

## THE EFFECT OF FOCUSED AND UNFOCUSED TASKS ON STUDENTS' SPOKEN PERFORMANCE AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL 4 BANDAR LAMPUNG

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### Abstract

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui pengaruh dari tugas-tugas yang terfokus dan tidak terfokus pada kecakapan lisan siswa dalam hal kompleksitas, akurasi dan kefasihan yang dikenal dengan istilah (CAF). Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif. Metode Independent Paired sample t-test digunakan untuk menentukan bukti statistik dengan membandingkan nilai rata-rata dua kelompok sampel independen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa baik tugas terfokus dan tugas tidak terfokus memiliki pengaruh yang berbeda pada CAF di mana nilai siswa dari tugas terfokus dalam hal kompleksitas leksikal dan dalam akurasi lebih baik daripada nilai rata-rata tugas yang tidak terfokus. Sementara itu, nilai rata-rata siswa pada tugas terfokus dalam hal kefasihan lebih rendah daripada tugas yang tidak terfokus. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa tugas yang terfokus memudahkan peserta didik untuk meningkatkan kecakapan lisan mereka dalam aspek leksikal dan tata bahasa sementara tugas yang tidak terfokus lebih unggul dalam meningkatkan kecakapan lisan siswa dalam hal kefasihan.

The objective of current research was to find out the effects of focused and unfocused tasks on the students' spoken performance in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF). The research is a quantitative descriptive research. The Independent Paired sample T-test was used to determine the statistical evidence by comparing the means of two independent groups. The results showed that both focused and unfocused tasks had different effects on CAF in which the students' mean scores of focused tasks in lexical complexity and in accuracy are better than the mean scores of unfocused tasks. Meanwhile, the students's mean scores on focused tasks in terms of fluency are lower than those of unfocused tasks. This suggests that focused tasks facilitate learners to improve their spoken performance in terms lexical and grammatical aspects while unfocused tasks excel in improving students' spoken performance in terms of fluency.

**Key words:** *Focused Task, Unfocused Task, Spoken Performance, CAF.*

## INTRODUCTION

People believe that being able to speak a language means knowing the language. The Junior High School students are obliged to learn English subject for four hours in a week. However, most of the English teaching in classroom provides limited chance for the students to practice English as a means of communication. Even worse, the teachers spend most of their time teaching grammar and some reading texts exercises to students as they are requested to prepare the national examination which focuses on forms.

The fact, the researcher taught English at SMPN 4 Bandar Lampung. He found that the students' score of class IX at the previous semester was bad. SMPN 4 Bandar Lampung used KTSP curriculum which means the teaching material in form of text or genre. They also got the difficulty on spoken performance. They lacked of confident and limited in vocabulary. It makes the student can not deliver his/her idea on spoken performance. Therefore in the teaching learning context, if students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak in the language classroom they will speak limited words or even become speechless and soon lose their interest in

learning. On the other hand, if the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in class can be a lot of fun, raising learner motivation and making the English language classroom an enjoyable place to learn the target language.

The paragraph above implies that ideally teachers should present the type of teaching learning activities which promote the development of their students' spoken performance. They can used Task Based Language Teaching to engage in the classroom. Izadpanah (2010: 50) conclude : "considering the principles of TBLT (i.e., authentic, learner centered, using language intentional and interactive). The author defines tasks as classroom undertaking that are intended to result in pragmatic language use tasks are a central component of TBLT in language classroom because they provide a context that activates learning process and promotes L2 learning." Moreover, Ellis (2013: 1) defined that Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an approach to teaching a second/foreign language that seeks to facilitate language learning by engaging learners in the interactionally authentic language use that results from performing a series of tasks.

Furthermore, Hutagalung (2014:1) elaborated about the implementation of

TBLT to teach speaking descriptive to the first graders of junior high school. The result of this research is that the implementation of TBLT to teach speaking descriptive was conducted properly and successfully according to framework suggested by Ellis. It was very engaging and motivating because the students were challenged to complete a communicative task. There was a good interaction among the students. Students' speaking ability after the implementation of TBLT on the first and the second meeting was satisfying. Other researcher, Ahour et al. (2015: 124)

The result of their study indicated that the performance of the students using focused task outweighed the students using focusing task outweighed the other two groups experiencing unfocused task and traditional task in terms of grammar. In addition, Montasseri and Saadi (2015:1) concluded that both focused and unfocused tasks had a statistically significant impact on Iranian EFL learner's development of collocations; however, the focused tasks were more effective.

