
EXPLORING STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON ENGLISH TASKS IN EFL CLASSROOM (A STUDY CONDUCTED IN SMPN 4 GORONTALO)

Farmin Yunus¹, Rasuna Talib², Sri Agriyanti Mestari³

English Department, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

(Justmn7@gmail.com), (rasuna68@yahoo.com), (sri_agree@yahoo.co.id)

Abstract

One of instructional setting in EFL classroom is to provide the students in doing the task. Willis (1996, p.23) said that tasks are always activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome. It is clear that the task has some various activities including grammar, role play, practice activities, etc. and for reaching the goal of the task itself it needs a target language as a communicative to achieve it. The attractive tasks delivered to students can be assumed that the students will enjoy and happy to finish it well. This means that the success of producing the various English tasks is of course to give a valuable impression of learners. This paper presents the study of students' perception on English task delivered by the English teacher in SMP N 4 Gorontalo during the 2015/2016 academic year. The questionnaire is the instrument used in this study, which refers to three indicators: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus as suggested by Willis' theory. Then the data are analyzed qualitatively as suggested by Creswell (2009): raw data, organizing and preparing data for analysis, coding data, and interpreting the meaning of data. The findings of result indicate that the students have a positive perception in doing the task given by the English teacher in the EFL classroom, such as in task content, instruction, teacher's corrective feedback. However, they still do hope the English teacher to provide much time for students in finishing the task.

Keywords: *English tasks, EFL classroom, perception.*

Background

The task is a part of classroom interaction in assessing students' ability in understanding material instead of test. It is a plan in the learning process, both in the beginning and the end of the subject that has main role to know the students' ability in learning process. Nunan (2001, p.10) defines "Task is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than for." It is known that learners require to interact each other in doing the task in that to get the outcome of task. Therefore, the outcome could be achieved by learners through some processes.

The process of task is closely linked to the teacher's performance in delivering task and guiding students in doing tasks. In delivering tasks, teachers must know the right way of delivering task in the class starting from introducing task stage till demonstration (presenting) task stage. While in guiding learner doing the task, the teacher has main role they are as an adviser and observer. Student needs teacher as an adviser and an observer to guide them in exploring and understanding the task. As the adviser, a teacher must introduce the topic and help them to arrange the task based on their own ways. Whereas, as an observer teacher must observe what the student do and give them a feedback. Accordingly, it has an effect to increase students' motivation in the learning process, have a good outcome and tend to participate in the learning process. It all depends on the teacher's way in delivering the task and the kinds of task itself.

This paper has been presented at Sahid Jaya Hotel Makassar- International Conference on Natural and Social Sciences 2017. Palopo Cokroaminoto University, Makassar, March 12-13, 2017.

As one of classroom setting, there are many kinds of task that should be given by the teacher in the class, namely dialogue, matching and etc. According to Pattinson (1987, p.57-58) there are seven types of task: *questions and answers, dialogues and role plays, matching activities, communication strategies, pictures and picture stories, puzzle and problems, and discussions and decisions*. The teacher can use it all depends on the students' way in learning English. It is clear that teacher have been provided by the task, so the teacher just needs to develop and to explore it using their creativity in designing the task in term of attracting students' motivation in learning English.

Attract students' interest in doing the task depends on how teachers in exploring task, to make it looks attractive so that they feel challenged. In exploring the task, teachers must go through several processes. According to Willis (1996, p. 38) there are 3 phases in exploring the task; they are pre-task, cycle, and language focus. For example, simplify the difficult task becomes easier and more attractive. This theory is taken from task based learning approach the theory. The processes are choosing an easy topic and can be understood by students, explain to them in a way that is easily understood, and provide the direction structure. So that students feel comfortable and interest in learning English because of the teacher's way in giving the task. Therefore, the goal of the task can be reached.

