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ESP ISSUE IN INDONESIAN TERTIARY CONTEXT: WHAT STUDENTS NEED IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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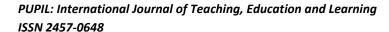*elokputrinimasari@gmail.com*

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze students' English needs in an ESP course. English for specific purposes has become a significant aspect in the learning process in Indonesian tertiary context. The significant of occupation requirement globally and the emergence of mastering certain skills for certain jobs drives the need of English for specific area. Referring to this concern, General English is considered no longer suitable and it should be specified into several subjects based on certain purposes. In this case, ESP gives chances for students and teacher to define the target or the outcomes based on their purposes by considering their needs. Thus, conducting need analysis is the first, most significant part to be conducted in ESP course. Conducted in a private university in Indonesia, this study employed descriptive qualitative approach that used questionnaire and focus group discussion to collect the data. This study is a representation of

teaching reflection after conducting 6-month ESP class. The results showed that since the students are enrolled in Communication Science Department, they need material that encourages them to communicate and participate actively in the classroom, refers to their major and reflects occupation-oriented material. The materials that distinguish this subject from others emphasize the specification of ESP class and show that the material used cannot be generalized. Therefore, the teacher should consider these results to prepare for the next ESP course.

Keywords

1. Introduction

The increasing number of global challenges in many fields of works emerge the needs of workers with advanced competency, including English competency. English has become lingua franca that is officially used in international communication. A study have examined that more than 80% of international organizations in Asia Pacific only use English in which it makes English as a vital role in social, politic, education and economy (Boroujeni & Fard, 2013). Besides, in some Asian countries, English is considered as one of significant subjects that influence students in choosing career pathway (Tan & Balasico, 2018). Thus, the general English is no longer sufficient to facilitate students to improve their English competency. General English is a type of English subject that is taught to get general knowledge applicable in all fields (Liu, 2016). The increase of competency for workplace also increase the demand of English specified for certain field. Unexpectedly, students with high English proficiency in certain field may perform better in certain workplaces than that of its counterpart (Sek, Mok, Leung, & Li, 2018). That is why the materials of English competency should also be developed based on each field that requires it. Therefore, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has a very significant role in the context of English as a foreign language.

Generally speaking, ESP is a part of English language learning in which the practical of it is quite different from general English. Actually ESP is not a teaching method or materials of English, but it is teaching and learning design specified for students with certain fields of study or work that is conducted to achieve the goal of that specific field (A. I. Ibrahim, 2010; Salehi, Davari, & Yunus, 2015). Theoretically, ESP is considered as an approach in language learning that is specifically designed to help students achieve what they need in the certain field they have targeted (Wozniak, 2010).

What makes ESP special is its specification that is significantly different from general English since there are some characteristics that limits the scopes of materials given. In general English, students usually learn all linguistic aspects in the slightly the same level. However in ESP, students learn only what they need. The aspects of linguistics, materials, method and learning design taught in ESP class is designed specifically to focus only on students' needs (Zohrabi, 2010). Thus, the use of English based on the target situation is strongly highlighted. According to Dudley-Evans (cited in A. I. Ibrahim, 2010), the characteristics of ESP are divided into two categories, namely absolute characteristic and variable characteristic. Absolute characteristic of ESP consist of three aspects. First, ESP is conducted to facilitate students to learn English in a specific field. Second, ESP employs certain learning methods to provide proper learning activities that suitable with the students' fields. The last, language features including grammar, lexis, discourse, genre etc. are the main focus of ESP course. Meanwhile, the variable characteristic of ESP covers five aspects. First, ESP is designed specifically for certain field. Second, teaching techniques employed in ESP course are significantly different from general English. Third, ESP is designed for higher education students or employees of certain workplace. Fourth, ESP is designed for students with intermediate or advanced level of competency. The last, ESP course strongly emphasizes on the students' basic competency in using English. These aforementioned characteristics are supposed to be the main references that underpin the ESP course. Determination of the materials, teaching methods, the objectives set by students should be based on students' needs, the target, and the type of program that is planned.

