

Buzz Group Technique: A Multi-dimensional Inquiry

Buzz Grup Tekniği: Çok Boyutlu Bir Araştırma

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Makale Başvuru Tarihi / Received: 09.06.2021

Makale Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 14.06.2021

Makale Türü /Article Type: Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

Anahtar

Kelimeler:

*Buzz grup tekniği,
Doküman analizi,
Nitel çalışma*

ÖZET

İnsanlar yalnız yaşayan canlılar değildirler. Birçok konuda birbirlerine ihtiyaç duyarlar. Bu da birlikte yaşamalarını sağlar. Bazı konularda grupça çalışmaları da kaçınılmazdır. Örneğin bir konu hakkında diğer insanların fikirlerini almak, bir soruna çözüm bulmak, bir olayı tartışmak vb. konularda grupça çalışırlar. Bunu yaparken de çeşitli tekniklerden yararlanırlar. Buzz grup tekniği de bunlardan biridir. Bu çalışmada buzz grup tekniği birçok farklı yönü ele alınarak detaylı bir şekilde incelenmiş ve doküman analizi ile netleştirilmiştir.

Keywords:

*Buzz group
technique,
Document analysis,
Qualitative study*

ABSTRACT

Humans are not solitary creatures. They need each other in many ways. This allows them to live together. Group work on some subjects is also inevitable. For example, they work in groups in order to getting other people's opinions on a topic, finding a solution to a problem, discussing an event, etc. In doing so, they use various techniques. Buzz group technique is one of them. In this study, the buzz group technique was examined in detail by considering many different aspects and clarified with document analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is developing a little more every day. International relations are developing in the same way. The most common language these countries use to communicate with each other is English. This language is a very important communication tool that a person will use both to improve himself and to communicate with people abroad, to express his wishes or needs, and especially to express himself. Both public and private schools are trying to teach English students in the best possible way. While teaching this language, there are four basic skills that are especially tried to be acquired. These are reading, speaking, writing, and listening. Various techniques are used while trying to teach these skills. One of these techniques is the Buzz Group technique. Therefore, in this study, the buzz group technique was inquired through different aspects and clarified with document analysis.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, buzz group technique has been discussed in detail by examining previous studies, records, documents, and other resources related to the subject, and document analysis technique has been used.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. What is Buzz Group Technique?

Brewer (1997) defines Buzz groups as groups that are formed by separating crowded groups into small discussion groups that consist of more than one person to 15 people. Their common aim is to argue a specific question, problem, or issue at the same time. According to Bellon, Bellon, and Blank (1992) in Brewer (1997), such groups create an atmosphere that encourages participants to think cognitively and in an independent way. Group members don't give so much importance to present-based rote memorization. Brewer (1997) states that Buzz groups foster more effectual argument. People can make use of them in various subjects and situations, and they are commonly used in combination with other techniques like a lecture. These groups create a suitable environment to get the discussion started. People often use them when they have subjects, difficult problems or questions, which require discussion to be solved.

Arivanathan (2015) defines buzz groups as a technique that is used to collect feedback on an issue or answer a question during a plenum. Arivanathan (2015) goes on with explaining how the buzz group method is put into practice. Two or three people discuss the issue or the question for a few minutes. They argue the given topic by sitting in their seats. In order to give energy to wide group meetings and events, the buzz groups supply a welcome change of pace for group members.

Handoko (2017) states that the buzz group method is used in group works. This technique is among alternative ways that can be used for getting effectiveness in teaching and learning. According to Brown (2001) in Handoko (2017), there are various methods that can be used for group works. There are two or more participants in each group and they discuss an issue that requires working together and self-initiated language. It is stated that the groups are not crowded, generally, there are 4 or 6 members. In group works, students can share information and it is an advantage of doing group works. Students argue a topic in a determinate time and they create a product by working together (Muntaha, 2016, p.195; Pangaribuan and Manik, 2017, p. 165; Barkley, et al. (2001) in Sari (2017); Sari,2017).