Stimulating learner's ability that they already have as their potential is the goal of the task. It is similar to Nunan (2004) said that the goal of a task is to practice the ability to describe an object concisely; to provide an opportunity for the use of relative clauses. It is clear that the task has an important goal to be considered by the teacher during the learning process. The goal is able to create the expected results if it is done with the right steps. Based on the preliminary observation at SMP N 4 Gorontalo, the English teacher used the steps of exploring English task in the class related to Willis' theory namely pre-task, task cycle and language focus. In pre task, the teacher explained the material in a simple way and delivered it through the game. While in task cycle, the teacher guides students to finish the task and provides them vocabulary and asks students to present the task in front of the class. Having passed those steps, the teacher came to the last step, it is language focus. Here the teacher role is providing corrective feedback to the students. This corrective feedback is gathered from the previous step in the task cycle while the students presenting their task in front of the class. The teacher also made and changed the task of the material to be easy and simple. As the result, the students felt happy and learn it with full of enjoyment in the class. All students are more enthusiastic to learn English in the class because of the task that is delivered during the learning process. Through this case, the researcher wants to know the students' perception towards the task delivered by the teacher in the class. Having gathered their perception, it also gives an advantage for the teacher to know their weaknesses in delivering the task so that they could improve it to be better than before. Therefore, the research entitles *exploring students' perception of English tasks in EFL classroom* are conducted.

Method

This study used descriptive qualitative method in order to get and to analyze the data. Qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore (Creswell, 2012). It is clear that qualitative method is exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon. This study used the qualitative method to find out about the students' perception of English task in EFL classroom.

Site and Participants

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Research site. This study is conducted in SMP Negeri 4 Gorontalo. The school has eleven classes that consist of VII, VIII, and IX classes. The seven grades consist of 5 parallel classes; the eighth grades consist of 3 classes; the ninth grades consist of 3 classes.

Participants. The participants are the seven-two and excellent classes. These classes are chosen because the teacher who applying the steps of exploring task using Willis' theory teaches these classes. Therefore, the students could give their perception towards the tasks that delivered by the teacher in the class.

Technique of collecting the data

This study used questionnaire, notably the kind of open-ended one. According to Creswell (2012, p. 220) "an open-ended question is the kind of questionnaires that allows the participant to create the options for responding. The open-ended responses, however, permit you to explore the reasons for the closed-ended responses and identify any comments people might have that are beyond the responses to the closed-ended questions. The drawback of this approach is that you will have many responses, some short and some long to analyze. Also, the responses are detached from the context, the setting in which people work, play, and interact". This means that the responses may not represent a fully developed database with rich detail as is often gathered in qualitative research. This study asked some questions to students based on the indicator of Willis' theory. There were eleven indicators of the teacher's performance in delivering the task. Stage 1 is **Pre-task** that has 5 steps: *introducing the topic, identifying the language topics, pre-task language activity, giving instruction, and preparing time*. Stage 2 is **Task cycle** that has 4 steps: *a teacher as a monitor, the planning stage, a teacher as language adviser and report steps*. Stage 3 is **Language focus** that has 2 steps; *analysis and practice*.

Data analysis

In analyzing the data, this study used Creswell's theory, namely raw data, organizing and preparing data for analysis, coding the data, themes and interpreting the meaning of themes/ description.

Results and Discussion

Regarding the Willis' theory, there are steps of delivering the task that the teacher should do in the class. Stage 1 is **Pre- task** that has 5 steps: *introducing the topic, identifying the language topics, pre-task language activity, giving instruction, and preparing time*. Stage 2 is **Task cycle** that has 4 steps: *a teacher as a monitor, the planning stage, a teacher as language adviser and report steps*. Stage 3 is **Language focus** that has 2 steps; *analysis and practice*. Those stages, including indicators are used as for gathering the data on students' perception of English tasks through questionnaire.

Table 1. The number of students' perception of English task delivered by the teacher in the class (class VII-2 and excellent class) in meeting 1,2 and 3

Stage 1 (Pre-task)					Stage 2 (Task-cycle)					Stage 3 (Language Focus)
Questions (Meeting 1)										
3	4	5	9	12	10	11	13	14	15	16
14	14	14	14	14	14	14	9,5	14	14	14
Stage 1 (Pre-task)					Stage 2 (Task-cycle)					Stage 3 (Language Focus)
Questions (Meeting 2)										
3	4	5	9	12	10	11	13	14	15	16
10	10	10	10	10	10	14	6,4	10	10	10
Stage 1 (Pre-task)					Stage 2 (Task-cycle)					Stage 3 (Language Focus)
Questions (Meeting 3)										
3	4	5	9	12	10	11	13	14	15	16
10	10	10	10	10	14	14	7,3	10	10	10

