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## Investigating Students' Engagement in Task-Based Speaking Activities

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat bagaimana siswa terlibat dalam aktivitas berbicara berbasis tugas dan perspektif siswa selama pembelajaran aktivitas berbicara berbasis tugas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data penelitian dikumpulkan dari observasi di kelas dan diverifikasi dengan data wawancara setelah menggunakan kegiatan berbicara berbasis tugas. Penelitian ini dilakukan di salah satu kelas di Sekolah Menengah Pertama di Jakarta Barat. Satu kelas diobservasi selama tiga kali pertemuan pada pembelajaran aktivitas berbicara berbasis tugas, dan enam siswa diwawancarai untuk mengetahui perspektif mereka terhadap aktivitas berbicara berbasis tugas. Data observasi dan wawancara dianalisis menggunakan metode enam fase dan diinterpretasikan. Studi ini menemukan bahwa penggunaan aktivitas berbicara berbasis tugas mempunyai dampak positif terhadap keterlibatan siswa. Kegiatan berbicara berbasis tugas dapat mengubah perilaku siswa menjadi lebih aktif, antusias, berani, menyenangkan, dan kolaboratif, sehingga mempengaruhi minat mereka untuk berpartisipasi dan terlibat di kelas. Perspektif siswa berpendapat bahwa metode aktivitas berbicara berbasis tugas sangat menarik dan dapat memudahkan siswa dalam memahami materi, aktivitas berbicara berbasis tugas membantu siswa menjalin hubungan baik dengan teman sekelasnya, dan siswa mengalami kesulitan pengucapan dalam aktivitas berbicara berbasis tugas. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat membantu guru, siswa, dan sekolah memberikan lebih banyak informasi tentang keterlibatan siswa dalam kegiatan berbicara berbasis tugas.

Kata Kunci: *Kegiatan berbicara berbasis tugas, keterlibatan siswa*

## Abstract

This research aims to see how students' engage in task-based speaking activities and students' perspectives during task-based speaking activity learning. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research data was collected from observations in the classroom and verified by interview data after using task-based speaking activities..This research was conducted in one class at Junior High School in West Jakarta. One class was observed for three meetings during task-based speaking activity learning, and six students were interviewed were interviewed to find out their perspective towards the task-based speaking activities. Observation and interview data were analyzed using the six-phase method and interpreted. This study found that the use of task-based speaking activities had a positive impact on student engagement. Task-based speaking activities can change students' behavior to be more active, enthusiastic, brave, fun, and collaborative, influencing their interest in class participation and engagement. Students' perspectives find task-based speaking activity method are very interesting and can make it easier for students to understand the material, task-based speaking activities help students establish good relationships with their classmates, and students experience pronunciation difficulties in task-based speaking activities. This research is expected to help teachers, students, and schools provide more information about student engagement in task-based speaking activities.

*Keyword: Task-based speaking activities, Students' engagement*

## INTRODUCTION

Task-based language teaching is one of the most successful and relevant language teaching strategies in recent years because of its efficacy in second and foreign language instruction, which has become a requirement in the twenty-first century (Torusda & Tunç, 2020). Task-based speaking activities based on task-based language teaching have been developed and deployed in the context of teaching and learning speaking to EFL students. Students benefit greatly from task-based speaking activities because they can explain their meaning in the target language. According to Albino (2017), task-based speaking activities can help students enhance their speaking fluency. According to Le and Huynh (2019), task-based speaking activities can improve students' knowledge, motivation, interaction, and language competence. While learning English speaking skills, many students struggle with things like how to pronounce words, how to start conversations, and more (Yevi et al., 2021). Task-based speaking activities are demonstrably beneficial for students, particularly those with low levels of competence. Students can put up a complete, deliberate effort and practice saying what they mean (Ellis et al., 2019). Additionally, students will be more motivated to study English, particularly speaking skills, when they are aware of their own learning needs and goals (Rida

et al., 2021).

