

## **USING GROUP PEER-TEACHING TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Motivation and Engagement are two components for successful learning. It is difficult to achieve learning objectives when the students are not motivated and less engaged in the teaching-learning activities. Hence, the research aimed to investigate whether group peer-teaching can be an alternative method to boost students' motivation and engagement. 32 students of a private university in Yogyakarta taking English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Vocabulary class participated in the research. They were divided into four groups consisted of eight students. Each group was asked to teach their classmates using Academic Word Lists as their teaching materials. The researched employed observations and interviews as the instruments for data collection. Then the data was analyzed qualitatively. The result of the research showed that group peer-teaching was quite effective in building students' motivation and increasing their engagement.

Keywords: Peer-Teaching, Motivation, Engagement

### **INTRODUCTION**

Motivation and engagement are two key factors to increase the probability of achieving the learning objectives. The students who are not motivated will not take an active part in the teaching-learning process. As a result, they will not be able to absorb the materials well. (Saragih & Utami, 2020). In line with that, Uddiniyah & Silvia (2019) posited that the students with high motivation will be likely to succeed in their learning, while the students with low motivation have a strong tendency to fail. Yulfi & Aalayina (2021) concluded that motivation was strongly correlated with learning achievement.

Considering the importance of motivation and engagement, it is essential to boost the students' motivation and engagement. Several researchers have conducted studies on how to increase those two important elements. Putra, P (2021) in his Classroom Action Research (CAR) at SMP Negeri Satu Atap Jarit, East Java, Indonesia used Google Meet (GM) to improve students' motivation during the online learning. He found out that the use of GM encouraged students to be actively participated and highly engaged in the lesson. Similarly, Nurlisa, Sada & Ikhsanudin (2020) stated that scaffolded Role Play and Facebook Discussion were effective tools to engage the students. Meanwhile, Wahyu (2019) proved that mind-mapping technique was effective to arouse students' interest and engagement in writing. Another way to increase the students' motivation and engagement was to use peer-teaching. (Christopher et al, 2016; Tullis, J.G., & Goldstone, R.L. 2020; Sunggingwati, 2018; Handayani, 2021)

Many studies regarding the utilization of peer teaching have been conducted on various level of education and diverse subjects. Handayani, M (2021) conducted a study at SMPN 4 Langsa. Her participants were 30 eight grade students studying English. She found out that peer-teaching helped students improve their English skills. Meanwhile, Yulianto (2019) investigated the effectiveness of peer-teaching at SMA Negeri 1, Wirosari District, Grobogan. The research involved 37 students taking contemporary art. He used Classroom Action Research (CAR) that consisted of two cycles. He observed that peer-teaching increased the students' test scores. Juliantine et al (2019) study the impact of peer-teaching on self-confidence and team work of 30 students joining volleyball extracurricular at SMKN 5 Bandung. The results were satisfying, they found out that peer teaching was proven to be effective in boosting students' self confidence and team work. At the university level, Ahmad, I.M., & Mohammed, H.E. (2018) discovered that peer-learning was more effective than traditional learning on Knowledge and Clinical Performance of Critical Care Nursing Students at Damanhour University. They conducted experiment by dividing 100 nursing students into two groups consisted of 50 students each. The first group (the study group) used peer-learning while the other group (the control group) was taught using traditional learning method.

Although there have been numerous studies regarding group-peer teaching, the studies conducted at the university level in Indonesia with English Language Education Department Students as the participants were quite rare. One that I can cite was the work of Sunggingwati (2022). She conducted her study at the English Education Department of a State University in East Borneo. The students had to do teaching practicum at secondary schools. To prepare for the practicum, the Department assigned its students to do peer-teaching activity. She found out that the group peer-teaching format was quite effective in helping the students to prepare their teaching. Since, I also teach at the English Education Department, I am interested to study the topic of group peer-teaching further.

### **Research Questions:**

The research aimed to find the answer to the following research questions:

What are the challenges of employing group peer-teaching?

How does the group peer-teaching increase students' motivation and engagement?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed descriptive qualitative research. The instruments of data collection were observations and interviews. 32 students took English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Vocabulary in Context class at an English Language Education Department at a private university in Jogjakarta participated in this research. They were divided into four groups consisted of eight students and each group was assigned to teach their classmates using Academic Word List as their teaching materials. To organize and manage the preparation and the teaching session, each group chose its leader. The distribution of teaching was as follows:

Group 1: Academic Word List Sublist 7

Group 2; Academic Word List Sublist 8

Group 3: Academic Word List Sublist 9

Group 4: Academic Word List Sublist 10

Each group led by the leader prepared the presentation then presented their part on a given date. The lecturer observed the group peer-teaching and gave feed backs and suggestions. After the session, the lecturer interviewed the leader and the members of the group.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Based on the observations and interviews, the researcher would like to present the findings of this study to answer the research questions:

What are the Challenges of Employing Group Peer-Teaching?

