



## “LET’S DISCUSS”: PICTURE-BASED SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION AS A STRATEGY TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS’ SPEAKING SKILLS

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### ABSTRACT

One of the most important skills in learning English is speaking, although many junior high school students still struggle with speaking, especially when it comes to fluency, pronunciation, and grammar. Students are frequently inactive and reluctant to participate in speaking activities due to low self-confidence, a limited vocabulary, and a fear of making mistakes. Through the use of Small Group Discussion with Pictures, this study sought to enhance the speaking abilities of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 8 Denpasar in the academic year 2025/2026. Classroom Action Research (CAR), which consists of preparation, action, observation, and reflection, was used in this study. 39 students served as the study's subjects. Speaking tests (pre-test, post-test I, and post-test II) and a questionnaire were used to gather the data. The results showed a significant improvement in students' speaking skills. The students' improvement was from 54.71 (pre-test) to 65.97 (post-test I) and 77.98 (post-test II). Furthermore, 87.18% of the students reached the passing grade at the end of the second cycle. The questionnaire results showed positive responses toward the implementation of the strategy, particularly in increasing confidence, motivation, and participation in speaking activities. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Small Group Discussion with Pictures is an effective strategy to improve students' speaking skills. It is recommended that EFL teachers implement the strategy as an alternative technique in teaching speaking skills.

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication is at the heart of language learning, as the primary goal of acquiring a language is to enable individuals to express ideas, share information, and interact meaningfully with others. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), communication not only involves understanding linguistic forms but also using language appropriately in real-life setting. This highlights the importance of

developing communicative competence, which encompasses fluency, accuracy, and the ability to convey meaning effectively. Among the four core language skills, speaking plays a particularly significant role to engage in interaction. Therefore, fostering students' speaking ability becomes a central focus in EFL instruction.

Speaking ability is a crucial skill in learning English because it is the main form of spoken communication that must take account of the listener (Brown, 1978; Yasa et al., 2023). Thus, is intriguing to research on speaking (Pramerta, 2023). In fact, it was found that students still face difficulties in speaking English, particularly in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy (Normawati et al., 2023) due to limited exposure (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Students who struggle with vocabulary, lack confidence, and are afraid of making mistakes frequently become inactive and reluctant to engage in classroom speaking activities.

These problems were also found among ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 8 Denpasar in the academic year of 2025/2026. Based on preliminary observations, students' participation in speaking activities remained low. Due to the teacher-centered nature of the learning process, students had few opportunities to practice speaking. This is concerning, as ninth-grade students need strong speaking skills as preparation for higher levels of education. Although several studies have shown that small group discussion is effective in improving speaking skills (Anwar et al., 2023; Mardhiyah et al., 2023), the use of small group discussion combined with picture media as visual stimuli in speaking instruction at the junior high school level has not been widely explored based on the local context.

Therefore, this study focuses on investigating how the implementation of Small Group Discussion using pictures can improve the speaking skills. This research aims to enhance students' speaking ability through the implementation of the strategy, particularly in fluency, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy, as well as to examine students' responses to the implementation of this strategy.

## METHODS

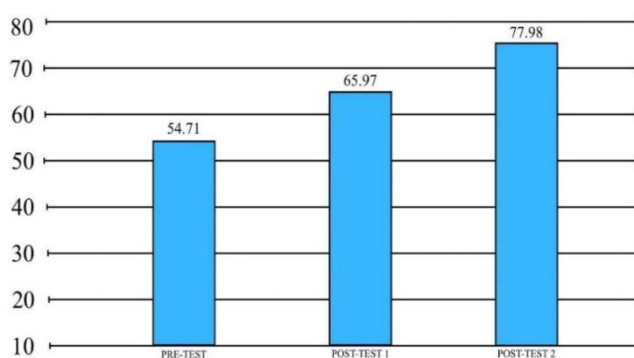
The two cycles of this study's Classroom activity Research (CAR) design included the following steps: planning, activity, observation, and reflection (Kemmis et al., 2014). During the 2025-2026 school year, 39 ninth-grade students from SMP Negeri 8 Denpasar participated. Purposive sampling was used, with the class selected based on the identified problem of students' low speaking ability. The research focused on improving students' speaking skills through the implementation of the Small Group Discussion with Pictures strategy in the teaching-learning process.