In language learning, there are several task types that can be used efficiently. Each work type is related to others, and each task type can serve as a starting point or a goal for a task that is similar to it. Prabhu (1987) classified task-based language acquisition activities into three categories: knowledge gaps, reasoning gaps, and opinion gaps. Skehan and Foster (1996) divide tasks into three categories: tasks involving personal information transmission, tasks involving narrative, and tasks involving decision-making. Willis (1996), on the other hand, divides tasks into six categories: listing, sorting, comparing, problem-solving, personal experience sharing, and creative work. The conclusion is that, despite the fact that tasks are classified, they all aim to give EFL students more opportunity to use the language.

Prabhu (1987) proposed the task-based language teaching method. It was divided into three stages: pre-task (a preliminary activity), task cycle (a focused activity or interactive process action), and post-task (a form-compliant activity). Willis (1996) extended this paradigm by presenting a framework for task-based language teaching. The framework consisted of three major stages: pre-task (subject and task introduction, preparation), task cycle (task execution, planning, and report), and language focus (language analysis, practice). Therefore, it should be noted that in the task-based speaking activity method, students have an active and important role in student engagement, with the teacher's job being to encourage and assist students when they complete their assignments.

Students' engagement in the teaching and learning process is essential because it serves as a powerful motivator for them to participate actively in their learning. The constructivist premise that learning is influenced by how a person interacts with activities having a learning purpose underpins the concept of student learning engagement (Coates, 2005). According to Mandernach (2009), student engagement is the result of intrinsic motivation or personal requirements that let students feel good and persevere in their task with confidence. Student engagement, in other words, is the expression of thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors by students (Taylor, Hunter, Melton, and Goodwin, 2011). Bloom's (1956) theory supports the idea that student engagement can be separated into three components. (1) Behavioral engagement: students that follow behavioral guidelines such as attendance and engagement. (2) Affective engagement: students who are emotionally active exhibit emotive responses such as curiosity or delight. (3) Cognitive engagement: students who use their brains actively will try to go above and beyond what is required and will love a challenge. According to a research study, teachers must be able to design situations and tasks that encourage student

participation (Parsons, Nuland, and Parsons, 2014). This study focuses on the emotional dimension of task performance, but uses the term affective engagement to include emotions that learners experience during task performance, as well as behavioral engagement to capture the actions and behaviors that people engage in while learning, which can support or hinder learning.

The affective or emotional part of engagement addresses the cumulative and long-lasting degrees of emotions that students experience, increasing their desire for postsecondary education (Bowden, 2013). This type of engagement is characterized by increased positive emotions during activities, such as pleasure, superiority, enjoyment, enthusiasm, and curiosity (Klem and Connell, 2004). Students who are strongly involved in academic activities can detect the purpose of the assignments and social communications (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Behavioral engagement is developed from the idea of engagement when taking into account the numerous ways that students interact (Fredricks et al., 2004). Assignment completion, active attendance, and participation in academic and extracurricular activities are all required for successful academic outcomes (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009). Another part of behavioral engagement is students' capacity to obey rules and instructions in accordance with classroom norms, in addition to being punctual and refraining from needless disruptive behavior (Mih et al., 2015). According to Fredricks et al. (2004), a student's willingness to participate may be influenced by their feelings toward their peers, teachers, administrators, and the school itself.

Many researchers conduct research in this area because they are passionate about student engagement in task-based language teaching. Vu & Tran (2021) investigated non-English major students' learning engagement in task-based language teaching. The non-English major students' degree of learning engagement in task-based language teaching had a significant impact. Xuyen & Trang (2021) also investigated the effect of task-based speaking activities on EFL learners' oral performance. Comparatively, EFL students in the experimental group outperformed their counterparts in the control group, who received conventional training, in oral performance. Another research was also conducted by Phuong & Tuyen (2022), who investigated secondary school students' perceptions of the use of task-based speaking activities in EFL classes. The students learned that when they joined task-based speaking activities, they encountered problems like the classroom environment, mixed abilities, and some challenging textbook assignments. Based on many previous studies, the majority of these studies exclusively concentrated on the beneficial effects of task-based activities on the

speaking ability of EFL students. Therefore, the researcher of this study wanted to explore students' engagement in task-based speaking activities and explore students' perspectives during task-based speaking activity learning.

