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Urip Sullstiyono, S.Pd., M.Ed., Ph. D.

PROMOTING STUDENTS' AUTONOMY IN LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH THEIR PREFERRED LEARNING ACTIVITIES



Promoting Students' Autonomy In Learning English
Through Their Preferred Learning Activities

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FOREWORD

This book is written based on the author's master thesis. The book examines a range of learning activities used in teaching English and identifies those that students see as most helpful. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire adopted from Willing (1988a). Some modifications had been made to meet the purpose of this study. The questionnaire consists of two parts. Part 1 is ethnographic data in terms of the participants' gender and field of study. Part 2 consists of 30 items on two pages comprises students' preferred activities in learning English. Students are asked to rank the activities of each category by circling one number. Circling number 1 means it is not helpful /preferable, while circling number 4 means it is very helpful /preferable for them. Then, all the responses were analyzed using SPSS Professional Statistics. The study found some activities which were helpful for students to learn English. Conversation activities, teachers' role to help students talk about their interest, English activities in small groups, practicing the sound and pronunciation, using multiple sensor modes, and talking to friends in English were activities that students found helpful and preferable. Another finding was that gender and students' field of study did not appear to affect students' choices of preferred activities. The study suggests a number of pedagogical implication for English teaching and learning for non-English department students at universities in Indonesia. The finding suggests that teachers should take preferred activities into account when they are teaching. The need of comprehensible input that is recommended by Krashen (1982, 1989) both inside and outside classroom should be provided by teachers to ensure the process of acquisition occurs. In addition, the study also proposed some suggestions for further research. These suggestions state the need to conduct research which involves more participants to confirm the results of the current study.

The author hopes that this book will benefit English language teachers and students as well as those who are interested in developing their knowledge and expertise in the area of language teaching and learning. This book also provides a new insight about how students can improve their language learning independently based on their preferred activities.

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2.43

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	iii
CHAPTER I BACKGROUND	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. The Significance of the book	6
1.3. The outline of the book.....	7
1.4. Summary	7
 CHAPTER II: WHAT LITERATURE SAYS ABOUT LEARNING ENGLISH	 8
2.1. Introduction.....	8
2.2. Language Acquisition.....	8
2.3. Language Learning	9
2.4. Language Acquisition and Learning in Teaching English in EFL Context.....	10
2.4.1. Second Language Acquisition Theory and Second Language Classroom Practice.	11
2.4.2. The Role of Teacher in Second Language Classrooms	13
2.4.3. Promoting Students' Activities outside the Classroom.....	16
2.5. Language Teaching Methods	17
2.5.1. The Natural Approach.....	18
2.5.1.1. Requirements for Optimal Input	19
2.5.1.2. Out side Classroom Activities	19
2.5.2. Total Physical Response (TPR).....	20
2.5.2.1. Requirement for Optimal Input	20
2.5.3. Suggestopedia	21
2.5.3.1. Requirement for Optimal Input	21
2.6. Factors affecting English Language Learning	22
2.6.1. Learners' characteristics.....	22
2.6.2. Learners' Language Learning Strategies	23
2.6.3. Learners' Belief about Language learning.....	25

2.6.4. Students' Learning Style	28
2.7. Individual Preferences in Learning English	29
2.8. Summary.....	30

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY,

PURPOSE AND PROCESS	31
3.1. Introduction.....	31
3.2. Study Purpose	31
3.3. Participants	32
3.4. Methodology.....	33
3.5. The Development of the Questionnaire.....	33
3.6. Data Collection	35
3.7. Data Analysis	36
3.8. Summary.....	36

CHAPTER IV: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS.....37

4.1. Item analysis	37
4.1.1. Learning English in Class	38
4.1.2 Teacher's Role	46
4.1.3 Grouping Arrangements	54
4.1.4 Language Focus	61
4.1.5 Sensory Modality	65
4.1.6 Outside Class Activities.....	70
4.2 Comparison across activities	78
Table 4.2.1	78
Table 4.2.2	79
Table 4.2.3	80
Table 4.2.4	80
Table 4.2.5	81
Table 4.2.6	81
4.3. Comparison across activities based on the students' field of study.....	82

Table 4.3.1	82
Table 4.3.2	83
Table 4.3.3	85
Table 4.3.4	86
Table 4.3.5	87
Table 4.3.6	88
4.4. Comparison across activities based on the students' gender	89
Table 4.4.1	90
Table 4.4.2	91
Table 4.4.3	91
Table 4.4.4	92
Table 4.4.5	93
Table 4.4.6	93
4.5. Discussion	94
4.5.1 Students' Preferred Activities	94
4.5.2 Male and Female differences and Field of Study Matters	97
 CHAPTER V: STUDENTS' PREFERRED ACTIVITIES IN	
LEARNING ENGLISH.....	98
5.1. Implications.....	98
5.2. Conclusion.....	101
 APPENDICES	
Approval Letter from the Dean of Teacher Training and Education Of Jambi University	104
Survey Questionnaire	105
Information Sheet for Participants	107
REFERENCES	108
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	111

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK

Our ability to use second languages comes mostly from what we have acquired, not from what we have learned (Krashen, 1989).

1.1. Introduction

This book is a study aiming to identify students' preferred activities in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The identification of preferred learning activities is important to improve the English teaching practice at the faculty of Teacher Training and education of Jambi University where I am teaching English. The university is located in Jambi province, in Sumatra Island. It has six faculties: Law, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Teacher Education and Training, Economics, and Health Science.

Although my main responsibility is teaching English to English department students, I also teach English to non English Department students at Economics, Physics, and Biology Departments. I have been teaching English at these departments for about three years. At University level, English for non-English department students is taught in two semesters. Students should study general English in one semester before they continue to study English for specific purposes in the next semester. Students must pass General English subject before they can take English for Specific Purposes which is based on their major i.e. English for Economics, English for Physics, and English for Biology.

It is worth bearing in mind that as an English teacher, I find teaching English is not easy. I often feel unsatisfied with my teaching practice in the classroom. There are several reasons that make teaching English difficult. Firstly, I have to deal with large classes in which more than fifty students in a class. Even though the definition of

large class in language learning classes context vary (Wright, 2005), this ratio is not ideal for a language classroom. Secondly, not all students who attend the English classes are motivated. English subject is a compulsory subject which means students have to learn the language for examination purposes and exposure to English is only for about two hours a week. Their low motivation and less English learning hours become an obstacle not only for me to teach English but also for them to learn it. Thirdly, the teaching focus of English at university level is on reading skill (Sawir, 2005, Sugirin, 1999, Setiyadi, 2001). This may be because most of the textbooks used in universities are written in English. So, the emphasis of teaching is on English grammar and vocabulary. This teaching emphasis is based on the assumption that students will understand an English text properly if they know the structure of English and have an adequate vocabulary. One consequence of this is that the teaching of other skills such as speaking, writing, and listening, are ignored (Sugirin, 1999). In my own experience learning the rules of grammar is not always enough to become a competent English user. Sawir (2005) has also observed that learning English is too often seen as learning some grammatical rules and doing some tasks without using the language for real communicative purposes.

Given that situation, the outcome of teaching English for non-English department students at my university is unsatisfactory and the students' English performance is very limited. Research conducted by Exley (2005) shows that most Indonesian students are categorized as less than good in spoken and written English proficiency. This may be because, as Setyadi (2001) suggests, non-English department students are not taught how to learn English with appropriate teaching strategies. He further said that this does not happen only in Indonesia but also in other South East Asian Countries.

Despite the unsuccessful story of teaching and learning English for non-English department students in my university, it cannot be denied that there are some students who have good English proficiency. For

example, I have one student, I will call him Arif, whom I categorize as a good language learner. I observed him learning English both inside and outside the classroom during the two semesters I taught English in his class. He was the subject of a previous study I completed in 2007 (Sefstiyu, 2007).

Based on my study of him, I concluded that the way he learns English has some of the characteristics that Rubin and Thompson (1982) identified as belonging to good language learners. Firstly, *He tried to find his own way, taking charge of his learning*(p.49). In his outside classroom activities, he often went to the Self Access Center (SAC) to learn English to develop listening skills.

Secondly, he used *memory strategies to recall what has been learned*(p.73). In the effort he makes to enrich his vocabulary, he would look up the English dictionary to refresh his memory and write the vocabulary on a piece of paper and stick it on his room door to make it easier for him to read whenever he walks through the door. Then, he *made his own opportunities for practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom*(p.61). He liked listening to the songs to improve his pronunciation as well as to enrich his vocabulary. He practiced his speaking with his friends outside the classroom. Even at home he always spoke to his beloved cat in English.

In learning English grammar, he was *creative and developing a "feel" for the language by experimenting with its grammar and words*(p.57). He read books and magazines to pick up grammar rules that he would use in his writing to try and become more proficient in his English language. He found that using the rules he had just learnt, rather than memorizing them, was a more effective way for him to learn grammar.

Another characteristic of good learner identified by Rubin and Thompson (1982) included the idea that the learner uses what he or she knows to *make intelligent guesses*(p.77). When Arif was watching movies, he covered the Indonesian subtitle on the screen and tried to

understand the whole story through guessing what unfamiliar words might mean from the context of the movie.

As a result of studying Arif's learning strategies, I became more aware of Dunn's (1988) idea that understanding students' preferred learning activities will make a significant contribution to the success of the learning process. In the light of my own experience as an English language learner, the ways of learning a foreign language, in this case English, that are effective for me, are by watching movies and writing the new words in a notebook. Like Arif, I learn pronunciation and the English accent by watching movies as well as collecting new vocabularies and English expression. These help me in improving my English. I have a best friend who learns English by memorizing at least ten words a day picked from the dictionary. This has allowed him to achieve very high grades in reading but it does not translate into effective spoken communication. Another friend of mine learns English by talking in front of the mirror and recording it to correct her pronunciation. This strategy has lead to her speaking beautifully, almost like a native speaker.