In conducting ESP course, there is an important thing to consider prior to the course, namely need analysis. Need analysis is the main key in conducting ESP class from which the specified target and objective of current ESP program are identified (Boroujeni & Fard, 2013; H. Ibrahim, Ali, Rahman, & Salih, 2013; Juan, 2014; Liton, 2015; Rahman, 2015). Need analysis is an activity of prioritizing students' needs to achieve the target by collecting information related to who the current students are, the reason in learning the language and the current level of competency they have. This is to bridge the gap among students' needs, intentions and emergence of using the language in the future (Guiyu & Yang, 2016; Juan, 2014; Liton, 2015; Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017). This activity can be conducted by employing several methods, such as having interview, giving questionnaire, analyzing documents, etc. Need analysis is the most important stage as well as the first one to be conducted in designing ESP course (Khan, 2007). Literally, the word need refers to someone's desire for something. In other words, need is

the standard to determine the targeted achievement. In this case, need refers to specific target that students want to, will to and should achieve (Arts, 2016).

Related to needs in ESP, there are some components that should be consider within the concept of need analysis. (Songhori, 2008) states that need analysis approach consist of Target Situation Analysis, Present Situation Analysis, Pedagogic Need Analysis, Deficiency Analysis, Strategy Analysis or Learning Need Analysis, Means Analysis, Register Analysis, and Discourse and Genre Analysis. This concept of Songhori is one of the most comprehensive concepts since it thoroughly conceptualize the need analysis and it has been used in numerous previous studies as guideline (Nimasari, 2016; Rahman, 2015). From the present concept of need analysis, there are at least ten aspects that are used as the basis in analyzing students' needs. Those aspects are the use of language in the present and in the future, students' perception of ESP, targeted skill or competency, the advantage of having the skill, learning strategies preferences, teacher-student interaction during the class, role relationship, teaching learning activities, current situation where ESP is conducted and students' expectation from the program (Khan, 2007; Nimasari, 2016; Songhori, 2008).

In Indonesia tertiary context, ESP is more focused on academic purposes as students are expected to be able to understand wide range of materials in a certain fields of study. The same condition also goes for students of Communication Science department in a private university in Indonesia. In this institution, ESP is designed for academic purpose, particularly in the field of communication. Unfortunately, the determination of the materials and the syllabus for the course are designed based on teacher's personal perspective. Students as the main subject that enroll in the ESP program have not identified yet in regard to their needs and objectives. The worst is that there is course book available for the course. Therefore during the class, teacher develops her own materials that may or may not suitable with the syllabus. This situation highlights that that conducting need analysis for ESP class is of high demand in order to fill the gap between the program and the expectation of target situation. Thus, this study was conducted to investigate students' need with regard to the materials and skills they want to achieve in ESP class. It is intended to answer the research question "in regard to materials and skills of English students concern about, what do the students need to facilitate their learning in an ESP class?"

2. Research Method

This study involves 60 students of first semester Communication Science who enrolled in ESP program this semester as the research participants. In this study, the researcher adopted need analysis questionnaire that has been modified according to the research target of this present study (Khan, 2007; Nimasari, 2016; Songhori, 2008). This questionnaire is the main instrument used to analyzed students' needs of English materials in ESP for communication. The 17 items in this questionnaire are developed based on nine specific aspects that have been discussed in the previous chapter. The questionnaire is in form of close item and open item that allow the researcher to collect thorough data related to students' English needs. In addition to the questionnaire, focus group discussion is also conducted in this study to gather additional information concerning what students experience during the class. The result of the discussion allows the researcher to get deeper data related to students' English needs.

The data have been collected from questionnaire and focus group discussion then are classified based on the aspects that become the guideline in conducting the program. The classification is conducted through percentage process. The percentage are later described and interpreted according to the underpinning theory. The result of this analysis is concluded as the research result.