The number of students in the class VII-2 is nineteen students. Having provided the questionnaire to them, the number of questionnaires that returns are fourteen questionnaires. Therefore, only fourteen questionnaires are available to be analyzed. In this meeting, the teacher taught them expression thanking material. Matching phrase to picture and dialog were the kind of task that learners make during the learning process. Learners felt so happy in doing the task, because of the teacher's way in attracting their motivation to finish the task. Whereas in the meeting 2, only ten questionnaires that available to be analyzed because some students did not give it back. It is still in the same class (VII-2). In this meeting, they discussed about the date, month and year. On the contrary, all respondents in meeting 3, it comes from an excellent class, they returned all the questionnaire. The number of questionnaires that available to be analyzed is ten questionnaires. It is same with their respondent in the class. In this meeting, they discussed about describing an animal. The table 1 shows that in stage 1 (pre-task) there are five questions delivered through a questionnaire. In question twelve, it has red color that means there were forty students (all students) dislike with the timing of tasks. While in the meeting 2, it showed that all respondents felt the timing in finishing the task is so fast. It showed in the question number 12 with the red color. Likewise, in the meeting 3 all respondents have same answered. They said the time is so short. Even they are an excellent class, but they want the teacher to add more time in finishing the task. Here is their perception towards question number 12.

What do you think about the time in finishing the task? Is it too short or vice versa? This is the last question in stage 1(pre-task). In this question, all students said the time in finishing the task was too short. It made them in a hurry to finish the task. As the result, some students were nervous in presenting the task in front of the class. Here was their perception.

Ya sangat cepat. Perlu ditambah waktunya

(Respondent 1, meeting 1, questionnaire sheet, August 13th, 2016)

Ya. Waktu yang diberikan oleh guru sangat singkat. Jadi saya terburu-buru mengerjakannya.

(Respondent 1, meeting 3, questionnaire sheet, October 22nd, 2016)

*Ya. Terlalu singkat.
(Respondent 1, meeting 2, questionnaire sheet, October 5th, 2016)*

All respondents for all meetings said that the time given by teachers in doing the task was too short for them.

In the stage 2 (task cycle), the question number 13 has a yellow color. It means that there are two perceptions of the students. There are nine students who felt confident in presenting the task and five students who felt nervous in presenting the task. Whereas, in the meeting 2, the question number 13 has a yellow color. It showed there are students who felt nervous in presenting the task and 4 students felt confident in presenting the task. Likewise, in meeting 3, there are seven students who felt nervous in presenting the task in front of the class and 3 students felt confident in presenting the task. Here is their perception:

Have you ever felt unconfident, when demonstrating or presenting the task in front of the class? This is the question number 13 for stage 2 (task cycle). All students in meeting 1, 2, and 3 have the same answers. Some students said they were confident in presenting the task in front of the class. It means they did not have fear about it. On the contrary, some students have an unconfident feeling in presenting the task in front of the class. They said they were afraid about it because they memorized the task to be presented. Therefore, they have unconfident feeling.

*Ya
(Respondent 3, meeting 1, questionnaire sheet, August 13th, 2016)*

Tidak Karena ibu guru selalu mengajarkan untuk selalu percaya diri dan tidak boleh merasa takut.

(Respondent 1, meeting 1, questionnaire sheet, August 13th, 2016)

*Ya
(Respondent 1, meeting 2, questionnaire sheet, October 5th, 2016)*

*Tidak
(Respondent 1, meeting 3, questionnaire sheet, October 22nd, 2016)*

The data showed that the students said yes and no. The students who said yes means they were afraid to present the task in front of the class and the students who said no means they did not have a fear to present the task in front of the class.

From the data above, it showed that the students dislike the timing in finishing the task is too short. They want the teacher give them much time in finishing the task. Here is their perception that like the English task delivered by the teacher in the class.

Students' perceptions toward teacher's performance in delivering the task for stage 1. At this stage, there are five questions relating to the step of exploring the task for the pre-task performed by the teacher according to Willis' theory. These questions consist of question number 3 (teacher's way in explaining topics), question number 4 (identifying phrases and words) question number 5 (of manual tasks assigned by the teacher), question number 9 (pre task language activity) and question 12 (preparation time).

Do you understand about the topic that teachers explained the class? Why? This is question number 3 in stage 1 (pre-task). Students felt happy with the teacher's role in exploring the task during the learning process. While explaining the material, the teacher demonstrated it with much excitement. It makes students feel comfortable in learning English. Here is the result of students' perception.