Gale (1974) in Handoko (2017) explains five objectives for group works. First, group assignments and group accomplishments give a chance for students to work together instead of competing with each other. Second, the group works help students to participate in the lessons that are studied in the class. Third, group works affect students' language skills (listening and speaking) in a positive way. Fourth, because students poll sources, comprehensive projects can be executed. Fifth, group work can affect students' social life positively and can be stimulative for students (Nurhayati, 2015, p. 1).

Lindgren (1972) in Handoko (2017) supports these five reasons. He states that there are a few students that are dominant while other students rarely participate in the lesson. Teachers can encourage students to participate in the lesson by calling on nonparticipants. Buzz group technique creates a suitable environment to get the discussion started. Some students can't start their discussions directly because of some factors like shyness and hesitating to say something wrong. Buzz group technique helps students in the same class, to study a new topic. If a student can argue a subject with his/her 2 or 3 friends as a small group, both the student and his/her friends can share their ideas and information easily and try to find a solution to a problem. Then the number of students in a group will be increased and eventually, there will be large groups (Milaningrum and Mulyanto, 2016, p. 68; Milaningrum, 2013, pp. 5-6).

Mason (1992) in Handoko (2017) also defines the buzz group method as a technique in which participants as small groups try to provide a solution to some problems. Answers are listed and joint answers are chosen for discussion by the members of the groups as a whole. One person who is selected in each small group explains shortly to the other participants.

According to Carpenter (1976) in Handoko, the buzz group method is a way that can be used to participate in every member of a crowded audience in the argument process.

The founder of the buzz group technique is Dr. Donald Phillips at Michigan State University. He created small groups that consist of 6 people from his large classes, then he gave them 6 minutes and asked them to discuss a problem. This technique was quickly spread and named the 'Phillips 66' technique. Today, the buzz group technique is commonly used. Various formats and arrangements have been presented to add flexibility to this technique. (Handoko, 2017, pp. 1-2; Brahm and Kleiner, 1996).

Tetsuro (1999) in Handoko (2017) points out that the buzz group is an associative learning theory that shows the way of teaching using small groups. It was introduced as a resolution to poor quality education in which the students were uninterested in learning and showed no participation in it (in Handoko, 2017, p. 2).

Kowski and Eitington (1976) specify that the buzz group is the most effective way of group learning because it provides participation in the learning process (in Handoko, 2017, p. 2).

Hurt (2012) claims that there is a technique that can be used to teach subjects of lessons to students through life-saving and thought-provoking discussion. Life-saving and thought-provoking affect learning and keeping the things that are learned in mind positively. The writer defines the buzz groups as small groups that consist of 2 or 6 people. Members of these small groups discuss a topic, generally a subject of a lesson.

Teachers can use buzz groups in a specific education program many times. If the participants are in a class, they sit in a way that they can see each other. In the case that they are in a terraced theater, two or three people, who sit in the same row, argue the given problem or the issue. If some students are left alone, they will join another group. The writer specifies the word ‘buzz’ means ‘noise’ or the buzz of the room when the participants argue an issue during a program (Pangaribuan and Manik, 2017, p. 165). If the topic requires argumentation or participants have so much energy and emotion around the topic, working with two or three people as small groups will be better.

Working in that way both lets each member to develop their own ideas, and lets the listener consider it and give feedback. People can use buzz groups if there is a minimum of 30 maximum of 3,000 people. If they are in a theater hall, the presenter asks them to turn left to right and speak with that person about the topic.

Muntaha (2016) assumes that in order to increase participation in the lesson and both show different sides of the topic and help students to look at the topic from different perspectives, teachers use the Buzz Group technique.

Gangel (2003) defines buzz group methods as small groups that aim to share ideas, find solutions to problems, or reaching a common viewpoint on an issue and then the whole class discussion comes in a limited time (In Sari, 2017, p. 3).

There are some procedural steps in applying the Buzz Group technique. These steps follow each other.