## METHOD RESEARCH

This qualitative research used a case study as the research method. According to Frenkel (2009), a case study is a qualitative research method that examines a significant person, organization, or example in order to develop an understanding of a specific situation or offer helpful generalizations. Because of that statement, the researcher chose a qualitative case study because this method was interpreted as describing the data by doing observation and then doing an interview with the students from the beginning until the end of the study. The researcher observed three times using a checklist that includes criteria for student engagement at each stage. This research took place in one of the junior high schools in West Jakarta. The participants were eighth-grade junior high school students. This research involved a class of 32 students as participants to observe students' engagement in task-based speaking activities. Six students applied to be interviewed as a form of collecting data for this research. The participants were aware of the observer's position. The interviews were conducted after three meetings to learn task-based speaking activities. The interviews were semi-structured, with eight questions at the core of the discussion and the student's data emerging as they emerged. In other words, before the interview, the researcher identified the activity in the class of findings based on the observation; then, during the interview, the result was discussed and students' perceptions explored. Observation and interview data were analyzed using the six-phase method by Braun & Clarke (2006) and interpreted.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### *RESULTS*

Based on the information gathered by the researcher through observation and interviews, the researcher found the results of students' engagement in task-based speaking activities. To answer this research question, the researcher analyzed the observational data, which would be strengthened by data interviews conducted with six students at the end of the study. Based on affective and behavioral indicators in the observation checklist, speaking activities used in task-based language teaching go through various levels.

Pre-task

The teaching and learning process began in the first stage (pre-task) with an introduction by the English teachers. The teacher went over the course material and learning objectives. The topic of the teacher's offered learning material is The Expression of Attention, Understanding, Complimenting, and Opinion. Before explaining the learning material, the teacher inquired about the students prior understanding of the content to be studied. At the time, students actively responded to the material's meaning. Students responded based on what they had learned from their textbooks. The teacher then concluded the students' comprehension of the content.

The teacher also began to educate students on the fundamental concepts of task-based speaking activities during this introduction activity. The introduction activity began by explaining the meaning and purpose of task-based speaking activities to students. The teacher described task-based speaking activities as a style of language acquisition that uses assignments as the primary emphasis of learning through speaking activities. All students are expected to learn how to speak English in front of an audience accurately and confidently. As students can demonstrate expressions in front of the class, it becomes a challenge for them to be confident. The teacher engages students in the task at hand by describing this strategy.

Students paid full attention during the pre-task when the teacher explained the topic of learning material (the expression of attention, understanding, complimenting, and opinion) and task-based speaking activities as a learning method, which can be classified as an aspect of behavioral engagement. Students are also engaged, interested, and do not feel bored in class, which is a facet of affective engagement.

### Task cycle

The teacher used task-based speaking activities in the second stage (task cycle) by leading student group discussions regarding the task of creating group dialogues and presenting them in front of the class. The teacher began by providing an outline of the group discussion. The task of creating the discussion includes acquiring content on how to exhibit attention, comprehension, complementing, and viewpoint. The teacher then divided the class into eight groups of four students each, with students given the option of selecting their own group members. Themes for group debate are also open to student ingenuity and can include topics such as school, play, family, or anything else.

Students planned group conversations by talking with one another. They were serious about their attempts. There is also a host group, which is the discussion's leader. The host

requested each group member, one by one, to contribute dialogue suggestions based on their roles. Students typically practice the four components of English competence in class, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing. When they run out of language to complete the sentences, they consult the dictionary. The groups frequently discussed each other. Furthermore, the teacher occasionally surrounds the class and enters the group to assist students.

Students must report the results of their discussions in front of the class after completing their responsibilities. Each group's presentation of themes was unique. The other groups were observed paying close attention to the group that appeared in front of the class. Each group that was presented received feedback from the teacher. The teacher commented that while some groups presented fluently and fearlessly, others lacked confidence and occasionally lost the dialogue. At this stage, there is a positive response, they loved conducting activities and interacting in English with their classmates while working on homework in class. Students and teachers both actively participated in the teaching and learning process.