So far there have a lot of discussions and research dealing with tasks in task based language teaching. However, to the writer's knowledge the discussion of focused and unfocused tasks are not many

yet, especially on speaking performance. Therefore, in this paper the writer is interested to investigate those tasks and their effect on students' spoken performance in terms of Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency (CAF) and the writer would like to know the effect of the tasks on students' spoken performance in terms of CAF at Junior High School 4 Bandar Lampung.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was intended to investigate the effects of focused and unfocused tasks on the students' spoken performance in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF). To reach this objective, this research used a quantitatively descriptive approach. The Independent Samples t-test compares with the means of two independent groups in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different. The Independent Samples t-test is a parametric test. This test is also known as Independent Two-sample t-test. The treatments were administered in pair work to one group of students in several meetings. Each of students' oral performance was recorded, coded and analyzed in order to see their complexity, accuracy, and fluency.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. The Differences of Speaking Performance in terms of CAF between the Focused Tasks and Unfocused Tasks

The purpose of this research was to investigate the effects of the use of focused and unfocused tasks in spoken performance by the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students of SMPN 4 Bandar Lampung. In order to see the student's speaking performance in terms of Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency in their utterances between different focused and unfocused task, the descriptive statistical was computed based on the students' speaking performance.

**Table 4.1 Table Comparison of CAF's Mean Scores on Focused and Unfocused Task**

	Method	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Syntactic	Focused Task	30	1,0860	,13756	,02511
	Unfocused Task	30	1,1553	,13903	,02538
Lexical	Focused Task	30	1,943	,09079	,01658
	Unfocused Task	30	1,405	,17112	,03124

			3		
	Unfocused Task	30	1,3357	,04804	,00877
Accuracy	Focused Task	30	1,8150	,14369	,02623
	Unfocused Task	30	1,4337	,11220	,02049
Fluency	Focused Task	30	1,2830	,22135	,04041
	Unfocused Task	30	1,405	,17112	,03124

Table 4.1 represents how the data of the mean scores on focused and unfocused tasks were gained. The distinction between focused and unfocused tasks create a collaboration between syntactical and fluency toward unfocused tasks. Consequently, lexical complexity and accuracy affect the focused tasks. To make detail understanding, the researcher explains about the result in the following explanation:

#### 4.1.1 The Results of Complexity

There are two dimensions of complexity, both are syntactical and lexical complexity. This present study used t- independent

sample. This data analysis must fulfill two terms, they are normal distribution and homogeneity. If the normality data can not be fulfilled, so the data analysis will use Mann-Whitney Test. In other words, it can be used t-independent sample with the real condition (the data is not homogeneity).

#### 4.1.1.1 Syntactical

Syntactical Complexity means that varying structures with complex elements, such as embedded dependent clauses are used. (Lintunen and Makila 2015: 381) In this section the researcher will elaborate the statistical data.

**Table 1 Table of Syntactical Mean Score of students on Focused and Unfocused Task**

Method	Mean Score of Syntactical item
Focused Task	1,09
Unfocused Task	1,16

Based on Table 1 shows the average syntactic value of students who use unfocused task learning methods is 1.16 and the average value of students who are taught using method focused tasks is 1.09 with an average difference of 0.07. This difference value is very small, so the difference between the two is not significant. The absence of this difference

is also based on the results of the t test, as shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 2. Comparison T-test Results of the Syntactical Mean Score of Students Using the Focused Task and Unfocused Task Methods**

T-test Score	Significance	Conclusion
1,942	0,057	Not significant ( $p > 0,05$ )

