Students' Perception towards the Use of Group Work Activity in Learning English at SMP Negeri 1 Jebus

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Key Word: *Perception,* *Group Work Activity,* *Students' Perception,* *Group Work Implementation*	**ABSTRACT** The research aimed to discover the students' perceptions at SMP N 1 Jebus in responding the implementation of group work in English learning. This research used descriptive qualitative research using data collection techniques that was technical triangulation including observation, interviews and documentation to obtain the data directly. This research used data analysis technique by Miles and Huberman in which data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The samples of this research were 16 students of class 9 C who are classified by six active students, five average students, and five passive students. The results of the interview with students showed from cognitive aspects, group work helped them to work collaboratively, finished tasks quickly, gaining respect; from affective aspects, it made learning fun, gathered with their friends; and from conative aspects, students could share ideas, have roles and divide the task to the members. Others had negative perceptions of group work in English class, such as unfair task participations, not being serious in finishing assignments, and afraid their opinions were not heard. Students emphasized that their group members influenced the productivity of group work. In conclusion, the students have positive perception of group work activities in learning English.

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Introduction

In general, schools in Indonesia taught English as a foreign language. Schools in Indonesia, especially junior and high school levels, determine English language as a compulsory subject. According to Richard and Schmidt, foreign language is a language that is not the native language (mother tongue) of large number of people in a particular country or region, is not used as a medium of instruction in school and is not widely used as a medium of communication in government and media, etc (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). Teacher takes a big role in the course of learning during classes and also setting moods in the environment of the class. The main goal to be achieved in every English class is to create fun learning environment, to make the students feel more interested and excited in learning English language, another thing that is also necessary is to generate the students to remain motivated in learning English language. Teachers should be able to provide these environments in the classroom, such as creative learning approach that can become a material of education.

In this case, one of the activities that is often used in English subject classroom is the use of group work activity as one of the forms of cooperative learning. This teaching method is believed to create a learning atmosphere that is more motivating and supportive than individual work. Cooperative learning exists when students work together to achieve joint learning goals. Cooperative learning, according to Johnson et al., is an educational tool in which use of small groups of students to work together to increase individual, as well as, group member learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2013).

Group work method is commonly implemented in schools. It is a learning activity which involves a small group of learners working together. The group may work on a single task, or on different parts of a larger task. Tasks for group members are often selected by the members of the group (Richards & Schmidt, 2013) Group work involves students actively in learning so they can improve their achievements. Beside group work, it is also common to find a group presentation as a form of encouragement to students' works in team and partnership in learning English. According to Porter, in group learning, students are divided into small

groups to learn content knowledge, to explore or discuss an assigned topic, or to complete cases, projects and group assignments, to answer a few challenging questions, to exchange ideas, and share some insights with group members (Porter, 2006).

Considering that, the group work method is implemented by teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Jebus. Based on the interview that the researcher had in the pre-liminary study with the English teacher in SMPN 1 Jebus on April 2023, group work method frequently used in English learning. The teacher said learning English using group work method was relatively easy in terms of time period in explaining a topic of learning material. By this means, it was easy for the teacher to deliver a complicated or big learning material that usually time consuming in a short period of time needlessly having one topic for several meetings. The teacher also believed that group work method was one such method to have a student center condition in English class. Apart from that, the teacher also had expectations that group work method can help students to understand learning topic more. She also said group work was expected to encourage students to overcome their nervousness and insecurity to ask the teacher about a material that they have not understand yet by asking the questions to their groupmates.

An important role in the outcome of group work is group member's perceptions and attitudes towards the group work. Most students may enjoy group work where they could discuss their academic issues, but may dislike it where all members share the same marks regardless of the contribution made by the members. The relation between groups is influenced by a variety of factors, including members' attitudes, views, and willingness to cooperate and contribute as a team. An important role in the outcome of group work is group member's perceptions and attitudes towards the group work. Most students may enjoy group work where they could discuss their academic issues, but may dislike it where all members share the same marks regardless of the contribution made by the members. Too many participants believe that this kind of practice unfairly disadvantages intelligent and industrious students while rewarding dull and lazy ones. It also encourages irresponsibility and laziness at the expense of intelligent and hardworking students' efforts (Campbell & Mingsheng, 2006).