My colleagues often question me about the best way of learning English. This question is not easy to answer since it depends on one's preferred ways of learning. What may work for me in learning English, may not work at all for others. For example, although I like watching movies, for others it may not help. Instead of watching movies, they prefer reading magazines to increase their vocabulary.

After three years of teaching English to non-English department students, one important thing that became clear to me after studying Arif, was that I, and my colleagues, do not teach the students through their preferred activities. This might be a reason why teaching and learning English in my faculty is not successful. According to Campbell, et al (2004) students will use their preferred learning activities to meet their multiple learning needs. In other words, each individual has a specific way of learning with which he or she will feel comfortable.

What I am going to reveal through my experiences of learning and teaching English is that each of us has his or her own way of learning which I believe is influenced by the learning preferences that each of us holds. According to Willing (1988) the efforts to match learning style, our own ways of learning and learning preferences can result in dissatisfaction of students' achievement. So, the notion of students' learning preferred activities becomes important to investigate in order to meet the effectiveness of teaching and learning English inside and outside classroom.

In this book I would like to argue that knowing students' preferred activities in learning English will help students learn English effectively. Learning activities inside and outside the classroom, the teacher's role, grouping arrangements, language focus, and sensory modality are the factors that can help both teacher and students achieve their goal in learning English.

Those factors have been investigated by Willing (1988) in his survey study involving 517 learners of English as a second language in Australia. In collecting the data, Willing utilized questionnaires for learners to complete. This study attempted to find out the students' learning preferred activities that might vary among group of learners. This goal was based on the assumption that the variables such as ethnic group, age, level of previous education, speaking proficiency level, and length of residence in Australia may affect students' preferred ways of learning.

Willing found that cultural backgrounds in some ways affected the learners' preferences in learning. Chinese learners, for instance, prefer that their teachers explain everything and tell all the mistakes they made during learning. Meanwhile, Arabic learners prefer to practice pronunciation and study grammar. It also found that learners' learning preferences were influenced by gender. In learning English, women like to learn new words more than men. On the other hand, men like writing everything in their notebooks more than women do.

However, the study by Willing (1988) did not reveal the learners' learning preferences by field of study. This might be because respondents of the survey research are adult migrants who do not enroll in formal education during the survey. This will be the researcher's concern to find out. It becomes important to find the major learning preferred activities of Indonesian non English department students regarding their field of study since it will be valuable information for the English teachers.

Furthermore, Willing's study was conducted in a second language context. Therefore, the replication of this study in a foreign language environment will bring different outcomes and will be useful information as Nunan (1991) states that the study conducted by Willing(1988) may have different result in English as a foreign language contexts. In addition to that, the correlation between learning preferences and gender is also investigated in this study.

1.2. The Significance of the book

This book presents an investigation of students' preferred activities in learning English with respect to classroom activities, teacher's behavior, grouping arrangement, language focus, sensory mode, and outside class activities. The subjects who participate in the study are Indonesian non-English department students studying in one of the universities where the researcher teaches as an English teacher. It is hoped that the result of the study will contribute worthwhile information to the improvement of teaching and learning practice at university level in Indonesia in general and particularly for Jambi University in which the study take place. Information provided by the study can also be a helpful source for decision makers in terms of the improvement of English teaching curriculum at university level.

CHAPTER II

WHAT LITERATURE SAYS ABOUT LANGUAGE LEARNING

2.1. Introduction

In the efforts to identify students' preferred activities in language learning, some issues related to the topic are important to be presented in this literature review. The issues are the theories about Second Language Acquisition and Language Learning and their role in teaching and learning English. The discussion of these theories underpins the success of language teaching and learning for non-English department students who are the data source of this thesis. In addition to that, language teaching methods which support the proposed language acquisition and learning theories are also discussed in this review as well as some factors that affect English language learning.

2.2. Language Acquisition

According to Krashen (1989) acquisition occurs when learners are acquiring a second language in an unconscious way. He further points out that the process of a second language acquisition is similar to the process used in first language acquisition. His theory is based on Chomsky's focus on how languages are produced in the human brain (Diaz, 2004). According to Chomsky (1959, as cited in Diaz) human beings learn language not only through a process which depends on behavioral reinforcement, but also our minds which have an active language processor, which he called "Language Acquisition Device" (LAD) which produces rules through unconscious acquisition of languages. In addition to that Ericsson (1986) states that learners acquire language in "natural order" whether they are first, second, or foreign languages. This natural order works on all levels of learners both adults and children. The learner will acquire certain grammatical rules in the

early stage and other structures in later stages. The language rules that learners acquire will occur in predictable order (Krashen, 1989).

There are some hypotheses for language acquisition to occur. First of all is input hypothesis. Krashen (1989) has proposed that someone is able to acquire a language only by understanding input. One way to make input understandable by learners is by using simple language. Using common vocabulary and shorter-simple sentences is advisable. Another way as proposed by Hudson (cited in Krashen, 1989) is providing background information. The background information can be provided by using learner's first language in a way it is presented. Helpful background information can be in the form of pictures, familiar topics and verbal information.

The second hypothesis is affective filter hypothesis. In this hypothesis, Krashen (1989) argued that even though language learners are exposed to sufficient comprehensible input, they do not necessarily achieve a high level of proficiency in the second language. Krashen proposed a hypothesis called the affective filter hypothesis. This hypothesis explains how affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety can contribute success in second language acquisition. This is the mental and emotional barrier that learners may have when they acquire a second language. According to Lightbown and Spada, (1999) "affect" refers to needs, motives, attitudes, and emotional states that can help or distract students in learning second language.

If low motivation, high anxiety, and low self-esteem are brought by learners, such things will prevent comprehensible input reaching the language acquisition device. So, the notion of lowering anxiety and building up motivation and self-confidence is important to the teaching of English to enable the learners receives adequate - comprehensible input in order to be proficient in second language.

2.3. Language Learning

Unlike language acquisition, language learning according to Krashen (1989) is a conscious process of study which focuses on the

pattern of language. A study of grammar, for example, is considered learning not acquisition. According to Gass (1990), language learners will deal with a grammar of a second or foreign language and develop that knowledge so it can be used in their utterances. This is to say that grammar knowledge that language learners possess is obtained through learning.

Krashen (1982) points out that language learning is playing a role as monitor. In writing skill, the correction of grammar accuracy is based on the rules that we have learned. In his monitor hypothesis, Krashen further states that our mind functions as an editor which checks our sentence productions for accuracy of grammatical rules to make corrections. The ability to edit accuracy that our minds have is obtained through learning.

However, the implementation of learning should ensure the flow of communication runs well. In other words, the conscious learning must not interfere with communication. Krashen (1989) states that the role of teaching practice is aimed to promote students to be optimal monitor users. These users will be able to use monitor for grammar accuracy when it is appropriate and when it does not interfere with communication. Optimal monitor users use their learned competence as a supplement to their acquired competence.

2.4. Language Acquisition and Learning in Teaching English in EFL Context

Teaching English in Indonesia has the position as teaching English as a foreign language. Berns (1990) defines that foreign language learning is the learning of the target language which takes place in a country that does not serve the target language as a speech community. In other words, in a foreign language learning context, there are few opportunities for learners to have input outside the classroom because the target language learned is not used as the main device of communication among people.

2.4.2. The Role of Teacher in Second Language Classrooms

If *acquisition* is the central of language teaching and *learning* is the element to support students to acquire a second language, so the purpose of teaching practice is to facilitate for the acquisition to occur. Then, the next points will be how students can acquire a second language and how they improve already had competence. Krashen (1982) comes up with the hypothesis that the language acquirers will understand input which contains $i + 1$, where i is current competence and 1 represents the next level, by focusing on the meaning not form of the message. This means that the acquirers will acquire language by getting the meaning first and structure later.

Once again, the existence of comprehensible inputs in language classroom are very important as well as the affective filter to the success of second language acquisition. Language classroom should play its role to provide sufficient comprehensible inputs for the students in relaxing atmosphere. As Krashen (1982) stated:

If acquisition is more central, and learning of less use to second language performance, and if comprehensible input and the filter are the essential causative variables for second language acquisition, the classroom should help only to the extent it supplies comprehensible input in an environment conducive to a low filter (p.33).

The role of the teacher is to provide input and help make it comprehensible in low anxiety situation which is for some extent; the input should also meet the requirements to be optimal. There are some characteristics for optimal input which goes with any activities or materials provided by teacher for language acquisition.

Firstly, the input must be comprehensible. The main role of second language teacher is to enable students get sufficient

comprehensible input in the target language (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). The teacher can slow down and make clear articulation he or she produces to allow students get the meaning more easily. The teacher, then, uses the more frequent used vocabulary and avoids using plenty of idioms. Using shorter sentences are also preferable to ensure the comprehensibility of input (Krashen, 1982). Another task of the teacher in attempting to provide comprehensible input is by using what Krashen called as extra linguistic support in the form of real objects and pictures. The teacher can also make use of students' knowledge to generate comprehension by choosing a topic to discuss which is familiar with the students' world.

Secondly, the input must be interesting and relevant. The teachers' task at this point is not easy. In looking for interesting and relevant topic, the teacher should take students' goals, interests and, background into account. According to Meier (2000) one of the essential steps in learning is to get students interested and curious to what are going to learn. This can be done by presenting games in teaching and learning activities. In addition to that the teacher must choose classroom activities that facilitate students' interest by eliciting students preferred activities that may help them in acquiring a target language (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

Next, the optimal input is not grammatically sequenced. The idea of teaching students with structure or rule of language will generate a problem in traditional foreign language learning (Krashen, 1982, 1989). If the teacher focuses in grammatical rule, the flow of communication will be distracted by teacher's concern on presenting a certain rule. The teachers will focus on grammatical sequence on their utterances instead of presenting comprehensible input by means of communicative activities which interest students to learn.

Then, structure or rule of language is presented in time order based on the syllabus. So, if one student misses one rule, he or she will

feel left behind by the others. This condition may result in confusion which in turn may distract the process of the acquisition.