Based on Table 2, the value of t-test = 1.942 is obtained with a significance value =  $0.057 > \alpha 0.05$ . Thus, the mean score of the syntactic students who use the Focused Task Method and the Unfocused Task are the same, in other words the focused and unfocused method has the same ability to improve students' syntactical abilities

#### 4.1.1.2 Lexical

Based on the results of the analysis obtained data on the Mean Score of Lexical students who use the method focused Task is higher than Unfocused Task. The mean score of Lexical students who use method focused Task is 0.94 while students who use unfocused is 0.34 with an average difference of 0.60 (see Table 3), below:

**Table 3. The Mean Score of Lexical Students Using the Focused Task and Unfocused Task Methods**

Method	Mean Score of lexical item
Focused Task	0,94
Unfocused Task	0,34

T test results as seen in Table 3 obtained t value = 32.401 with a significance value =  $0.00 < \alpha 0.05$ . This shows that the difference in the average lexical value of students on both methods is significant. The score of students who learn to use the method focused task is greater, so it can be concluded that the Focused Task Method is better than the Unfocused Task method in improving the value of Lexical Students. It can be drawn on the table 4 below.

**Table 4 T-Test Results Comparison of the Students' Lexical Mean Score Using the Focused Task and Unfocused Task Methods**

T-test Score	Significance (p)	Conclusion
32,401	0,000	signifikan ( $p < \alpha 0,05$ )

The results of the analysis using the t test obtained sig values.  $0,000 < 0,05$ , which indicates that there are significant

differences in the lexical value between the Focused and Unfocused task.

#### 4.1.1.3 The Results of Accuracy

Based on the analysis results obtained data on the average value of the accuracy of students who use the Focused Task and Unfocused Task methods can be seen in the following table

**Table 5 The Mean Score of Students' Accuracy Using the Focused Task and Unfocused Task Methods**

Method	Means Scores of Students' Accuracy
Focused Task	0,81
Unfocused Task	0,43

Based on the table above, the table shows that the mean score of the students' accuracy who taught by focused task (0.81) is higher than unfocused task (0.43). The following evidence will be proved about the previous core.

**Table 6 T-Test Results Comparison of the Students' Accuracy Mean Score Using the Focused Task and Unfocused Task Methods**

T-test score	significance (p)	Conclusion
11,46	0,000	signifikan ( $p < \alpha 0,05$ )

The results of the analysis using the t test are obtained sig values  $0,000 < 0,05$ , which indicates that a significant difference in the accuracy value between the Focused and Unfocused methods. The accuracy value (Table 4.1 above) that uses the Focused task is 0.8130 higher than the Unfocused task which is 0.4397

#### 4.1.3 The Results of Fluency

Based on the data analysis taken from the table below (table 7). The result of students' fluency using unfocused task is 1.41, while the focused task is 1.28. These results indicate there is significant difference between focused task and unfocused task.

**Tabel 7. The Mean Score of Students' Fluency Using the Focused Task and Unfocused Task Methods**

<b>Metode Pembelajaran</b>	<b>Nilai Rata-rata Fluency Siswa</b>
Focused Task	1,28
Unfocused Task	1,41

**Table 8 T-Test Results Comparison of the Students' Fluency Mean Score Using the Focused Task and Unfocused Task Methods**

<b>Metode Pembelajaran</b>	<b>Nilai Rata-rata Fluency Siswa</b>
Focused Task	1,28
Unfocused Task	1,41

The results of the analysis using the t test obtained sig values.  $0,02 < \alpha 0,05$ , which indicates that there are significant differences in the fluency value between the Focused and Unfocused methods/task. The fluency value that uses the unfocused task is higher than the focused task. The means scores of the students' fluency value that uses the unfocused task is 1.4057 (1.41) and uses the focused task is 1.2827 (1.28).

#### 4.2 Discussion

In this session the researcher discusses results which were found in this research in order to answer the research problems by giving related theories and research result which has been conducted by the previous researcher in the same field as justification of this research. An important result which was also found during the research process will be elaborated in this session.