Burdett add that the lack of clear objectives, inequality of contribution among group members, unequal effort not reflected in marks, difficulties of accommodating different work schedules for meeting times, lack of staff support, overuse of group work, the overwhelming effects of assessment, lack of choice and flexibility, and collaboration are some of the factors that affect using group in classroom teaching (Burdett, 2003).

Moreover, students have their own views and perception on this one learning method. According to Robbins & Judge, perception is defined as a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give ideas about their surroundings (Robbins & Judge, 2013). If they have a positive view of the group work method, this will certainly produce a positive response as well from the students. On the other hand, if they view group work as a negative approach, they will have a negative response in class as well especially in learning English. These statements above are also in accordance with the Stimulus-Response (SR) theory stated by Skinner (Kaplan, 2017). He stated that the learning process given by the teacher is called stimulus, meanwhile response is something accepted by the students. The more stimuli that are received by the students means it will shape the response and the result of response is called behavior.

Therefore, perception is formed before the behavior comes and needs to be observed because perception refers to someone's behavior. It is also supported by the statement by Brown that researchers need to continue evaluating teachers' and students' perceptions of Foreign Language, as the field will most assuredly change over time and unusual perception of Foreign Language teaching among teachers and students will most definitely persist in the Foreign Language classroom (Brown, 2017). According to the research conducted by Sudiro et.al, students perceive group work discussion method in learning-teaching process as a positive approach to their learning. Students stated that group work enhances their understanding of the lesson, increases English speaking skills, increase enthusiasm, builds up interaction to practice English, and develops confidence in speaking English (Sudiro, Anggraini, Setyorini, Antasari, & Juhanasar, 2022). This research aimed to discover the students' perceptions at SMP N 1 Jebus in responding the implementation of group work and its implementation in English learning.

Method

This research conducted using qualitative method. According to Sugiyono (Sugiyono, 2017), qualitative method research collects data in the form of words or images rather than numbers. Sukmadinata defines qualitative research as the description to analyze events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals or groups and the results of these studies can increase the readers' comprehension (Sukmadinata, 2016). The research design of this study is descriptive research. According to Creswell,

descriptive research method is to gather information about present existing events or condition. Creswell stated that the purpose of descriptive method is to find an in-depth explanation about the research object systematically (Creswell, 2018). Descriptive research design is *a scientific approach which involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way*. It is suitable to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the participants' experience.

A population is defined as a group of individuals who share the same characteristic (Creswell, 2018). After conducting interview with the English teacher, it is known that all 9th grade students have participated in group work activity several times in learning English and students in grade 9A – 9C share the same English teacher. Thus, by the recommendation of the English teacher on the day of the preliminary study, the population taken in this study was students in grade 9 class C SMPN 1 Jebus 2023/2024 academic year. It consisted of students of average 14 – 15 years old which divided into 16 students of male students and 15 female students that in total of 31 students.

Creswell define sample as a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for generalizing about the target population. Sampling is the process of choosing specific individuals or sampling units from the sample frame (Mesa, Chica, Bastos, Bonamigo, & Duquia, 2016). According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson, they in agreement that there is no specific rule for selecting the number of participants in qualitative research (Bezabih & Ago, 2022) The benchmark for researchers in determining the number of informants is not based on representation, but if the depth of the information is sufficient.

The sample is taken based on the nonprobability sampling technique which the entire population does not have the same opportunity to become the sample. The sampling technique used in this research is purposive sampling technique. According to Abdussamad, purposive sampling is a sampling technique with certain considerations so that it will make it easier for researchers to explore the object under study (Abdussamad, 2021). In this case, to select the participants of this research, with the recommendation of the English teacher, the researcher chose six students who considered active, five students who considered average, and five students who considered passive in group work activities in English language class in 9th grade of SMPN 1 Jebus for the 2023/2024 academic year. Students who have those characteristics were selected as the participants. This sample was chosen because it can be said to be gave as much as necessary information to support this research.

