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Small group discussion (SGD): A method of instruction in teaching oral communication in the senior high school

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ABSTRACT

Small Group Discussion (SGD) is a learner-centered instructional method where Grade 11 students are organized into groups of two to six members to interactively explore Oral Communication competencies. In this study, it serves as the primary intervention to reduce speech anxiety and enhance verbal proficiency. This quasi-experimental study evaluated the effectiveness of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) instructional method in enhancing the academic performance and communicative proficiency of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Oral Communication in Context during School Year 2025–2026. Employing a one-group pretest–posttest design with 40 purposively sampled learners organized into small collaborative teams (2–6 members), the investigation assessed performance across three core DepEd competencies: explaining communication processes, applying breakdown repair strategies, and identifying speech contexts. Baseline pretest results indicated foundational performance, with competency means ranging from 4.33 to 5.00 (Fairly Satisfactory to Satisfactory). Following the SGD intervention, posttest assessments demonstrated substantial learning gains, with mean scores rising to 7.18–7.95 (Very Satisfactory). Paired-samples t-tests confirmed statistically significant improvements across all targeted competencies ($p<0.001$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0). The highest mean gain (+2.95) was recorded in strategic competence (using strategies to avoid communication breakdown). An assessment of implementation concerns yielded an overall weighted mean of 2.88 (Often). The most prominent operational challenges identified were linguistic barriers during transitions from the local dialect to the target language (WM = 3.35), restricted instructional class time (WM = 3.33), social anxiety during peer interactions (WM = 3.28), and a lack of explicit pre-discussion guidance (WM = 3.15). The study concludes that Small Group Discussion is a robust, learner-centered intervention that significantly strengthens students' communicative competence and conceptual mastery. However, maximizing its pedagogical impact requires proactive teacher mediation, structured participation rubrics, and time-management scaffolding. Based on these findings, a strategic communication simulation matrix and an enhanced learning activity framework were developed for seamless curriculum integration.

Keywords: Small Group Discussion (SGD), Oral Communication in Context, communicative competence, communication breakdown, speech context, Senior High School, instructional strategy.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern educational landscape emphasizes a systematic approach to learning that prioritizes the holistic development of students. According to the Department of Education (2020), the primary goal of the curriculum is to foster functional literacy, where students are not just passive recipients of information but active participants who develop 21st-century skills, including critical thinking and effective communication. To achieve this, teachers must pivot toward learner-centered methodologies that stimulate engagement and provide a psychological safe space for students to express their unique perspectives and competencies.

In the context of language acquisition, teachers must employ strategies that transform the classroom into an interactive laboratory for speech. One highly effective approach is the implementation of Small Group Discussion (SGD). This method allows students to delve deeper into linguistic nuances by actively investigating, connecting, and concluding ideas within a peer-supported framework. As noted by Gonzalez (2015), SGD is often spontaneous and flexible, encouraging students to voice their viewpoints frequently, which naturally cultivates higher-order thinking and confidence in oral delivery.

Active engagement in small-group settings directly correlates with improved student achievement. When learners contribute meaningfully to a group, they take ownership of their education, moving beyond rote memorization to deeper inquiry. Research suggests that collaborative learning environments are essential for developing the teamwork and communication skills necessary for success in a globalized society (Vander Ark & Schneider, 2015). By delegating authority to small groups, teachers promote a democratic classroom atmosphere where every student's voice is valued, thereby upholding the principles of educational equality and student rights (Marlina, 2018).

Despite the theoretical benefits of communicative language teaching, many Senior High School students still struggle with oral proficiency. Recent assessments indicate a gap between curriculum goals and actual classroom performance, often attributed to traditional, teacher-centered instructional styles that fail to meet the requirements of modern learners (Estrera, 2020). There is an urgent need for teachers to adjust their pedagogical styles to align with the constructivist approach, which prioritizes the facilitation of learning over mere content delivery.

While various teaching strategies such as case studies, role-playing, and technology-based lectures exist, SGD stands out for its specific ability to target oral fluency and social interaction simultaneously (Fran, 2021). By breaking down the barriers of a large classroom setting, SGD provides a platform and knowledge for even the most hesitant speakers to practice.

