

# Examining a Senior High School English Teacher's Use and Perceptions on Task-Based Learning to Teach Reading Comprehension

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**Abstract:** *As one of required skills in English language learning, reading skill is necessary for EFL students. Students' reading comprehension is essential in gaining an entire understanding of the text content. Therefore, teachers should select appropriately the approaches fit to their students' conditions. In support to all those aspects, Task-Based Learning (TBL) is able to employed in teaching reading comprehension because it engages students in logical thinking and helps to improve students' communicative skills through learning contexts it provides. In consequence, the students are forced to use the target language via communicative and understanding tasks. The present study aims to identify senior high school English teacher's use and perception of Task-Based Learning in the teaching reading comprehension. The research participant was an English teacher of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at one of the state senior high schools in Jember. The design of this research was descriptive qualitative and the research instrument was a semi-structured interview in order to gain data from the senior high school English teacher who implemented Task-Based Learning for teaching reading comprehension. Next, the data were analyzed thematically. The research result showed that the English teacher perceived the Task-Based Learning Method facilitated her to have a good and proper way by implementing the three stages of Task-Based Learning procedure in the learning process for teaching reading comprehension. Although it could be claimed that this method is suitable for teaching reading comprehension, it remained necessary for the teachers to recognize the positive and negative impacts or problems that occur during using this method in maximizing the usage of Task-Based Learning for teaching and learning process.*

**Keywords:** Teaching Reading Comprehension, Task-Based Learning, Teacher's Perceptions

## I. INTRODUCTION

English is positioned as a Foreign Language or a Second Language in many countries. In Indonesian school curriculum, English is considered a Foreign Language (EFL) and decided as a compulsory subject to be learned by students in order not to be left behind, especially in education. Learning a language, especially EFL takes a serious effort and it is not an easy step to experience (Brown, 2007). To achieve a successful classroom teaching and learning, teachers should implement an effective instruction about what they planned (Chairena, 2016). They need to select appropriate approaches which are fit for their students' conditions (Cook, 2008). Teachers must consider various variables in finding the approach they will use for the students (Norland & Pruett-Said, 2006). By using the appropriate approach, students will possibly practice the target language in real situations. This is a kind of a guideline to assess the language use in real conditions (Wongkanya, 2008).

In English Language Teaching (ELT), reading skill must be mastered by the students as in reading, the students should be knowledgeable and understand well about what the teacher has elaborated in the context. Thus, in comprehension the students are expected to have more skills than to explain individual texts or passages after comprehending the texts. Most students find that reading comprehension is difficult, especially the one relates to find out the main idea of the reading text.

Given this fact, there is one approach which can be used in the teaching reading comprehension namely Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach. Task-Based Learning comprised three steps in the structural framework that is pre-task cycle, task cycle, and language focus (D. Willis, 1996). Consequently, Task-based Learning will suitable with the instruction and assist the learning process to run effortlessly linked to its approach of students centered that creates a communicative language environment in which students are able to practice the target language. Bunmak (2017) stated that Task-Based learning had positive attitudes towards the teaching process. However, some educators had some problems to implement the Task-based learning in an English classroom, for instance the learners' level of proficiency and the teachers' knowledge and preparation. Then, Chen (2018) showed that the combination of interesting reading materials has a positive experience in language teaching. Dealing with the use of Task-Based learning in teaching reading, Tilfarlioglu & Basaran, S. (2007) conducted a study that found students who were given the Task-based writing activities had better reading comprehension.

Those above mentioned studies were only the studies conducted in the context of Task-Based Learning in ELT viewed from students' perspective. However, a research about Task-Based Learning in teaching reading comprehension viewed from the English teacher's perspective remain is underexplored. Hence, this present study attempts to fill in the gap by conducting a descriptive study design entitled "Examining a Senior High School English Teacher's Use and Perceptions on Task-Based Learning to Teach Reading Comprehension"

## II. METHODOLOGY

This research used the qualitative case study design that attempts to investigate deeply the detailed activities related to the case that is the Task-Based Learning used by senior high school English teachers in teaching reading comprehension. Task-Based learning itself has been conducted by the teacher in the senior high school the method in a fun and effective way. A descriptive case study was employed in this study. This relates to what Yin (2003) says a descriptive case study is a type of case study that is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurs.