*Paham. Belajarnya sangat jelas dan lucu.
(Respondent 6, meeting 1, questionnaire sheet, August 13th, 2016)*

*Saya sangat puas, karena setiap penjelasan yang diberikan oleh guru dan dapat dipahami dengan mudah dan cepat.
(Respondent 4, meeting 2, questionnaire sheet, October 5th, 2016)*

Paham. Karena mudah dimengerti. .

(Respondent 4, meeting 3, questionnaire sheet, October 22nd, 2016)

The data above were the representative of the other students. It is clear that students' perception is variously. The data above are the representative from other respondents because other respondents have the same answer for them. It is clear that the students like the style of the teacher in explaining the material. They said that they were satisfied with teacher's role in explaining the topic during the learning process. The teacher explained the topic clearly. They also felt happy in learning English because the teacher always delivered it with lots of humor.

What an interesting thing that you feel towards a teacher's explanation? This is question number 4 in stage 1 (pre-task). It showed that all respondents were very interested in learning English because the teacher provided game through a song. They felt happy in memorizing the name of the month using a song given by the teacher to facilitate them in remembering the material. Understanding the materials included all aspects of the introduction of tasks and materials, instruction and how to present were so good and students like it. Also, the teacher delivered the material with full of humor. Here is the result of students' perception towards the teacher's way in exploring the task.

Hal menarik yang kami rasakan adalah ketika ibu guru memberikan contoh dengan sangat lucu.

(Respondent 3, meeting 1, questionnaire sheet, August 13th, 2016)

Hal menarik yang kami rasakan adalah disaat kami semua diajak bernyanyi bersama-sama itu sangat menarik dan bahkan guru kami pun ikut menghibur.

(Respondent 4, meeting 2, questionnaire sheet, October 5th, 2016)

Bernyanyi sambil bermain

(Respondent 1, meeting 3, questionnaire sheet, October 22nd, 2016)

The data above shows that the students were very interested and satisfied toward the teacher's role in giving the task.

Do you understand with the task instruction? Give the example of instruction?

This is question number 5 in stage 1 (pre-task). The students said they were satisfied with the instruction of task that the teacher did during the learning process. The fact, they knew what they will do with doing the task. Here was their perception toward teacher's performance in giving the instruction of task.

Paham. You and the stend

(Respondent 3, meeting 1, questionnaire sheet, August 13th, 2016)

Paham. Can you describe the animal like that?

(Respondent 1, meeting 3, questionnaire sheet, October 22nd, 2016)

Paham. Do you andderstain

(Respondent 4, meeting 2, questionnaire sheet, October 5th, 2016)

The data above showed that the students were very understanding of the directions given by the teacher in doing the task. However, some students in meeting 1 and 2 has wrong written. They wrote a wrong instruction in written form in English. Based on the teacher statement she still focused on the speaking skill than writing. It was different from meeting 2, the students wrote the correct sentence in English. Because they were an excellent class student. All students who joined in this class has basic of English skill. Here, all students know a little bit about English.

What kind of interesting task that you like? This is question number 9 in stage 1 (pre-task). Having distributed the questionnaires, it showed that the students have various ideas about the task they like. Here was their perception.

Memasangkan kata di lcd dengan buku.

(Respondent 2, meeting 1, questionnaire sheet, August 13th, 2016)

Tugas dimana kami mencari tahu hari-hari yang penting dalam bulan.

(Respondent 4, meeting 2, questionnaire sheet, October 5th, 2016)

This respondent was interested in interviewing the date, month and year of his friend's birthday. On the other hand, other respondents have a different idea.

Soal mempraktekan dialog dengan teman.

(Respondent 6, meeting 2, questionnaire sheet, October 5th, 2016)

This respondent said that dialog was a good task during the learning process. The respondent enjoyed practicing the dialog in front of the class with their fellow.

Mendeskripsikan gambar hewan

(Respondent 1, meeting 3, questionnaire sheet, October 5th, 2016)

This respondent was the representative of other respondents in meeting 3. Here all respondents have same answer, they like to describe animal task. They love this task because it was the only one task during the learning process.

Students' perceptions toward teacher's performance in delivering the task for stage 2. At this stage, there are five questions relating to the step of exploring the task for task cycle performed by the teacher according to Willis' theory. These questions consist of question number 10 (teacher as monitor and language adviser), question number 11 (planning stage), and question number 13, 14 and 15 (report stage).