Thus, the comprehensible input that teachers present in the classroom should provide the natural review in which grammar will not be presented in sequence. The teachers will not attempt that a certain topic on day-to-day basis consists of a particular rule. For instance, if teachers want to present the use of future expression, other tenses will also be used. This notion is based on the nature of communication that the utterances we produce are using various rule of language structure to meet the need of the communicating goals. According to Nattinger (1990) that the main goal of language teaching is to make students able to deal with the meaning and produce the target language in real communication not to teach them the rules of grammar.

Another task of the teachers to make input optimal is by creating the learning environment in the classroom relaxing and non-stressful. Language teaching methods and materials presented to the students must help students be able to acquire language rather than be a test or tool to reveal their weaknesses. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the teacher must be able to create an interesting and friendly classroom in ensuring the language acquisition to occur.

In explaining the roles of the teachers Richards and Lockhart (1994) come up with some points which are based on the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning theories. Some of the roles will be discussed in relation to English learning practice in the classroom.

First, teachers have role to decide what approaches and activities will be employed in the classroom. Second, teachers should be able to create environment which is conducive for students to learn and work both individually and cooperatively. Third, teachers should help students find their own ways of learning and work independently. Then, teachers should be able to deal with classroom management and organization in which they will decide classroom routines, rules,

grouping arrangements and so forth. At last, teachers should encourage students' confidence and keep students' interest in learning.

2.4.3. Promoting Students' Activities outside the Classroom.

The reason to promote learning activities outside the classroom for non-English Department students is the lack of hours of English subject they take in completing their degree. English is a compulsory subject for non-English major students from six faculties in Jambi University. Unfortunately, they only learn English in one semester or two semesters for just two hours a week. This limited time is considered insufficient to give opportunity for the students to acquire and practice English.

In his study about good language learners, Nunan (1991) points out that 44 teachers of English as a foreign language who are the participants of the study agreed that formal language classroom is insufficient to develop their English skills. In his follow-up study involving a group of advanced second language learners who were asked to rank the activities that they found helpful to learn English, it found that conversation with English speakers, having opportunities to practice English outside classroom, and accessing media-radio, television, newspaper are respectively the three most helpful activities in learning English outside the classroom.

In attempt to help students improve their language competence outside the classroom without the presence of their teachers, the teachers should provide them enough input to achieve conversational competence. This competence is the tool for the students to have conversations and obtain more input outside the classroom (Krashen, 1982). Krashen further explains that conversational competence consists of the ways of starting conversation and the ways of maintaining the conversation. In terms of the quality of input, more comprehensible input, second language acquirers can use some techniques to get other people to whom they talk to explain part of the conversation they do not understand. These techniques vary from repeating a single word they do not

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY, PURPOSE AND PROCESS

3.1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters I have outlined the origins of this study and my previous findings about what some successful learners of English consider to be the strategies that best help them learn English. In this chapter in section one I will review the purpose of the study, in section two I will discuss the selection of the participants. Section three will explain the development of the questionnaire and section four I will outline the process for the data analysis.

3.2. Study Purpose

As noted in Chapter One, the purpose of this study is to investigate Indonesian students' preferences for activities that help them learn English. This will include their classroom activities, the teacher's behaviour, grouping arrangements, language focus, sensory modes, and outside-class activities. The selection of these aspects of learning is adapted from Willing (1988) who conducted surveys of Australian immigrants who were studying English.

So, the main goal of this study was to seek information about students' preferred activities in learning English. The study is aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What are the preferences of Indonesian non-English department students for particular kinds of classroom activities?
2. What are the preferences of Indonesian non-English department students for particular types of teacher behavior?
3. What are the preferences of Indonesian non-English department students for particular grouping arrangements?

be able to use English language as a medium of interaction both spoken and written English.

Access to these students' participation in this survey was gained by official permission and consent from the dean of Faculty of Teacher Training and education. Included in this thesis in Appendix A is a letter from The Dean of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Jambi University stating that the faculty gave permission for the researcher to collect the data.

3.4. Methodology

The research design used in this study is a survey research. The survey is a kind of research which aims to collect the data at a certain time encompassing description of a condition, identification of standards comparing to existing condition, and relation between one event to another (Cohen and Morrison, 2000). This study is intended to gather the data which describe students' preferences in their effort to learn English. In collecting the data, the questionnaire is used. According to Crowl (1983) questionnaires can be used in the survey if the sample size is considered large. This survey included all non-English department students from economics, Biology, and Physics departments. The total number of participants is 170. This study is a complete census survey in which information is collected from all member of a population. According to Wiersma and Jurs (2005) if all population is included in the survey, the survey is called a census.

3.5. The Development of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from students' learning preferences questionnaire by Willing (1988). The questionnaire consists of two parts. Part 1 is regarding to ethnographic data in terms of the participants' gender and field of study. Part 2 consists of 30 items on two pages comprises: question 1-7 dealt with preferred classroom activities; 8-12 dealt with teacher behaviour; 13-17 related to different sorts of learning group; 18-20 have to do with which aspects of language that

learners need emphasis; 21-23 propose three sensory-modality option for learning purposes; and 23-30 related to different outside class activities. Respondents are asked to rank the activities of each category by circling one number. Circling number 1 means it is not helpful /preferable, while circling number 4 means it is very helpful /preferable for them.

The modified version of the questionnaire was piloted in a group of Indonesian students studying in Australian universities. The pilot group was students who are studying in some majors other than English. The consideration to choose this group is to meet the similar characteristics between pilot group and the real participants from whom the data will be collected as Wiersma and Jurs (2005) state that the group used for the pilot run should be in the position to make valid judgements about the items.

This pilot run was intended to identify possible misunderstandings, ambiguities, and inadequate items. It was found that in part 1 of the questionnaire, the question asking the length of learning English became irrelevant since the study is trying to find out the students' learning preferences affected by different gender and field of study only. Next, the blank space provided that was intended to gain any possible activities that participants might add were omitted. The omission was done because none of the participants in the pilot filled out the blank to add some possible activities.

It was also found that instruction used in the questionnaire is understandable since it used a simple and clear language. The time spent to answer all questions in the questionnaire is 10 minutes in average. The questionnaire was given in English and was not translated in Bahasa Indonesia, Indonesian language. The reasons are because the language used in the questionnaire is simple and clear and it is believed that the participants will be able to answer the questions effectively since they have been studying English in junior high school and senior high school before attending university.

3.4. Data Collection

The revised questionnaire was sent to Indonesia and handed out to all participants to complete on 30th May 2008. The questionnaires were administered to intended participants once the researcher obtained permission from Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee to conduct a research involving human subjects. The questionnaires were distributed to 170 participants. The completion of the questionnaire is voluntary and the participants were not required to provide their names. The participants felt free not to complete the questionnaire and left the questionnaire blank. The completed questionnaires should be placed in a sealed box provided.

In distributing and collecting the questionnaires, the researcher was assisted by a colleague who was agree to help collect the data from all participants in Jambi, Indonesia and send them back to the researcher in Australia. To help the colleague in the process of data collection, a set of instruction was given to make sure the procedure of data collection was right. The details are as follows:

1. Every students is to receive a questionnaire to complete
2. The questionnaire will take 10-15 minutes to complete
3. The return of a questionnaire means that student has consented to participate in the study
4. Participants are not required to give their name
5. Participants are free not to complete the questionnaire
6. Participants are asked to rank the activities that they find helpful by circling a response, as the instruction indicated
7. Participants are asked to return completed or uncompleted questionnaire in a sealed box provided.

(Adapted from: Phan, 2002)

Attached to each questionnaire was information sheet which was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee. The content of this information sheet is shown in appendix B.

3.7. Data Analysis

After the questionnaires had been returned, each questionnaire was given a code number. Then, all the responses were analyzed using SPSS Professional Statistics. SPSS stands for Statistical Package for the Social Science. In this survey, the researcher used frequency distributions and histograms in statistical procedures to analyze individual item of each category and make a comparison among the items to find out which items of six categories get the most preference and the least preference from the respondent

3.8. Summary

The purpose of this survey study is to investigate Indonesian students' preferences for activities that help them learn English. The survey was conducted at faculty of Teacher Training and education of Jambi University, Indonesia from late May to mid June 2008. The students took part in this survey are from Economics, Biology, and Physics departments. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from students' learning preferences questionnaire by Willing (1988). The data will be analyzed from the questionnaires by using SPSS statistical procedures

CHAPTER IV

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This chapter contains the results derived from the analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire survey of 170 Indonesian Non-English department students at a university, in Jambi, Indonesia.

The data relating to this study will be presented in the following procedure. Firstly, the responses for each item will be reported in the form of table and histogram. Secondly, the comparison among activities will be analyzed to find out which activities gained the most favor from the students. Finally, the comparison among activities will be counted to find out students' preferred activities based on their field of study and gender.

One hundred and seventy (170) questionnaires were distributed and one hundred thirty-nine (139) completed responses were received for an overall response rate 82%. The other 18% either did not return the questionnaires or were absent on the day the questionnaire were distributed. The respondents were asked to complete 30 items which encompass six categories; learning English in classroom, teacher's role, grouping arrangements, language focus, sensory modality, and outside classroom activities. The responses provided ranged from not helpful to very helpful on a four point scale, where not helpful was given number 1 and very helpful number 4.

4.1. Item analysis

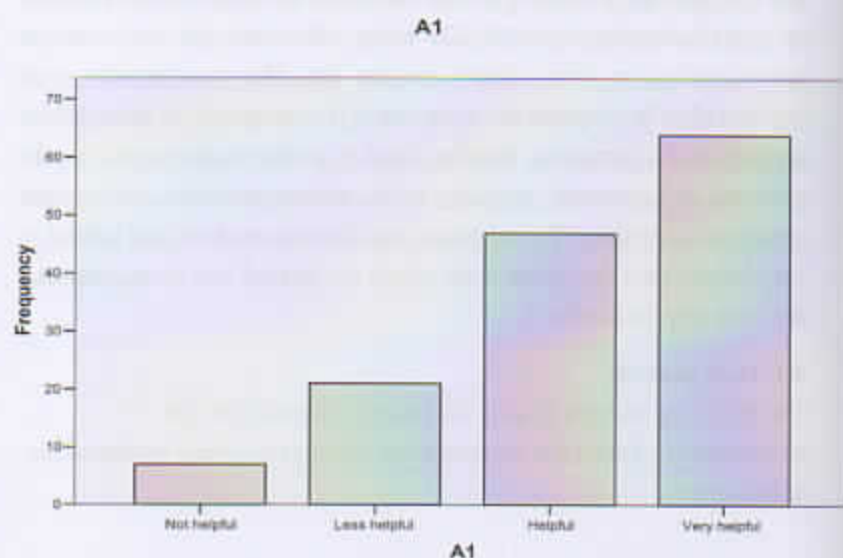
The following sections display the results obtained from the questionnaire. Each table represents the findings from one section of the questionnaire.