Brewer (1997) claims that if there is a suitable room, any size group can be separated into the buzz groups. The first thing the leader does is dividing the whole group into smaller groups of anywhere from 2 to 15 people. Brewer (1997) also states that the people, who are members of buzz groups, should have a room in which they can sit in a circle or in a way that they can see each other. Sitting in the room in these two ways will enhance the discussion. When the groups are formed, the leader will give information about the issue or the problem that members will discuss. All groups can discuss the same issue or each group can discuss a different problem. Brewer (1997) suggests that when the issue or the problem that will be argued is determined, the groups should be asked to choose leaders or recorders among group members or the presenter can choose one person from each group. The person, who is determined as the leader of the group, makes sure that participants know each other guides the discussion, and try to ensure that each member show attendance at the discussion. Williams (1983) states that the buzz group technique encourages members of small or crowded groups to participate in the argument by creating a proper environment for members (in Brewer, 1997). The person who is chosen as the recorder of the group takes some notes and write a sum so as to represent and share with other participants when all small groups gather and create a large group. As the number of participants of the buzz groups isn't high, less than 4 participants, determining a person as a leader or recorder is not required. In such situations, the presenter asks each group to determine a member of the group to present their information at the end of the buzz group session. Brewer (1997) believes that the time that is given to participants for discussion in the buzz group should be enounced at the beginning of the discussion and should be determined according to the numbers of participants in each group, the level of difficulty of the subject or issue, and the aim of the buzz groups. The time that is given for discussion should not be less than 2 minutes and more than 20 minutes. If these groups aim to help the participants know each other, for instance, the time should be short. But, if these groups are discussing or trying to find a way to solve a difficult problem or issue, then the time should be long. When the members of buzz groups are arguing the issue, the teacher can move between groups and can listen to them. If the teacher wants to warn members to just focus on their issue or stimulate discussion, he/she can do that by asking questions. The presenter shouldn't stay too long at any group because the participants will not ask their questions to him/her. The presenter should warn members of groups that they have just 1 or 2 minutes, then the time will be up. As time has ended, the presenter unites groups and creates larger groups, and asks for the reports of the buzz group recorders. After the presentation of all reports, the presenter may start a general argument. Brewer (1997) specifies that according to the simplicity or difficulty of the topic, the presenter may ask for group recorders to get together later so as to make a summary of their findings into a report on the topic. Participants of each group (generally more than 3 persons) move their chairs and create a circle. Sitting in a circle increases the discussion of each group and helps the participants know each other better (Renner, 2011 in Brahm and Kleiner 2015).

2. *The Purpose of Using the Buzz Group Technique*

Arivananthan (2015) claims that there are three procedures for putting the buzz group into practice. They are used so as to provide feedback, to engage participants with an issue, and to compose questions after a presentation. Arivananthan (2015) explains these three procedures one by one.

A. The first one is ‘to provide feedback’. There are 4 steps to practice it according to Arivananthan (2015).

- i. Firstly, the presenter asks participants for making small groups that consist of 2 or 3 people without standing up. Groups that consist of 2 members are suitable for small sessions and 3 members are suitable for larger sessions. The participants can share ideas or information with other person/persons who sit on the right or left side by not moving from their seats during the plenary.
 - ii. Secondly, the presenter gives the topic to provide feedback. The topic can be determined before the discussion or during the discussion. The presenter gives 3 or 5 minutes to participants to discuss the topic and put into words their ideas. The presenter heartens each member of the buzz group to speak about their ideas shortly and give answers to the comments of other participants with the group that they are members of. The presenter asks participants to choose one person from each group to feedback to the plenum.
 - iii. Thirdly because all members of buzz groups discuss the topic at the same time, their voices make noise, in other words, they ‘buzz’. This atmosphere is full of life and energy, and this environment helps participants to feel energetic as attaching to their collective understanding.
 - iv. Fourthly, when the limited time is up, the presenter finishes discussions and asks the reporters of each group to present and share their group’s answers to the question in the plenum for 1 minute less. If participants want, the presenter can write their feedback on cards.
 - B. The second one is ‘to engage with the topic’. There are three steps.
 - i. Firstly, the presenter asks participants to make small groups with persons next to them. These groups consist of 2 or 3 members.
 - ii. Secondly, the presenter calls all members of each group and asks them to express their ideas and emotions on the topic, speak about the things that they have learned from the happening, or shortly make a sum of their experiences related to the topic. The presenter gives 3 or 5 minutes for group arguments.
 - iii. Thirdly, when the given time reaches its end, the presenter can ask groups that they can share their answers and ideas if they want, for 1 minute. If the presenter’s aim is just to provide engagement of participants with the topic, he/she may not ask members to report their conclusions.
 - C. The third one is ‘to compose questions after a presentation’. There are four steps.
 - i. Firstly, the presenter asks participants to make small groups with 1 or 2 people.
 - ii. Secondly, the presenter asks groups to argue only concluded representation and prepare a proper question for the reporter.
 - iii. Thirdly, the presenter limits the time with 3 or 5 minutes that he/she gives to participants to produce an idea with their groups about what the question should be.
 - iv. Lastly, the spokesman of each group asks their group’s question to the reporter in the plenum.
3. *The Procedural Steps*

