The Benefits and Challenges of Group Discussion in Syntax Project

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Article Info	Abstract
Keywords: Confidence; Communication Skills; Group Discussion; Syntax project;	In the frame of qualitative research, this study aims to know the benefits and challenges of group discussion in Syntax project for students in EFL context in accomplishing Syntax project. The participants of this study consist of 25 students from the students of Syntax class in one of the higher educations in Kendari. The qualitative data were analyzed by questionnaire and students' interview. The results of the research revealed that the students' responded positively to the group discussion activity. It indicated this activity can improve students' confidence and communication skills. Nevertheless, the students found it challenging in terms of the time allocation to finish the project as they cannot manage their time to finish the project well

1. INTRODUCTION

A long line of research underscores the benefits of discussion in learning process, especially group discussion, for achieving desired learning outcomes and student satisfaction Michael Prince, (2004). In the overall, desiderate of classroom instruction, student interaction, problem solving, cooperation, mastery of content are the positive effects of group discussion Hamann et al., (2012) Nicol & Boyle, (2003) and Ellis et al., (2004).

Discussion not only promotes communication skills (Dallimore et al., 2008), but also improves learning (Pollock et al., 2005), including cooperative learning and critical thinking (Garside, 1996). For example, in her comparison of student learning of material taught in lecture and presented in discussion, Garside (1996) reported "significantly more learning with regard to higher level items" is in the discussion mode. Similarly, Lyon & Lagowski, (2008) showed that students participating in discussion groups scored higher on exams and attained higher course grades than those not attending discussion sessions.

In the group discussion, there are many types of individual differences of students. In line with it, with individual differences, there will be many ideas so group discussion can generate more knowledge for students. Learning in a discussion requires the students to discuss a topic (Baskoro, 2018). It makes them connect with other students in learning

together as a team. They mention interpersonal skill as a skill where students connect with other students using emotional engagement as human beings. However, based on the researcher preliminary observation, Syntax class is one of the subjects in the institute which mostly used discussion in learning process. There were students who barely participate in a group discussion and there were students who had more confidence to express their opinion more often and dominate the discussion, while some of them who were less confident stayed silent during the discussion. The reason was that they do not know the importance of active participation in a group discussion. They do not get actively involved in it and it makes it difficult for the students to cooperate and get the benefits of group discussion for their interpersonal skill. Based on the explanation, the researcher wants to explore the benefits of group discussion in syntax project because the researcher wanted to see if group discussion might increase the students' confidence, communication skill, and knowledge of the class project.

Some scholars had previously analyzed this about the benefits of group discussion. A study by Riski and Sucitra (2017) reported that group discussions improve their attitude in communication skill, self-confidence and respect. In addition, Hunkins & Hammill, (1994) mention that group discussions make the students more tolerant in learning diversity. For instance, students in Islamic institute at Kendari came from various places. The students should deal with diversity in order to interact three with other students who come from different backgrounds and build the relationship among students by developing interpersonal skills in their learning. If the students are aware of the benefits of group discussions, they might develop their interpersonal skills, thus would be more willing to participate in group discussions.

However, based on the researcher's preliminary observation, Syntax class is one of the subjects in the institute which mostly used discussion in learning process. There were students who barely participate in a group discussion and there were students who had more confidence to express their opinion more often and dominate the discussion, while some of them who were less confident stayed silent during the discussion. The reason was that they do not know the importance of active participation in a group discussion. They do not get actively involved in it and it makes it difficult for the students to cooperate and get the benefits of group discussion for their interpersonal skill. Based on the explanation, the researcher wants to explore the benefits of group discussion in syntax project because the researcher wanted to see if group discussion might increase the students' confidence, communication skill, and knowledge of the class project.

In this course, students receive comprehensive theoretical background information about syntax project and then they start implementing it in microteaching sessions in teaching English subjects. During the application of syntax, they displayed great abilities and confidence, but they are still uncertain whether or not will be able to apply it in real classroom situation during their teaching practice, and what challenges they might encounter? it has been noticed that just few of them who used syntax project in classrooms. This was the key motive for me to investigate the problem in order to find out the challenges that hinder the application of Syntax project. Therefore, this study aims to the benefits of group discussion and challenges of Syntax project if there are any. It also aims to provide some suggestions based on the findings of the study that might facilitate the implementation of group discussion and Syntax project.