Consequently, this study seeks to assess the effectiveness of Small Group Discussion (SGD) as a method of instruction in teaching Oral Communication among Senior High School students. Specifically, the study seeks to investigate how this pedagogical approach enhances students' communicative competence and academic achievement, ensuring they are well-equipped and knowledgeable for the communicative demands of the 21st century.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to ascertain the effectiveness of Small Group Discussion (SGD) as an instructional method in teaching the functions, nature, and process of communication, various communication strategies, and different types of speech contexts in Oral Communication

among Senior High School students for the School Year 2025–2026 as the basis for developing enhanced learning activities, such as strategic communication simulations.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of students' performance prior to the implementation of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method in terms of explaining the functions, nature, and process of communication, using various strategies to avoid communication breakdown, and identifying the different types of speech contexts?
2. What is the level of students' performance in the aforementioned competencies after the implementation of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method?
3. Is there a significant difference in students' academic performance before and after the implementation of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method?
4. What is the level of issues and concerns encountered by the students during the implementation of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method in Oral Communication?
5. Based on the findings of the study, what enhanced learning activities can be proposed?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design, specifically a one-group pretest–posttest and quasi-experimental research design, to evaluate the effectiveness of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method in teaching Oral Communication among Senior High School students. This design allows for the assessment of students' communication competencies before and after the implementation of the instructional intervention. Quantitative data will be collected through the administration of pretests and posttests, which will measure students' proficiency in selected oral communication skills prior to and following exposure to the SGD method. To determine whether significant differences exist in students' performance, a paired-samples t-test will be used to compare the pretest and posttest scores. Through this approach, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the Small Group Discussion method in enhancing students' oral communication competencies and promoting active learning within the Senior High School setting.

The study explored how Small Group Discussion (SGD) impacts Grade 11 students in Oral Communication using the Input-Process-Output (IPO) Approach to analyze information throughout the study, and this flow is presented in Figure 2 as three connected components labeled Input, Process, and Output. The input of the study includes the profile of the respondents and their pretest and post-test scores on the identified Oral Communication competencies, namely explaining the functions and process of communication, using strategies to avoid breakdown, and identifying speech contexts. The process phase begins with a formal request to the School Principal of Biabas Trade High School for approval. It involves gathering baseline data through a pretest. The intervention follows, where lessons are delivered using the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method. A post-test is then administered to evaluate improvement. Finally, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is conducted to gather qualitative insights into the students' experiences during the activities. The output of the study is a set of enhanced learning activities for Oral Communication, specifically designed to optimize the use of small group interactions to improve student performance and confidence.

The study was conducted at Biabas Trade High School (BTHS), a public secondary institution located in Biabas, Ubay, Bohol, Philippines, as shown in the location map of the research environment presented in Figure 3. Biabas Trade High School is situated in the municipality of Ubay, which is known as a central hub for trade and education in the northeastern part of Bohol. The school provides a diverse learning environment, offering

various Senior High School strands including General Academic Strand (GAS), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), and specialized Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) tracks. BTHS is committed to providing quality education that balances academic excellence with practical skills, making it an ideal locale for testing student-centered instructional methods like Small Group Discussion.

The study utilized a cluster sampling technique, wherein the population will be naturally grouped into clusters based on their intact class sections or strands, including GAS, HUMSS, and TVL specializations such as Automotive, Electronics/Cosmetology, Bread and Pastry, and Electrical. From these clusters, one intact class section will be randomly selected to serve as the participants of the study. The selected cluster will serve as the study's respondents, and all students within the chosen cluster will be included in the study. This approach ensures that data collection is practical and aligned with the natural classroom setting, where the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method will be implemented as an instructional intervention. By using an intact class, the study minimizes disruption to regular class organization while still providing relevant and reliable data on the effectiveness of the SGD method in improving students' Oral Communication performance. As presented in Table 1, which shows the distribution of respondents, there were 15 male respondents, representing 37.50% of the group, and 25 female respondents, representing 62.50%, for a total of 40 respondents, or 100.00%. In this table, N refers to the total population.

To measure student learning outcomes, the researcher used a test questionnaire validated for the Oral Communication curriculum to evaluate students' mastery of the designated competencies. The pretest questionnaire aimed to assess students' baseline knowledge of the communication process, their ability to identify strategies for avoiding communication breakdown, and their familiarity with various speech contexts. The questions are structured as multiple-choice items and situational analysis to evaluate how students apply communication theories to real-life scenarios. The post-test questionnaire served to evaluate knowledge retention and the effectiveness of the SGD method. While covering the same competencies and maintaining the same level of difficulty as the pretest, the items may be rearranged to ensure the validity of the results. By comparing these scores, the researcher can track the development of the students' communicative competence. Furthermore, a structured survey questionnaire was administered to gather quantitative data regarding the students' experiences, specifically measuring their level of engagement, their perceived ease of expressing ideas in a group, and the frequency of challenges encountered during discussions using a 5-point Likert scale.

