

Undergraduates' Perception on their English Learning Process: Preliminary Step toward "Foundations of Social Studies" CLIL-Based Material Development

Rahmati Putri Yaniafari^{1*}, Ajeng Ayu Rihardini², Agung Wiradimadja³

¹Faculty of Letter, Universitas Negeri Malang,
Jl. Semarang, No. 5, 65145, Malang, Indonesia
yaniafari.fs@um.ac.id

ajeng.ayu.1602216@students.um.ac.id

³Faculty of Social Science, Universitas Negeri Malang,
Jl. Semarang, No. 5, 65145, Malang, Indonesia
agung.wiradimadja.fis@um.ac.id

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract: English has emerged as the language of scientific communication (Björkman, 2011; Jenkins, 2006). Given the significance of English, in addition to ESP courses that have been incorporated in university curriculum, the CLIL method can be one of the choices for improving students' English mastery. Before implementing CLIL and creating the necessary resources, a comprehensive investigation is required to determine the 'what' and 'how' the content, curriculum, assessment, and evaluation will be produced (Flowerdew, 2013). Prior to developing "Fundamental of Social Studies" CLIL-based content, this research intends to analyse several aspects. It investigates: (1) the significance students place on grammar, vocabulary, and language skills in the English learning process; (2) the students' preferences in English learning activities; and (3) the language components that students improved the most. Students in the Social Studies Program were given a survey. The implication based on the findings is that future material developments are recommended to include audio-materials, pay more attention to speaking activities, and incorporate more diverse grammar activities. Moreover, the type of activities involved are suggested to include group work as it is favoured by the students; especially for speaking performance. Group speaking performance is preferred then the individual one for it lessen the anxiety.

Keywords: CLIL, Need Analysis, Material Development, ESP, Social Studies

1. Introduction

As a lingua franca, English plays an essential role in communication, particularly among individuals who do not speak the same first language (Seidlhofer, 2005). It allows those whose first language is English and non-English to participate in a intercultural conversation (Jenkins, 2006). Using English as a lingua franca eases the non-native speakers as they could flexibly pronounce the word differently from the 'standard English' based on their first language as long as it is recognizable and intelligible (Kirkpatrick, 2012; Yang, 2016).

In education, teaching English as a Lingua Franca allows students to learn language successfully while developing multilingualism at the same time (Kirkpatrick, 2012), which facilitates

them to expand their social circle with people of different culture and background (Jenkins, 2006). As we all know, in the field of education, mastering English may widen students' knowledge as they are provided with lots of resources other than their first language. Moreover, English has become the language of communication of scientific information (Björkman, 2011; Jenkins, 2006). Abundance of information and literature of any field that are freely accessible worldwide are written in English. The language has contributed and widely used in the field of English for Academic and Specific Purposes in many domains (Baker, 2009; Björkman, 2011).

Looking at the importance of English for the students and the increasing demand of English proficiency in the workforce, ESP (English for Specific Purposes), as a subject, has been included in many college and universities curricula (Chang, 2017; Charles, 2013), including in Indonesian Universities. However, it seems that students need more opportunities to study English in classroom context, as based on preliminary interview, many departments only provide 1 meeting weekly for ESP subject. Moreover, not all students who enroll in university have adequate English skills to meet the expectations of their studies (Md Naim, 2020). An approach called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is suggested. This approach has been used widely in the field of education where content and language are taught at the same time. What makes ESP and CLIL different is that ESP focus more on the language usage in a certain field, while CLIL focus more on the content (Fortanet-Gómez & Bellés-Fortuño, 2008). In this case, CLIL approach then used in teaching other content courses in the field of Social Studies.

Since the balance of content and language is tremendously emphasized in CLIL, students will have a chance to improve their language mastery as the courses make it more relevant to the content communicative needs (Sobhy et al., 2013). In order to achieve a certain level of language mastery through CLIL, students have to pass the 'threshold level' or the minimum level of English mastery (Navés, 2009). Therefore, students are encouraged to learn English to be able to follow the teaching and learning process well, which means CLIL can be one option to promote students' English mastery directly. Moreover, CLIL promotes students' language production as they will "learn to use the language and use the language to learn" (Mehisto et al., 2008). However, balancing content and students' language mastery is not that easy as the learning process should meet the students' need which varies from context to context.