Syntax project should lead students in search of open problem solving, as well as the acquisition of skills, such as problem-solving ability, oral communication, written communication, and teamwork, among others. In such learning environment, the students are able to create their own knowledge, at their own pace. They also develop self-directed learning skills and critical thinking. While developing their projects, the students are also exposed to many aspects of a given process. This brings them closer to real life expectations. Studies show that the acquired and developed skills are aligned with those possessed by more experienced engineers Frank et al., (2003). The findings suggest that professional development may help alleviate some of the perceived challenges teachers face when implementing project-based learning. The study also suggests that 21st Century skills play a valuable role in project-based learning implementations and should be specifically addressed in the development and implementation of project-based learning experiences.

2. METHODS

This research implemented a qualitative approach with descriptive data analysis techni que to know students' response regarding to the Benefits of Group Discussion and Challenge s of Syntax Project. This study utilized by two instruments that is questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was used to find out students' benefits of group discussion while interview was used to scrutinize challenges faced by students during group discussion in accomplishin g syntax project. The instruments were utilized since qualitative data are most often collected by researchers through interviews and questionnaire. However, interviews compared to ques tionnaires are more powerful in eliciting narrative data that allows researchers to investigate p eople's views in greater depth (Kvale, 2004). Questionnaire consists of 12 statements. While,

the interview consists of two questions. The researchers distributed questionnaire and interview through Whatsapp documents and google form periodically. After collecting questionnaire data, the researchers calculated the data, classified and analyzed it. While, the interview was done through code in the interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results from Questionnaire

Group Discussion to Improve Students' Confidence
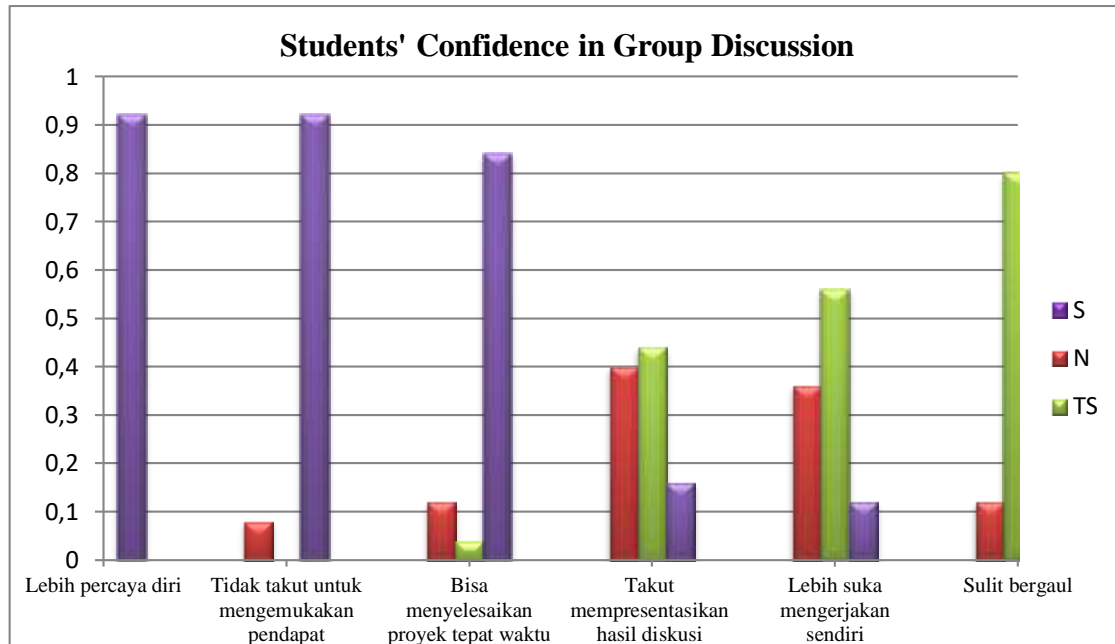
Based on chart above, the results of this study reveal that most of the students agree that Group discussion improve students' confidence (Q1), this can be seen in the response of 92% of students who answered strongly agree with this statement. Moreover, students also agree that the group discussion make students not afraid to express their opinion (Q2), it can be seen from 92% of students who answered strongly agree with this statement. And then from the next statement in confidence category that students can finish the project on time (Q3), there are 84% who answered agree that the statement. Refers to research results and the group discussion above, it can be concluded that the implementation of group discussion in Syntax project can improve the students' confidence. In addition, before giving the project, the lecturer prepared the direction that could help the teaching and learning process during the implementation of group discussion in Syntax project. Besides, the interesting brainstorming and explanation of the topic given were also needed in order to attract the students' attention during the course.

