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## THE EFFECT OF GROUP WORK AND INDIVIDUAL WORK ON EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY THROUGH DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT UPTD SMP NEGERI 2 PEMATANGSIANTAR

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to determine the effect of using topic cards combined with group work on students' speaking ability in descriptive text at SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar. This research employed a quantitative method with a pre-test and post-test control group design, involving 31 students in the experimental class and 31 students in the control class. The experimental class was treated using topic cards combined with group work, while the control class was taught using conventional teaching methods. The data were collected through speaking tests assessing pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency, and were analyzed using SPSS version 27.0, including descriptive statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, homogeneity test, and t-test. The results showed that the mean score of the experimental class increased from 51.21 to 58.27, while the control class increased from 46.17 to 55.44. However, the result of hypothesis testing indicated that the significance value (0.129) was greater than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ), meaning that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was accepted and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of topic cards combined with group work does not have a statistically significant effect on students' speaking ability in descriptive text, although there was an observable improvement in both groups.*

**Keywords:** *Speaking Ability, Descriptive Text, Topic Cards, Group Work, Teaching Strategy*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Background of Research

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in learning English as a foreign language, as it enables students to communicate ideas, express opinions, and interact effectively in various contexts. However, many students still face difficulties in developing their speaking ability, particularly in descriptive text. These difficulties are often related to limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, inadequate practice opportunities, and the use of less engaging teaching methods in the classroom. As a result, students tend to be passive and reluctant to participate in speaking activities.

To address these challenges, teachers are required to implement interactive and student-centered teaching strategies that can encourage students to actively engage in the learning process. One of the strategies that can be applied is the use of topic cards combined



with group work. Topic cards can provide students with clear guidance and stimulate their ideas in speaking, while group work allows students to collaborate, share ideas, and practice speaking in a more supportive and less stressful environment. Through this combination, students are expected to develop their speaking ability more effectively, particularly in terms of fluency, vocabulary, and confidence.

Several previous studies have shown that the use of interactive media and collaborative learning strategies can contribute positively to students' speaking development. However, the effectiveness of combining topic cards with group work in teaching descriptive speaking still requires further investigation, especially in the context of junior high school students. Therefore, this study attempts to examine the effect of using topic cards combined with group work on students' speaking ability in descriptive text.

This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar involving eighth-grade students. The research aims to determine whether there is a significant effect of the implementation of topic cards combined with group work on students' speaking ability. The findings of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions, particularly in enriching teaching strategies for speaking and supporting teachers in creating more engaging and effective learning environments.

### **The Problem Research**

Based on the background of the problem above, the research problem can be formulated as follows: *“Is there a significant difference in the speaking ability of eight-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar between those taught through group and individual work using descriptive text?”*

### **The Objectibve of Research**

In discussing this research, the researcher puts forward the main objective of the study as follows: *“To investigate whether there is a significant difference in the speaking ability of eight-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar between those taught through group and individual work using descriptive text”*

## **II. THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **The Definition of Speaking**

Speaking is the ability to produce articulated sounds and words in order to convey thoughts, ideas, feelings, or orally acquired information to others. It is categorized as one of the productive language skills. Speaking is regarded as a crucial communication tool that plays an essential role in social interaction and daily life. Richards (2018) states that speaking



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is an interactive process in which speakers produce language, comprehend messages, and respond appropriately to others in order to convey meaning effectively, while Bygate (2018) emphasizes that speaking is both a productive and interactive skill that requires learners to use language fluently, accurately, and appropriately in communicative contexts.

### **Speaking Ability**

Speaking ability refers to the students' capacity to express ideas, thoughts, and information orally in an understandable and meaningful way. It involves several components such as pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and the ability to convey meaning based on context. Speaking is considered a difficult skill because students must produce language spontaneously while paying attention to accuracy and clarity. Students often face problems such as limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, low confidence, and difficulty in organizing ideas when speaking. Therefore, appropriate teaching strategies, such as group work and individual work using descriptive text, are needed to help students improve their speaking ability effectively.

### **Components of Speaking Ability**

In assessing students' speaking ability, this study uses the assessment rubric proposed by Brown (2004), which comprises four main components: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. These four components reflect the essential aspects of oral language use. Pronunciation refers to the clarity and intelligibility of speech, fluency relates to the smoothness of speech delivery, vocabulary concerns the appropriate use of words related to the topic, and grammar involves the use of simple grammatical structures that do not interfere with meaning.

### **Teaching Speaking through Descriptive Text**

Descriptive text is used as a context and stimulus for speaking activities rather than as a writing product. It is used to encourage students to produce oral descriptions based on personal experiences and familiar topics. Through descriptive speaking activities, students are able to practice pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar in a meaningful and communicative way. Therefore, descriptive text serves as an effective medium for eliciting students' speaking ability in both group work and individual work settings.