3. Result and Discussion

The data collected from questionnaire was analyzed by categorizing based on nine aspects of need analysis. The result is presented in form of percentage for each aspect. The first aspect is analyzing the use of English in present and in the future. This aspect refers to the students' orientation in learning or using English during the ESP program.
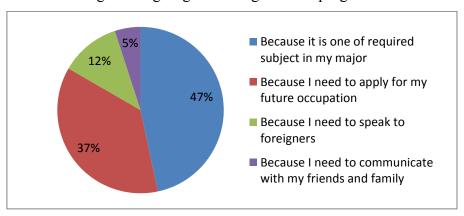

Figure 1: *Students' Responses in Learning English*

Figure 1 shows that the biggest reason for students in learning English is due to the obligation of the institution for students to take this subject. This option is valued as 47%. Meanwhile the second highest option is valued 37% in which it refers to students' consideration that they may need English for their future occupation so that they need to learn it.

From the group discussion result, it was revealed that most students state that they learn English for academic purpose and because they are obliged to learn it, while some other students admit that having good English skill is beneficial and highly valued for their career in the future, especially for them who will work in communication field such as journalism, public relations, broadcasting, public speaking, etc.
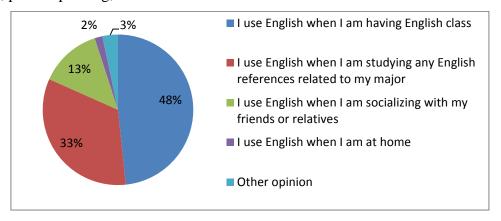

Figure 2: *Students' Use of English*

According to figure 2, it can be seen that the highest percentage is 48% that refers to first option; students use English only in English class. The second highest response is when students read references related to their major that is written or spoken in English. This option has percentage 33%.

From the group discussion, it is known that students barely communicate using English outside the class because they found it awkward and the situation is not supportive enough. Moreover, only when they are asked to find additional materials related to their major that is written or spoken in English they quite openly use English to interact.

It can be said that students have little intention in using English in daily communication since their purpose is study-oriented or job-oriented. Therefore, the material provided in the class should be selected by considering the use of language in the workplace and academic setting. Besides, since ESP in this institution applies text-based learning, the type of texts used also refers to the ones used in the field of communication.
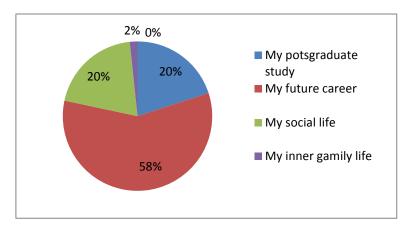
Figure 3: *Future Orientation of Learning English*

From figure 3, it can be known that most students or 58% students state that English they currently learn is oriented to be used in their future workplace. Two other second highest percentage or 20% for each option show that English is used for higher education or for social interaction with their colleagues.

This result is in line with students' argument during group discussion. They express their consideration of career-orientation in learning English materials in ESP class. Even though they previously reveal that they learn English for their academic purposes, continuing study in higher level of education is not something easy. They have to take proficiency tests i.e. IELTS as an obligation for the registration. That is why they admit that English is beneficial for their next study, but the use of English in workplace is more considerable for them. Concerning the use of English for social communication, students say that they still cannot use English for daily communication, instead, they want to learn English so that they can access international sources of news as they need to say up-to-date. Thus, they expect the materials provided for them are related to their aforementioned concerns.

Based on this result, it can be inferred that the role of English in Communication Science department is to facilitate their academic need for current time as well as for future career orientation. Thus, providing material that may support their major in communication is recommended. For example, teacher can elaborate more on texts related to journalism or Public Relations along with the analysis of vocabulary and language focus related to the texts.

The second aspect addressed in need analysis for ESP is concerning students' perception towards the ESP program itself. In conducting need analysis for ESP, students as the course taker have the biggest role in deciding the effectiveness of the course. It is done by considering their thought on English for communication.
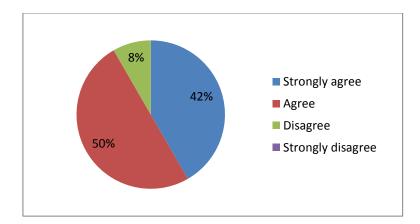
Figure 4: *Students' Perceptions towards ESP in Current Curriculum*

As what is shown in figure 4, 50% students state that they are agree with the decision of integrating ESP in the current curriculum. Moreover, other 42% students even say that they are strongly agreed if the English subject they are currently enrolled in is specifically designed for them and is integrated with their major.