Refers to researchers results and the group discussion above, it can be concluded that the implementation of group discussion in Syntax project can improve the students' confidence. The data analysis shows that the group discussion can help students to improve their confidence. Group discussion also can help them to understand the materials well. It is related to (O.Nyumba et al., 2018) findings that group discussion can be used effectively with primary students as well as with adult learners, if appropriate adaptations in degree of structure and instructional objectives are made. Group discussion is particularly valuable for students who are weak in independent study skills. The students can use the group discussion to be learning process in the class.

Group Discussion to Improve Students' Communication Skills
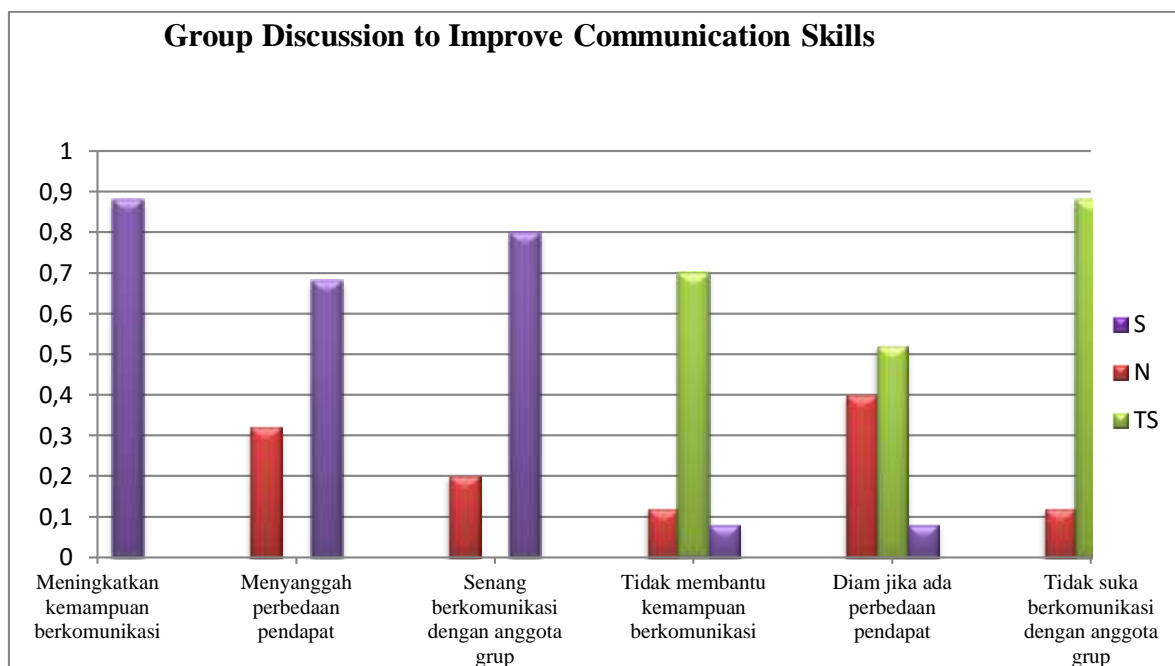
Based on chart above, for the category of communication skills indicated that group discussion improves students' communication skills. It can be seen in Q7 that states that group discussion helps students' to improve their communication skills, there are 88% students who answered strongly agree of this statement. In addition, most students answered agree for Q8 that state students disprove if there is a difference of opinion in the discussion group. While most students answered agree for Q9. Statement of the Q9 are students' happy and open minded when communicating with other group members. It indicates that group discussion helps students to improve their communication skills. It can be seen from their response in the questionnaire from the researchers as one of member of group discussion in the project show some response.

Group discussion helps students to improve their communication skills because students would argue to understand the material of comfort and to the success of

communication skill development from the argue would be a focus on question-answering by students and it can help the students to improve their communication skills. Generally, findings of this research show the desired results with regards to the issue in speaking activities. Some of the issues identified include the students' proficiency of spoken language that hinder their participation in the class, their inability to practice the language outside the class, teachers' inconsistency in conducting speaking activities in the class, etc.

