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EFL TEACHERS CHALLENGES IN DESIGNING ACCESSIBLE LEARNING TASKS

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Abstract
This study aims to identify the challenges faced by English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in creating tasks that are accessible to all learners. The subjects of this study are 28 EFL teachers who teach at various schools in South Sulawesi. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to deeply explore data through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The results show that the main challenges faced by teachers include differences in student proficiency levels, limited resources, and a lack of training in designing inclusive tasks. Additionally, factors such as the learning environment and technological barriers also affect teachers' ability to meet the needs of all learners. This study provides important insights for the development of more inclusive teaching strategies that support effective learning in EFL classrooms.

Keywords*: EFL Teachers, Challenges, Creating Task, Descriptive Qualitative.

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) dalam menciptakan tugas yang dapat diakses oleh semua peserta didik. Subyek penelitiaan ini adalah 28 orang guru bahasa Inggris yang mengajar di berbagai sekolah di Sulawesi Selatan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskrptif kualitatif untuk menggali data secara mendalam melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil penelitian

menunjukkan bahwa tantangan utama yang dihadapi guru meliputi perbedaan tingkat kemampuan siswa, keterbatasan sumber daya, dan kurangnya pelatihan dalam merancang tugas. Selain itu, faktor lingkungan belajar dan hambatan teknologi juga memengaruhi kemampuan guru untuk memenuhi kebutuhan semua peserta didik.

Kata kunci: guru EFL, tantangan, membuat tugas, deskriptif kualitatif

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers is crucial in facilitating students' language acquisition, especially in diverse classroom settings. Teachers are expected to create an inclusive learning environment that meets the diverse needs of their learners. In South Sulawesi, where this research is conducted, teachers face the challenge of designing tasks that are not only educational but also accessible to all students, regardless of their varying proficiency levels, socio-economic backgrounds, and learning styles. The importance of making tasks accessible cannot be overstated, as it ensures that all students can engage in the learning process and achieve success in mastering the English language.

Previous studies have highlighted the significance of inclusive education and task design in enhancing student engagement and achievement. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), EFL teachers are responsible for not only language instruction but also for creating environments that support learners with varying levels of proficiency and cultural backgrounds. Tomlinson (2001) emphasizes differentiated instruction as a critical strategy in fostering an inclusive classroom environment. Harmer (2015) discusses the necessity of adapting lessons to cater to diverse learner needs, advocating for modifying content, processes, and outcomes to accommodate these differences. Additionally, Gibbons (2002) highlights scaffolding as a strategy to support English language learners (ELLs) by adapting instructional practices to create an inclusive classroom environment.

In the classroom, the process of task design involves considering various factors such as the language level of students, available teaching materials, and overall learning objectives. However, these tasks often end up being tailored to a particular group of learners, unintentionally excluding others who may need additional support or adjustments. This diversity necessitates the design of tasks that cater to a broad spectrum of learners, which is further complicated by resource limitations and insufficient training in inclusive teaching strategies. Many teachers in South Sulawesi face such limitations, making it challenging to create tasks that are universally accessible. Borg (2015) notes that without professional development, teachers may feel ill-equipped to address the needs of diverse learners in the classroom, the process of task design involves considering various factors such as the language level of students, available teaching materials, and overall learning objectives. However, these tasks often end up being tailored to a particular group of learners, unintentionally excluding others who may need additional support or adjustments. This diversity necessitates the design of tasks that cater to a broad spectrum of learners, which is further complicated by resource limitations and insufficient training in inclusive teaching strategies. Many teachers in South Sulawesi face such limitations, making it challenging to create tasks that are universally accessible. Borg (2015) notes that without professional development, teachers may feel ill-equipped to address the needs of diverse learners.