### **4.2.1 Spoken Performance**

Ellis, Li, and Zhu (2018: 38) stated that the difference between the two types of tasks lies in their design, whereas unfocused tasks are designed to elicit general samples of language use, focused tasks are design with a specific language item (typically, a grammatical structure) in mind in the hope that when the task is performed students will use or attempt to use that item. In corporate to this statement, the researcher draws some discussions in the following explanation.

#### **4.2.1.1 Complexity**

Linguistic Complexity in TBLT according to Bui and Skehan (2018:2) has been viewed as how elaborate a learner's language is, which suggests a persoal inclination to be adventurous in using more advanced language. They also explained that complexity is typically measured as either structural or syntactical complexity (e.g., ratio of subordination or length of clause/AS unit as general complexity indices, and range of grammatical structures as specific complexity indices) or lexical complexity (e.g., lexical diversity, lexical sophistication, and lexical density).

Furthermore, Vaezi (2012: 673) asserts that linguistic properties of a piece of writing may include syntactic complexity,

lexical complexity, and grammatical complexity. However, in this study grammatical complexity was not probed into.

#### **a) Syntactical Complexity**

Syntactical Complexity means that varying structures with complex elements, such as embedded dependent clauses are use. (Lintunen and Makila, 2015: 381) Based on the previous table (syntactical result), it showed that focused and unfocused task are not significant, it means both can be good in terms of syntactical complexity. Lintunen and Makila (2015: 391) examined about syntactical complexity on spoken and written skill. They concluded that written production was significantly more complex than spoken production. The greatest similarities with the recent research that, they also found the clause length of written and spoken production did not differ much. The fact that the complexity ratios revealed a statistical difference between T-units and AS-units, but not between sentences and U-units, indicates that the choice of the segmentation unit affected the results greatly. It makes no significant differences in term of syntactical complexity.

Another previous researcher, Eslami (2014: 1185) concluded that syntactical complexity may create comprehension



problems for mid and low proficient students, but not for high proficient ones. In line to the recent research, his research also found no significant difference, while in this research, the syntactical complexity does not give significant effect to the students by using focused task and unfocused task. Based on Eslami and this study, the teacher can divide the students based on their level to get good improvement in speaking performance.

### b) Lexical Complexity

The measurement for another type of complexity, lexical complexity was done by calculating the percentage of lexical words to total number of words (Michel, Kuiken, & Vedder 2007:248).  
Lexical Complexity:

$$\frac{\text{Lexical words}}{\text{Total Number of words}} \times 100\%$$

Look at this the table of calculation and the transcription below!

No	Lexical Words	Example
1.	Full verbs, nouns, adjective, adverbs ending in -ly	Buy, houses, good, carefully
2.	The verbs have, do, be except when used as auxiliaries	I have much money
3.	Wrongly conjugated verbs	Buayed
4.	Words that have problems with	Man, men

	number	
5.	Interjections	Hi, hello, goodbye
6.	Hyphenated words and constructions	I'm, I'd
7.	Conjugated forms of verbs count as different type	Do and did
8.	Phrasal verbs	To get up
9.	In preposition verbs	Interested in

The following is the example of coding and calculating the lexical complexity :

S1 : Hello, ex, excuse me. I wanna order some cakes. What is the list of cake today?

S1 : What you mean yesterday's doughnuts? Is it not a good doughnut?

S1 : Oh, I see. Mm, well. So, there is no pizza, no cereals and no brownies. So I wanna

Order ten pieces of tarts, and ten pieces of cupcakes.

S1 : Ok. Thank you. And how much those altogether?

S1 : Ok. Here is the money.

S1 : Welcome. (00:47)

The transcription above, narrate that the underlined words in the unfocused task stimulate the students to engage the utterances in a informal expression. While in the focused task, the students used the formal and structural utterances.