The result of group discussion then revealed that English is an important subject and of high significant to be learnt even though they are not majoring in English. Students continue state that as students of Communication Science department, they are expected to be able to properly communicate as a journalist or public relations professional. Therefore, they need to stay up-to-date concerning current news and issues in the field of communication in which some of the information is released from overseas sources. Regarding this concern, English is considered as beneficial subject to facilitate them accomplish this need.
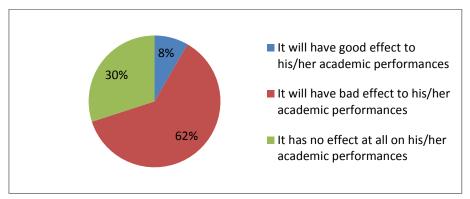

Figure 5: *Students' Perception towards the Correlation between English Competency and Academic Achievement*

This result represents students' responses regarding the correlation between students' English competency and their general academic achievement. According to the percentage analysis, 62% students admit that having low English competency may affect their academic

achievement somehow. Conversely, other 30% students have different, opposite opinion in which English competency does not relate to their general academic achievement so it does not have significant effect.

Correlated to the previous item, students in the group discussion assert that the subject of English is somehow correlated to their academic aspect even though it does not significantly relevant. It can be seen from students' confident. Students who are agree with this correlation utter that they have higher confidence if their English skill is good. Despite this fact, to what extent they are related is influenced by students' interests and motivation in learning. That is why some of the students argue that having good English skill does not mean their academic achievement is increase significantly.
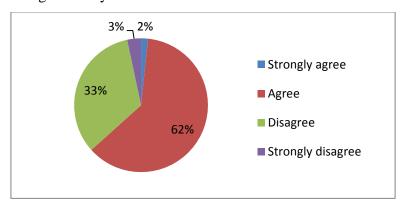

Figure 6: *Students' Perceptions towards the Sufficiency of English Learning*

Figure 6 represents students' response on the sufficiency learning time allotment they spend in enrolling ESP program. Based on the analysis of the questionnaire, 62% students agree that the English subject they take has 2 credits. In this case, students perceive that English is not a main subject their major and it is learn only for specific purpose. Thus, 2 credits are enough for them. In opposite, 33% students reveal that they disagree if it only has 2 credits.

Later from the group discussion result, it is known that students who are career-oriented and higher education-oriented believe that the more credits the English subject has, the more materials they can learn. It seems that this divergence is influenced by their perceptions on to what extend their English skill affect on their general academic achievement.

Generally speaking, the second aspect represents how significant is the English to be included in the curriculum. From the analysis result, it can be known that English is important and it cannot be used only as supplementary subject as a general subject. Instead, the course or the subject should be designed specifically according what students really need or want to

achieve. Therefore, the material provided should not be adopted even from the similar setting since the students' characteristics and prospective are different.

The third aspect analyzed in investigating students' need in ESP is current condition or situation where the ESP program is conducted. This aspect refers to the appropriateness of learning sources and the availability of those sources.
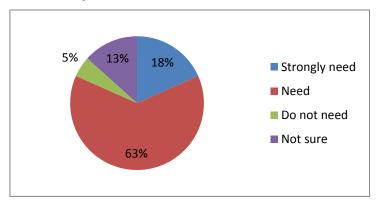

Figure 7: *Students' Perception towards Additional English Course*

This point addresses students' need concerning additional higher level of English class for their curriculum that will discuss about translation of international journal, writing abstract and research paper in English and delivering an academic presentation in English. As what can be seen in figure 7, there are 63% students who state that they need additional, higher level English materials integrated in English subject they take. Other 18% students even strongly need such material since it can strengthen their ability in using English.