Prior to adopting CLIL and developing the materials needed, need analysis is required. It is to establish the 'what' and 'how' the material, curriculum, assessment, and evaluation will be developed (Flowerdew, 2013). A need analysis is useful to develop materials that fit students' level and to make sure that it reflects all the skills that the students need (Aydin, 2013). Moreover, the quality of learning materials promote students' critical thought as well as help the students recognize the limitation of their current thinking and learning (Mehisto, 2012). Therefore, the learning outcome seriously depends on how the material developed. This study aims to analyse students' needs prior to developing CLIL-based "Foundation of Social Studies" material, an instructional material that provides content material on foundation of social studies as well as facilitates foreign language learning. Before integrating English language material into the content material, a preliminary study needs to be conducted. Thus, this study focuses on investigating: (1) the degree of importance students attaches to grammar, vocabulary, and language skills in the English learning process; (2) the students' preference in English learning activities; (3) Language aspects students improved the most.

2. Method

This study employed survey design which adapt Lasagabaster & Doiz' (2016) research instrument. It involved 20 items that were classified into 3 categories; 6 items were about the students' view on the importance of language aspects, 8 items asked about preferred learning activities, and 6 items on language aspects students improved the most. The data obtained were analyzed on the basis of frequency. One open-ended question was added in the end of the questionnaire to support the quantitative data.

The respondents are Social Studies Program Students cohort 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2017 studying in a public university in east java, Indonesia (those who are taking ESP course and those who have finished ESP course in the previous year(s)). Each cohort in Social Studies Education study program consists of 2 classes of 35-38 students. From the total of 8 classes, 123 students participated

in this study. As the material being developed will be the first CLIL material in the department, the respondents were asked to reflect on English materials and English lessons they had in ESP course. The students participating in the survey were those taking ESP course and those who had finished ESP course in the previous year(s). The following is the distribution of the respondents by cohort.

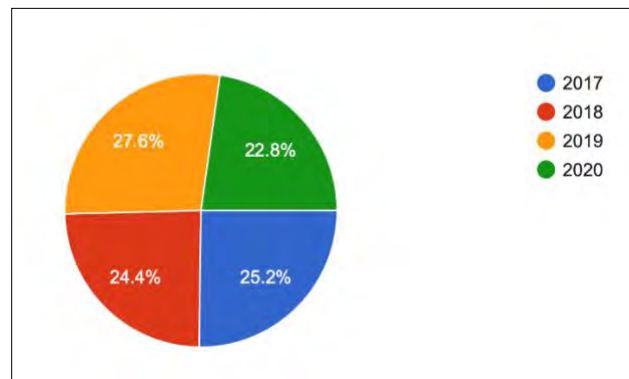


Fig 1. Distribution of the Respondents by Cohort

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Students' Views on the Importance of Language Aspects and Skills

Table 1. The Degree of Importance of Each Language Aspects and Skills based on Students' Perspective per Cohort

Cohort	Grammar	Reading	Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Listening	Speaking
2017	93.5%	93.5%	90.3%	96.8%	90.3%	93.5%
2018	86.7%	96.7%	100%	96.7%	93.3%	93.3%
2019	91.2%	94.1%	88.2%	88.2%	91.2%	97%
2020	92.8%	92.8%	96.4%	92.8%	92.8%	85.7%
Total average	91%	94.3%	93.7%	93.6%	91.9%	92.4%

Based on the average result of the close-ended questionnaire distributed to four cohorts, the students believe that all language skills are equally important. 91% of the students agree that learning grammar is important. Grammar indeed is important, as it is one of the foundations of a language proficiency (Male, 2011; Wang, 2010). Students will struggle with oral and written communication if they do not master grammar. They may not be able to construct sentences correctly. Similarly, Zhang (2009) also mentioned that grammatical competence is one of the communicative competence, which means that students have to know how to use the grammar and vocabulary of the language to achieve communicative goals, and know how to use it in a socially appropriate way.

Almost equal to grammar, 91.9% of the students think that mastering listening is important. Although listening may seem to be a passive activity, its importance is undeniable. According to Yurko & Styfanyshyn (2020), listening is necessary to gain more knowledge upon the language use, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and accent. Having good listening skill also helps the students to have better comprehension of message conveyed based on the tone of voice, stress, and pitch (Renukadevi, 2014; Richards, 2008). Therefore, if the students do not have sufficient listening skills there will be no way for students to comprehend the message of a conversation and there will be a possibility for students to have difficulty following the teaching and learning process. As Wallace et al.

(2004) has mentioned that listening skills are important for students during teaching and learning process since through listening, students receive information and gain insight.