The data was collected by the researcher by using three instruments namely, observation, interview, and documentation.

1. Observation

According to Sugiyono (Sugiyono, 2017), that observation is a form of complex process, a process composed of various biological and psychological processes. In this study, researcher was observed the state of students' learning environment, the state of how group work method conducted or implemented in the classroom, and how the student' behavior in group work activity in learning English. The researcher uses non-participant observation. According to Fraenklen and Wallen, non-participant observation is where the researcher is not involved directly in the situation they are observing (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2013).

This observation was carried out by describing a detailed explanation of what happened during the English learning process using group work according to the results of the observations. During the observation, the researcher recorded everything that was necessary and happened during the process of implementing group work in English learning. Observations were carried out using an observation sheet as a guide for researchers to make observations more focused and structured so that the data obtained were easy to be processed.

2. Interviews

Interview is a method used when the researchers want learn more things from respondents in-depth and the number of small number of respondents (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). The interview guideline was referred from the theory of aspects of perception from Baron and Byrne supported by Walgito, that is cognitive aspects, affective aspects, and conative aspects. (Baron & Byrne, 2008)(Walgito, 2010). It was constructed to answer the research questions on the chapter one about students' perception as can be seen below.

Table 1 <The Interview Content Guideline of Students' Perception on Group Work Activity in Learning English at SMPN 1 Jebus>

No	Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Number of Items

|			
1.	Cognitive (knowledge,views/opinion, belief)	Students' knowledge, views, and opinions related to the learning material and the group work activities.	5
2.	Affective (emotional)	Students' emotional reactions to the group work activities whether it is positive emotions or negative emotions, good or bad, and evaluative judgement.	5
3.	Conative (behavior)	How the students' role in group work activities being applied in the classroom is. Whether the students take big a role in participating the group activities or minimal role.	5

3. Documentation

Beside interview, a study can be sourced from various pre-existing documents as long as the data supports the main data (Glenn A, 2009). The use of documantation is necessary to complete the data to be collected. This research equipped with photo to support the accuracy of the data taken. The documentation that took were in the form of photos of the lesson plan of the learning materials that used in group work activity, the English lesson syllabus, the photos of students and teacher when they interviewed and the photos of the observation days.

The data have to be checked for their sturdiness and confirmability. A valid set of data is one that is neither manipulated nor does it differ from the field's actual reality. The term validation describes the degree of alignment between the data reported by researchers and the reality experienced in the field (Sugiyono, 2017). According to Cresswell and Miller, one of the ways to promote the validity of a research is by employing the strategy of triangulation Triangulation is the data validity technique used in this study to test the credibility of the data submitted by researchers so that it is feasible to study. Then Cresswell & Miller, stated that triangulation is defined to be a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (Cresswell & Miller, 2000).

In this study, sources related to the research topic are validated through technical triangulation. In order to obtain reliable data, the researcher obtained the information with different technique that is observation, interview, and documentation. Abdussamad stated that technical triangulation is one of the ways to check the credibility of a qualitative research (Abdussamad, 2021). The researcher examined multiple technic and sources, such as interview responses and observational data as many times as necessary to obtain the valid findings of this study.

Diagram 1 <Research Data Validity Scheme>
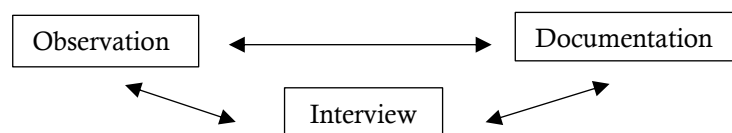
According to Sugiyono, data analysis is the process of systematically compiling data derived from the outcomes of interviews, questionnaire, field notes, and documentation. How to organize data into categories, describe it into units, synthesize, organize into patterns, choose which ones to important and what was learned, and draw conclusions so that it is understandable by oneself and others (Sugiyono, 2017).