In this present study, focused task give higher effect on lexical complexity than unfocused task. Lahman et al (2015: 29), in their study stated that "we assessed the grammatical and lexical complexity of

spontaneous oral productions by long-term L2 speakers and how they are affected by age of onset, length of residence, continued L1 use, level of education, and other potential factors.” It means that it can be spontaneously applied, if the age of the learners or the educational level of the learners are adult. As we know, the researcher took IX SMP students as the sample of the research. It makes, the teacher should apply the focused task because as a teenager, she/he will focus on form than meaning. Focused tasks are tasks aimed to predispose learners to process, receptively or productively, some particular linguistic feature, for example a grammatical structure (Ellis, 2003:16)

#### **4.2.1.2 Accuracy**

Kim, Nam and Lee (2016: 148) have investigated the relationship between L2 proficiency and production of 130 L2 Korean learners with four different L1s. They measured their Korean language proficiency and evaluated their writing and speaking on complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) from two story-retelling tasks. they defined the accuracy (p.150) “is an important construct for evaluating the development of the learner’s L2 grammar.” To measure accuracy in their research, they compared the number of error free clause against the total number of clauses. They

(p.175) concluded that proficiency stronger correlation with fluency and complexity than with accuracy in L2 production seem to suggest that we should include not only accuracy but also fluency and complexity in the evaluation of L2 development. They gave similar tasks to the students, while this present study gave different tasks (focused and unfocused task). In contrast to the present study, accuracy give the positive effect on focused task.

Ahangari and Barghi (2012: 19) suggests that almost always accuracy is better observed in grammar test than in real communicative activities like writing compositions. They also (p.6) defined that accuracy is the ability to use the language correctly, and grammar instruction in any language teaching/learning program mainly aims at uplifting accuracy in learners for better communication. In line to this theory, focused tasks are tasks aimed to produce learners to process receptively or productively, some particular linguistic feature for example a grammatical structure (Ellis, 2003: 6). The accuracy value that uses the focused task is 0.8130 higher than the Unfocused task which is 0.4397. The possible reason is because the students have already mastered in composing the simple present utterances.

### Group Five

- S1 : | Hi. |
- S1 : | Arjuna, where are you on Sunday from six to ten a.m(C)? |
- S1 : | What do you usually do at that time(C)? |
- S1 : | I'm at home too (C). |
- S1 : | I usually take a bed(C), eh take bath, watch television(C), and breakfast(C). |
- | Thanks (C). |
- S2 : | Hi. |
- S2 : | On Sunday at six to ten, I'm usually at home (C). |
- S2 : | I usually have break fast(C), clean my room(C), take a bath(C) and help my mom(C). | | And how about you(C) |
- | Where are you on Sunday at six to ten am(C)? |
- S2 : | What do you usually do at that time at home(C)? |
- S2 : | Alright. | (00:38')

In details, the previous researcher, Ansarin and Chehrazad (2015: 86) also investigated the effects of two different focus on foem techniques, unfocused and focused recast, on EFL learners' oral accuracy. It is similar to the present study that focused task shows the greater speaking performance on accuracy dimension. Other similarity was the material in line with the structural target. Simple past tense in line to the retelling task, in other case, simple present tense is correlated to describing routine activity.

### 4.2.1.3 Fluency

The term 'fluency' is widely used in language pedagogy and 'fluent' is regularly appeared in language testing and assessment (Yang, 2013: 58). He also stated that "the practice of speaking fluency in a long-term period is a challenging task for both EFL teachers and learners, but also a powerful retrieval strategy to enhance the speaking competence in order to maintain the conversations in real life."(p55) Therefore in the teaching learning context, if students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak in the language classroom they will speak limited words or even become speechless and soon lose their interest in learning. On the other hand, if the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in class can be a lot of fun, raising learner motivation and making the English language classroom an enjoyable place to learn the target language.

Bahrani and Khaghaninejad (2016: 444) investigated the role of gender on Iranian intermediate learners' oral accuracy and fluency. The results of statistical analysis showed that female participants outperformed the male participants in terms of fluency while male participants had a better performance in terms of

speaking accuracy. However, in this present study, the researcher took paired group in analyzing the speaking performance. It is supported by John (2017: 1), he also concluded that group work is a good way to develop speaking skills. Harmer (2007:116) also elaborated that one of the advantages of paired work is :”It dramatically increases the amount of speaking time any one student gets in the class.” Related to this research, the researcher found that unfocused task has a positive impact to fluency of the students, because it is supported by the syntactical complexity. Hence, the student can be good in a syntactical utterance, she/he will be good at fluency too. Ahour and Shemshadsara (2015: 126) stated that, in unfocused task the topics are drawn from a real life or perhaps from the academic curriculum that students are studying. Look at this transcription which occurred in unfocused task (group 8) :