Meanwhile, 92.4% of the students agree that learning speaking is important. Being able to speak well requires students' ability to express thoughts, opinion and feeling by putting words together in a meaningful way (Qureshi, 2007). Rao (2019) found that many people see that the indicator of successful language learning is to be able to use the language to communicate in real life as it reflects all the language skills and aspects including vocabulary and grammar the students learnt throughout the learning process. Beside the daily communication, in specific particular situation, such as presenting in an international seminar or conference, students should have good speaking skills as they have to deliver the material well (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Ličen & Bogdanovič, 2017).

As for learning pronunciation, 93.6% of the students believe that it is important. Similarly, Goodwin (2001) argues that learning pronunciation is essential in order to achieve the communicative goals, in which the communication goes well and can be understood by both speakers, especially the communication between non-native and native speakers. Speakers from different mother tongue may have different way of pronouncing English words, thus learning pronunciation will be helpful to make their pronunciation clearer and more understandable. Rajadurai (2001) on her research found that learning pronunciation promote students' confidence as they are able to articulate the English words better. Furthermore, Çakir & Baytar (2014) on his research stated that having good pronunciation will help the students to overcome their anxiety in oral communication.

The degree of importance of vocabulary learning is slightly higher compare to pronunciation learning. 93.7% of the students agree that learning vocabulary is important. Grabe (2004) stated that the role of vocabulary and grammar knowledge will help the students to have good reading comprehension as they will have better word recognition. From Grabe's statement, we can infer that the more vocabulary the students have, the greater understanding the students get in comprehending a text. Nation (2001) claims a broader effect of vocabulary acquisition as it plays a vital role in all language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students with little vocabulary may struggle to grasp discussions, build words while speaking, read written materials, and effectively convey their views. Therefore, have an adequate vocabulary is essential for a successful second language use and acquisition.

From all language skills and component, the importance of reading mastery gets the highest number of votes. 94.3% of the students believe that mastering reading is important. According to Yurko & Styfanyshyn (2020), reading will make students' written English better as they will learn how to use a proper spelling, punctuation, grammar rules, and diction. Because the students are already familiar with good word spelling and sentence structure, it will be easier for them to recognize poorly written material if they are exposed to a range of texts. Beside written structure, Bharuthram (2012), Hermida (2009), and Kadir et al. (2014) mentioned that reading will also help to develop students' critical thinking skill as the students should also comprehend the whole meaning of the text instead of only understanding the structure. Thus, mastering reading can be helpful to lead the students to their academic success. The overall result can be seen below:

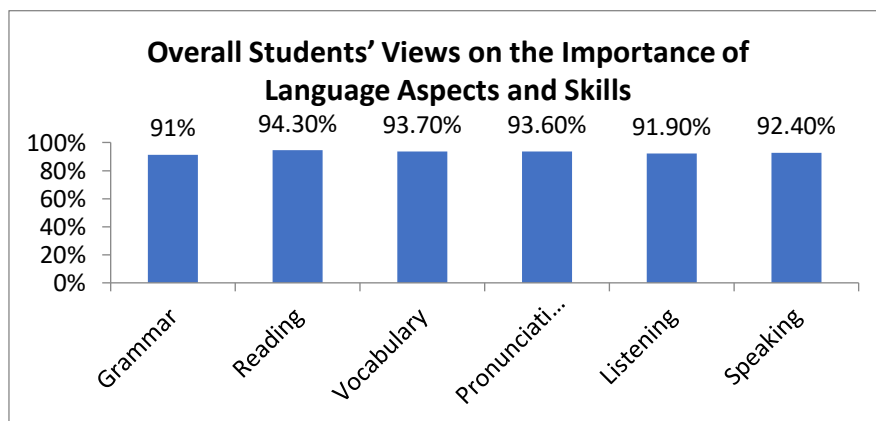


Fig 2. Overall Students' Views on the Importance of Language Aspects and Skills

3.2 Students' Preferred Learning Activities

Table 2. Students' Preferred Learning Activities per Cohort

Cohort	Encouraged to participate actively	Does not like being forced to speak	Doing group work	Oral presentation	Self-study	Using books to learn	Listening to audios	Using authentic material
2017	71%	38.7%	58%	32.2%	29%	25.8%	71%	64.5%
2018	73.3%	43.3%	70%	36.7%	53.3%	23.3%	56.7%	50%
2019	70.6%	38.2%	73.5%	32.3%	38.2%	23.5%	73.5%	35.3%
2020	60.7%	35.7%	64.3%	39.3%	35.7%	32.1%	50%	46.4%
Total Average	69%	39%	66%	35%	39%	26%	63%	49%

