

A. INTRODUCTION

A.1. Background of the study

Nowadays English is used as one of the major subjects in many schools in Indonesia. As with others subjects, learning English in class can be done individually or through group work. In learning English students also need the ability to achieve their goal during learning process. Meanwhile in measuring students' ability teachers use assessments throughout the learning process to get students' results about what they have learned. It is very important for teachers to use the best teaching techniques to assess their students' ability. One of the assessment techniques we should pay more attention to is the assessment of students through group work. Burdett (2003) stated that not all of the group work assessment was viewed positively by students in the case that students thought about fairness and unfairness in giving individual grades through group work assessment. Moreover, she also said that teachers should consider that there can be many problems with the methods used and students have different points of view toward the value of group work assessment. This may also impact the strength and weaknesses of group work assessment for students' ability to improve.

Studies of investigating students' perceptions toward group work assessment especially in English courses have been conducted by researchers as well as teachers. In order to enhance students' achievement, the teacher uses assessment to evaluate the students' abilities during their learning process. People assume many teachers think group work is one of the better ways to assess students since group work brings positive impact not only for academic purposes but also helps the students socially. According to Burdett (2003) for instance, it builds good characteristics like helping the students learn to interact with others. It means that group work will have a good

effect on their daily communication and sharing their ideas with others. It is also supported by the previous study of Bentley (2013), that a wide variety of communication strategy have been employed for working on group assignments, and also for individual assignments when seeking input and support from peers.

However, as Burdett said before, the fact that group work assessment will not always be viewed positively shows that problems appear in assessing students through group work. This, in turn, caused researchers and teachersto conduct an investigation about students' perceptions toward group work assessment in English courses as one of the major subject.

A.2. Statement of the problem

English is not only a challenging course but is also a major subject in junior high school. English is one of the main subjects included in the national examination, so it is important to control and evaluate the ability of students in the English lesson to prepare them for national examination. Teachers need to assess students: whether they understand and are able to master the English material in class. As stated in the writer's statements before, there are some techniques to assess the students' abilities during the learning process in class. This study discusses one of the techniques which is assessing studentsthrough group work. However, there are common problems associated with it. Through this study the writer is gaining information about students' perception toward group work assessment. Rensburg (2012) investigate done common problem which was that group assessments may lack fairness in assessing individual participation and contribution through group work results. Interviewing some students at Victoria University, Rensburg(2012) found that there was an occurrence which was describe as "social loafing": in an ethnically diverse group some group members may

be reluctant to contribute for fear or feelings for inferiority but then they will receive the same grades as other members who gave greater contributions. Based on what the writer has experienced in teaching practicum, the writer agrees that students feel sometimes that group work assessment is not fair in assessing their individual abilities since all of the members in group will get same grades even though actually there are some students who do not fully participate to do the work.

Moreover, in the same line with Rensburg, Davies (2009) said there are many issues about students' different points of view about group work related to students' role in cooperating English group work assignment. As Frey & Schmitt (2007) mentioned that in the case of different levels in one class - especially for students who are slower learners - the group work assessment strategy should build a conditional class that has good communication among students. So then the slow learners will be helped from other students who have wider knowledge or information. However, students have different opinions about working in groups that must be divided equally without considering abilities and knowledge. In the same way, students see the lack of different proportion of knowledge which makes the slow learners reluctant to made contributions toward completing group work. Presumably, teachers will assess the final product as a group work assignment. Getting the same grade as every other members of their group creates feelings of unfairness in the students who made greater contributions while working with their group.

A.3. Purpose of the study

This study aims to know about the perceptions of junior high students toward group work assessment, especially in English class since English is a challenging subject. It is important for teachers to know about students's opinions in assessing the students abilities and contributions through group work. When the teachers know about students's perception toward group work assessment in English lessons, the teacher can decide whether the students should receive group work assessment as a better way to assess their abilities or not. The purpose of this study is also to find out students' points of view and opinions about group work as well as the effects, benefits, and efficiency of group work. The results of this study may also help teachers to discover the best techniques for assessing their students based on students' expectations.