S1 : | I am looking for some cakes.(C) |  
 What cakes are ... ada di sini there, here?  
 | What cakes are there Here ?(C) |  
 S1 : | Well, I will order pizza.(C) |  
 S1 : | Is there tart cake?(C) |  
 S1 : ten pieces. | How about doughnuts?(C) |  
 S1 : | Emm, how is the price?(C) |  
 S1 : | Oke, I will have twenty pieces then.(C)  
 | | How about cup cakes?(C) | | Do  
 you have it?(C) |

S1 : emm. | Ten pieces please. | And ... do  
 you have cereals and brownies today?(C) |  
 S1 : No..no.. no. | That’s all.(C) | How much  
 are they?(C) |  
 S1 : | twenty pieces. |  
 S1 : | This is the money.(C) |  
 S1 : | Thanks.(C) |  
 S2 : | Can I help you?(C) |  
 S2 : | We sell many kinds of  
 cakes.(C) | | There are doughnuts, apple pies, tarts,  
 brownies, danishes, Bread, biscuits, hot dogs, pizza,  
 burger, cupcakes, crispy, cereal and pop corns  
 (C) |.  
 S2 : | Sorry. (C) | | We don’t have pizza  
 today.(C) | | It was yesterday’s  
 stock.(C) | | Anything else?(C) |  
 S2 : | Oh yes. | | We have it today.(C) | |  
 How much do.... do you need? (C) |  
 S2 : | The doughnuts are not today’s  
 stock.(C) | | It was yesterday’s stock.(C) | | But  
 we still have it.(C) |  
 S2 : | Yeach, it’s more lower  
 price.(C) | | Usually, it is three thousand  
 each but we sell it two thousand a half  
 today. (C) | So it is more murah..  
 murah...cheaper than ... yesterday.(C)  
 S2 : | Yes, we have today. (C) | | How  
 much? |  
 S2 : Cereals and brownies. | Sorry. | | We  
 don’t have today(C). We will nyiapkan...  
 emm... provide tomorrow. | You want  
 anything else?(C) |  
 S2 : | Ten pieces of tarts is forty thousand  
 rupiah (C)and ten pieces of cupcakes is  
 fifty five thousand Rupiah(C) | and the..  
 the doughnuts is .... | Sorry how much  
 doughnuts? |

S2 : | Twenty pieces are ... fifty thousand.(C) |  
 | So,you should pay forty plus fifty five plus fifty.(C) | | They are one hundred fourty five thousand. (C) |  
 S2 : | Two hundred. | | Then your change's fifty five thousand.(C) | | Here it is.(C) |

The transcription above told that the conversation still run smoothly, eventhough the utterances looked ungrammatical. In addition, Ganta (2015: 2762) also explained about unfocused tasks are based on a theory which says that learning is an implicit process which cannot be influenced directly through instruction. He described about the strengths of task based learning. Task based learning helps learner to interact spontaneously. So, in doing paired work conversation, it leads the student to be good at fluency. Based on the results, unfocused is better than focused in applying fluency.

This explanation above also make an insight that focused and unfocused task can be succesful in any different extents depend on the students' factor and teacher's instruction in the teaching learning process.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the result and the discussion of the research, the writer draws the following

conclusion: Focused and unfocused tasks which belong to the TBLT approach have their own strengths and weaknesses, both focused and unfocused tasks can be used to implement structural tasks to elicit the students experience spoken performance in the simple present ( grammar ) through the tasks. then, in terms of CAF, focused task excels and leads the positive effect on the spoken performance in complexity (lexical complexity) and accuracy. This finding was proved and supported from the score of calculation from the statistical computation of mean scores. Thus, Unfocused task is closely-related to the contextual situation or real-world task. Based the calculation of the CAF's scores, unfocused task makes the good impact to the syntactical complexity and fluency of the students.

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