The data about students' perception on group work activity obtained using interview and elaborated using descriptive analysis technique and the implementation procedure of group obtained using observation. The data analysis technique that used was from the Miles and Huberman model analysis technique. Miles dan Huberman stated that the activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and take place continuously until complete, so that the data is saturated. The activities in data analysis namely data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification (Abdussamad, 2021).

1. Data Reduction

Reducing data entails summarizing, selecting the main elements, simplifying, focusing on the important things, and transforming the data.

2. Data Display

In qualitative research, data display can be done in the form of brief or detailed descriptions or narrative, charts, graphs, matrices, flowcharts, and so on. By displaying data, it made it easier to understand what happened and organized the information that permits for conclusion drawing.

3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification

Drawing conclusions and verification are the third steps in qualitative analysis. The researcher drew the conclusion and verified by searching for the significant meaning obtained from the data in display.

Findings and Interpretations

After collected the data, the researcher found the two points that would be discussed, those are: the implementation of group work method in learning English and student's perception of the group work method used by teacher in learning English.

1. Implementation of Group Work in Learning English at SMP N 1 Jebus.

Based on the five days of observations that conducted by the researcher at 9th grade class C in SMP N 1 Jebus, there were two learning materials that were taught with group work, namely label and procedure text. This observation aims to find out how group work is implemented in English learning. According to Meodijiono & Dimyati, good implementation of group work can be seen from the procedures, namely selection of the topic, forming groups, distribution of topics and tasks, the group work process, reporting the results, and assessment (Dimyati & Moedjiono, 2015). Additionally, Ellis and Holmes stated that there are five steps in implementing group work, that is:

a. Preparing for group work.

b. Designing the group activity

c. Introducing the group activity by having the students in groups before giving instructions to them, explaining the task clearly, set rules for the group interaction, and let the students ask questions.

d. 4) Monitoring the group task.

e. 5) Ending the group task by providing closure to the group activities in which students do group reporting. (Ellis & Holmes, 2017)

Based on the observation sheet, the researcher found the implementation of group work method in learning English at 9th grade from the planning to the process of the group work activity in English class. The observation was conducted five days due to limited time that proceed towards final examination of the first semester. The first day to the third day was for 'label' material and the fourth and fifth was for 'procedure text' material.

From the observations conducted by the researcher, the choice of learning topics to be used in group work was deemed suitable because the teacher felt that with this task students would not feel bored and could interact with other students. From interviews with teachers, she stated that the selection of material that would be used as group work assignments was also adjusted to the existing syllabus. The group commonly used is long term group work. According to Janssen, long term group work is a group activity that is done by using a long enough duration that is more than one meeting, as two days to a month (Janssen, 2014).

The group members division is very important to students because it affected students' attitude in group work. The division of group members is determined by the teacher and the teacher also appoints the student to be the leader of each group. The teacher explained this more in the interview, so that students could be distributed evenly in each group so that homogeneous students were not in one group. This is to avoid inequality between one group and another group. Besides, based on the interview, the teacher stated that the process of the group work activity will not be effective if the students choose the group members themselves, because the students will not do the task seriously and will talk too much with their friends. Whereas, the distribution of tasks in groups was usually determined by the students' agreement in that group. The teacher only gave general instructions about what must be done, such as discussing what material, showing examples that are appropriate to the material, and other things related to the learning topic and group work.

In the learning process, teachers did not immediately let students went to work on their own. The teacher still participated in organizing the class so that it remained conducive and effective. Apart from that, the teacher also often approached each group to ask about progress, ask about obstacles and ensure that students remained focused on the learning being carried out. During the learning process, it was also common for teachers to provide feedback to each group she approached to ensure that each group had sufficient understanding of the topic being discussed. This result of observation also in line with Ellis and Holmes that stated one of the steps in implementing group work is to monitor the group work progression (Ellis & Holmes, 2017).