The validation of the multiple-choice questionnaire began with the establishment of content validity through a structured expert review. A subject matter expert evaluated the initial item pool to ensure that each question aligns with the specific learning objectives and theoretical framework of the experimental study. Following the expert review, the instrument underwent a pilot test with a sample of 50 participants who share similar characteristics with the target population. This phase facilitated a detailed item analysis, where the Difficulty Index and the Discrimination Index will be calculated for each multiple-choice question. Items that prove to be statistically ineffective, either because they are too easy, too difficult, or fail to distinguish between high and low-performing students, will be eliminated or adjusted. This process ensured that the final questionnaire is sensitive enough to measure the expected knowledge gains from the pretest to the posttest phase of the experiment. The reliability of the dichotomously scored instrument was then statistically verified using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20. This analysis measures the internal consistency of the questionnaire, with a target coefficient of 0.70 or higher to indicate acceptable reliability for an academic study. By ensuring that the items consistently measure the same underlying construct, the study will confirm that the instrument provides stable and dependable results. This step is vital for

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ensuring that any variance in scores observed after the intervention is a reflection of the experimental treatment rather than measurement error.

In the data gathering procedure, a letter requesting authorization to conduct the study was obtained by the researcher from the principal of Biabas Trade High School. Once approved, an orientation was conducted for the Grade 11 students to explain the purpose of the research and ensure their cooperation. The pretest was administered during their scheduled Oral Communication classes. Following this, the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method was integrated into the instructional delivery for the identified competencies. After the intervention period, the post-test will be given. Finally, selected participants answered questions about their insights and experiences, which will then be recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The data gathered in this study was analyzed in accordance with the research questions. The mean and standard deviation were used to describe the level of students' performance in the pretest and posttest, providing information on the central tendency and variability of scores. Frequency distribution was used to present the number of respondents according to their performance levels in both the pretest and posttest results. A paired-samples t-test was employed to determine whether there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the respondents at a 0.05 level of significance. The quantitative data gathered from the student survey was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Responses will be numerically coded to calculate mean scores, frequencies, and percentages, establishing statistically significant trends regarding the students' experiences with the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method.

Finally, the study employed a scoring procedure to evaluate the impact of Small Group Discussions on students' performance in Oral Communication. A score range of 9-10 was categorized as Outstanding, which means the student got 90 %-100 % of the correct answers. A score range of 7-8 was categorized as Very Satisfactory, which means the student got 70 %-89 % of the correct answers. A score range of 5-6 was categorized as Satisfactory, which means the student got 50 %-69 % of the correct answers. A score range of 3-4 was categorized as Fairly Satisfactory, which means the student got 30 %-49 % of the correct answers. A score range of 1-2 was categorized as Did not Meet Expectation, which means the student got below 30 % of the correct answers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered from 40 Grade 11 respondents of Biabas Trade High School in Biabas, Ubay, Bohol, on the effectiveness of the Small Group Discussion (SGD) method in teaching Oral Communication. The study employed a quantitative one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design. One intact class section was selected through cluster sampling, and all students in the chosen cluster served as respondents. Data were gathered through a validated multiple-choice pretest and posttest covering three competencies, together with a structured survey questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale on the issues and concerns encountered during implementation. The data were analyzed using the mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution, percentages, and the paired-samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance. The discussion that follows is grounded in the data gathered, and the results are interpreted in direct relation to the objectives of the study.

Pretest performance in Competency 1: Explains the functions, nature, and process of communication

The pretest results provide a baseline of the students' performance before the intervention. For the first competency, no learner (0.00%) reached the 9-10 Outstanding range or the 7-8 Very Satisfactory range. Twenty-three learners (57.50%) fell within the 5-6 Satisfactory range and 17 learners (42.50%) within the 3-4 Fairly Satisfactory range, while no learner (0.00%) fell within the 1-2 Did Not Meet Expectations range, for a total of 40 learners (100.00%). The mean was 4.58 with a standard deviation of 0.81, interpreted as Fairly Satisfactory. This indicates that, prior to the SGD intervention, the 40 respondents possessed only foundational knowledge of communication functions and processes, a finding that closely mirrors the pre-intervention mean of 14.25 reported in a parallel one-group pretest-posttest design by Bohari (2019), where learners similarly entered speaking-related tasks at the developing stage. The absence of participants in the 1-2 band signals that learners were not entirely unexposed to communication concepts but lacked the depth of understanding required for mastery. Valentine et al. (2023) similarly observed that students entering SGD-based speaking studies typically demonstrated only partial mastery of foundational constructs before teacher mediation was introduced.