In this research, we chose the English teacher who taught in the Tenth grade at one of the public senior high schools as a participant. The English teacher has implemented the Task-Based Learning materials since the school has implemented the 2013 Curriculum. Moreover, the English teacher has been teaching English for twenty years old which makes the English teacher had rich information dealing with the use of Task-Based Learning. Therefore, because of those reasons, we was interested in investigating Task-Based Learning used by senior high school English teacher deeply.

In this research, we used interview to collect the data on the use Task-Based Learning by senior high school English teacher in teaching reading class especially in reading comprehension. According to Esterbeg (as cited in Sugiyono, 2015), interview is a meeting of two people to decode and encode the information and idea via questions and responses producing in communication and joint construction of meanings about a specific topic. Gill et al. (2008) state that the aim to conduct an interview is to investigate the individuals' experiences, views, or beliefs on specific issues. In this research, we had offline and online interview to get in-depth information by using semi-structured interviews. At the beginning, we conducted an offline interview with the English teacher to get in-depth information about the data. After that, to obtain additional information, we also did online interview by *WhatsApp* voice call. Before conducting the research, we did the preliminary study in order to obtain background information about the application of Task-Based Learning in teaching reading comprehension. Both in the preliminary study and in the stage of collecting the data, the questions were written in the English teacher's first language of Indonesian.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data which were in the form of recordings. The recorded data were then transcribed into a written form. The data analysis followed the stages of Thematic Analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) consisting the steps of familiarizing data, generating codes, searching themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and the last was producing a report. In familiarizing data, we listened to the original audio of the interview which was done in the first language of Indonesian. The Indonesian version of the interview data were then translated into English. In this stage, we generated the data into 7 different codes by highlighting them in different colors to differ each code. In searching themes, we started to take shape as the shift from codes to theme because a theme contains something important about the data concerning with the research question. In this analysis method, we found 4 different themes that represent the important data in the interview. In reviewing theme, we involved a recursive process where the theme development were reviewed concerning the coded data and the entire data set. In defining themes, we clearly stated the specificity of each theme. Finally, in producing the report, we interpreted those themes to show their prevalence. We wrote down the data report in descriptive paragraphs to interpret how the English teacher perceived to the implementation of Task-Based Learning in teaching reading comprehension.

### III. FINDINGS

The research data analysis of the Task-Based Learning used in teaching reading comprehension yields some findings that were being divided into two sections. They are the task types of Task-based Learning used by the English teacher and the teacher's perception of Task-Based Learning implementation in the teaching of reading comprehension.

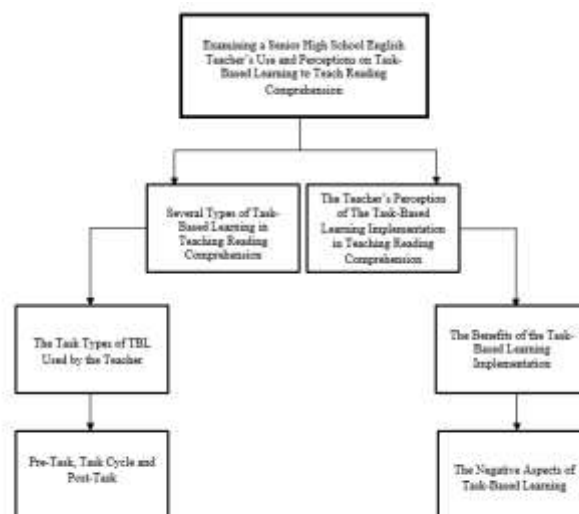


Figure 4.1 The Findings of Analysis

The types of tasks used by English teacher in teaching reading comprehension were so many and varied. The purpose was of having these task types in learning and teaching activities especially in teaching reading comprehension in class was being based on the specific function and purpose of the learning process. As what the English teacher stated in the interview that had been translated as follows:

*“Those types of tasks were multiple choice, true and false questions, matching, answer questions and also asking for ideas and opinions from existing reading texts. Because each text has information that must be retrieved. If the goal was to find general information, I would give multiple choice and so on. However, if the goal looked for specific information, I would give true false or answer questions”* (Julia, 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2022).

*“In addition, through group matching questions, students would not only memorize the meaning of the reading text but also understand the content of the reading text”* (Julia, 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2022).

From the interview transcript above, it can be concluded that the English teacher experienced to use multiple choice, matching, and answer questions (WH Questions) to find the general information of the text. However, when the English teacher had a purpose to find the specific information, she would prefer to use True or False Question, matching, and answer questions (WH Questions).