Students assert in the group discussion that they should take this additional materials in different semester, at least after they accomplish the basic one. The students in this present study confirm that they could get wider range of materials and have more time to enhance their skills.
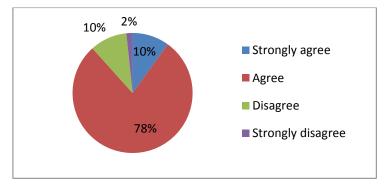

Figure 8: *Students' Perception on English Appropriateness*

Figure 8 depicts the percentage of students whether they agree or not concerning the English materials given in the course. In this case, most students or about 78% students agree that the types of material given are suitable for them and in line with their major. This result is supported by the analysis of teacher's self-made syllabus. The syllabus made by the teacher involve materials including text-based exercises in which the topics of the texts are related to communication field that are taken from news articles, I-news and other related sources. From this result, it can be inferred that there is relevance between the materials in English subject and other subjects. That is why students show interest in this course.
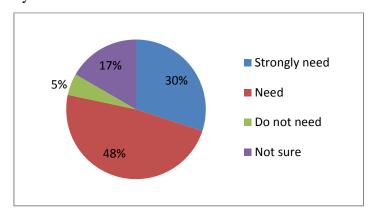

Figure 9: *The Necessity of English Textbook*

According to the questionnaire analysis, there are 48% students who confirm that they need an English course book that they can use as well as to support their English needs as what is mentioned in item 1, 2 ,3 and 7. Moreover, 30% students even state that they strongly need it.

From the discussion result, it is known that most students found it difficult to learn English when there is no module or book available for them during the class. Had they assisted with this kind of book, they can easily learn the explained material, practice the exercises and the tasks given and review the material have been discussed in the class. Most students explained told that it is not easy for them to do note-taking while listening to teacher's explanation. That is why they prefer to have an ESP course book.

Broadly speaking, the setting where the ESP course is conducted will affect its design. In this present study, English subject or ESP is conducted as a 2-credit basic subject given to the students in the first semester. Considering students' perspective towards the course, a more advance program is needed to focus more on the practices is suggested to be conducted to enhance students in improving their competencies. Therefore, materials that give chances for students to interact more and use oral English more effectively.

Need analysis questionnaire then also analyze the skills or competencies the students want to master along with the advantages or the purpose of having those skills. They are the next two aspects analyzed in this study.
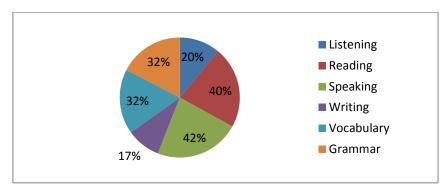

Figure 10: *English Skills Students need to Master*

This item represents what English skills students expect to learn in ESP course. As what displayed in figure 10, the distribution of English skills students expect to have is quite equal from one to each other. Among six basic-English skills commonly involved in ESP course, speaking got the highest rank with 42%. Meanwhile, reading skill placed the second rank with 40%.

Concerning this matter, students acknowledge in the discussion session that speaking is most relevant skill for them since they are majoring in communication. As for the reading skill, mastering this skill allows them to analyze and understand global issued as a part of their major. Regarding the equal distribution of students' interest towards the skills, students acknowledge that those skills are actually related and integrated to each other. However, the highest ranked skills are the ones should be prioritize in order to provide a more focus material for the course. This is what makes ESP different from general English.
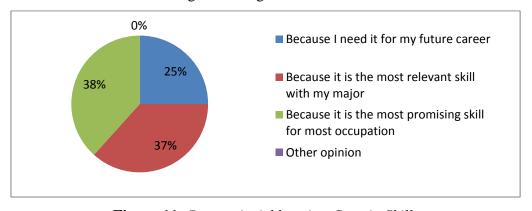

Figure 11: *Reason in Addressing Certain Skills*

As what is displayed in figure 11, there are some considerations that underpinned students' preferences in preferring certain skills to master. Based on the result of questionnaire analysis, it is known that 38% students need to develop the skill in item 10 because the skill is the most promising skill for their future career and is required for most occupation. Other 37% students state that they tend to choose that skill because it is the most relevant skill regarding their major.