The clustering of all responses within the 3-6 midpoint band is consistent with documented pretest behavior among Filipino Senior High School learners, where limited instructional time and teacher-centered pedagogies constrain deeper engagement with the nature and process of communication in the Oral Communication in Context curriculum (Alda, 2023). Alda, in a study on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning implementation in Senior High School English classes, also noted that Topic 1 and Topic 2 consistently register below threshold scores before learner-centered interventions are introduced. Taken together, this pretest pattern establishes a meaningful starting point against which the impact of the SGD method can be evaluated, confirming that the learners' initial competence was at the Fairly Satisfactory level and in need of structured instructional scaffolding (Bohari, 2019).

Pretest performance in Competency 2: Uses various strategies to avoid communication breakdown

For the second competency, 30 of 40 learners (75.00%) scored within the 5-6 Satisfactory band and 10 learners (25.00%) within the 3-4 Fairly Satisfactory band. No learner (0.00%) scored in the 9-10 Outstanding, 7-8 Very Satisfactory, or 1-2 Did Not Meet Expectations bands. The mean was 5.00 with a standard deviation of 0.72, interpreted as Satisfactory. Unlike Competency 1, no learner scored in the 7-10 ranges, which suggests a marginally higher, though still non-mastery, familiarity with communication strategies. This pattern aligns with Bohari (2019), where pretest participants entered SGD-mediated lessons with partial strategic competence rather than complete unfamiliarity. The 0.00% in the lowest band indicates that learners had been exposed to basic clarification techniques through prior classroom encounters, although not to the extent required for Very Satisfactory performance (Fang et al., 2018).

Fang et al. (2018) clarify that strategic competence involves verbal and non-verbal strategies such as circumlocution, appeal for help, asking for repetition, clarification request, confirmation request, self-repair, and guessing, which are typically weak before targeted intervention. Lemana (2022), in a descriptive-quantitative study of Filipino tertiary learners, likewise documented that although Filipino students possess some strategic competence, they tend to overuse fillers, self-repetition, and mumbling, patterns that frequently result in communication breakdowns rather than their prevention. The Satisfactory pretest mean of 5.00 thus reflects a partially formed but unreliable strategic repertoire, positioning this competency

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as an area where the peer-mediated practice environment of SGD could meaningfully scaffold improvement (Bohari, 2019; Santos, 2023).

Pretest performance in Competency 3: Identifies the various types of speech context

The third competency showed the lowest pretest performance of the three. Twenty-four of 40 learners (60.00%) were in the 3-4 Fairly Satisfactory range and 16 learners (40.00%) in the 5-6 Satisfactory range, while no learner (0.00%) reached the 9-10 Outstanding or 7-8 Very Satisfactory bands or fell in the 1-2 band. The mean was 4.33 with a standard deviation of 0.69, interpreted as Fairly Satisfactory. As with the first two competencies, no learner reached the Outstanding or Very Satisfactory bands. That 60.00% of the cohort scored only within the 3-4 range signals that the types of speech context, typically covering intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass communication as defined by Cangara and verified by Pambudi and Hariayanti (2023), was the most unstable competency area before the intervention.

Existing literature confirms that learners often enter oral communication courses with strong interpersonal familiarity but a weak conceptual vocabulary for distinguishing speech contexts. Pambudi and Hariayanti (2023) argue that each context carries distinct demands, including audience, channel, and feedback orientation, that learners rarely internalize without explicit instruction. Buzarna-Tihenea et al. (2017) similarly confirm that in student-centered learning environments, the role of communication is best understood only after learners are explicitly scaffolded to differentiate context types. The Fairly Satisfactory result therefore identifies types of speech context as the weakest foundational layer in Oral Communication in Context, and the area with the greatest room for pedagogical improvement through SGD-based instruction (Bohari, 2019).