She said when she taught reading comprehension classes by using the TBL, she applied three basic stages in the learning process, namely pre-task, task-cycle, and post-task. In each stage of TBL, she explained that she had different activities and methods. It was adapted to the conditions and the abilities the student in the class. Here is her statement:

#### Pre-Task

*“First, the students were given pre-reading stage so that they would know the material. This could be done by providing videos, asking difficult words and looking for synonyms for some difficult words. It was done by showing videos, asking some leading questions, or digging up difficult words encountered by students. The point was that the teacher must prologue the children regarding the content of the material that would be given”* (Julia, 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2022).

#### Task Cycle

*“After that, they did the core activity by answering some questions in the form of analysis questions. It could be done by giving the students texts and asking them to work in groups or in pairs. While trying to answer questions, they could increase their knowledge of the material given by exchanging some ideas, thoughts or opinions to their friends”* (Julia, 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2022).

#### Post-Task

*“In post-task, the teacher could ask some students to present or discuss their works by drawing conclusions together. Post tasks could be done by asking some extended questions related of the content of the material given. By asking additional questions. For instance, when I taught reading comprehension about Narrative Text, I would ask a question to my students “What did you do when you were the participant of the text?”* (Julia, 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2022).

From the interview transcript above, it can be concluded that the perception of the English teacher was teacher played an important role to help students for having a better understanding in reading text by applying pre task stage. After giving the text at the previous stage, at the task cycle, the teacher asked students to do those tasks in pairs or even in groups consisted of 4-5 students for discussing and exchanging their ideas and opinions among other students in that group. While in the post-task, the English teacher asked students to present the results of the discussion by explaining the conclusions they got between in pairs or in groups.

The benefits of TBL, the English teacher answered freely to give her opinion about the use of Task-Based Learning for teaching reading comprehension she has done. The main question is related to the usefulness or the benefit of Task-Based Learning in the classroom.

*“Yes, Task-Based Learning is a method that has been the most suitable for learning reading comprehension. I noted the students' outcome when I taught them reading comprehension class using Task-Based Learning was that the students could understand the meaning of words or sentences more deeply”* (Julia, 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2022).

*“By the use of Task-Based Learning, students became more familiar for answering the question. Task-Based Learning could encourage students became more patient so that they not only understand the text but also answer questions correctly. I had proven that students would have significant results in understanding and answering readings when they used Task-Based Learning method. A number of task types were quite helpful because those could facilitate students to be able to understand the text.”* (Julia, 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2022).

*“Task-Based Learning was not only in the form of memorization for students but also understanding and application. Task-Based Learning was a method that could be applied in the principle of “learning by doing”. In this process, students were asked to work, and discuss their ideas and also their opinion”* (Julia, 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2022).

From the data above, the English teacher agreed that Task-Based Learning used in teaching reading comprehension was useful for her. This can be proven by her statement that with Task-Based Learning used in teaching reading comprehension, students became more familiar for answering the question. Task-Based Learning could encourage students became more patient so that they not only understand the text but also answer questions correctly. Also, by using Task-Based Learning, the students would have significant results in understanding and answering readings when they used Task-Based Learning method.

The negative aspects of Task-Based Learning are negative aspects that students perhaps get in the Task-Based Learning applied in their learning activities. Here, the English teacher was stated:

*“The biggest challenge was so many students had very minimal vocabularies. Sometimes, it made students difficult to transfer knowledge in English. Thus, it would decrease students' motivation in learning English. When students were faced with a long text or a text that contained high-level vocabulary, they would lost their motivation. Moreover, students seemed to be able to answer and write down questions easily, but when they took a test, they would be confused and failed”* (Julia, 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2022).

From the data above, the English teacher said that Task-Based Learning is sometimes made students difficult to transfer knowledge in English. Thus, it would decrease students' motivation in learning English. When students were faced with a long text or a text that contained high-level vocabulary, they would lost their motivation. Moreover, students seemed to be able to answer and write down questions easily, but when they took a test, they would be confused and failed in the reading comprehension class.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The study's findings reveal that the English teacher used several types of tasks to support and facilitate her teaching process. The tasks experienced by the English teacher were in the form multiple choice, WH questions, true and false questions, matching questions, and synonym. The finding was in line with Chen and Lin's (2009) definition stating that task is an action having a specific goal that is typically taken as part of schooling. Those various types of tasks were not given in process of teaching reading comprehension simultaneously, but the tasks were selected and given according to the learning objectives to be achieved by the English teacher. It is in line with Nugroho (2013), tasks were divided into real-world task and pedagogic task. Therefore, the English teacher utilized several types of tasks to facilitate students for text comprehending for both inside and outside classroom reading tasks related to the learning objectives.