This result is in line with students' statement during the discussion that they have the intention to learn English as per requirement that may be included in their future career application. Even though some of students admit that having good English skill is the most prominent one, they acknowledge that it may give them additional credential.
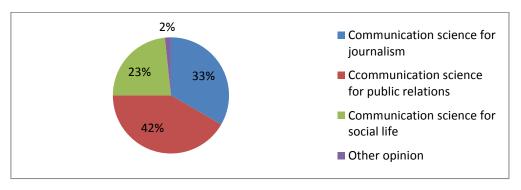

Figure 12: *Topics Need to Emphasize on Class*

In this item, students define the topic of materials or text they want to learn more in ESP class. According to figure 12, it can be seen that most students, 42%, show interests in topics related to Public Relations while 33% students are interested in journalism related topics. Generally, these two kinds of topics are chosen because they are two main major competencies included in Communication Science department. Therefore, in deciding the topic of texts or the materials, students' preferences are influenced by their personal interest in choosing what major competency they are interested in to.

In conducting ESP course, apart from the materials, skills or competencies that will be taught is the next thing to be considered. In this current setting, English is addressed for the purpose of communication both oral and written. Besides, for the sake of students' academic achievement, competency to understand materials written in English is needed. Based on the result, English skills that seem needed by students are speaking and reading. These skills are perceived by the students as the most relevant and significant skills for their major. Meanwhile,

for writing based skills is not quite impactful because the course is a basic English course in which the students do not practice more in it.

The next aspects analyzed in need analysis for ESP are regarding the learning strategy preference and learning activities. In this case, how students learn and what kind of learning activities conducted in the class become one of important factor in conducting ESP course because these aspects relate directly to the students' competency development.
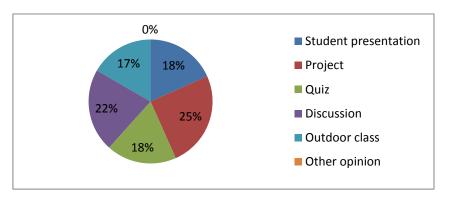

Figure 13: *Students' Preference of Learning Activities*

Figure 13 depicts students' preference concerning learning activities conducted in the ESP class that that is considered proper with their major. As what is displayed in figure 13, it seems that the distribution of students' answers is quite equal for all options. This result shows that students tend to combine the activities and prefer to not only learn within one single type of activities, depending on the type of task, exercise, or topic they have to accomplish. However, it can be seen that project has the highest percentage with 25% and the second one is discussion with 22%.

Considering this result, the result of discussion activity revealed that students prefer activities that involve teamwork and facilitate them to be active in a group. Students stated that as these types of activities are in line with their major because as students of communication, they are obliged to be able to create a concept of an event or activities. That is why having project or discussion during English class allows them to accomplish the task in a more efficient way as well as improve their communication skill.
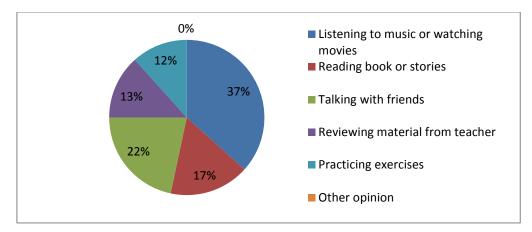
Figure 14: *Students' Preferences of Learning Strategies*

Figure 14 shows the percentage of learning strategies mostly employed by students. From the analysis, it is revealed that the most used strategies in learning English is through listening spoken text or watching visual text. In this study, this option achieves 37%. In this case, songs and movies are the most familiar sources.