4.1.1. Learning English in Class

Table 4.1.1.1 - reading activity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	7	5.0	5.0	5.0
Less helpful	21	15.1	15.1	20.1
Helpful	47	33.8	33.8	54.0
Very helpful	64	46.0	46.0	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.1.1
Mean, and Histogram for Reading



Mean = 3.21

N = 139

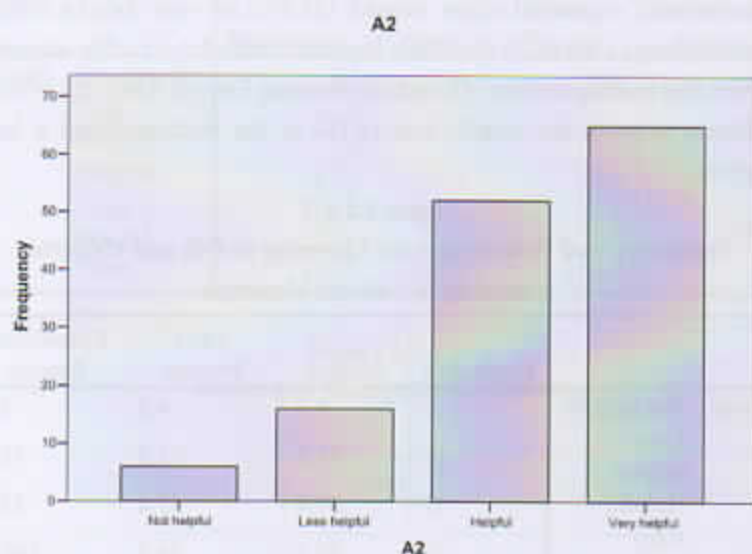
The total number of students who responded to reading activity was 139. As displayed in histogram figure 4.1.1.1, the mean score for this activity was 3.21 which go towards to the very helpful end of the scale. Most of the students responded either helpful (33.8%) or very helpful (46%) representing a total of 79.8% of the students (Table 4.1.1.1). The students found that reading activity is helpful in learning English. Only 5% of the students found it not helpful and 15.1% of the students found it less helpful.

Table 4.1.1.2

Frequency and Percentages for Listening to Cds and Cassettes
Listening to Cds and Cassettes

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	6	4.3	4.3	4.3
Less helpful	16	11.5	11.5	15.8
Helpful	52	37.4	37.4	53.2
Very helpful	65	46.8	46.8	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.1.2
Mean, and Histogram for Listening to Cds and Cassettes



Mean =3.27

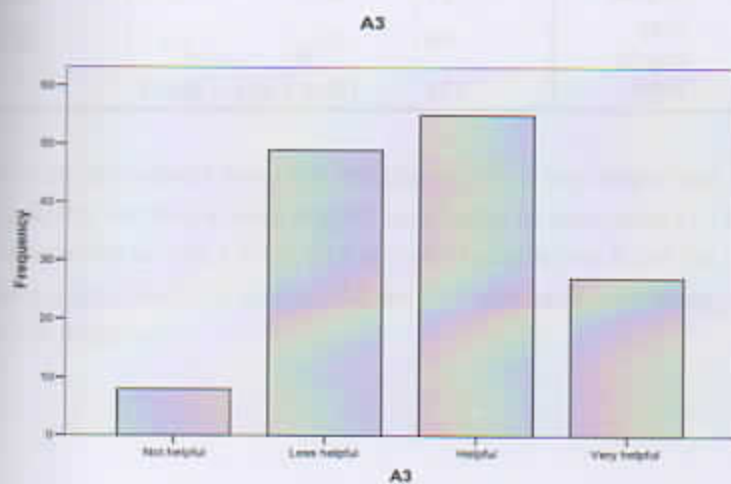
N = 139

According to the result shown in table 4.1.1.2, most students found that listening to Cds and Cassettes are helpful for them learn English. This was evidence in the fact that 84.2% of the total 139 participating students chose to answer helpful (37.4%) and very helpful(46.8%) so that the mean score for the statement at 3.27 on a scale 4 points showed that listening to Cds and Cassettes is the activity that can help students to learn English.

Table 4.1.1.3
Frequencies and Percentages for Playing Games
Playing Games

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	8	5.8	5.8	5.8
Less helpful	49	35.3	35.3	41.0
Helpful	55	39.6	39.6	80.6
Very helpful	27	19.4	19.4	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.1.3
Mean, and Histogram for Playing Games



Mean = 2.73

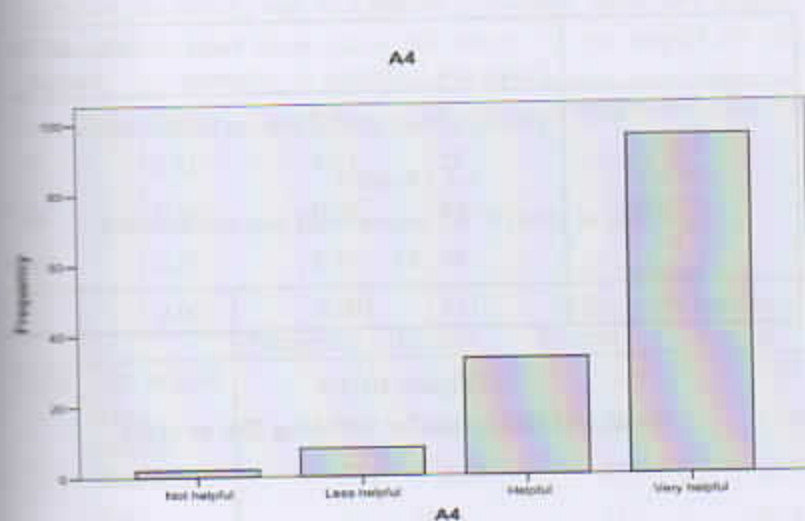
N = 139

As indicated in table 4.1.1.3, 59 percent of students reported some degree of helpfulness of playing games activity in their learning. In particular, 39.6 percent of students identified playing games as helpful activity, with 19.4 percent indicating that the activity is very helpful. However, 41 percent of respondents reported that playing games is either not helpful or less helpful activity in learning English. It is clear that students were split on this activity.

Table 4.1.1.4
Frequencies and Percentages for Having Conversations
A4

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
Less helpful	8	5.8	5.8	7.2
Helpful	33	23.7	23.7	30.9
Very helpful	96	69.1	69.1	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.1.4
Mean, and Histogram for having conversations



Mean = 3.60

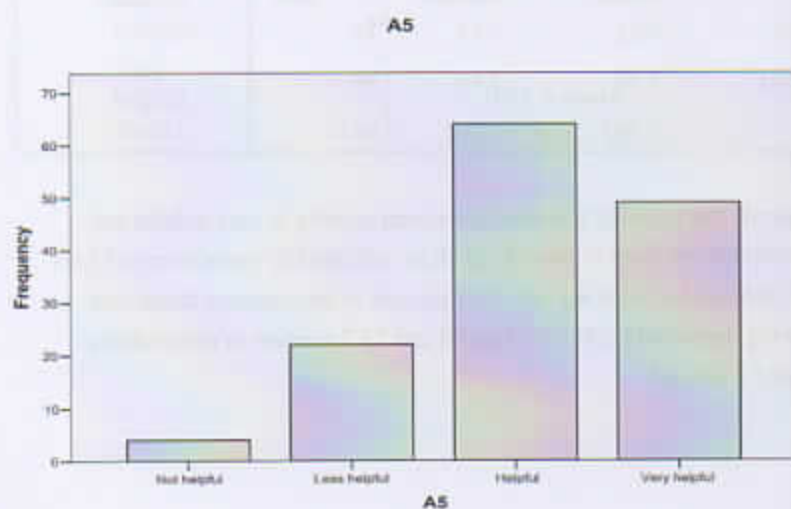
N = 139

Overall, the students found conversation activity is very helpful and preferable for them to learn English as indicated by mean score of 3.60. As indicated in table 4.1.1.4, 69.1 percent of respondents found that having conversation is very helpful and 23.7 percent of respondents found it helpful.

Table 4.1.1.5
Frequencies and Percentages for Watching Film or Video
A5

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	4	2.9	2.9	2.9
Less helpful	22	15.8	15.8	18.7
Helpful	64	46.0	46.0	64.7
Very helpful	49	35.3	35.3	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.1.5
Mean, and Histogram for watching film or video



Mean = 3.14

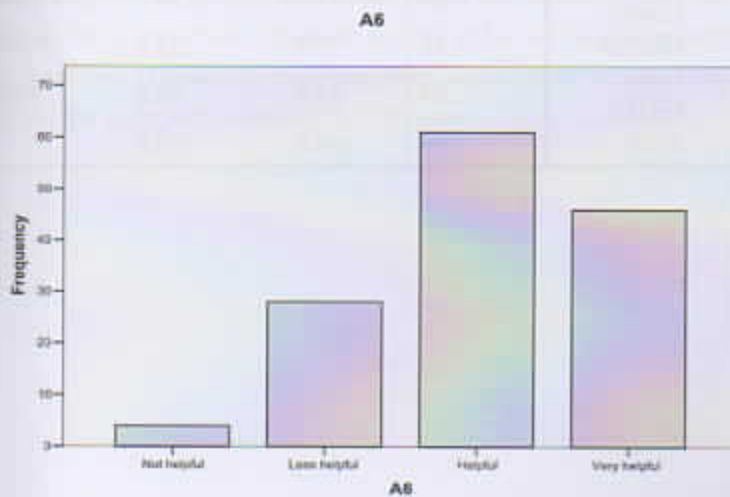
N = 139

The mean of 3.14 for watching films or videos showed that students found that activity is helpful. In particular, 46 percent of students chose helpful for the activity and 35.3.percent of students chose very helpful. While, students who chose either not helpful or less helpful for the activity is only 18.7 percent as opposed to 81.3 percent of students who chose either helpful or very helpful for the activity.

