spread, the statement "There are some obstacles I feel in conducting small group discussion" got the highest score, 68,4. It means the students admitted they still get difficulty studying through the small group discussion method. This condition can be a result that the students feeling the workload or the learning activity was too heavy for them and they do not have enough time to comprehend every single of their workload. Since their roles as a manager of small group discussions (Agnihotri & Ngorosha, 2018), the teacher must be able to manage the time effectively to achieve learning objectives and arrange the procedure for each workload efficiently. The important thing lecturer has to

do is to know students' needs on workload and also their ability level (Axmedovna et al., 2019; Iswati & Triastuti, 2021; Rachmawati et al., 2021).

The fifth is about generic skills. Psychomotor & affective skills or generic skills are to elicit information about whether students' problem skills, communication skills, planning, and team working skill are improved. The mean score for the fifth indicator was 81,2. It was classified as good. From the six statements spread, the statement "Small group discussions increase my skill in oral and written communication" was the highest score 88,3. This finding was in line with the research result of Christiani & Mintohari, (2014); Laal & Ghodsi, (2012); Saputri, (2017); Sulistyowati, (2017). It shows us that the students get advantages through holding small group discussions, especially to increase their speaking and writing skills.

The next is students' perception related to the learning experience on motivation in small group discussions. The mean score for the sixth indicator was 84,5. It was classified as very good. The result shows that the students need motivation from teamwork to grasp lessons during small group discussions employed. A small group consists of 5 – 8 students. Each student in the group member must be able to motivate themselves and also motivate fellow students in a group. Fellow students can motivate each other if they can avoid poor communication, poor group meeting attendance, the diversity of grade expectations, obtaining scores without deed the same work, various work principle, lack of formal direction, and culturally dissimilarity methods to work (Hassanien, 2006).

Overall, the students preferred the lecturers who had a high dedication and showed educational activities as their professional role. It means they must be knowledgeable, experienced, well-prepared, and able to motivate students to engage in group discussion (Schiekirka et al., 2012). The last one, we saw in the general data description that the average percentage is 72,2. The percentage described is a good level. It is about the availability of modules. Module becomes a must, to support a successful learning process (Nepal, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion above, it may be summarized that the third-semester students of the English department in UIN SMDD Bukittinggi have good learning experience related to all aspects; of structure or teaching quality, understanding about learning, assessment of learning outcomes, workload, appropriateness, generic skills (psychomotor, affective ability), motivation, and last but not least they have a good learning experience with the module used during learning process through small group discussion. Despite the students' perceptions being good, the teacher needs to improve all items of each indicator, especially the indicator of Good Teaching. The English teacher of UIN SMDD Bukittinggi must master the kind of small group discussion and how to conduct them in English class with the appropriate method for all English language skills.

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