Questionnaires and speaking assessments were used to gather data. To gauge students' progress in speaking abilities in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy, the speaking assessments comprised a pre-test, post-test I, and post-test II. The research instrument was a speaking assessment rubric. The collected data were analysed using descriptive quantitative analysis by calculating mean scores and percentages to assess the degree to which students' speaking abilities have improved and the efficacy of the used technique.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The graph demonstrates a steady improvement in ninth-grade students' speaking abilities from the pre-test to the post-tests in each cycle following the application of the Small Group Discussion with Pictures technique. This continuous improvement indicates that students' involvement in small group discussions made a positive contribution to the development of their speaking ability, particularly in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy. The result aligns with a study conducted by [Sudiro et al. \(2022\)](#) who stated that the implementation of group discussion enriched English speaking skills.

The steadily rising pattern also reflects an increase in students' confidence and participation in speaking activities. Collaborative learning supported by visual media helped students become more active in expressing their ideas and interacting with their peers. Thus, the graph supports the conclusion that using Small Group Discussions with pictures helps make the speaking learning process for ninth-grade students more relevant and communicative. Pictures can make powerful contribution for English learning ([Wright, 2010](#)).



**Figure 1. The development of students' speaking skill achievement after the implementation of the small group discussion with pictures strategy in the pre-test, post-test I, and post-test II.**

To identify the students' initial speaking ability, a pre-test was administered at the beginning of the study. In this pre-test, ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 8

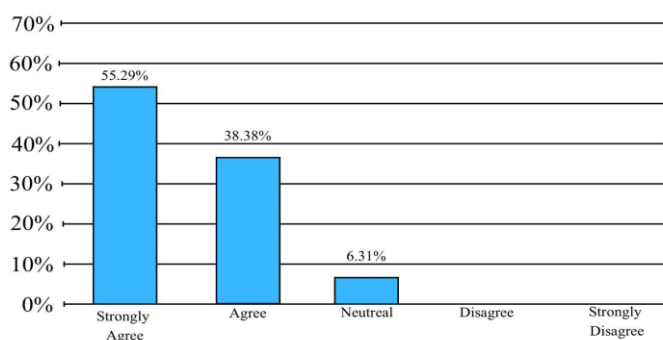
Denpasar were asked to demonstrate their speaking skills orally by presenting a descriptive text based on a given topic. The assessment focused on three aspects: fluency, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy. It is aligned with [Brown and Lee \(2025\)](#). The total score obtained in the pre-test was 2,134, with a mean score of 54.71.

The school's Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) was set at 70. The results showed that only 5 out of 39 students achieved the minimum standard. This finding indicates that most students still experienced difficulties in speaking English, particularly in fluency, grammar, and pronunciation. Therefore, an effort to improve students' speaking skills was necessary. The researcher used the Small Group Discussion with Pictures technique in the teaching-learning process to solve this issue.

Based on the pre-test results, Cycle I was conducted to improve students' speaking skills through the application of the Small Group Discussion with Pictures strategy. Cycle I consisted of two meetings and followed four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. After the implementation of the strategy, Post-test I was administered at the end of Cycle I. The results of Post-test I showed that students' scores ranged from 33 to 100, with a total score of 2,573 and a mean score of 65.97. This increase in the mean score indicated an improvement in students' speaking skills following the strategy's implementation. However, only 15 of the 39 students (38.46%) reached the KKM. Since the success indicator requiring at least 80% of students to achieve the KKM had not been met, the research was continued to Cycle II.

Cycle II was carried out based on the reflection from Cycle I with the aim of further enhancing students' speaking skills. This cycle also consisted of two meetings and followed the same four stages, with greater emphasis on improving grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. Post-test II was given to students to gauge their development following Cycle II's implementation of the Small Group Discussion with Pictures technique. With a mean score of 77.98 and scores ranging from 53 to 100, the overall score earned in Post-test II was 3,040. These results showed a significant improvement in students' speaking skills, as 34 of the 39 students (87.18%) achieved the KKM.

During Cycle II, students appeared more active, confident, and enthusiastic in participating in speaking activities. This finding aligns with a study conducted by [Crisianita and Mandasari \(2022\)](#). These findings confirm that the Small Group Discussion with Pictures strategy was effective in improving students' speaking skills. As the success indicators had been achieved, the research was concluded at Cycle II.