#### Language focus

In the third stage (language focus), students are invited to re-read their group dialogue and highlight difficult words. The teacher uses this segment of the class at this point to urge students to focus on new linguistic structures and then practice using them in a variety of scenarios. A learning approach that actively engages students with significant points, which are the main targets of the learning being carried out, facilitates mastery of this language.

The meeting was concluded by the teacher reviewing the learning material once again, and the teacher inquired what they had learned from the preceding content. These questions elicited active responses from students. Students defined and demonstrated the expressions of attention, understanding, complimenting, and opinion from the start. Students have a thorough understanding of what they have learned. The teacher also rated student understanding based on how students responded to questions posed by other groups. They enjoyed and performed well in these meetings, and students are not afraid to answer questions in English class.

The results of the observation checklist showed that students were actively engaged in speaking assignments. Students eagerly debated and courageously presented in front of the class. Following that, students assisted other students who appeared to understand the discourse. During the three meetings, no student disrupted the teaching and learning process.

Task-based speaking exercises, in brief, can make students more active and enjoy class participation and engagement through group discussion and presentation strategies.

#### Students' perspectives on task-based speaking activities

Another finding that can be expanded on in this section is students' perspectives on task-based speaking activities. Student engagement was observed in meetings during the learning process. Most students pay attention when the teacher teaches. All students are present in class. Also, there is interaction between the teacher and students related to the material. Students follow the teacher's instructions in the learning process. In task-based speaking activities, all students finish and turn in assignments on time. The interview data also supports students' perspectives on task-based speaking activities. It was found that students' perspectives on task-based speaking activities had a positive impact. Presented as an answer to the question "How do you feel when you use task-based speaking activities in class?" The students explain their perspective in the following quotations:

*"I like learning to use the TBSA method in class, this method makes it easier for me to understand the material, Mrs." (DS)*

*"I am enthusiastic about learning to use the TBSA method in class, this method is very interesting for my learning, Mrs." (FE)*

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that most students consider the task-based speaking activity method to be very interesting and can make it easier for them to understand the material. In addition, other findings from interview data found that task-based speaking activities helped students in group assignments. Presented as an answer to the question, "Do task-based speaking activities help you in group assignments?" The students explain their perspective in the following quotations:

*"There are no difficulties, Mrs. Group assignments are very helpful, because if there is something I don't understand, I can ask my friend and discuss many things at the same time, Mrs." (BA)*

*"Smoothly, no significant difficulties. The problem is that group assignments make me*

*interact with other friends and make me have a good relationship with friends. The learning is also not boring." (PV)*

Based on the data above, most students stated that learning task-based speaking activities using the group discussion method helped them establish good relationships with their classmates. They can seek information from other, more understanding groups by asking questions, and they can also discuss other matters. Students also show how student engagement in discussion sessions makes learning less boring. Furthermore, other findings from the interview data also found that students experienced pronunciation difficulties in task-based speaking activities. Presented as an answer to the question, "Do you find it difficult when learning to speak English using the task-based speaking activity method in class? What are the difficulties? How do you overcome these difficulties?" The students explain their perspective in the following quotations:

*"Yes, sometimes there are difficulties in English pronunciation. Sometimes I ask my classmates or teachers, what is the correct way to read English sentences." (MM)*

*"I still have difficulty in pronouncing English. I overcome it by practicing speaking English more, Mrs." (GM)*

Based on the data above, most of the students' difficulties in task-based speaking activities are related to good English pronunciation. The findings show that students cope with a lot of practicing speaking English and asking friends and teachers how to pronounce it correctly. This is intended to help students understand how to avoid mistakes in speaking or reading. The two are intertwined, but it would be a mistake to regard pronunciation as less important. Pronunciation is the bridge between you and other people. It's the first thing people notice when they start talking. If you don't have good pronunciation, it will be difficult for others to understand what is being said.