According to Brahm and Kleiner (1996), there are six factors that should be used for attaining the best results of the Buzz Group technique. The first one is determining the problem. The second one is informing tasks. The third one is the number of members in groups. The fourth one is the proximity of groups. The fifth one is the limited time. The sixth one is a relaxed environment.

Lesmeister (2012) lists procedural steps like that:

- 1- The teacher gives information about the topic.
- 2- The teacher asks members to make groups, each group should consist of 6 people.
- 3- The teacher clears the activity.
- 4- The teacher gives the worksheet to all groups.
- 5- The students do the worksheet and argue it in a group.
- 6- After speaking about the worksheet, all groups should represent the work they completed in front of the class.
- 7- Another group remarks and gives corrections.
- 8- The teacher gives feedback, too (in Handoko, 2017; Muntaha, 2016).

Hamilton et al. (1984) state that first the teacher should clear the question very well and should make sure that no one in the class has a problem with the topic that will be argued by students who are members of small groups. If there are some students who don’t understand the topic before the discussion, may some problems occur. The topic must be understandable and easy for students. Otherwise, they may don’t believe that they can discuss such a topic in a short time. The teacher asks groups that they should choose one member from each group as a recorder or a leader. Taking the responsibility for presenting capable leaders and recorders can be a valuable learning experience for students. Students should be informed previously about the responsibilities of the leader so as to make sure that the group members engage in the topic and all of them show participation.

Moreover, they should get the importance of the record work of keeping exact written records key items argued. The responsibilities of the leader and recorder should be explained quite well to the students. The discussion or buzzing should last short. The leader should hearten calm students to participate in the discussion, hereby these students prevent the aggressive students from losing control of the discussion and harming good group coaction. During the discussion, the teacher should guide and control the discussion process being made in small buzz groups by moving from one to another. When the discussion finishes, the teacher makes a short sum and makes a positive link with the event that will happen next (in Pangaribuan and Manik, 2017).

According to Milaningrum (2013), there are 9 procedural steps. Except for 2 of them, they are the same as Lesmeister's (2012) in Handoko, 2017 procedural steps.

- a) The first one of these two steps is that the teacher gives reading texts to all groups and asks them to discuss the substance of the reading text.
- b) The second one is that the teacher and all students make a sum of presentation so as to make certain that the topic has been argued sufficiently. The teacher has to make sure that all of the students comprehended the connection between their discussion and the principals of teaching.

4. *Different Versions of the Buzz Group Technique*

Although Phillips is the founder of the Buzz Group technique, different formats have been developed over time by different people, apart from the original version.

Phillips 66 Method

Brewer (1997) states that the founder of this method is J. Donald Phillips. This technique can be used with both large and small groups. In this method, the crowded groups are divided into small groups which consist of 6 persons and these people don't move their chairs so much in order to make a circle. The subgroups have 6 minutes to argue the issue or problem.

Clark's 22 Method

Brewer (1997) points out that people can use Clark's 22 Method as the participants are in the rooms in which they can't move easily, especially when the seats are fixed. There are 2 persons and they have 2 minutes to argue the given topic. The leader of the discussion asks for reports from all groups.

Huddle Method

Brewer (1997) specifies that in this method, there are 5 or 6 people and they discuss the problem. Brewer (1997) says this method and a basketball or football game huddle are alike. In these two groups, members speedily argue choices and make a plan. Members of each group choose a leader at the starting of the discussion, so as to lead the discussion. Holmes and Martensen (1983) point out that huddle groups are reproductive because the small group is flexible, without the press, and unofficial conversation (in Brewer, 1997).