Similarly, the students' perspectives with regard to the involvement in the oral group activities can also be identified, such as students' enthusiasm and motivation, contribution, sense of belonging as well as the importance of peer correction among group members. Also, there is a positive implication on the use of group discussion activities in which students show improvement in their individual performance in speaking.

Meanwhile, the percentage of students who answered agree was higher that show group discussion helps students to improve their communication skills because students would argue to understand the material of comfort and to the success of communication skill development from the argue would be a focus on question-answering by students and it can help the students to improve their communication skills. Generally, findings of this research show the desired results with regards to the issue in speaking activities. Some of the issues identified include the students' proficiency of spoken language that hinder their participation in the class, their inability to practice the language outside the class, teachers' inconsistency in conducting speaking activities in the class.

Results from Interview

Students' Challenges in Syntax Project
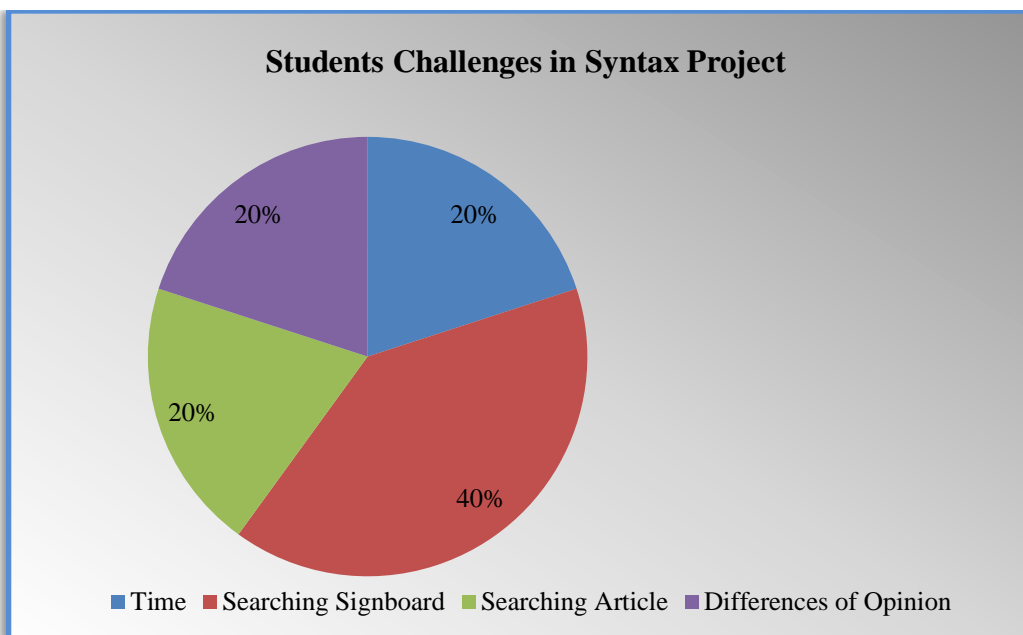
This section focuses to know students' challenges during doing Syntax project. Based on the chart above, there are differences of challenges from 10 students who have researcher doing interview. The following are students' challenges for time category have percentage 20%. This can be seen in the following excerpts:

"The challenge we faced in completing the project was the time to be tight with other assignments because in that semester there were many similar projects for other courses. Therefore, it is difficult for each group member to work optimally at the same time". (Q1, C1, S4)

Result of the second challenges that students' face was doing Syntax project are in searching of article. In the interview shows 40% of the students think transportation is challenges during the project. The students' responses based on the challenges of transportations as follow:

"The challenge we faced in completing the project was the challenge more to the vehicle, because looking for an English sign board around the campus is rare and looking for it, you have to explore, and it requires a vehicle and I don't have a vehicle." (Q1, C2, S5)

"The challenge I faced when working on a syntax project was that it was difficult to find a place that had an English sign board. Besides that, we had to go around to find it." (Q1, C2, S2)

Result of the third challenges on chart that students' face was doing Syntax project are in searching article as a reference. In the interview shows 20% of the students think searching of article is challenges during the project. The students' responses based on the challenges of searching article as follow:

"The challenge we faced in completing the project was that I had to find five references for the article, but the references were very limited, so I had to look for references all day long as references in the project report." (Q1, C3, S3)