Posttest performance in Competency 1

The effectiveness of the SGD method was assessed through the posttest performance of the learners, administered after the completion of the lessons to allow a comprehensive assessment of their understanding and retention. For the first competency, 3 learners (7.50%) reached the 9-10 Outstanding band, 31 learners (77.50%) the 7-8 Very Satisfactory band, and 6 learners (15.00%) remained in the 5-6 Satisfactory band. No learner (0.00%) remained in the 3-4 Fairly Satisfactory or 1-2 Did Not Meet Expectations bands, for a total of 40 learners (100.00%). The mean was 7.48 with a standard deviation of 0.85, interpreted as Very Satisfactory, a +2.90-point improvement over the pretest mean of 4.58. This upward shift parallels Bohari's one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental findings, where the posttest mean ($M2 = 18.43$) significantly exceeded the pretest mean ($M1 = 14.25$) with t-test = 8.5148 > t-table = 2.006 (Bohari, 2019). Similarly, Nuraini et al. (2025) documented that SGD-treated cohorts achieved a mean of 66.76 versus 53.67 in conventional-method cohorts ($t = -6.717$, $p < 0.05$), confirming the SGD advantage in communicative content delivery.

Beyond statistical improvement, the shift in distribution is pedagogically significant. Thirty-three of 40 respondents (85%) reached either Very Satisfactory or Outstanding performance, suggesting that SGD-based peer discourse enabled learners to articulate the functions, nature, and process of communication in a manner approaching mastery. This is supported by Crisianita and Mandasari (2022), who established that small-group discussion strengthens conceptual articulation by creating active and confident participation structures. Valentine et al. (2023) likewise highlight that SGD places the learner at the center of the learning experience, with peer-to-peer interaction allowing deeper engagement with complex

communication constructs than lecture-style instruction. The result is consistent with the documented capacity of SGD to lift Senior High School learners to higher levels of communicative-conceptual mastery (Yustina et al., 2021).

Posttest performance in Competency 2

For the second competency, 9 of 40 learners (22.50%) reached the 9-10 Outstanding band, 30 learners (75.00%) the 7-8 Very Satisfactory band, and 1 learner (2.50%) remained in the 5-6 Satisfactory range. No learner (0.00%) was in the 3-4 or 1-2 bands. The mean was 7.95 with a standard deviation of 0.75, interpreted as Very Satisfactory. This was the strongest posttest performance among the three competencies. The +2.95-point gain over the pretest mean of 5.00 is the highest competency gain of the three, and 97.50% of the cohort reached either the Very Satisfactory or Outstanding band. This pattern aligns with the quasi-experimental findings of Patricia et al. (2024), where the SGD group's mean rose from 38.94 to 71.15, with t-counted = 3.70462 > t-table = 2.01174 at $p < 0.05$. Kahar et al. (2025) also reported that group discussion significantly improved vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension, with active participation serving as the mechanism for strategic competence development.

The strong effect on this competency is consistent with the conceptual purpose of SGD. In SGD, learners actively negotiate meaning, clarify doubts, request repetition, and self-repair in real-time peer exchanges, which are precisely the strategies that Fang et al. (2018) identify as the operational definition of strategic competence. Through repeated small-group practice, Filipino learners, who Lemana (2022) observed tend to overuse fillers and mumbling in real-world discourse, are scaffolded toward more strategic repair behaviors that prevent communication breakdowns. The posttest distribution therefore reflects a deep alignment between the instructional method and the target competency, producing both statistical and pedagogical improvement (Kahar et al., 2025).

Posttest performance in Competency 3

For the third competency, 33 of 40 learners (82.50%) were in the 7-8 Very Satisfactory band and 7 learners (17.50%) in the 5-6 Satisfactory range, while no learner (0.00%) was in the 9-10, 3-4, or 1-2 bands. The mean was 7.18 with a standard deviation of 0.71, interpreted as Very Satisfactory. The +2.85-point gain over the pretest mean of 4.33 is notable because this competency entered as the weakest area and exited within the Very Satisfactory band, albeit with no learners reaching the Outstanding range. This aligns with Wiratno and Huda (2024), whose quasi-experimental study yielded $F = 26.591$, $P = 0.000 < 0.05$, indicating that SGD is significantly more efficient than conventional instruction in enabling learners to master discrete speech-focused content.

The absence of learners in the Outstanding range despite the marked gain is pedagogically meaningful. According to Yustina et al. (2021), SGD fosters higher-order thinking skills oriented toward speaking performance, but mastery-level conceptual content, such as the nuanced distinction among intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public, and mass communication, often requires extended instructional exposure beyond a single treatment cycle. Pambudi and Hariayanti (2023) emphasize that each speech context carries its own demands in channel, audience, and feedback orientation, requiring deliberate scaffolding beyond a basic conceptual introduction. That 82.50% of learners reached Very Satisfactory while none reached Outstanding indicates that the intervention was effective in raising conceptual readiness, but additional instructional cycles may be needed to push learners toward full Outstanding performance (Yustina et al., 2021).