Effective task design is vital in the EFL context, as research shows that well-designed tasks enhance student motivation, engagement, and academic performance. Ellis (2003) posits that meaningful and communicative tasks contribute significantly to language development. Moreover, differentiated instruction, as highlighted by Tomlinson (2001), involves adapting tasks to students' learning styles, interests, and abilities, thereby creating an inclusive classroom environment. Skehan (1998) further emphasizes that balancing task complexity and cognitive demands is essential for accessibility and success.

Despite the theoretical advancements, practical implementation of inclusive task design remains challenging. Teachers must navigate diverse student needs, limited resources, and time constraints, often prioritizing curriculum coverage over

inclusivity. Schmidt (1990) and Dörnyei (2005) underscore the importance of addressing individual differences and fostering metacognitive skills to improve student outcomes. These insights highlight the necessity for innovative approaches to task design that accommodate diversity while maintaining high educational standards

This study investigates the challenges EFL teachers in South Sulawesi face in creating tasks that are accessible to all learners. By employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research explores teachers' experiences, perceptions, and strategies in designing inclusive tasks. Unlike prior studies that focus on generalized principles, this study provides localized insights into specific barriers and practical solutions within a socio-cultural context, offering unique contributions to the field.

Ultimately, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations to support professional development programs and policy interventions. These initiatives are essential for empowering teachers, enhancing instructional practices, and ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students. By addressing these challenges and highlighting potential solutions, this research aspires to foster a more inclusive and equitable learning environment where all students can thrive.

2. METHODS

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by EFL teachers in South Sulawesi when designing tasks that are accessible to all learners. A simple, qualitative approach will be used to gather insights into teachers' experiences and strategies for creating inclusive tasks.

1. Participants

The study involved 28 EFL teachers from various schools in South Sulawesi. These teachers selected based on their experience in teaching English and their ability to provide relevant information about task design.

2. Data Collection

Data collected using the following methods:

a. Interviews:Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the 28 teachers. The interviews focused on the challenges teachers face in creating accessible tasks,

the strategies they use, and their overall experiences with task design.

b. Classroom Observations: Teachers observed during their lessons to see how they implement tasks in the classroom and how they address the needs of different learners.

c. Document Analysis: Lesson plans, task materials, and assessments reviewed to understand how teachers design tasks and whether they are accessible to all students.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1 Results

The results of this study are based on the analysis of data collected from semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal the main challenges faced by EFL teachers in South Sulawesi in creating tasks that are accessible to all learners, as well as the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges.

a. Challenges Faced by Teachers

1) Diverse Student Proficiency Levels: A significant challenge identified by teachers is the wide range of proficiency levels among students within the same classroom. Some students struggle with basic vocabulary and grammar, while others have a more advanced understanding of the language. This makes it difficult for teachers to design tasks that are suitable for all learners. Many teachers reported that they often have to adjust tasks on the spot, either simplifying them for struggling students or adding complexity for more advanced learners.

2) Limited Resources: Teachers reported facing resource constraints, including a lack of textbooks, digital tools, and other teaching materials. This limitation affects their ability to design diverse tasks that could cater to different learning styles and proficiency levels. Teachers expressed the need for more access to teaching materials that can support differentiated instruction.

3) Time Constraints: The teachers noted that the pressure of completing the curriculum within a limited time frame often prevents them from adequately

adapting tasks to meet the needs of all students. As a result, teachers tend to use more generic tasks that do not fully address the diverse needs of learners.

4) Lack of Training on Inclusive Teaching Practices: A common concern among teachers was the lack of professional development opportunities focused on inclusive teaching strategies. Many teachers expressed a desire for training that could help them better understand how to design accessible tasks and use differentiated instruction techniques.

b. Strategies for Task Design

1) Task Modification: Teachers often modify tasks during lessons to ensure they are accessible to students with varying levels of proficiency. This includes simplifying instructions, providing additional support, or offering alternative tasks for advanced learners. For example, when working with writing tasks, teachers might provide sentence starters for lower-level students or ask more advanced students to write longer or more complex responses.