The group discussion result exposed in line result that supports the questionnaire result. Students state that listening to English songs and watching movies is the easiest strategies they can employ to make them familiar with English text and vocabularies. They can imitate they way native speakers speak, so that they can improve their listening and speaking skills at the same time. However, it also can be seen in figure 14 that the percentage of other strategies is not significantly different. This result actually proves that employing more strategies will be more effective for students in making their learning more successful. Moreover, students' preference in choosing learning strategies is in line with another aspect analyzed in this study. For instance, the second most employed strategies are talking to their friends with value 22%. This type of strategies may work well with the skill they want to master; speaking. In this case, students reveal that having peer discussion is beneficial for them since they can share their opinions and give feedbacks to each other.
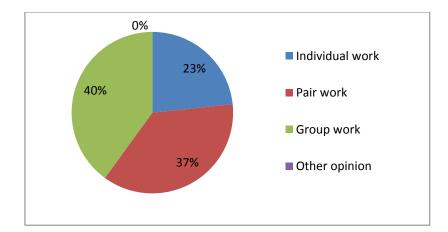
Figure 15: *Students' Preference of the Type of Learning Activities*

According to figure 15, it can be known that 40% students tend to choose activities that involve teamwork work in group. Meanwhile, 30% students choose to work in pair instead. Students reveal that doing the tasks in group or in pair will motivate them to learn and to finish the tasks effectively, efficiently. However, the rest of the students perceived that individual work is also important to determine whether or not they understand the materials thoroughly.

Therefore, in conducting ESP course, teacher should consider that group or pair work is beneficial for students, especially in the stage of discussing the materials. However, teacher should also consider that there should be some tasks designed for individual work so that teacher can assess their individual output. Compared to the previous study, the type of learning activities investigated in this study chosen in a broader range so that its percentage is not significantly different. This result also suggests that teacher need to mix these activities accordingly so that it can accommodate students' preferences.

The last two aspects investigated in this study to know about students need in ESP are concerning relationship role and students' expectation towards the program. The former one refers to the interaction between students and teacher while the later one refers to students' thought in joining current ESP class.
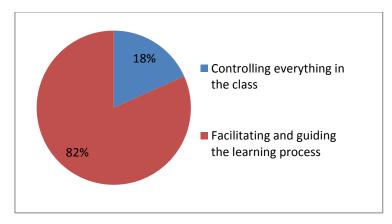
Figure 16: *Teacher-Student Interactions*

As what is displayed in figure 16, most student prefer teacher who facilitate and guide the learning process instead of teacher who control all the learning activities. The percentage for this result is 82% and 18% respectively. Students, later, state that they like to have teacher who also give them chance to improve the tasks or learning materials on their own during the class. Even though students admit that teacher's control during teaching learning process is indeed needed, they believe that learning process that is too much strictly controlled or even dictated by the teacher is not impactful. For example, students tend to have some times to collect information on certain materials during the class discussion instead of directly discussing the materials without giving them time to share their thoughts. This is the result gotten from the group discussion.

This result suggests that in conducting ESP class, teacher should be able to promote autonomous learning and encourage students to be independent learners. In the previous study, the analysis result for this aspect also showed the similar result. It means that the teaching learning activities may be more effective when teacher can make him/herself as facilitator and guide to lead students to be respectful to their learning, be motivated to accomplish the tasks, and be autonomous learners.
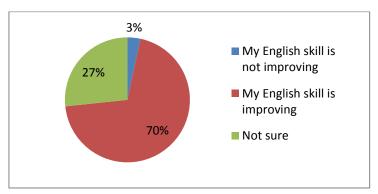

Figure 17: *Students' Perception towards the Current ESP Program*

Based on the result of the questionnaire as displayed in figure 17, students evaluate their learning and admit that there is significant improvement in their competency after attended ESP class. They found it beneficial to attend the ESP course. On the other hand, there are around 27% students who cannot identify whether their competency improves or not. In this case, these students tend to not actively participate in class since they perceive that attending English class is only an obligation.

4. Conclusion

English for specific purposes (ESP) is designed to facilitate students' English need based on their objectives in learning the language itself. In addition, conducting need analysis is of high significance. As what a study revealed, it may be an attempt to bridge the gap between students' expectation and experience in teaching learning process (Shetty, 2018). Therefore, the materials given will be also different, depend on the objectives. From the analysis of need analysis questionnaire and group discussion, it is known that generally, students have similar tendency in term of their English learning. It also works towards the skills or competencies need to be mastered. Deciding what skills to be more emphasized should be based on students' preference towards the course and future orientation of major of education in which students enrolled in.
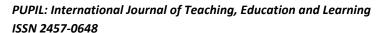
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