Exploring EFL Students' Perceptions Toward Language Learning Activities Applied in Indonesian EFL Classroom Today

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Abstract

The present paper sheds light on Indonesian EFL students' perceptions toward learning activities applied in the classroom teaching practice. Classroom activities particularly related to learning activities have been widely accepted as one of factors that influence students' achievement in learning. In the current study, the researcher attempts to answer three research questions: (1) How important the learning activities in students' perceptions to facilitate them for learning, (2) what benefits gained from those learning activities? And (3) which learning activities do students perceive to be the most facilitating them in learning? The participants in this study were 21 EFL students, in state university of Makassar. The participant consisted of different term which in the second term, fourth term and sixth term. Survey and open-ended question were developed in collecting data. The researcher analyzed the data through data analysis strategy particularly coding qualitative data. The result of the study analysis showed that the discussion was quite important and both Writing paper/article and Book review were just important, while individual presentation and Quiz were very important activities. Table 3 summarized the students' perception toward benefits of learning activities. The finding also showed discussion activity to be the most facilitating students in learning.

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Keyword: EFL students, learning activities, students' perception.

INTRODUCTION

Learning is the significant activities or process of acquisition of new knowledge or skills in order to be knowledgeable person through experience, study, by being taught. For some EFL learner in Indonesia, English which known as foreign language becomes the challenge one to learn. The EFL students tend to passively participate during learning process in the classroom, and the form of learning strategies applied by teacher held significant role here. In facilitating student to be more active or want to participate, firstly the models of learning should be shifted from teacher-center learning to be student-center learning, by SCL then students have more opportunities to learn and students can construct

their own meaning by talking, listening, writing, reading, and reflecting on content, ideas, issues and concerns. Secondly, the learning activities should be provided and implemented for the EFL student to allow them more engaging and participating in learning English. The use of various activities in the classroom to teach a foreign language has a great impact on learners. The activities can be classified into both individual and group activities of learning.

Reviewing various activities applied in classroom, the researcher concern about students' perception toward those learning activities. Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2015) examined EFL learners' perceptions of classroom activities and their achievement goal orientations. Students who perceive their classroom activities as challenging and interesting, their first priority would be adapting mastery goal orientation while students who perceive their classroom activities as unsupportive, not demanding, and boring then students would adapt a performance-avoidance goal orientation toward their EFL learning. However in this study, the researcher would examine students' perception on their experience during teaching and learning process.

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

1. How important the learning activities (discussion, book review, individual presentation, quiz, journal summary and writing paper/article) in students' perceptions to facilitate them for learning.
2. What benefits that can be gained from those learning activities?
3. Which learning activity do students perceive to be the most facilitating them in learning?

Learning Activities Commonly Used in Indonesia

Discussions

Discussions can play a valuable role in lecture courses, seminars, quiz sections, labs, studios, and a variety of other settings. A well-planned discussion can encourage and stimulate student learning and add variety to your class. While "good" discussions can be a powerful tool for encouraging student learning, successful discussions rarely happen spontaneously. Preparing ahead of time will help you define a clear focus by establishing goals and student expectations for the discussion. Discussions can be an excellent strategy for enhancing student motivation, fostering intellectual agility, and encouraging democratic habits. They create opportunities for students to practice and sharpen a number of skills, including the ability to articulate and defend positions, consider different points of view, and enlist and evaluate evidence.

Quiz

Quiz is a form of learning activity with the purpose assessing students ability and comprehension. Coleman and Werneth in Thirey (2011) examined the impact of quizzes

in an introductory college astronomy course. They found that a control course which emphasized daily quizzes resulted in a more positive student response to the course though there was no difference with the evaluation which was given to the instructors.

Student Presentation

Student presentations benefit the presenter in significant ways. By doing presentations, students learn how to speak in front a group, a broadly applicable professional skill. They learn how to prepare material for public presentation, and practice (especially with feedback) improves their speaking skills. Presentation is an effective communicative activity that has been widely adopted by EFL conversation teachers to promote oral proficiency.

METHOD

To obtain required data, the researcher selected participant randomly of English students, state university Makassar. They were consisted of different term and department; a questionnaire was administered to 15 students. Table 1 provides a description of participant who included in this study. They were chosen to share their perception toward some activities

Table 1. Description of the participants

No	Department	Term	Participant	Male/female
1	SL English Education	II	9	4/5
2	English Education	VI	5	0/5
3	English Education	IV	7	2/5
	Total		21	5/15

The questionnaire used in this study is attached in Appendix 1. In the interest of asking students' perception, the researcher's questionnaire consist of three questions which are the first question refers to how important the suggested kind of learning activities for them, and they should circle scale number in the range 1 – 5, the second deal with open-ended questions primarily used so that participants could express their ideas about benefits of those learning activities, and in the last question, participant should select one learning activities to be the most facilitating them in learning based on their experience. The questionnaire, written in English, was administered in class. The participants completed it in approximately 10 minutes.