Circular Response Method

Brewer (1997) puts forward that this technique is not very different from the general buzz group technique, but they differ in replying to the given topic or the problem is represented according to positions of the seats in the round. This makes sure that every member shows participation in the discussion.

Progressive Buzz Sessions

Brewer (1997) claims that the progressive buzz session and the general buzz group have so many common points except two points. The first one is the limited time, the second one is the members of groups discuss both the topic questions and additions.

Arivananthan (2015) points out that there are two variations.

- I. The teacher asks students to argue a question and write their answers on cards. The teacher gathers all cards and groups them according to their likeness. The teacher uses a pinboard when he/she does this. Cards on which there are written different ideas should come out of other cards. This may make giving feedback easier when there are 30 students.
- II. The teacher can use buzz groups to produce questions that will be explained by an expert pending a presentation. This gives the chance of describing the substance of the presentation to the students because raising relation and improving engagement. Enough time should be given to the expert for

making his/her presentation ready. This time should be arranged according to the expert and the topic. May the expert will need just minutes or hours, or even days to prepare the presentation.

5. *The Appropriate Usage of the Buzz Group Technique*

There are appropriate usages of the Buzz Group.

According to Brewer (1997), there are four appropriate uses for the Buzz Group technique.

- a) The Buzz Group is quite suitable for increasing discussion, particularly when the number of participants is high. It allows us to know what are students' needs and in which areas they are interested and provides cooperation for students, they work together and help each other.
 - b) Buzz group method can be used to help participants to know each other better. Generally, short versions of the buzz group technique like Clark's 22 method can be used to make a beginning that relaxes the tense or the formal atmosphere.
 - c) As the teacher recognizes that there are a few students who can't speak in front of a crowded group easily, he/she can use buzz groups. With this method, these shy students can speak in small groups and express their ideas.
 - d) Buzz group let a crowded group evaluate the learning experience. Occasionally, offers for making a meeting better can be expressed in a buzz group session.
- ##### 6. *The Advantages, Disadvantages and Limitations of the Buzz Group Technique*

There are some advantages of this method.

Brewer (1997) represents that there are four advantages of the Buzz Group method.

- i. Buzz groups allow all members to express their thoughts.
- ii. Members of Buzz Groups understand how to work in actual life occasions where other people's ideas are taken into consideration.
- iii. It creates a suitable environment to get the discussion started.
- iv. This method is convenient for topics that require discussion as participants share their ideas.

According to Brahm and Kleiner (1996), there are four advantages of the Buzz group method.

- i. This technique gives the chance of expressing ideas and participating in the discussion to all members of crowded groups. It is not so easy but forming small groups makes it easier.
- ii. Buzz Group helps some students, who hesitate to speak or ask questions to large groups, to express their ideas and ask their questions to other members of small groups.
- iii. It is hard to make a decision with crowded groups. The Buzz Group method eliminates this difficulty and makes it easier by dividing large groups into small groups.
- iv. There is not any limitation on the topic that participants discuss. Everybody can use it how they want when they want, where they want, and for what they want.

Handoko (2017) lists the same advantages of the Buzz Group as Brewer (1997) and Brahm and Kleiner (1996). But there are three advantages that are quite different.

- i. Students gain experience by practicing leadership, so they can develop themselves about this subject.
- ii. It forms various opinions.
- iii. Teacher can lay stress on some points that are misapprehensioned by students and can correct these points.

As with most things that have advantages, the Buzz group method has its disadvantages.

Brewer (1997) lists three disadvantages of the Buzz Group technique.

- a) A few students may decrease the positive effects of the group with rude and wrong manners.
- b) If this method is used in young learners' classes, it may not be useful. In addition, if the members of the groups are well acquainted with each other, they may not give so much importance to each other's ideas and take them seriously.
- c) It may take time when the teacher works with crowded groups.

Brahm and Kleiner (1996) point out three disadvantages of the Buzz Group method like Brewer (1997).

- a) The teacher has to structure the discussion. Otherwise, there may not be so good ideas reached by a group.
- b) This method depends on the usage of words and speaking. Generally, students don't feel ready, or may they hesitate to speak in the group.