We can conclude from the explanation above that many of the findings that the researchers found are evidence that task-based speaking activities help students influence good student behavior and emotions. They are characterized by students doing assignments and following instructions, submitting completed assignments on time, and responding positively to the use of task-based speaking activities.

## *DISCUSSION*

Based on the results of observations and interviews, this section discusses student engagement, focusing on the stages of task-based speaking activities and students' perspectives during task-based speaking activities. The stages that students go through in task-based speaking activities include pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. In line with Willis (1996), that categorizes task-based learning into three stages: pre-task, task cycle, and linguistic focus (post-task). Based on research findings, task-based speaking activities encourage students to actively participate and engage in useful activities by giving them the opportunity to talk with friends, share opinions, demonstrate their work, ask questions, and provide feedback. Most of the answers to the first research question are consistent with the findings of previous studies. Vu & Tran (2021); Xuyen & Trang (2021); and Phuong & Tuyen (2022) found that assignments within the framework of task-based language teaching (TBLT) or task-based speaking activities (TBSA) are excellent tools for EFL learners to monitor student participation in speaking activities. Students have full attention when the teacher explains topics and assignments in English class as an aspect of behavioral engagement. According to Fredricks et al. (2004), students' willingness to participate can also be influenced by their feelings towards peers, teachers, administrators, and the school itself. Students also feel enthusiastic and don't feel bored, so they do the assignments given as an affective aspect of engagement. Task goals and social communication can be seen by students who are intensely involved in academic activities (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Furthermore, other findings reveal students' perspectives during task-based speaking activities. It was found that students' perspectives on task-based speaking activities had a positive impact. The first students' perspectives on the task-based speaking activity method are very interesting and can make it easier for students to understand the material. In line with previous research by Phuong & Tuyen (2022), which stated that students learn from everything around them and that their comprehension is based on what they see, hear, touch, and engage with, As a result, if teachers plan activities that include games or physical movement, children will be more engaged and motivated. The study's findings are also consistent with Harmer's (2007) theory, which claims that students at this age enjoy working in pairs and groups and have a strong desire for teacher and peer praise. The second discovery from the perspective of students in task-based speaking activities is to help students establish good relationships with their classmates. In line with previous research by Xuyen and Trang (2021), when working

in groups, task-based speaking activities give students more topics to discuss. Students communicate with each other to achieve some interdependent goals, such as increased understanding of activity coordination or joint solutions to problems (Galanes, Adams, and Brihart, 2004). The third discovery is that students experience pronunciation difficulties in task-based speaking activities. The findings also show that students practice speaking English a lot and ask friends and teachers how to pronounce it correctly. Students can be made more conscious of their pronunciation by asking teachers which words they find challenging to speak (Fadhillah & Fauzi, 2020). In line with previous research, Xuyen & Trang (2021) stated that by practicing task-based speaking activities, students were able to make fewer pronunciation mistakes. This is also in line with Harmer's (2001) statement, which states that speaking ability is a tool to facilitate communication, which involves a number of linguistic elements, including vocabulary and pronunciation.

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to determine students engage in task-based speaking activities and students' perspectives during task-based speaking activity learning. The research findings reveal that students actively participate in each stage of this teaching and learning task-based language teaching through speaking activities (pre-task, task cycle, and language focus). The students discussed vigorously and presented bravely in front of the class. Students who were more interested in task-based language training were enticed by task-based speaking exercises. When the teacher describes the topic of learning material, task-based speaking activities can modify student behavior to give complete attention (expressions of attention, understanding, complementing, and opinion). Task-based speaking exercises can also influence students' interest in class participation and engagement by making them energetic, enthusiastic, brave, fun, and collaborative; this is a component of affective engagement. Furthermore, students' perspectives during task-based speaking activities. Students find task-based speaking activity method are very interesting and can make it easier for students to understand the material, task-based speaking activities help students establish good relationships with their classmates, and students experience pronunciation difficulties in task-based speaking activities. The findings also show that students practice speaking English a lot and ask friends and teachers how to pronounce it correctly.

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