Table 4.1.1.6
Frequencies and Percentages for Writing in notebook
A6

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	4	2.9	2.9	2.9
Less helpful	28	20.1	20.1	23.0
Helpful	61	43.9	43.9	66.9
Very helpful	46	33.1	33.1	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.1.6
Mean, and Histogram for writing in notebook
A6



Mean = 3.07

N = 139

With only 23 percent of respondents chose either not helpful or less helpful, the results once again suggest that students found writing in notebooks is the activity that can help them in learning English. 77 percent of students chose both helpful and very helpful with 43.9 percent of students found the activity helpful and 33.1 percent of students found it very helpful.

4.1.2 Teacher's Role

In this section I present data collected for questions relating to students' understanding of the teacher's role.

Table 4.1.2.1

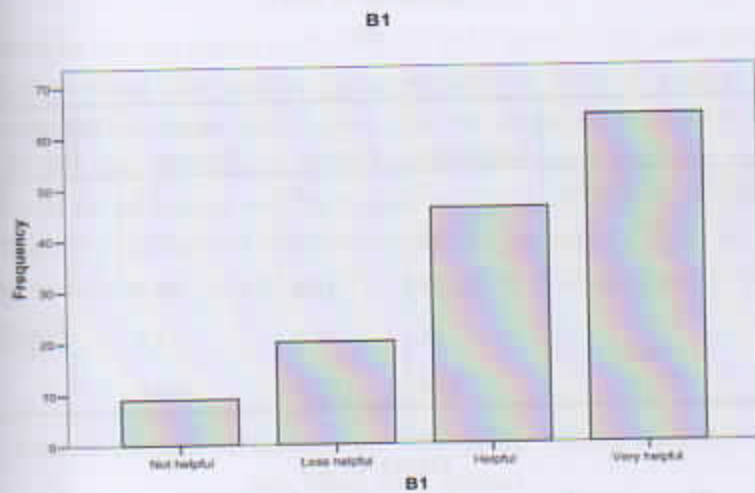
Frequencies and Percentages for the teacher explaining everything to students

Explaining everything to students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	9	6.5	6.5	6.5
	Less helpful	20	14.4	14.4	20.9
	Helpful	46	33.1	33.1	54.0
	Very helpful	64	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.2.1

Mean, and Histogram for explaining everything to students



Mean = 3.19

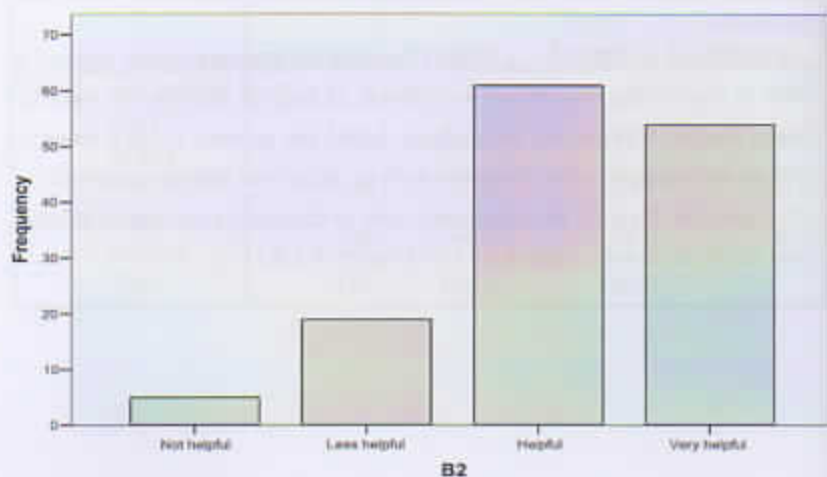
N = 139

As indicated in table 4.1.2.1, 33.1 percent of students chose teacher's role in explaining everything to students as helpful activity for them to learn English. 46 percent of students found the activity is very helpful. While, the students who chose the activity either not helpful or helpful is 20.9 percent. Overall, the responses were to choose the activity is helpful end of the scale with a mean of 3.19 (Figure 4.1.2.1).

Table 4.1.2.2
Frequencies and Percentages for the teacher giving students
problems to solve
B2

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	5	3,6	3,6	3,6
Less helpful	19	13,7	13,7	17,3
Helpful	61	43,9	43,9	61,2
Very helpful	54	38,8	38,8	100,0
Total	139	100,0	100,0	

Figure 4.1.2.2
Mean, and Histogram for giving students problems to solve
B2



Mean = 3.18

N = 139

Based on the data shown in table 4.1.2.2 and Figure 4.1.2.2, most of the students found that teachers giving problems to solve to students is preferable activity to learn English with the overall mean of 3.18. As indicated that 82.7 percent of respondents chose either helpful or very helpful for the activity with the highest percentage of students choosing the activity as helpful (43.9%). While, only 3.6 percent of students found the activity is not helpful and 13.7 percent of students found it less helpful.

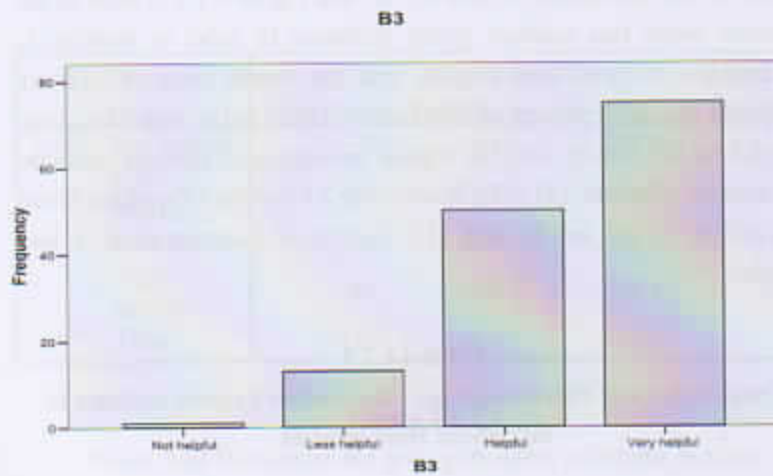
Table 4.1.2.3

Frequencies and Percentages for the teacher helping students to talk about their interest

B3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	1	.7	.7	.7
	Less helpful	13	9.4	9.4	10.1
	Helpful	50	36.0	36.0	46.0
	Very helpful	75	54.0	54.0	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.2.3
Mean, and Histogram for helping students to talk about their interest



Mean = 3.43

N = 139

The mean of 3.43 led to the conclusion that most students agree that teachers' role in helping students to talk about their interest is either helpful of preferable activity to learn English. As indicated in table 4.1.2.3, 54 percent of students found that the activity is very helpful with 36 percent of students chose the activity as helpful.

Table 4.1.2.4

Frequencies and Percentages for the teacher telling the students all their mistakes

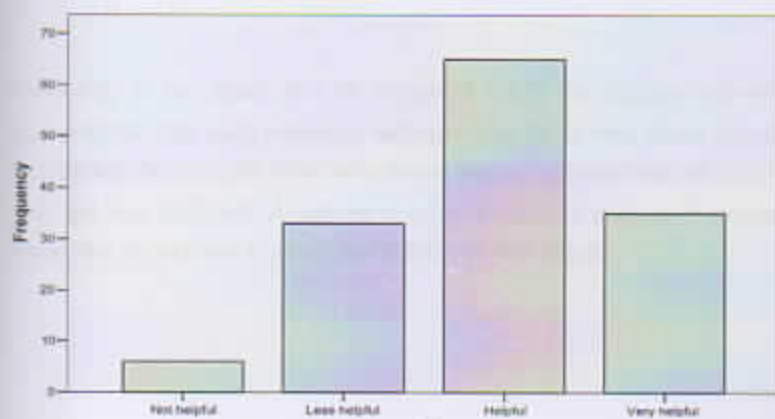
B4

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	6	4.3	4.3	4.3
	Less helpful	33	23.7	23.7	28.1
	Helpful	65	46.8	46.8	74.8
	Very helpful	35	25.2	25.2	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.2.4

Mean, and Histogram for the teacher telling the students all their mistakes

B4



B4

Mean = 2.93

N = 139

According to the mean of 2.93 (Figure 4.1.2.4) for teachers telling the students all their mistakes, indicated that those who found that the activity was helpful and those who found that the activity was not helpful were not very far different.

Table 4.1.2.5

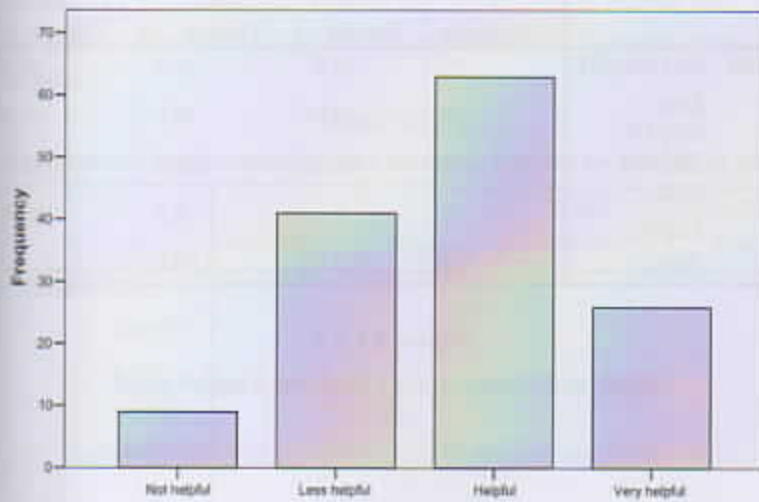
Frequencies and Percentages for the teacher allowing students find their own mistakes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	9	6.5	6.5	6.5
	Less helpful	41	29.5	29.5	36.0
	Helpful	63	45.3	45.3	81.3
	Very helpful	26	18.7	18.7	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.2.5

Mean, and Histogram for the teacher allowing students find their own mistakes

B5



B5

Mean = 2.76

N = 139

According to the mean of 2.76 (Figure 4.1.2.5) for teachers allowing students find their own mistakes, indicated that those who found that the activity was helpful and those who found that the activity was not helpful were not very different. As shown in table 4.1.2.5, 36 percent of students found that the activity is either not helpful or less helpful.