**Figure 2. Students’ responses after the implementation of the small group discussion with pictures technique in speaking skill instruction.**

Along with the speaking assessments, students were given a questionnaire at the conclusion of Cycle II to gather their opinions on the use of the Small Group Discussion with Pictures technique in speaking lessons. The questionnaire consisted of ten statements measured using a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The purpose of the questionnaire was to explore students’ perceptions regarding their confidence, motivation, participation, and comfort while taking part in speaking activities using the strategy.

The results of the questionnaire analysis showed that most students had positive reactions to the Small Group Discussion with Pictures technique. From the total overall score of 1.709, the *Strongly Agree* (SA) category reached 945 points, representing 55.29%, while the *Agree* (A) category obtained 656 points, or 38.38%. Meanwhile, the *Neutral* (N) category accounted for 108 points, or 6.31%. There were no responses in the *Disagree* (D) or *Strongly Disagree* (SD) categories. Small group discussion can be an instrument for the students’ speaking skills improvement (Bohari, 2020; Zuhro & Budi, 2024). These findings show that almost all students expressed agreement with the use of the Small Group Discussion with Pictures strategy in speaking instruction.

These positive responses can also be linked to the role of instructional materials in supporting students’ language development. The materials used in the Small Group Discussion with Pictures technique were presented in English, which encouraged students to engage in EFL learning. This exposure enabled students to simultaneously develop their oral communication skills (Haile et al., 2024; Pramerta et al., 2023). In this way, the integration of English-based materials and visual aid with collaborative discussion created a more holistic learning experience, fostering both comprehension and production (Chen, 2025). As a result, students became more

confident and motivated to participate, as they were continuously supported by meaningful input that contributed to their communicative performance.

These findings lead to the conclusion that students perceived the Small Group Discussion with Pictures strategy as helpful in improving their English speaking skills. Students also reported that the use of pictures supported them in generating ideas and expanding their vocabulary, while small group discussions increased their confidence and reduced their fear of making mistakes when speaking. It shows that pictures are effective in improving students skills (Phuong, 2018; Saragih & Gultom, 2022). In addition, the small group discussion activities created a more comfortable and supportive learning environment, encouraging students to become more active and willing to participate in speaking tasks. Through a group discussion implementation, it is highly effective to enhance the students' speaking skills in their English learning (Al Jawad & Abosnan, 2020; Hoque et al., 2024; Susanti et al., 2021).

Therefore, the questionnaire results strengthen the findings from the speaking tests. In addition to being successful in enhancing students' speaking abilities in terms of fluency, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy, the Small Group Discussion with Pictures strategy also gets good feedback from students regarding their motivation, self-assurance, and involvement in the learning process. Students' learning results and classroom participation significantly improved after the Small Group Discussion with Pictures technique was used in Cycles I and II. The students' average scores increased beyond the KKM, and the success indicator of the study was achieved in Cycle II, with more than 80% of the students reaching the mastery level. In addition, the questionnaire results revealed that students gave positive responses to the strategy, as it helped to enhance their confidence, motivation, and participation in English speaking activities.

In short, students in the ninth grade at SMP Negeri 8 Denpasar were able to improve their speaking skills by using the Small Group Discussion with Pictures method, according to the findings of a classroom action research study carried out during the 2025-2026 academic year. The improvement was evident from the test results, which showed a gradual increase in the mean scores from the pre-test to Post-test I and also Post-test II.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this classroom action research show that using the Small Group Discussion with Pictures strategy has effectively improved the speaking skills of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 8 Denpasar. This improvement was reflected in the gradual increase in students' mean scores from the pre-test to Post-test II, as well

as the achievement of the success indicator, with more than 80% of students reaching the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM). In addition to improved learning outcomes, students also demonstrated greater participation, confidence, and motivation in speaking activities, as supported by the questionnaire results.

## SUGGESTION

Despite its positive results, this study is limited by its small sample and lack of a control group, which may affect generalizability. Future research should involve larger, more diverse participants, use experimental designs, and apply standardized assessments. Overall, the Small Group Discussion with Pictures strategy is recommended as an effective alternative for teaching speaking, as it fosters a more interactive learning environment and supports students' communicative development.

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