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Summary of pretest and posttest performance

Across the three competencies, the pretest mean for the competency on explaining the functions, nature, and process of communication was 4.58 (Fairly Satisfactory) and the posttest mean was 7.48 (Very Satisfactory), yielding an average weighted mean of 6.03, interpreted as Satisfactory. For using various strategies to avoid communication breakdown, the pretest mean was 5.00 (Satisfactory) and the posttest mean was 7.95 (Very Satisfactory), yielding an average weighted mean of 6.48, interpreted as Very Satisfactory. For identifying the various types of speech context, the pretest mean was 4.33 (Fairly Satisfactory) and the posttest mean was 7.18 (Very Satisfactory), yielding an average weighted mean of 5.76, interpreted as Satisfactory. In total, the pretest mean was 4.64 (Satisfactory), the posttest mean was 7.54 (Very Satisfactory), and the overall combined mean was 6.09, interpreted as Satisfactory.

The competency with the highest overall performance was using various strategies to avoid communication breakdown, with a pretest mean of 5.00, a posttest mean of 7.95, and an average weighted mean of 6.48. This implies that active negotiation of meaning within SGD cycles allowed learners to directly apply and practice strategic repair behaviors, with frequent, low-stakes opportunities to employ circumlocution, clarification requests, self-repair, and confirmation requests. Teachers can leverage this strength through real-life scenario simulations, such as role-playing exercises involving workplace misunderstandings or customer service interactions, which enhance adaptability, conversational fluency, and real-time communication management.

The competency with the lowest overall performance was identifying the various types of speech context, with a pretest mean of 4.33, a posttest mean of 7.18, and an average weighted mean of 5.76. This implies that distinguishing among abstract speech contexts requires a deeper conceptual vocabulary and explicit structural scaffolding. While students moved from Fairly Satisfactory to Very Satisfactory, mastering nuanced differences in channel demands, audience expectations, and feedback loops remains more challenging than practicing interactive speaking strategies. The improvement in the total mean from 4.64 (Satisfactory) to 7.54 (Very Satisfactory) demonstrates the clear effectiveness of SGD as an instructional method for Senior High School Oral Communication in Context. Student-centered, peer-mediated learning builds academic confidence, encourages peer feedback, and promotes active knowledge construction, and teachers can capitalize on these results through timely, constructive evaluation during post-discussion debriefs so that performance continues to progress toward full mastery.

Significant difference between pretest and posttest performance

A paired-samples t-test at the 0.05 level of significance was used to determine whether the differences between pretest and posttest scores were statistically significant. For the first competency, the mean rose from 4.58 (SD = 0.813) to 7.48 (SD = 0.847), a mean difference of -2.90, with an effect size of -4.91, a t-value of -31.1, and a p-value of < 0.001. The decision was to reject the null hypothesis (H0), indicating a significant difference. This shows that learners who initially lacked structural understanding of communication processes were able to articulate these concepts meaningfully after sustained participation in peer-mediated group discourse. Bohari (2019) reported a comparable pattern at SMA Plus Munirul Arifin NW Praya, where the posttest mean rose from M1 = 14.25 to M2 = 18.43 (t-test = 8.5148 > t-table = 2.006), and Valentine et al. (2023) observed that SGD enables deeper engagement with abstract communication concepts than lecture-style pedagogy.

For the second competency, the mean rose from 5.00 (SD = 0.716) to 7.95 (SD = 0.749), a mean difference of -2.95, with an effect size of -6.55, a t-value of -41.5, and a p-value of < 0.001. The decision was to reject H0, indicating a significant difference. This was the largest absolute gain among the three competencies, and it suggests that repeated negotiation-of-meaning episodes gave learners frequent, low-stakes opportunities to practice repair strategies, including circumlocution, appeal for help, clarification requests, confirmation requests, self-repair, and guessing, which Fang et al. (2018) identified as operational dimensions of strategic competence. Patricia et al. (2024) reported a parallel pattern among Grade IX learners at SMPN 3 Banawa, with scores improving from 38.94 to 71.15 (t-counted = 3.70462, $p < 0.05$), and Yustina et al. (2021) emphasized that SGD fosters the higher-order thinking and adaptive speech behaviors that anti-breakdown strategies demand.