2) Use of Group Work: Collaborative learning was identified as a common strategy to address the diverse needs of students. Teachers use group work to pair students with varying levels of proficiency together, allowing more advanced students to assist those who are struggling. This peer support helps to bridge the gap between students and ensures that everyone is engaged with the task.

3) Scaffolding: The teachers reported using scaffolding techniques to support students in completing tasks. This includes breaking tasks into smaller, manageable parts, providing clear instructions, and offering additional explanations or examples when necessary. Scaffolding helps ensure that all students can participate and gradually build their language skills.

Differentiated Materials: Teachers also mentioned using a variety of teaching materials, such as visual aids, audio recordings, and handouts, to cater to different learning styles. These materials help to make tasks more engaging and accessible, particularly for visual and auditory learners.

3.2 Discussion

The findings of this study highlight several critical challenges faced by EFL teachers in South Sulawesi when designing tasks that are accessible to all learners. The diverse proficiency levels of students emerged as the most significant challenge, which is consistent with research by Richards and Rodgers (2014) that emphasizes the importance of addressing student diversity in language teaching. The findings also align with those of Xu (2017), who notes that varying student abilities require flexible and adaptive teaching strategies.

The issue of limited resources further complicates the task design process. The lack of access to appropriate teaching materials is a common challenge in many developing regions, as noted by Borg (2015). Teachers in South Sulawesi expressed frustration over their inability to fully implement differentiated tasks due to the absence of sufficient resources. This highlights the need for better access to teaching tools and materials that can support inclusive education. Time constraints were also a key factor limiting teachers' ability to design accessible tasks. Teachers in South Sulawesi, like those in other parts of the world, are often pressured by curriculum deadlines, which can result in a focus on efficiency rather than inclusivity. This finding is supported by the work of Tomlinson (2001), who argues that effective task design requires adequate time for planning and adapting lessons to meet diverse student needs.

One of the most positive findings was the teachers' use of collaborative learning and scaffolding as strategies to make tasks more accessible. These approaches are consistent

with the principles of differentiated instruction and constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasize the importance of supporting students' learning at their individual levels. Group work, in particular, allows for peer support and fosters a collaborative classroom environment, which can help bridge proficiency gaps and ensure that no student is left behind.

Additionally, the lack of professional development opportunities on inclusive teaching practices highlighted in this study points to a gap in teacher training. While teachers are employing creative strategies to adapt tasks, many expressed a need for formal training that would help them understand best practices for designing inclusive tasks. This aligns with the findings of Borg (2006), who suggests that professional development is crucial for improving teachers' ability to address the diverse needs of their students.

In conclusion, while teachers in South Sulawesi are facing significant challenges in designing tasks that are accessible to all learners, they are employing a variety of strategies to overcome these obstacles. The use of differentiated materials, scaffolding, and collaborative learning is commendable and demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusive teaching. However, the study also reveals a need for improved access to resources and professional development opportunities to further support teachers in creating accessible and effective tasks for all students. These findings offer valuable insights for educational policymakers, school administrators, and teacher training programs in South Sulawesi and similar contexts

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the key challenges faced by EFL teachers in South Sulawesi in creating tasks that are accessible to all learners, including diverse student proficiency levels, limited resources, time constraints, and a lack of professional development on inclusive teaching practices. Despite these obstacles, teachers have

employed various strategies such as task modification, scaffolding, differentiated materials, and collaborative learning to support students with different needs. These strategies demonstrate the teachers' commitment to providing an inclusive learning environment and ensuring that all students, regardless of their proficiency, can engage with the material.

However, the findings also point to the need for further support, particularly in terms of resources and professional development. Teachers expressed a desire for more training on inclusive teaching strategies and better access to teaching materials. Addressing these gaps will be crucial for empowering teachers to create more effective and inclusive tasks, ultimately improving the quality of English language education in South Sulawesi and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

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