Which is a nice way of doing the task? Whether individually or in groups? Why would you be interested in working on individual tasks or group? This is question number 10 for stage 2 (task cycle). At this stage the students felt satisfied with the teacher's performance in delivering and explaining the task while they were working on the tasks. Talking about the number of tasks, and which task that they like either group or individual; they prefer group task. Through group activity, they can share ideas with each other.

Membuat percakapan dengan teman.

(Respondent 1, questionnaire sheet, all meetings)

On the contrary, one student has different answered about the group task.

Kelompok. Karena saya takut ditunjuk ibu guru

(Respondent 8, meeting 1, questionnaire sheet, August 13th, 2016)

This respondent seems to be afraid of finishing the task individually. He did not have the encouragement to present the task in front of the class. He preferred working on a group task because there was little opportunity for him to be chosen.

What do you complain about the tasks either individually or in groups? This is question number 11 for stage 2 (task cycle). Having distributed the questionnaires, it showed that all students said they did not have any complaints about the teacher's performance in delivering the task.

Tidak ada yang saya keluhkan

(Respondent 1, questionnaire sheet, all meetings)

The data showed that the students did not have any complaints about the teacher's performance in delivering the task. It was different from their statement in question number 5 in stage 1. They said the timing was too short. On the contrary, they did not have any complaint in this question.

What do you expect from your teachers and your friends when you present a task or after you present the task? This is the question number 14 for stage 2 (task-cycle). This question provided for them in terms of knowing their suggestion toward teacher's performance in delivering the task. Having distributed the questionnaires, the students said they wanted the best way for a teacher in correcting their mistake (words, pronunciation, intonation, etc.).

Mengharapkan yang terbaik

(Respondent 1, questionnaire sheet, all meetings)

Having presented the task, what do you think about the number and the type of tasks assigned by the teacher? This is the last question for stage 2 (task cycle). This

question provided to them in terms of getting their perception about the difficulty and easiest tasks. Through this questionnaire, it showed that all students for all meetings said that the task that given by the teacher during learning process was so easy.

Mudah

(Respondent 1, questionnaire sheet, all meetings)

It means that the task given by the teacher in the class was so easy for them to be finished. It was easy because teacher adjusted it to the students' cognition.

Students' perceptions toward teacher's role in exploring the task for stage 3.

This part analyzed the practice and analysis steps in stage 3 (language focus). On the questionnaire, this part of the question is at number 16.

Meeting 1, 2 and 3. While presenting the task during the learning process, the teacher corrected the students' pronunciation, mistaken words directly. However, Willis said that the teacher must corrected it after the learners presenting the task. Having gathered their perception through questionnaires, the students like with that way, they assumed it can help them to improve their English. Here is the question how do you feel with teacher's role in correcting the task from the first step till the last step? And they said that the teacher did her best to keep helping them.

From the data above it showed that the students complaint the timing of task. they wanted the teacher provided them much time in that to prepare their selves to present the task to be well in the class. also, the students are interested to the dialogue task. To know students' perception in learning process, this study delivered questionnaires to them to gain their perception about the teacher's performance in delivering the task during learning process. All student likes with the teaching learning process that they had followed. So, all respondents said that the teacher's performance in delivering the task was really good and it made them felt happy and they could enjoy to learn English. It was also supported by the reasons why they love it. They like it, because in teaching learning process the teacher explains the subject clearly, so they understood the subject or the topic very well. Therefore, they can do it easily because they still remember the material. They were not boring to do the task as usual. Even though, the students complaint about timing. They wanted, the teacher provides them more time to finish the task. As the result, they did the task in rush. Talking about timing Chickering and Gamson (1987) utilizing the best time is something that is very important for students. The students need to manage their time in doing the task before presenting it or reporting it. It means if the allocating good time given by teacher for students in doing the task, the students will take a main role to manage their capability in preparing theirself, what they will say first in opening the speech and etc. It is also supported by Willis (1996, p.54), timing is very important for students to organize themselves or their group before presenting the task. Therefore, teacher must pay attention about timing because it determines the outcome of the objective of lesson.

Conclusion

The students have a positive perception in doing the task given by the English teacher in EFL classroom, such as in task content, instruction, teacher's corrective feedback. However, they still do hope the English teacher to provide much time for students in finishing the task.

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