Students presenting the results of their work do reporting the results of group work. During the presentation, students explained the results of their work using English, reading from texts prepared by their respective groups. This aims to train students to pronounce words in English and practice their understanding. At the end of the presentation session, students receive feedback from the teacher regarding their work results, presentations and questions asked.

In assessing group work task, there are two aspects that the teacher used as a reference, such as student work and the students' individual score in group work. Students expected the assessment was not only from the sum result of the group work but also noticed students' achievement individually. The group score was assessed from the participation and cooperation in the group work, for example whether the group is coherent, open and helpful to each other. Then during the presentation, pronunciation is used as an aspect when assessing assignments. It was one of the aspects that the teacher used in assessing from individual score. Besides, the teacher also assessed the participation of the students while their do the group work.

2. Students Perception of Group Work Activity in Learning English

Based on the interview conducted by the researcher, the students mostly stated positive perception of the group work method used by teacher in teaching English in classroom which is necessary in effective teaching and learning. However, there are also several negative responses towards group work. The result of the interview consisted the students' perception from cognitive aspects such as the students' knowledge and view, affective aspects such as the feelings related to group work, and conative aspects such as the students' act and behavior towards group work.

This research found two results of students' perception; those are positive and negative. Based on the result of the students' interview, there are several points related students' perceptions. These points can be seen in the three aspects of perception that is cognitive, affective, and conative. These points will be explained in this discussion below.

a. Cognitive aspects

Cognitive aspect relates to the basic knowledge or view that someone have about an object. In this case, the object is group work method that used in English class. The cognitive is interpreted as the thoughts and beliefs adopted towards the subject that being perceive. Understanding the object that being perceived is also one of the indicators of perception. The students would describe group work as an activity where students can work together, share tasks, communicate, and collect suggestions, ideas and opinions from friends in order to complete assignments and become a good group. This shows that students have a general view of what is meant by group work in learning. This can be related to one indicator of perception, namely understanding or comprehension of the object that is being perceived. This indicates that students can provide their perceptions regarding group work.

Moreover, the benefits of group work that students get in learning English. In their interviews, most students stated that group work had a number of benefits in learning English. Among them are discussing and exchanging opinions, helping each other, reducing the individual workload, encouraging the students to participate in the activity. Students can also familiarize themselves with and respect their classmates. In addition, students can become more responsible for the tasks given to them. Furthermore, some students also think that group work activities to make it easier for them to understand the material being studied to improve communication skills when discussing. Based on the results of interviews with students, the students found it easier to understand the material when the group members explained it to them or when they discussed it together.

However, there were a small number of students who had negative opinions about group work, for example one student felt that he was rarely involved in group work because he was rarely asked to do it, so he felt unable to participate in the task. Other students felt that sometimes group work was the same as individual assignments because there were group members who did not participate in doing the assignments. The student felt that some members played more than they worked, making the group atmosphere less conducive.

b. Affective aspects

According to Baron in Byrne, affective aspect, also known as emotional component, is related to feeling with the attitude to the object (Baron & Byrne, 2008). It is associate with emotions and it also have their own role in influencing students' perception and how they achieve in learning. Based on the result of the interview, most of the students feels positive relation such as happy, enjoy, and interested in learning English with group work. Most students think that learning using group work is more comfortable, enjoyable, exciting and not boring. Apart from that, students also feel more enthusiastic and become more curious. Students can help each other and become more familiar with friends. Students feel happy because they can gather with friends and learning feels more relaxed. The students had positive perception because they feel

that by using group work, they were interested in comprehend the material, increasing self-confidence, and made the learning less boring.

The students considered that group work was the place for them to increase their self-esteem in learning English. Not a few students think that group work helps them to be more confident in English class especially to convey their opinions. Students' self-confidence increases because they feel they can do it together so they don't need to feel embarrassed when learning English. The researcher also found out that most of the students liked to do a group work activity in learning English. The students prefer working in group due to several motives such as group work made the task completed quickly, it is easier because there were chances to share opinions which makes the task easier. they can get to know they friends better, and felt more excited because they can gather with their friends.