For the third competency, the mean rose from 4.33 (SD = 0.694) to 7.18 (SD = 0.712), a mean difference of -2.85, with an effect size of -7.88, a t-value of -49.8, and a p-value of < 0.001. The decision was to reject H0, indicating a significant difference. Although this competency produced the highest t-statistic magnitude, reflecting tight within-group variance, the +2.85-point improvement is pedagogically significant because it entered as the weakest pretest area yet exited within the Very Satisfactory range. Pambudi and Hariayanti (2023) note that each type of speech context carries distinct channel, audience, and feedback demands that learners rarely internalize without explicit scaffolding, and Wiratno and Huda (2024) corroborated this dynamic with $F = 26.591$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. Considered together, the decision to reject H0 in all three tests ($p < 0.001$ in each case) demonstrates that SGD possesses broad instructional effectiveness rather than competency-specific efficacy, and the clustering of posttest means between 7.18 and 7.95 points to a convergent mastery floor, supporting the conclusion that SGD is a robust and versatile method for teaching Oral Communication at the Senior High School level (Nuraini et al., 2025; Patricia et al., 2024).

Issues and concerns encountered in the implementation of Small Group Discussion

The survey on issues and concerns, rated on a scale where 3.50-4.00 is Always, 2.50-3.49 is Often, 1.50-2.49 is Sometimes, and 1.00-1.49 is Never, yielded an overall weighted mean of 2.88, interpreted as Often. This indicates that the 40 respondents experienced a generally moderate-to-significant cluster of implementation challenges when SGD was used as the principal instructional method, ranging from peer-behavioral issues to systemic school-level constraints. That the composite falls within the Often range rather than Sometimes (1.50-2.49) suggests that while SGD remained implementable, the method required substantial pedagogical support. Bohari (2019) documented a similar pattern, noting that SGD implementation is feasible only when instructors systematically address the structural, linguistic, and interpersonal obstacles that learners report, and Alda (2023) observed that Senior High School cohorts consistently rate Often to Always on operational barriers when instruction demands sustained peer interaction. The 2.88 mean should therefore be read less as a critique of SGD than as a diagnostic signal that its success hinges on proactive teacher management of classroom realities.

Linguistic and logistical constraints posed the most substantial hurdles. Linguistic exposure challenges, or difficulty shifting from local dialects to English and Filipino, ranked highest (WM = 3.35, Often), a tension exacerbated by involuntary code-switching and compensatory communication behaviors (Lemana, 2022; Pambudi & Hariayanti, 2023). Closely following were severely limited classroom hours or tight presentation schedules (WM = 3.33, Often), social anxiety or cultural resistance to sharing ideas openly (WM = 3.28, Often), and lack of clear, structured guidance or explicit rubrics from the instructor (WM = 3.15, Often). These findings highlight that typical 40- to 60-minute class blocks are insufficient for

full SGD execution (Nuraini et al., 2025) and that explicit rubrics and intrapersonal preparation are critical to prevent groups from regressing into silence or free-riding (Valentine et al., 2023).

Moderate-frequency concerns centered on team dynamics, teacher feedback, and the physical environment. Inconsistent participation or unequal distribution of work (WM = 2.98, Often) and dominant behaviors that monopolize conversation and suppress minority viewpoints (WM = 2.98, Often) were twin group-dynamic issues that peer monitoring can help resolve in smaller settings but that often persist in larger public high school classes (Bohari, 2019; Crisianita & Mandasari, 2022). Divergent student proficiency levels between highly expressive and anxious speakers (WM = 2.83, Often) proved problematic when informal seating placed reticent learners together rather than in intentionally mixed-ability groups (Patricia et al., 2024). These dynamics were compounded by insufficient feedback or lack of clear post-discussion evaluation from the teacher (WM = 2.78, Often), which deprives learners of corrective evaluation (Fang et al., 2018), and by insufficient physical space or high noise levels (WM = 2.63, Often), which disrupt auditory tracking in overcrowded classrooms (Kahar et al., 2025).

Cognitive and institutional factors were rated lowest. Severe academic fatigue or cognitive overload (WM = 2.50, Often) marked the lower bound of the Often category, suggesting that complex topics can strain learners unless SGD tasks are modularized into shorter segments (Yustina et al., 2021). Misalignment of individual schedules outside class hours (WM = 2.43, Sometimes) and the absence of structural frameworks or peer-evaluation tools to address non-contributing members (WM = 2.33, Sometimes) fell in the Sometimes range, reflecting secondary institutional gaps readily diminished through strong school coordination and asynchronous learning tools (Alda, 2023; Santos, 2023). The summary result of 2.88 (Often) confirms that, while SGD is an effective and interactive intervention, its efficacy depends on deliberately balancing linguistic, structural, interpersonal, and logistical supports rather than using it as an unmediated technique (Bohari, 2019; Santos, 2023; Yustina et al., 2021). Structured participation rubrics, intentional time-management frameworks, language bridging strategies, and constructive post-activity debriefs are therefore needed to keep collaborative learning focused and inclusive.