### **Challenges in the Preparation Stage**

The main problem of the preparation stage was the leader/member contribution to the group discussion. Here were the challenges uttered by the leaders of the group (I used pseudonym to protect their identity)

Leader 1

“I excluded the name of a student because he didn't make any contributions to the group”

(Norma)

Leader 2

“Some of my members just read my chat without responding” (Cecil)

Leader 3

“I couldn’t discuss effectively with my members because the problems of the signal” (Tita)

Leader 4

“I am sorry Sir; I couldn’t join some meetings in the preparation because I had to go to my hometown since my grandmother passed away” (Simon)

Despite the challenges in the preparation stage, the presentation worked quite well. The leaders together with the members were able to overcome the challenges using the following strategies: First, focus on the students who were willing to be active and distributed the jobs equally. The students who didn’t contribute to the discussion were not included in the list of the group members. The decision was made after the leaders and the members tried several times to contact him/her.

Second, to cope with the bad signal, the groups combine the synchronous meeting (zoom/G-meeting) with the asynchronous meeting (via email and WA group). Finally, when the leader could not present, he assigned one of his responsible members to lead the discussion.

### **Challenges in the Preparation/Presentation stage**

The challenges in the presentation stage were to make sure that the participants could follow the presentation effectively and got the maximum benefits of the presentation. Sometimes the challenges were related to the preparation stage. To overcome the challenges, the lecturer gave some feedbacks and suggestions:

Be careful in choosing the font size, color and style. The lecturer observed that some presentations could not be seen clearly because the font size was too small, the font color was not in contrast with the background, and the style was too “artistic”

Ensure that the image/visual aids help the students to remember the words and make it easier to recall the words. For instance, the first group just picked random pictures to beautify their presentation without considering the connection between the images and the words being learned.

Practiced pronouncing the words several times so that you can pronounce the words clearly and accurately.

Made contextual examples for example by using your classmates’ names or the situation familiar to you so that your classmates can memorize the words.

Engaged the participants, for instance, by playing kahoot, quizzes, mentimeter, padlet, or other applications.

### **Challenges in the Post Presentation Stage**

The most important job of the group was to make sure that the participants paid attention and comprehended their presentation. This can be done by checking their understanding of the lesson. The lecturer observed that the first group after they finished their comprehension didn't do comprehension checking. Hence, the lecturer reminded the other groups to engage the audience, for example, by asking them questions related to the content of the presentation. It may be important to inform the participants at the beginning to pay attention to the presentation because they would be given some comprehension questions after the presentation.

The lecturer was glad that the other groups took his advice seriously, some groups even gave reward to the participant who could answer their questions. It worked well because most of the participants really paid attention to the lessons and were able to answer the questions correctly.

### **How Does the Group Peer-Teaching Increase the Students' Motivation and Engagement?**

One of the causes of students' lack of motivation was the fact that they found the lesson to be boring. This might have been caused by the way the lecturer delivered the lessons. The students lost motivation because they did nothing in the class, this situation made them bored. As a result, some of them did other activities such as daydreaming or playing with their smartphones. Group-peer teaching added a variety to the teaching-learning process. It offered different atmosphere and ambience to the usual lessons.

The researcher interviewed students regarding the benefits of group peer-teaching. Here are some excerpts of the interview:

“I feel more motivated in preparing my teaching because my lecturer and my friends will watch my performance. So, I learn to pronounce the words I am about to teach over and over again until I am confident that I can pronounce them correctly. I also try to create contextual examples using those words so that my friend and I will be able to memorize them easily” (Megan, member)

“My leader was great; she could manage and distribute the jobs well. I learn about leadership from her. I also learn to work together with different types of people”  
(John, member)

“I learn from previous team presentation. I got some ideas for my group presentation from the feedback given to my friends' presentation from the lecturer. I also learn by watching my friends' presentation, for instance, I found out that the visual aids need to

support the examples, the words must be pronounced correctly, and we need to engage the audience”  
(Stevia, member)

The findings of this study conform to those of Sunggingwati (2018). She mentioned that group peer-teaching format provided opportunities for the students to have better teaching preparation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Group peer-teaching was one of the ways to increase students’ motivation and engagement. It is the student-centered approach that gave the students the opportunity to be responsible for their own learning and demonstrate their ability to master the lesson. It made the students active. They took part in the teaching-learning process instead of just sitting passively and listening to the lecturer’s explanation. The latter often caused sleepiness and boredom.

There were some challenges in employing the group-peer teaching, namely: bad signals, team work, students’ mastery of the materials, and delivery of the materials. Fortunately, the students were able to overcome the challenges by using asynchronous meeting, study the materials together before presenting, and learn from the lecturer’s feedback and previous presentations

On the other hand, the group peer teaching had benefits. Firstly, it was motivating because the students could exercise their creativity. They could design their presentation in they way they like; using funny images, background song, and various colors. Secondly, this will enhance the students’ engagement since the students were interested in their friends’ presentation.

In addition to boost students’ motivation and engagement, the group-peer teaching was also effective tools to enhance students’ hard skills and soft skills. Students prepared the peer-teaching seriously because they would be the center of attention, Hence, the students practiced to pronounce the words many times, they also tried to create contextual examples, and they used visual aids that were relevant to the examples they gave. Furthermore, the students sharpen their soft skills such as leadership, time management, and communication skills.

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