However, some students also have negative perceptions about this. A student stated that they preferred to do individual work rather than group work because the part of the job that students did didn't seem really equal. Group work also consider noisy so that the group members did not do the task seriously. Meanwhile, another student said that he did not enjoy the group work because the group members did not give him any tasks. Several students also stated that group members are the important factor that can determine whether the group work assignment is comfortable and enjoyable to do.

c. Conative Aspects

Baron & Byrne stated that conative aspect is related to attitude or the tendency to act behavior towards the object (Baron & Byrne, 2008). In this case, the object is group work method that used in English class. The attitude can be considered as the students' participation which can be seen in the group work's element that is individual accountability. These points can be seen from the interview guideline namely, the division of the group task, the students' activeness in participating group work activity, sharing ideas, and whether the students consider their contribution worth in group.

Based on the results of interviews and observations obtained, the division of tasks is determined by each group. In some groups, the tasks carried out by each member are determined by the group leader. Others let each member determine the tasks they will carry out themselves. Tasks are distributed according to the abilities and expertise of each group member. In each assignment, the group tries to distribute as fairly as possible so that the possibility of members feeling cheated is small, although not zero.

Group work activities is a method for discussing a particular topic by expressing the opinions of each individual to solve a problem by discussion. Therefore, group work activities provide more opportunities to participate and feeling of contribution. This statement can be seen in the results of the interview, the students argued that they found it easier to play an active role in learning when working in groups. Students can search for material, develop creativity, express ideas, share solutions, and present results. Based on the results of interviews, students often exchange opinions or ideas to discuss with their group friends. Students offer ideas that they think are good and even if there are differences of opinion, students immediately discuss to get a more suitable idea.

The students stated that they found it easier to play an active role in learning when working in groups. Students can search for material, develop creativity, express ideas, share solutions, and present results. From the interview results that students feel that their contribution to the group is important because they believe that if one of the students does not work or help, the work will not be completed on time. Besides, group work helped students become responsible with their part of the task.

However, there were one or two students who felt that group work did not make them more active at all. This is because these students feel that their opinions are not heard and sometimes, they are not asked to do assignments. students also think that if they think their contribution is not important, then the situation will not be conducive if they only try individually and group work feels difficult. There are still some students who think their opinions are not necessary.

Conclusion

Based on several elaborations and analysis data on the finding results and discussion, the researcher would make conclusion by showing the result of the observation sheet and interview towards the students. Teaching and learning process of group work method was carried out in order to increase students' motivation in learning English.

In conducting group work in English class, the teacher implemented discussion activity. It made the students more actively involve in the classroom and made them think in providing ideas or looking for sources of learning material. Presentations were also given after discussions which allowing the students to practice pronunciation and public speaking. Apart from that, determine the members of each group and the

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distribution of tasks was given as much as possible to make all students contributed and participated in their groups.

Based on the students' interview, most of the students gave positive perception towards the use of group work activity in learning English. From the cognitive aspects, the students stated that it was easier to understand the learning materials by helping each other, making tasks faster to complete, they could learn how to work with people, respect, and appreciate each other. From the affective aspects, the students were enjoyed the learning process, they were happy to be together with their friends during English class, being more confidence in taking parts and expressing their opinion, and they preferred to have a group work activity in English class. From the conative aspects, the student stated that group work made them became more active, improved communication skills, they could divide the task into roles, made them exchanged ideas and solved problem by discussing it together.

Whereas there were also some students gave negative perception towards group work activities that were being used in English class by giving statements such as, the participation to the task that did not seem to be equal, sometimes it was noisy that the group members did not do the task seriously, and being afraid that their opinions was considered not necessary. The students also perceived that the group member was one of the most important things that influenced the process of group work activity.

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