4.1.3 Grouping Arrangements

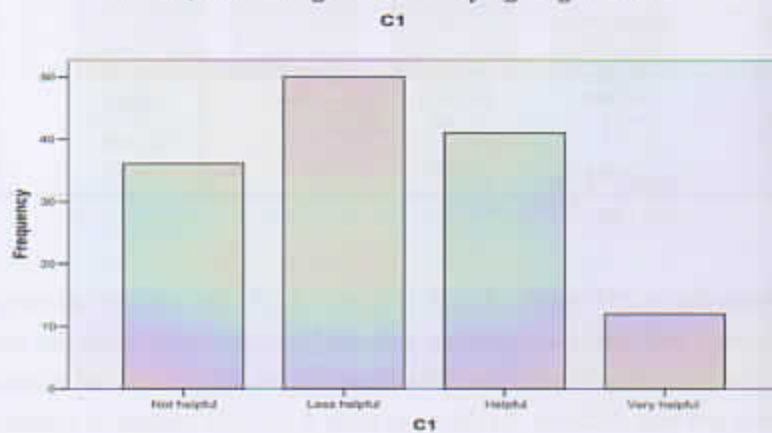
Table 4.1.3.1

Frequencies and Percentages for studying English alone

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	36	25.9	25.9	25.9
Less helpful	50	36.0	36.0	61.9
Helpful	41	29.5	29.5	91.4
Very helpful	12	8.6	8.6	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.3.1

Mean, and Histogram for studying English alone



Mean = 2.21

N = 139

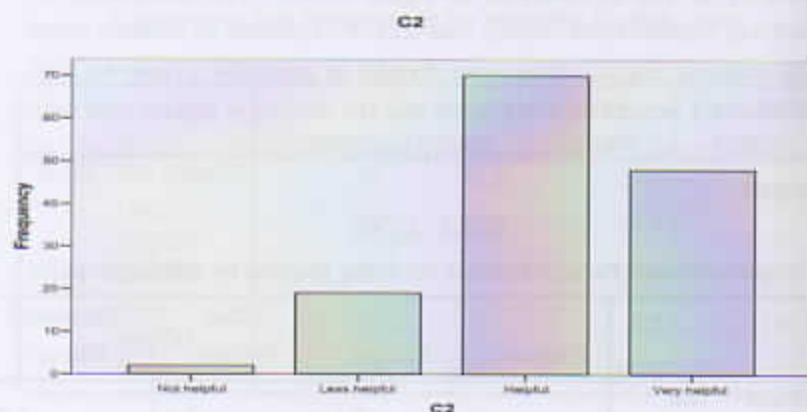
The total number of students who responded to grouping arrangements category is 139 as indicated in Figure 4.1.3.1. The mean score of studying English alone activity was 2.21. 61.9 percent of students found that studying English alone is not helpful or preferable (Table 4.1.3.1). While, 38.1 percent students found that the activity is helpful with only 8.6 percent chose the activity as very helpful and 29.5 percent chose it as helpful.

Table 4.1.3.2

Frequencies and Percentages for studying English by talking in pairs

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
Less helpful	19	13.7	13.7	15.1
Helpful	70	50.4	50.4	65.5
Very helpful	48	34.5	34.5	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.3.2
Mean, and Histogram for studying English by talking in pairs



Mean = 3.18

N = 139

According to the result shown in both Table 4.1.3.2 and Figure 4.1.3.2, most students found that studying English by talking in pairs is a helpful activity for learning and practicing English. This was evident in the fact that 84.9 percent of the total 139 participating students chose to answer either helpful or very helpful for the activity of talking in pairs. In particular, 50.4 percent of students found the activity helpful and 30.5 percent of students found the activity very helpful.

Table 4.1.3.3

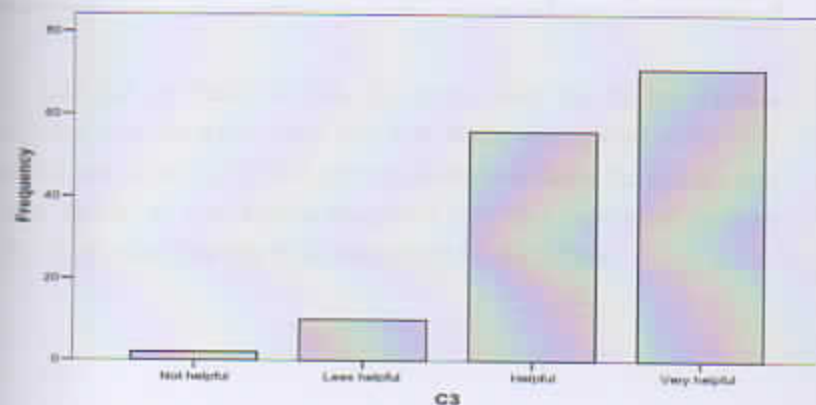
Frequencies and Percentages for having English activities in small groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Less helpful	10	7.2	7.2	8.6
	Helpful	56	40.3	40.3	48.9
	Very helpful	71	51.1	51.1	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.3.3

Mean, and Histogram for having English activities in small groups

C3



Mean = 3.41

N = 139

Overall, the students found having English activities in a small group is either helpful or very helpful for learning English as shown the mean score was 3.41. As indicated in Table 4.1.3.3, 91.4 percent of students chose the activity as helpful. In particular, 40.3 percent students found the activity helpful and 50.1 percent of students chose the activity as very helpful.

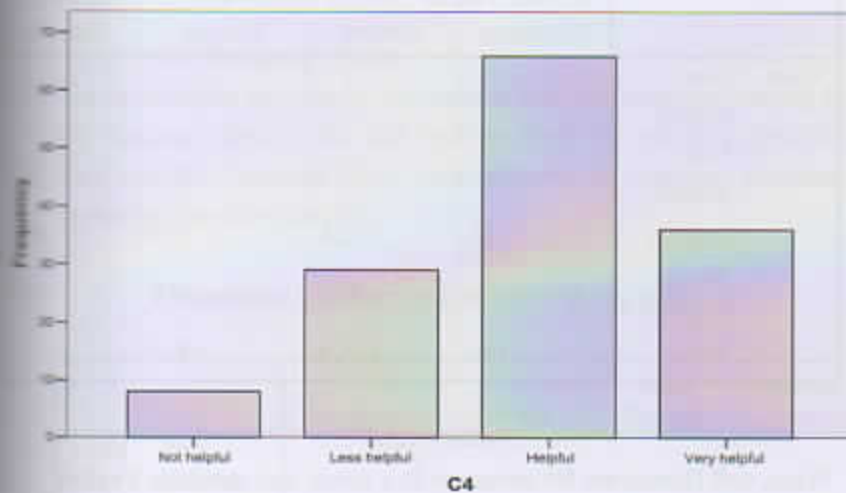
Table 4.1.3.4
Frequencies and Percentages for having English activities with the whole class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	8	5.8	5.8	5.8
	Less helpful	29	20.9	20.9	26.6
	Helpful	66	47.5	47.5	74.1
	Very helpful	36	25.9	25.9	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.3.4

Mean, and Histogram for having English activities with the whole class

C4



Mean = 2.94

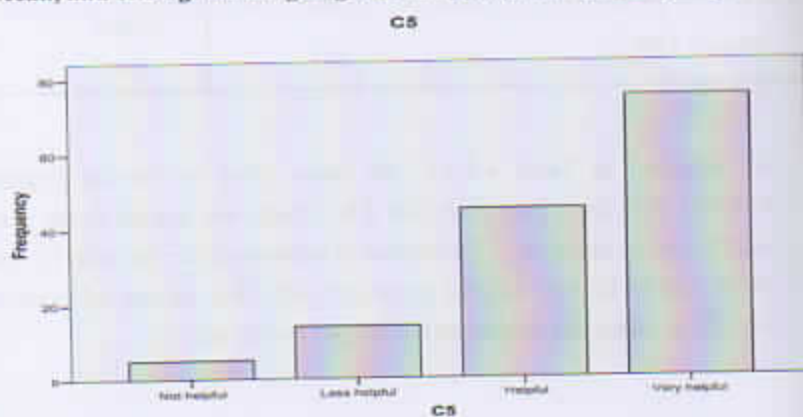
N = 139

As indicated in Table 4.1.3.4, the mean score for having English activities with the whole class was 2.94 which was toward to the very helpful end of the scale. 73.4 percent of students chose the activity was either helpful or very helpful compared with 26.6 percent of students who chose either less helpful or not helpful for the activity.

Table 4.1.3.5
Frequencies and Percentages for going out in a group and speaking English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	5	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Less helpful	14	10.1	10.1	13.7
	Helpful	45	32.4	32.4	46.0
	Very helpful	75	54.0	54.0	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.3.5
Mean, and Histogram for going out in a group and speaking English



Mean = 3.37

N = 139

On average, 86.4 percent of students with a mean score of 3.37 showed that the students generally found that the activity of going out in a group and speaking English is helpful and preferable. Table 4.1.3.5 and Figure 4.1.3.5 show that 54 percent of students found the activity very helpful. In addition, 32.4 percent students found it helpful.