In the aspect of students' learning preference, the questionnaire obtain varied answers. In average, 69% of the students like to be encouraged to participate actively in a language class. While in contrast, 39% of the students do not like being forced to speak or actively participate in a language class. A study by MacIntyre et al., (1998) found that encouragement of students' participation in a communication is essential to achieve the communicative goal of learning a language. However, there might be some shy or even introvert students who do not like to be engaged in a conversation due to their communication apprehension or even anxiety. McCroskey (1977) and Minghe & Yuan (2013) found that some students, usually the one with low proficiency, encountered a fear of speaking with other person as it may arouse their level of anxiety. Therefore, an oral presentation can be one option to get the students have more speaking activity and get used to it. However, only 35% of the students like to have an oral presentation. A research by Brooks & Wilson (2014) found a similar result in which the students feel that oral presentation promote their communication skills yet it is considered as a challenging activity as they are required to use all the four language skills. Therefore, oral presentation can be a great opportunity for students with high English proficiency, but a struggle for students with low English proficiency. However, if oral presentation is guided properly, it will provide the students with more learning experience and long life skills that will be beneficial in all school subjects as well as later in the workplace (King, 2002).

There are 66% of the students who prefer doing a group work in the class, yet 39% of the students prefer to have a self-study without the teacher. Similarly, Meiramova & Zhanysbayeva (2015) found that the majority of students prefer group work over self-study as they get more new ideas, problem solving and teamwork skills as well as peer feedback and opinion. Moreover, Long & Porter (1985) stated that group work increases students' language practice opportunities and improve the quality of students' talk, especially in a large class with a limited time to practice the language. Instead of speaking individually, speaking in group with the same pace and interest will allow students to have various kinds of conversation that will also develop the quality of their talks at the same time.

From 123 respondents, only 26% of the students like to learn a language through books rather than any other learning media. 63% of the students prefer listening to audios to learn a language and 49% of the students like to use authentic materials such as journals, articles, videos, etc. to learn a language. As Tomlinson (2011) mentioned, learning material is not limited to textbook only, but it can also be anything that is helpful for the students' language improvement. Each learning material has its own benefits depend on the students' need and preference. Chou (2010) found that books do provide

the students with various kinds of topics and genre in the four skills area and may promotes students' autonomy, yet many college students feel that using books is boring and uninteresting as they expect that their language learning to be different from their high school classes. Instead of using books, Abu-Melhim (2009) suggested that learning language through audio will develop students' sensitivity to pronunciation and intonation. It will also familiarize them to how native speakers interact verbally. Another source (Umirova, 2020) stated that learning language using authentic materials, such as video or audio, may provoke students' critical thinking skills and provide meaningful learning for students as well as a model of correct and appropriate language use.

The overall result of students' views on preferred learning activities can be seen below:

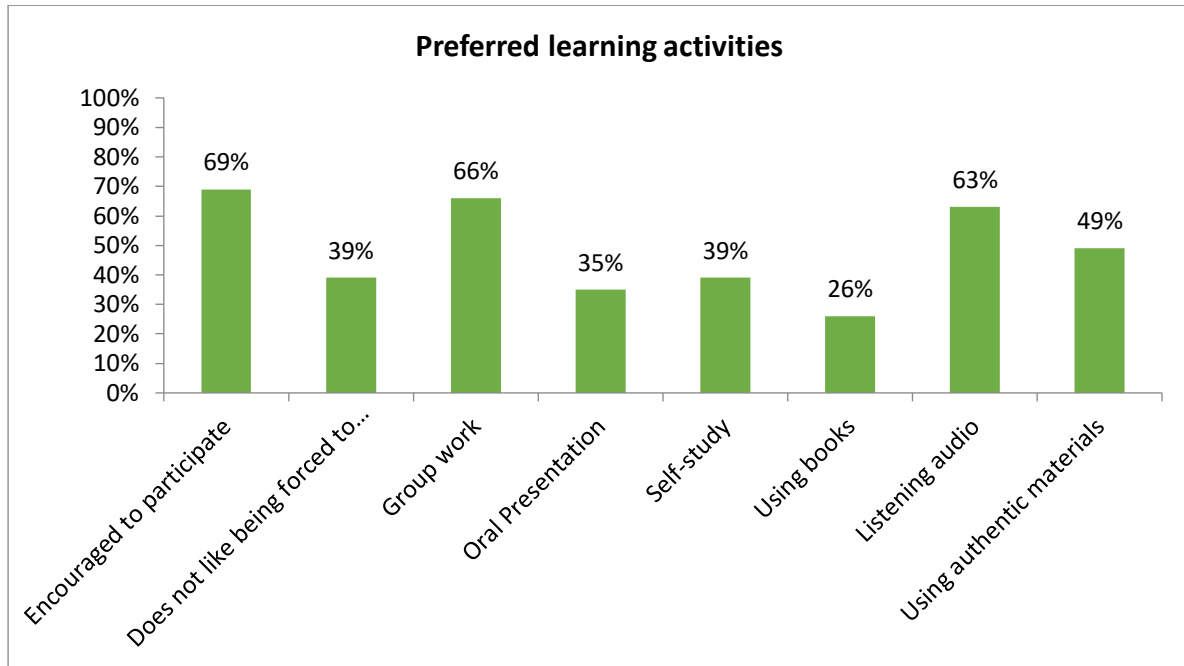


Fig 3. Overall Students' Preferred Learning Activities

3.3 Students' Self-Perceived Language Improvement

Table 3. The Degree of Students' Self-Perceived Language Skill/Component Improvement per Cohort

Cohort	Reading	Speaking	Writing	Listening	Vocabulary	Grammar
2017	32.2%	35.5%	38.7%	32.2%	45.2%	38.7%
2018	33.3%	26.7%	26.7%	16.7%	30%	20%
2019	47%	29.4%	32.6%	29.4%	44.1%	20.6%
2020	32.1%	21.4%	25%	17.8%	21.4%	21.4%
Total Average	36.1%	28.2%	30.7%	24%	35.2%	25.2%

In the category of students' self-perceived improvement, 36.1% of the students feel that their reading mastery are improving. Similarly, 35.2% of the students think that their vocabulary increased.

Meanwhile, 30.7% of the students agree that their writing skills have improved. However, only 28.2% of the students feel that they have better speaking skill. Similar to the previous result, 25.2% of the learners think that their grammar mastery increased. Meanwhile, only 24% of the students who think that listening skill have improved. Studies (Dafouz et al., 2007; Pérez-Vidal & Roquet, 2015) found that among the language skills, mostly the major improvement happen in their reading and writing skills, while the least improvements the students made is on their listening and speaking skills. Regarding to language aspects, grammar is in the last rank of students' improvement in CLIL based class compared to vocabulary (Dafouz et al., 2007; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2016). The result is in contrast with the main purpose of CLIL in which it supposed to focus on students' communicative needs and promote students' language production (Mehisto et al., 2008; Sobhy et al., 2013). As we can see, students of 2017 have better improvement than the others. According to Pérez-Vidal & Roquet (2015), academic year might have substantial benefits for students. Students with longer study period are assumed to have significant differences in terms of language proficiency. The choice of teaching materials, media and activities may contribute to students' language improvement, and all of these can be decided through the need analysis. As Aydin (2013) and Flowerdew (2013) has mentioned, need analysis is used to develop the 'what' and 'how' the language teaching process can be developed to foster students' language skills and needs. The overall result can be seen below:

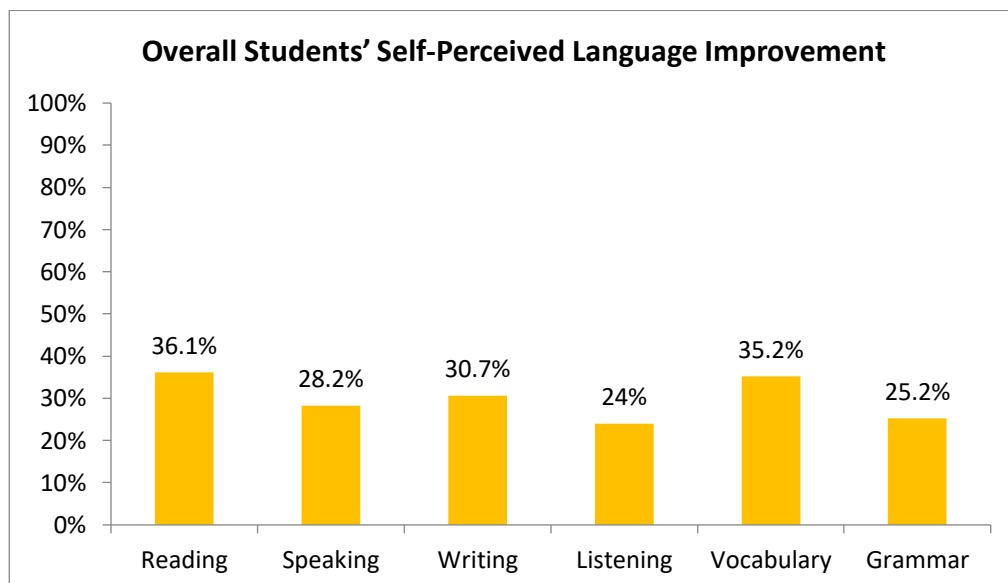


Fig 4. Overall Students' Perception of Their Language Skill/Component Improvement

Based on the open-ended questions, many students thought that the teaching and learning activity was already good and interesting, yet many students also thought that it was not effective and efficient. Some of them even stated that the learning process was monotone. Graaff et al. (2007) stated that language learning should be based on meaningful activity and material, just as natural language is always learned in a meaningful situation. Therefore, various kinds of activities and materials related to real life situation and need will increase students' motivation and enthusiasm in learning a language. Moreover, Sanchez (2017) mentioned that appropriate teaching activity may increase students' enjoyment during the teaching and learning process. They stated that it would be better if they can also have more time to practice their speaking rather than only reading, grammar, and vocabulary because the majority of the students realized that all the language skills and aspects were important in order to master a language. It is in line with Ibrahim (2010) and Sobhy et al. (2013) who states that the purpose of learning a language, especially in ESP and CLIL class is to allow the students communicate using the language in a specific field of study. Yet, teachers still need to motivate students to read, as this has substantial effect on their reading habit (Baba & Rostam Affendi, 2020). Some of the students also

suggest that the teacher should give them a direct feedback so that they know whether they have made a mistake or not. If both teacher and students understand the importance of feedback, the teaching and learning process will likely to be more effective and enjoyable (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Regarding the teaching media, the majority of the students stated that the media they usually used are power point, video, and YouTube. However, there are still a small number of students that mentioned that they only used book and journals. Some of the students preferred learning a language through a video or direct presentation rather than only reading and writing something so that they could practice their speaking and pronunciation. Noora (2008) stated that when students prefer one or two learning method, media, or activities, that means that the student either enjoy it or find it useful for their learning improvement. Rao (2002) suggest that teacher should provide the students with many opportunities that enhance students' speaking ability as they do not have many chances to involve in real life use of the language.

Constraints and Implications on Future Material Development

To accommodates students' needs and preferences, the future CLIL-based material development should consider some of the aforementioned aspects: (1) the degree of importance students attach to grammar, vocabulary, and language skills in the English learning process; (2) the students' preference in English learning activities; and (3) Language aspects students improved the most. Based on the survey, the constraints and implications for the materials would be: (1) the materials need to take in audio materials as students preferences of listening activities is quite high, and they claim they need improvement in listening skill; (2) it would be better if the activities encourage the students to speak as they views that their speaking competence is not much improved; (3) Grammar activities should be more plentiful and diverse as the students feel their grammar had not improved significantly; (4) materials that contain exercises should not fully involve individual exercises; instead, they should involve guidelines of activities that requires group work and encourage students' to participate; (5) in speaking skill practice, try not to provide activities which forced the students to speak individually, as they claimed that they do not like being forced to speak individually in front of public. Group performance is highly encouraged as it might hinder their foreign language anxiety (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Moreover, teachers do need to consider students' preference as the success of language acquisition is determined by the preferences and interests of the students (Shanti & Jaafar, 2021).

4. Conclusion

From the survey, we can conclude: (1) the majority of students believe that all language skills and aspects are important; (2) students prefer language learning activities that encourage them to participate (69%), to work together in groups (66%), and to listen to audio (63%); (3) They do not really like to only read and write using books (26%), to do oral presentation (35%), to do self-study (39%), and do not like being forced to speak (39%); and (4) In terms of self-perceived language improvement, language aspects that need improvement the most are listening, grammar, and speaking. Future material development should listen to those needs and preferences. It is recommended to: (1) include audio-materials, (2) pay more attention to speaking practice, (3) incorporate more diverse grammar activities, (4) include group work activities rather than individual exercise, and (5) encourage more group speaking performance than individual performance for it lessen the anxiety. The material developer should provide less individual type of exercises, facilitate more group work that encourage all students to participate equally, and provide audio along with written explanation.

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