- c) The teacher evaluates all groups' responses and thoughts when the members finish the discussion.

Handoko (2017) completely agrees with Brewer (1997) except for one disadvantage.

- a) Students may not understand the subject or take it seriously and just fiddle away.

According to Brewer (1997), there are two limitations of the Buzz Group technique.

- a. The teacher has to make ready the group very well so as to prevent any disconnection that may occur between the subject and the base.
 - b. The purpose is not about using it for the whole meeting but to put it to other methods.
7. *The Buzz Group Technique for the Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing*

Reading, listening, speaking and writing are four basic skills that teachers try to teach to students. So as to teach these language skills to the students, some teachers use the Buzz Group technique.

I. READING

Milaningrum and Mulyanto (2016) specify that reading and comprehension are attached to each other. The reader reads the text and tries to understand what the text is about and what does it mean. If the person, who doesn't understand the context of the text, reads the text and he/she can't get any information or something else from that text. So reading requires comprehension.

In order to teach reading to the students, teachers use the Buzz Group technique. If the teacher uses this method, he/she must structure the lesson according to the students. They are at the center of the lesson. This method lets the students participate in the reading discussion, it encourages students and groups to help each other, and improve their speaking skills. When students work in groups, they can use their knowledge to find solutions to reading problems. It creates a proper environment that heartens the students who hesitate to speak in front of a large group. They can do this in a small group easily. Because a large group is formed as small groups, students have the chance of participating in the discussion and state their ideas. It is advantageous about getting feedback for crowded groups when participants discuss a topic in a limited time. In the case that one student gives an answer to the problem that they discuss, that student encourages other students for future processes. This will guide other students to review their thoughts by giving feedback or tell their opinions to other students. The students will work together or discuss the text together.

II. LISTENING

Muntaha (2016) claims that the Buzz Group technique, in which students work together, can be used to help students reach the aim of the learning activity. The students make small groups and the aim of these groups is looking from different perspectives to an issue, evaluating and helping all students to be a part of the teaching learning process. For using the Buzz Group in teaching listening, there is another method. It is used as a comparator. In the Buzz Group, because students work with their friends, they share the information they have about the topic. Students feel no force in the class, naturally, they feel relaxed and can show participation actively, join the learning process. Because the student is put into the center of the lesson, they can say what they think about the subject and suggest. They may feel more confident because students discuss a topic, this affects their listening and speaking skills positively.

III. SPEAKING

Nurhayati (2015) puts forward that for the purpose of teaching speaking to the students, Buzz Group is a useful technique. This technique not only solves teachers' problems but also students' problems. It purposes develop communication among members and make social life. It affects their speaking skill positively.

Nurhayati (2015) shares some findings of the research in his article. The findings show that the Buzz Group method improved students in some aspects.

- 1) Students can produce questions.
- 2) They respond to questions.
- 3) Students can rewrite a text with their own words by not changing the meaning.
- 4) They can speak better and they are more active.

IV. WRITING

Pangaribuan and Manik (2017) completely agree with Milaningrum and Mulyanto (2016) about the positive effects of the Buzz Group method. Pangaribuan and Manik (2017) state that this technique helps students to write their ideas or comments about a topic. As this technique is student-centered, the teacher asks

small groups to discuss and write their conclusions that will be shared by the presenter with all students. Students write their responses, ideas, comments on cards, expressing themselves gives the students to develop their writing skills.

4. CONCLUSION

When teachers try to teach the language skills, which are speaking, listening, reading, and writing, to students, they use various techniques and ways in order to acquire these skills. Buzz Group is one of these techniques. Some researchers tried to find the effectiveness of this method during the learning process. According to these researches, when students discuss a subject or try to find a solution to a problem with their friends as small groups, they can participate in the discussion, express their ideas, speak about their suggestions and comments. Because there are not so many students in a group, they can know each other better, in that situation they can share the information and thoughts easily. Buzz Group is particularly useful for shy students. In such an atmosphere and environment, because students discuss a topic, they develop their speaking skill, as they listen to each other during the discussion, they develop their listening skill, they put their opinions into words, they develop their writing skill and if the teacher gives them a reading text to read and discuss, students develop their reading skill.

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