4.1.4 Language Focus

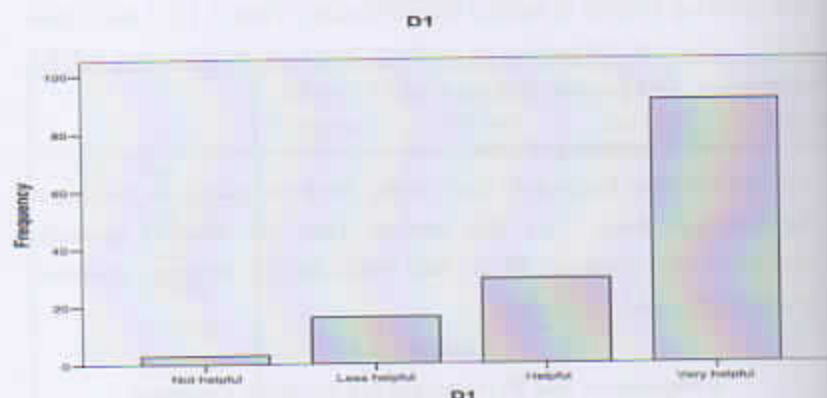
The next section focuses on data arising from the questions relating to the language focus. As will become clear the students generally expressed the opinions about their attitudes to learning grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.

Table 4.1.4.1

Frequencies and Percentages for studying grammar

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	3	2.2	2.2	2.2
Less helpful	16	11.5	11.5	13.7
Helpful	29	20.9	20.9	34.5
Very helpful	91	65.5	65.5	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.4.1
Mean, and Histogram for studying grammar



Mean = 3.50

N = 139

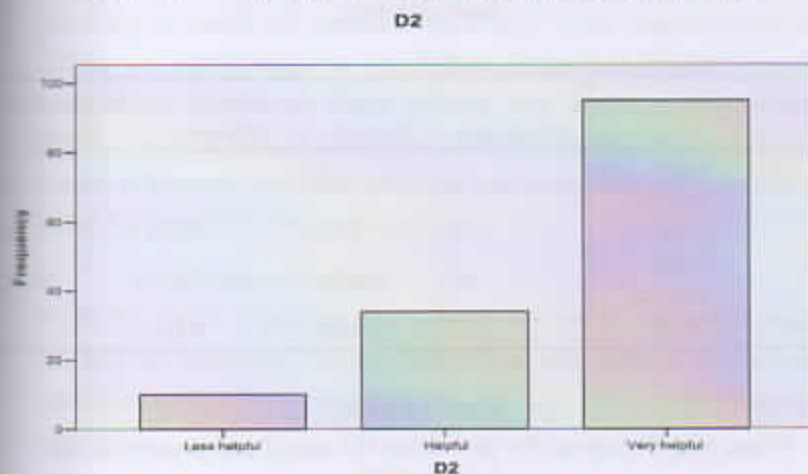
Based on the data shown in Table 4.1.4.1 and Figure 4.1.4.1, an average of 86.4 percent of the total of 139 respondents found that studying grammar is helpful in learning a foreign language.

Table 4.1.4.2
Frequencies and Percentages for learning new words (vocabulary)

D2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less helpful	10	7.2	7.2	7.2
	Helpful	34	24.5	24.5	31.7
	Very helpful	95	68.3	68.3	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.4.2
Mean, and Histogram for learning new words (vocabulary)



Mean = 3.61

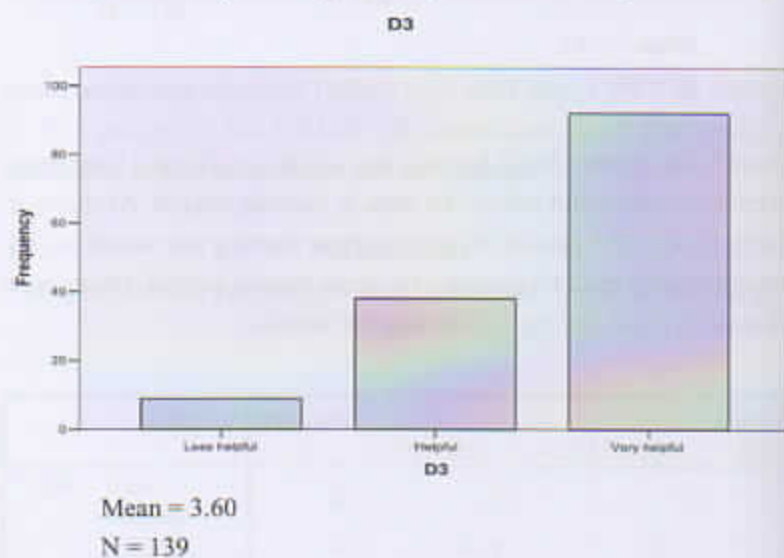
N = 139

Overall, the students found learning new words (vocabulary) were either helpful or very helpful activity for them in learning English. As shown in Table 4.1.4.2, 68.3 percent of students chose learning new words as very helpful activity and 24.5 percent of students found it helpful. While, none of students found that the activity was not helpful.

Table 4.1.4.3
Frequencies and Percentages for practicing the sound and pronunciation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less helpful	9	6.5	6.5	6.5
	Helpful	38	27.3	27.3	33.8
	Very helpful	92	66.2	66.2	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.4.3
Mean, and Histogram for practicing the sound and pronunciation



Based on the Table 4.1.4.3 and Figure 4.1.4.3, the results shown similar pattern with the previous activity; learning new words (vocabulary). In practicing the sound and pronunciation activity, most students found the activity was either helpful or very helpful for them in learning English. 66.2 percent of students chose learning new words as very helpful activity and 27.3 percent of students found it helpful. While, only 6.5 percent of students chose the activity as less helpful and none of students found that the activity was not helpful.

4.1.5 Sensory Modality

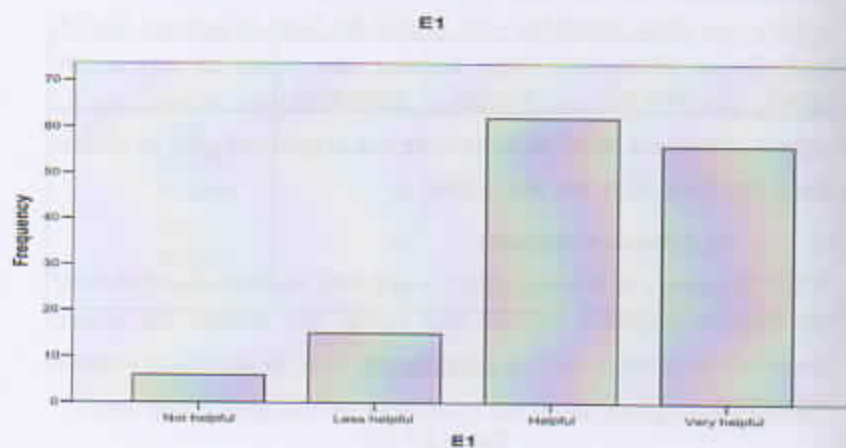
While this aspect of learning theory is not well understood in Indonesia, the students responses indicate that taking into account the sensory modalities involved in various activities can assist in improving language acquisition.

Table 4.1.5.1

Frequencies and Percentages for learning English words by seeing them

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Not helpful	6	4.3	4.3	4.3
Less helpful	15	10.8	10.8	15.1
Helpful	62	44.6	44.6	59.7
Very helpful	56	40.3	40.3	100.0
Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.5.1
Mean, and Histogram for learning English words by seeing them



Mean = 3.21

N = 139

According to the result shown in Table 4.1.5.1, most students found learning English words by seeing the words was a helpful activity for them. It is shown that 84.9 percent of 139 students participating in this survey chose the activity as helpful and very helpful. In particular, 44.6 percent of students found the activity helpful and 40.3 percent of students found it very helpful. While, only 15.1 percent of students chose the activity as either not helpful or less helpful. As indicated in figure 4.1.5.1, a mean score of 3.21 of 4 points showed that the activity was more helpful than not helpful.

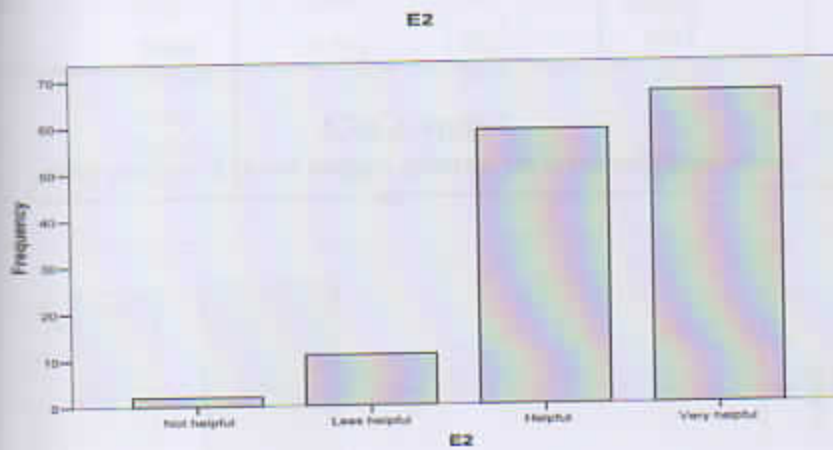
Table 4.1.5.2

Frequencies and Percentages for learning English words by hearing them

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	2	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Less helpful	11	7.9	7.9	9.4
	Helpful	59	42.4	42.4	51.8
	Very helpful	67	48.2	48.2	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.5.2

Mean, and Histogram for learning English words by hearing them



Mean = 3.37

N = 139

With only 9.3 percent of the respondents chose learning new words by hearing as either less helpful or not helpful activity in learning English, the results suggest that the activity is helpful for the students as indicated in Table 4.1.5.2, 48.2 percent of respondents found it very helpful. The mean score of this activity is 3.37 towards very helpful end of the scale (Figure 4.1.5.2).