The English instructor uses the pre-task, task-cycle, and post-task phases of Task-Based Learning to teach reading comprehension. The research findings are in line with Ellis (2007:2) and Willis (1998) this shows the three main stages of the design of Task-Based Learning, pre-task, task cycle, and post-task which indicate the development of such activities. The English teacher used pre-task stage by giving some questions, life experiences, played video, or dug difficult words related to the reading texts. Task-cycle stage was carried out by giving several tasks in the form of synonym, matching, comparing, discussing experiences and storytelling. Following completion of the activity, comment on how well the students performed in regard to the grammatical and content constructs by emphasizing the relevance of the reading passage. Therefore, these made teaching reading comprehension process with TBL run properly and technically well.

Moreover, for the teacher's perception in the TBL implementation, there is the benefits of using he Task-Based Learning. Dealing with the benefits of Task-Based Learning carried out by the English teacher when she taught reading comprehension class, she stated that this method had several various functions that really help the learning process. In line with Willis (1996), TBL is applied to find solution in teaching and learning process. It means that by using TBL method, the teacher and students will overcome their problems in understanding reading texts by doing the various tasks. Thus, the English teacher pointed out that the tasks facilitated students to have a better and deeper understanding of words and sentences. Moreover, the English teacher concluded that TBL had certain aims in each ordered stages namely pre-task task-cycle, and post-task. Moreover, the first stage aimed to help students recall some language useful for the task and build students' background knowledge.

Besides that, the result of the present study revealed that TBL could help students become more familiar in answering questions and understanding the context of a text. Task-Based Learning required students to not only to memorize but also to understand and apply the material. The finding revealed when students were forced to understand a reading text, it would has good impact with text related to their real-life. That perception in line with statement from Willis (2004), Task-Based Learning (TBL) is a learning activity that engages learners in logical thinking. It means, the tasks that are given to students are clear and have some information transfer. Furthermore, the strength of TBL in promoting natural learning in the classroom context seem to be the main factor of its effectiveness in enhancing L2 learners' skill (Ellis, 2003, 2009, 2015; Shintani, 2011). Thus, the English teacher felt that TBL was suitable to be applied in the teaching and learning especially teaching reading comprehension as this was done through student discussion which was called learning by doing.



While for the teacher's perception in the TBL implementation is the negative aspects of Task-Based Learning. The negative aspects were encountered relate to the minimum vocabulary of students, the ability to transfer information with the existing questions, the lack of students confidence, and lose students' motivation to learn. Moreover, by giving various kinds and types of tasks to the students, sometimes it made them feel burdened and bored. Some students also experienced to get bad score in tests even though they seem able to answered questions.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the result, the English teacher used some task types in the form of multiple choices, WH questions, true and false questions, and find synonyms by matching questions in a teaching and learning reading comprehension. In the aspect to find general information, the English teacher experienced to implement the task types in the form of multiple choices, matching, and WH Questions. Lastly, as for finding the specific information, the English teacher used true and false questions, matching, and WH Questions.

The English teacher perceived that the Task-Based Learning method facilitated her to have a good and proper way in teaching reading comprehension class. By implementing the three stages of Task-Based Learning in the learning process, the students had mature preparation to absorb the reading text as well as the questions given. Moreover, this method affected in improving students' understanding of the reading text contents, helping students to relate the text with their real life, and increasing students' ideas and opinions.

The suggested directed to the English teachers who implemented Task-Based Learning during the teaching of reading comprehension, they should recognize the positive and negative impacts or problems that occur during using this method. Moreover, the English teacher needs to pay attention to the student's participation in maximizing the usage of Task-Based Learning for teaching and learning in reading comprehension classes. Thus, students can gain the material or context in the reading text as well as enjoy the reading comprehension classes.

In addition, dealing with future researchers who want to conduct the similar researches, they are suggested to explore the use of Task-Based Learning in different participants for having another point of view and exploring various perceptions of Task-Based Learning implementation. Moreover, future researchers can also explore the implementation of Task-Based Learning in other English skills such as writing, listening, or speaking.

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