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## Group Work and Individual Work in Teaching Speaking

Group work refers to a classroom learning activity in which students work together in small groups to complete tasks, discuss ideas, or solve problems collaboratively. Group work allows learners to interact with one another, share responsibility for learning, and actively participate in the learning process. Through interaction with peers, students practice important speaking components such as fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy in a meaningful context.

Meanwhile, individual work refers to learning activities in which students' complete tasks independently, without relying on peer assistance or group collaboration. Individual work enables students to demonstrate their actual academic abilities because the learning outcomes reflect their own understanding and effort rather than the influence of other learners. Both group and individual work create effective learning conditions that support the improvement of students' speaking ability.

## II. THE METHOD OF RESEARCH

### Research Design

Research methods are systematic approaches used to collect, analyze, and interpret data in order to answer research questions or test hypotheses. These methods may be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed, depending on the objectives of the study. Creswell & Creswell (2017) define research methods as procedures for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data systematically, while Punch & Oancea (2014) describe them as structured steps in the process of generating scientific knowledge.

In this study, the researcher employed a quantitative research approach, which focuses on the analysis of numerical data to examine relationships between variables and to obtain measurable results. The research used a quasi-experimental design, specifically a pre-test and post-test non-equivalent control group design. This design was applied to investigate the effect of group work and individual work on students' speaking ability through descriptive text by comparing students' speaking performance before and after the treatment in both groups.

### he Technique of Collecting Data

The data in this study were collected through a speaking test administered to the students. The speaking test was used as the main instrument to measure students' speaking



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ability before and after the treatment. The test was conducted twice, namely a pre-test and a post-test, to obtain quantitative data on students' speaking performance.

The pre-test was administered prior to the treatment to identify students' initial speaking ability. After that, the students received the treatment through group work and individual work using descriptive text. At the end of the treatment sessions, a post-test was conducted to measure students' speaking ability improvement after the implementation of the teaching strategies.

Students' speaking performance was assessed based on four aspects: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar, using a standardized speaking rubric. The scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test were then used as the primary data for analysis.

### **The Technique of Analyzing Data**

The data were analyzed using SPSS version 27.0. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean scores and standard deviations of students' speaking performance from the pre-test and post-test. Prior to hypothesis testing, a normality test was conducted to ensure that the data were normally distributed. After the assumption was met, an independent sample t-test was applied to determine whether there was a significant difference in speaking ability between students taught through group work and those taught through individual work using descriptive text.

## **III. ANALYSIS OF DATA**

### **Data Analysis**

The data above present the findings of a study conducted to examine the effect of group work and individual work on students' speaking ability through descriptive text. The study involved eighth-grade students who were divided into two groups: an experimental group taught using group work and a control group taught using individual work. A pre-test and post-test were administered to measure students' speaking ability before and after the treatment.

The results of the pre-test showed that students' speaking ability was still relatively low. Many students experienced difficulties in pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary use, and they showed low confidence when expressing ideas orally. These results indicate that



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students faced considerable challenges in speaking English prior to the implementation of the teaching strategies.

After the treatment was implemented, the post-test results showed an improvement in students' speaking ability in both groups. However, students who were taught through group work demonstrated better speaking performance, particularly in fluency and confidence, compared to those taught through individual work. This finding suggests that interaction and collaboration during group activities contributed positively to students' speaking development.

Furthermore, hypothesis testing was conducted using an independent sample t-test. The result showed that the t-count was higher than the t-table at the significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ , indicating that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted. This result confirms that there was a significant difference in speaking ability between students taught through group work and those taught through individual work using descriptive text.

These findings indicate that group work is more effective than individual work in improving students' speaking ability, particularly in helping students' express ideas more fluently and confidently in descriptive speaking activities.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

##### Conclusion

This study concludes that both group work and individual work have a positive effect on eighth-grade students' speaking ability when implemented through descriptive text. However, group work proved to be more effective in improving students' speaking performance, particularly in terms of fluency and confidence. The results of the statistical analysis confirmed a significant difference between the speaking achievement of students taught through group work and those taught through individual work. These findings suggest that interactive and collaborative learning activities provide greater opportunities for students to practice speaking and actively engage in the learning process. Therefore, the use of group work is recommended as an effective strategy for enhancing students' speaking ability in EFL classroom contexts.

##### Suggestions



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Based on the findings of this study, English teachers are encouraged to implement group work in teaching speaking, particularly through descriptive text, to create a more interactive learning environment and to improve students' fluency and confidence in speaking. Teachers are also advised to manage group activities effectively to ensure equal participation among students.

For students, active participation in group discussions and speaking activities is recommended to enhance their speaking ability and build self-confidence in using English orally.

Future researchers are suggested to conduct further studies by involving larger samples, longer treatment durations, or different text types and speaking activities to obtain more comprehensive results regarding the effectiveness of group work and individual work in improving students' speaking ability.

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