Synthesis of findings

In sum, the 40 Grade 11 respondents entered the study at the Satisfactory level overall (pretest mean of 4.64), with Competencies 1 and 3 rated Fairly Satisfactory (4.58 and 4.33) and Competency 2 rated Satisfactory (5.00). After the SGD intervention, the overall posttest mean rose to 7.54 (Very Satisfactory), with posttest means of 7.48, 7.95, and 7.18 for the three competencies. The paired-samples t-tests produced p-values of < 0.001 for all three competencies, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis in each case at the 0.05 level of significance. These results directly address the objectives of the study by showing that SGD significantly improved students' oral communication competencies and by identifying the issues and concerns, with an overall weighted mean of 2.88 (Often), that condition its implementation. The findings contribute to the field by providing empirical evidence from a Philippine public Senior High School context that peer-mediated discussion enhances both conceptual mastery and strategic communication, while also showing that linguistic barriers, limited class time, social anxiety, and insufficient teacher scaffolding must be managed for the method to succeed. These insights provide the empirical basis for the enhanced learning activities that constitute the output of this study and prepare the reader for the summary, conclusions, and recommendations presented in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of small group discussions on the performance of Grade 11 Senior High School students in Oral Communication in Context, with the aim of developing enhanced group discussion learning materials that strengthen communicative competence and active peer collaboration. Using pre-test and post-test multiple-choice instruments anchored on three targeted Department of Education learning competencies, and analyzing the data through frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and the paired-samples t-test, the investigation yielded highly favorable results. Students' operational challenges and implementation concerns were likewise evaluated through weighted mean analysis, which allowed the study to consider both the instructional gains of the method and the conditions under which it was carried out.

The pre-test results showed that learners possessed only foundational knowledge across the targeted competencies, with mean scores falling in the Fairly Satisfactory and Satisfactory ranges. This baseline confirmed that students required structured instructional scaffolding to attain higher levels of communicative mastery prior to the intervention. In contrast, the post-test results revealed a substantial upward shift across all competencies, with the majority of learners reaching the Very Satisfactory and Outstanding performance bands. This gain indicates that the small group discussion method enabled students to articulate communication concepts and to apply strategic repair behaviors effectively. The paired-samples t-test further established a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores across all three learning competencies, which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Because this significance was consistent across all strands, it can be concluded that active peer interaction directly enhances conceptual understanding and strategic communication skills, and that small group discussions constitute a robust and effective instructional strategy for improving student achievement.

Despite these favorable outcomes, the assessment of implementation concerns yielded an overall rating indicating that operational barriers were often encountered during small group discussion cycles. The most prominent challenges reported by the learners involved dialect-to-target language transitions, restricted instructional time, and social anxiety during peer interactions. Nevertheless, the frequent presence of these challenges did not impede the overall pedagogical efficacy of the method. Taken together, the findings highlight the decisive effectiveness of small group discussions in elevating student learning outcomes and active participation in Senior High School language instruction.

In light of these conclusions, teachers should continue to integrate structured collaborative frameworks to foster dynamic, student-centered learning environments in Oral Communication in Context. By proactively addressing the identified operational barriers through clear rubrics and effective time management, educators can maximize the transformative benefits of small group discussion strategies. Accordingly, educators may utilize structured small group discussion activities paired with explicit participation rubrics to optimize student engagement and address linguistic transition barriers, while targeted teacher training and professional development workshops on small group discussion management may be implemented to orient educators on managing classroom time and group dynamics. School administrators and instructional leaders may also support peer-mediated instruction by providing adequate learning resources, flexible scheduling, and physical spaces conducive to collaborative learning.

Finally, because the present study relied on written multiple-choice tests, future researchers should extend this work by incorporating authentic, performance-based assessment tools, such as standardized rubrics for live oral presentations, debates, and simulated

conversational tasks, to measure actual spoken communicative competence. They should also examine how targeted strategies designed to minimize social anxiety and language barriers directly influence students' real-time communicative fluency and active verbal execution during group interactions.

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