Gay at al (2006 p.469) suggests three iterative, or repeating, steps: (1) reading/memoing, (2) describing, and (3) classifying research data. The data analysis of qualitative data above has similarity with the processes in qualitative data analysis by Huberman and Miles in kikuchi (2009 p.460) which suggest three processes: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing and verification. Besides, the researcher analyze the data through data analysis strategy particularly coding qualitative data, the finding of students' perception answered in open-ended questionnaire was marking and referencing categorically with code and labels.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the first question which about how important the learning activities applied in classroom in students' perceptions, Table 2 showed the result analysis of the scale selected by students among the range 1-5.

Table 2. Descriptive statistic for each learning activities

Learning activities	Percentage (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Discussion	0.00	4.76	9.52	52.38	33.33
Writing paper/article	0.00	9.52	38.10	33.33	19.05
Individual presentation	4.76	0.00	23.81	33.33	38.10
Book review	4.76	23.81	38.10	14.29	19.05
Quiz	0.00	23.81	23.81	23.81	28.57
Journal summary	9.52	38.10	33.33	19.05	0.00

Note: 1= very less important
2= less important
3= important
4= quite important
5= very important

The higher scale percentage of discussion was scale 4 (quite important) showed that discussion in students' view is necessary to facilitate their learning. The learning activities classified to be the important one are writing paper/article and Book review, the scale of both categories showed 38, 10 % lower than the percentage of discussion activity. Journal summary activity seemed less important in students' perception, the statistic showed 38, 10 % as the higher percentage in the scale 2. As discussion was quite important and both writing paper/article and Book review were just important, the students' perception toward individual presentation and Quiz was in scale 5 (very important) with percentage 38, 10 % and 28, 57 %.

Each of learning activities applied in classroom is essential to assist and facilitate student in learning. The teacher should appropriately select which learn activities necessary to apply in classroom, the effectiveness of activity and how important they are should also consider. After identifying how important those learning activity, thus it is necessary to know students' perception about the benefits of each learning activities. From data, quiz constitutes to be an activity required to apply because it encourage students to learn more and challenge them to think appropriately and quickly. Thirey (2011 p.8) stated the administering daily quizzes was a worthwhile exercise and He believed that the exercise only slightly beneficial in performance on tests.

Table 3 below provides the data obtained from the questionnaires to answer the second question regarded with the benefits of learning activities that students perceive in teaching and learning process. Students are expected to share their ideas based on personal experience and their achievement or improvement. The researcher has analyzed the data through coding qualitative data strategy, which then categorizing the students' opinions into specific statement as follow:

Table 3. Students' perceptions toward benefits of learning activities

Learning activities	Benefits
Discussion	- share knowledge - increase critical thinking - improve speaking - help in conveying opinion - knowing lot of knowledge - learn to solve problem together - give motivation in learning - to be more confident talk in front of class
Writing paper/article	- grammar practice - improving vocabulary - increase active English skills - improve writing skill - able to apply theory given by lecture
Individual presentation	- generate self-confident - train us to become public speaker - train us in speaking, pronunciation, and express ideas
Book review	- enhance vocabulary - add new knowledge - able to analyze the book - as reading activity - identify the purpose of each book - improve translation skill

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Quiz	• assess or measure our ability
	• help us to understand subject to be quizzed,
	• encourage to learn more
	• identify our weakness
	• skillful in memorizing
	• maintain the brain to keep working every time
	• encourage to be always prepare
	• empowering students to study
	• make discipline
	• help in recalling previous materials
Journal summary	• learning new knowledge
	• increase reading
	• learn about English sentences and phrase
	• contribute in our writing
	• enhance comprehensibility

Table 4. Learning Activity Students Perceived Mostly Facilitate Them to Learn

Learning activities	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Discussion	9	42.86
Writing paper/article	2	9.52
Individual presentation	4	19.05
Book review	3	14.29
Quiz	3	14.29
Journal summary	0	0.00
Total	21	100

Table 5 showed the result of the data obtained from the questionnaires regarded with which learning activity to be facilitating students most. Discussion was the higher percentage of the other activities, 42, 86%. Conversely, no one students selected journal summary to facilitate them in learning. In the table 4, discussion benefits were the students could share knowledge, increase critical thinking, improve speaking, help in conveying opinion, knowing lot of knowledge, learn to solve problem together, and give motivation in learning. It was inevitably if discussion become the most facilitate them, because in discussion students acquired opportunity to develop themselves whether their language skills such as speaking and listening or their language elements.

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CONCLUSION

The result of study reflected that the most important of learning activities were Individual presentation and Quiz. From the finding, students could gain more benefits through discussion and quiz, discussion encouraged student to get involve in learning and assist them to be more active sharing the knowledge. While quiz provide them occasion to assess their ability to identify what need to be improve. Table 2 showed Journal summary activity had low percentage in the term of how important the learning activities and what learning activity perceived mostly facilitate them, even some students mentioned some benefits of the activity such as improving reading skills, learning new knowledge and enhance comprehensibility. Therefore, the learning activity discussed above should be more evolved in the class.

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