Result of the fourth challenge on chart that students' face during group discussion in Syntax project are in differences of members group opinion. In the interview, it shows 20% of the students think differences of member group opinion. The sample of students' responses based on the challenges in differences of opinion as follow:

"The challenge that I feel the most is when there are many views and opinions in the discussion and how we can align our thoughts with all the members in the group." (Q1, C4, S1)

The results of the study revealed that some students' feel advantages in searching of sign board and other advantages are some of students dominated the work and did not allow

their classmates in the group to take active role in the project, whereas others wanted to direct the project according to their interests especially high achievers. As a result, those who did not get the opportunity to participate became upset and unwilling to continue working with the same group.

This of the little exposure and training that student received on the skills of collaborative work before conducting the project, or the group discussion rules were not effective. However, lectures can set students up for success by helping them build a solid foundation for these skills using scaffolds Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, (2006). Furthermore, using technology is one of the essential components of the project, but the findings showed that some students don not have their own devices or maybe they did not have access to technology which obstructed them from searching for information to be shared with their classmates in the group. Another issue revealed by the study was that some students worked very fast focusing on finishing the project rather than learning from the process of carrying out the project. This could be attributed to the common fact that students were still exam oriented and interested in gaining high marks rather than acquiring skills.

The participants' responses to these challenges were reflective of the pressure from outside sources. The comments that addressed the challenges did so in ways that addressed the outside barriers. Students indicated the need to find more time out of the regular schedule, for instance, to respond to the challenge of time to plan and implement Syntax project. Additionally, students indicated how they used resources available to them, especially collaboration with their member of group. The responses indicated the students' valued collaboration despite the difficulty finding time to do it. The responses to the challenges were often laced with additional comments about the outside influences. Though designed to collect only information about how they respond to challenges, the open construct of the question allowed for teachers to expand upon how they respond to the challenges they face.

From that interview, the researcher concluded that Syntax project are challenging for students. The biggest challenging for students are to search of the sign board because some of them do not have private vehicle.

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion is drawn based on the result of the analysis of data. The finding shows that group discussion improves students' confidence and communication skills and also researcher find that Syntax project are challenges for students' Group discussions can facilitate and stimulate student learning because students become actively engaged, as

existing research on teaching and learning behavior has broadly established. This study shows that student perceptions confirm, by and large, that discussions enhance student learning. Students find that group discussions are particularly likely to stimulate student interest and engage them with the material. While oftentimes not all students engage actively in discussions in classroom, students report that discussions have positive effects for example, over half of the students stated that the group discussion helped them to improve confidence and communication skills. There are four important challenges regarding the successful implementation of Syntax project were addressed: (1) searching article; (2) Searching Sign Board; (3) Time; and (4) Differences of opinion. As a result of challenges of Syntax project are participants unhappily coexisted in project but did not fully inhabit them. Indeed, the data suggest that individuals became less enthusiastic to work with people who were different over time. Students showed themselves unwilling to searching of signboard because they do not have vehicle. However, even though students' have challenges to finish the project they still work hard with their team until the end of project.

Analysis of the data revealed that the participants were able to apply Syntax project whereas the rest failed to do so because of the following reasons: some of them were do not like in differences of opinion from member of group. Most pre-service teachers found it difficult to manage their classroom time appropriately because projects took more than the expected time. Additionally, the context where Syntax project was implemented played a fundamental role in hindering the process of using PBL effectively. Designing valid and reliable assessment tools that require students to demonstrate their understanding was another striking difficulty. Meanwhile, the benefits of group discussion in Syntax project, which is searching sign board, it has positive response. Based on the result of the questionnaire and interview analysis, it indicates that the most of students' get many benefits from the completed project in Syntax project. It also shows that the students feel happy, fun, and surprised to the group discussion, it is very useful for improving students' skills such as confidence and communication skills. It makes the students become more interested in learning while doing project. In addition, the most of students claim that they feel happy and fun during learning while doing the group discussion. The students think that the group discussion will give positive impact, not only to develop their knowledge but also to explore their ideas and thinking abilities. Some students also have opinion that the group discussion is a challenge for them. The use of group discussion in Syntax project can improve students' speaking ability. Through discussion, they are placed in a situation where they are encouraged to interact using the target language. Group discussion provides the effective

use of classroom 'speaking time' because it enables students to have greater opportunities for sharing ideas.

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