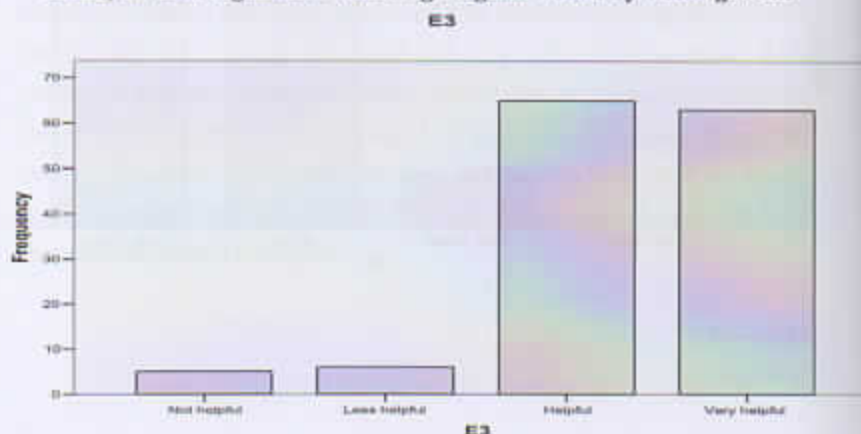
Table 4.1.5.3

Frequencies and Percentages for learning English words by writing them

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	5	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Less helpful	6	4.3	4.3	7.9
	Helpful	65	46.8	46.8	54.7
	Very helpful	63	45.3	45.3	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

Figure 4.1.5.3

Mean, and Histogram for learning English words by writing them



Mean = 3.34

N = 139

As indicated in Table 4.1.5.3 and Figure 4.1.5.3, most of students found that the activity was either helpful or very helpful for them in learning English (92.1 percent). While, only 7.9 percent of students found the activity either less helpful or not helpful. Overall, the responses were to find helpful end of the scale with a mean of 3.34.

Table 4.1.5.4

Frequencies and Percentages for learning English words by hearing, seeing, and writing them

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not helpful	3	2.2	2.2	2.2
	Less helpful	3	2.2	2.2	4.3
	Helpful	35	25.2	25.2	29.5
	Very helpful	98	70.5	70.5	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	100.0	

CHAPTER V

STUDENTS' PREFERRED ACTIVITIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

This book has provided information regarding preferred activities in learning English as a foreign language of Indonesian non-English Department students at a university in Jambi. In addition to supplying data on which decisions may be based, it comes up with some implications for English language teaching and practice.

5.1. Implications

The information generated from the results of this study will be useful for improving teaching and learning practice in my university. The students' preferred activities in learning English will be helpful for teachers when design learning activities that suit students in terms of their interest. This study has shown that students prefer conversation activities in class. According to this preference, teachers should take conversation activities into account when constructing instructional design. As I explained in literature review, conversation can be best medium for students to get comprehensible input, which is a main element in language acquisition.

In addition, Ellis (1992) states that comprehensible input is negotiation matters which mean that teachers are advised to create activities in which interactions will occur to generate productive utterances by learners in the conversation. Ellis further explains that in order to make language classroom more successful, the teachers should stop interfering in the learning process and give opportunities for learners to engage in interaction that allows the learners to develop naturally in communicative activities.

Thus, teachers can use conversation activities to provide comprehensible input for the students. One point to bear in mind that the topic of conversation built in classroom should reflect students' interest and come from their life. In this study, students prefer their teachers to

help them to talk about their interest. This preference will be rich resource for teachers to develop the topic of the conversations that can be very much helpful and meaningful than topic which does not originally derive from students' real life.

The results of this study have also shown that students found reading activity both in classroom and outside classroom not helpful or preferable. The researcher assumed that students prefer not to choose reading as helpful activity as a result of monotonous reading lesson presented to students by the teachers. In conventional reading lesson, students are required to read the text chosen by teachers. Then, teachers explain some words which students are not familiar with. Next, teachers and students translate the reading text into their first language. Finally, students are asked to answer the questions following the text. If there is limited time to complete the task in classroom, the teachers usually assign the task as homework for students to complete at home.

There are some ways that teachers can do to avoid students feeling bored with a reading lesson. One way is by choosing familiar topic to the students. In doing so, the teachers can negotiate the topic with students. The relevance of the topic for students is something to consider. Krashen (1989) states that self-selected reading can encourage students to be enthusiastic about the reading. Once students get interested in reading, they will comprehend the text better. Another way is by allowing students to have reading for pleasure. The teachers can initiate this activity by asking students about their reading habits outside of school. Then, the teachers can assign the students to make report about their reading in written form so that teachers can involve by giving comments in the effort to support the students reading habits. The next step, teachers can ask students to find the reading topic that is relevant to their major field of study and again ask them to make report to assess the students' comprehension of the topic chosen by students. Krashen (1989) points out that there are relationship between reading for pleasure and reading comprehension, grammatical development, and writing style.

Another finding of this study is that students do not like studying English alone. They prefer studying English in small groups or in pairs. In learning style dimension, most of the students in this study are categorized field-dependent learners (Abraham cited in Hoang 1998). This kind of learner prefers learning language by listening to cassettes or practicing English in pairs rather than studying grammar in isolation.

The fact that students prefer to study English in small groups or in pairs should be taken into account by the teachers when they arrange the classroom so that students can benefit from the group arrangements conducting in class. According to Long and Porter (1985) some experts in language teaching methodology recommended small group work including pair work in the second language classroom to ensure the availability of comprehensible input as well as negotiation which occurs in conversation between non-native speakers. In addition, Richards and Lockhart (1994) state that the choice of learning arrangements were set up by teachers within a lesson and these arrangements depend on what kind of lesson the teachers are teaching. So, the choice of grouping arrangements which are appropriate for certain lessons and students' preferences are important factor in learning English in class room.

Regarding language focus, students prefer practicing the sound and pronunciation and learning new words (vocabulary) to studying grammar. This result supports Krashen's theory about second language acquisition. Learning grammar is intended to prepare students to be able to use what Krashen calls their 'monitor skill', the capacity to edit language as we speak and write. Thus, the teaching and learning of grammar should not distract the flow of natural communication among students which make comprehensible input possible to occur. According to Netten and Ferguson (1995) in communicative activities, a number of grammar instructions are reduced and the teaching of grammar does not need to precede communicative language use. In addition to that, Titone (1987) point out that the teaching of grammar can be much easier when it

follows acquisition and the grammar learning must be functional and practical oriented rather than formal and theoretical ones.

This study has uncovered that there were no significant differences among students from three different field of study i.e. Economics, Physics, and Biology in their learning preferences. One interesting point is that biology students prefer using English to foreigners. According to Sawir (2002) learners may have different goals in for language learning. Some learners may learn English for the purpose of communicating with native speakers. Using English to foreigners is also seen as students' effort to use communication strategies in order to negotiate for communication problem and to enhance the effectiveness of communication.

Regarding gender, this study also came up with no significant differences of students' preferred activities in learning English. These results might indicate that field of study and genders are not affecting factors of students' preferred activities in learning English as a foreign language. However, these results can not be generalized as the number of students in this study is only 139.

5.2. Conclusion

This study has provided some information regarding students preferred activities in learning English in a foreign language context. some evidence of this study suggest that Indonesian non-English department students prefer having conversation activities in classroom, they like their teachers helping them to talk about their interest instead of allowing them to find their own mistakes. The students prefer having English activities in small groups and practicing English to studying English alone. For outside classroom activities, the students prefer talking to friends in English to reading at home. This study also suggests that there were no significant differences among students in terms of their preferred learning activities on the basis of their gender and field of study.

One important point that should be stressed is that the findings of this study can only provide information to understand the learning preferences of Indonesian non-English department students in learning English. The findings can not be used to generalize all Indonesian students. The students whose major field is English, for example, may have different preferred activities in learning English.

A final conclusion I draw from the findings is that as an English teacher, I am going to use students' preferred activities to improve my teaching practice in classroom and to encourage my students to learn English outside classroom. English activities undertaken both inside and outside classroom should take comprehensible inputs into account. Students' communication activities should be in the form of group works and pair works. In my effort to encourage students to talk in English, their interest is a good topic to discuss in order to get the students actively involve in the activities I designed.

In addition, in order to accommodate students' preferred activities in learning English, I am going to implement some techniques derived from the findings of this study. Firstly, I will encourage my students to watch English programs on TV. By watching the programs, they will learn how English speaker pronounce the words. Intonation, listening skill, and English expression can also be learnt. For those who like writing, I will assign them to write English poems, short story, and simple journal that expose their interest and real life.

In terms of learning vocabulary, I will encourage my students to have reading for pleasure. This activity can help students learn new words as well as learn to comprehend an English text. Magazine, short story, newspaper, and novel are authentic sources of reading for pleasure. For those who prefer listening to Cds and Cassettes, presenting English song in classroom is a helpful mean to learn English. Vocabulary, pronunciation as well as grammar can be learnt from this activity. For those who like having conversation with friends, English drama

performance can be an effective way to practice their speaking skill through roles that they act.

At last, I recommend that students' preferred activities in learning English are very helpful information that English teachers should consider in their efforts to improve their ways of teaching English. There are various activities that English teachers can try to implement inside and outside classroom to meet students' interest in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning English, in particular for non-English department students.

In addition, as there is increasing interest in the ways in which non-English Department students can be supported in their learning of English not only in Indonesia but also in other ASEAN countries, the findings of this study will be also useful knowledge for education system policy makers, curriculum designers, and teachers working in the area of English language teaching in South East Asia

Appendix A: Approval Letter from the Dean of teacher Training and education Faculty of Jambi University



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This is to clarify that the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training of Jambi University, Indonesia has agreed to permit Mr. Urip Sulistyono to conduct his survey research at the faculty from April to June, 2008.

The Faculty would be pleased to provide the researcher with its official records and data related to his study if he needs.

Jambi, April 11, 2008



बिना शिरोद्धिन सादगुर, M.Pd
NIP 14-466 232

Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data about students' opinions about the helpfulness of various learning activities when learning English as a Foreign Language. Please read the *Participant Information Sheet* (page 1) and, if you agree to participate, complete the following questionnaire.

Part I

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female (circle the appropriate box)

Field of Study:

Part II

Rank the following activities in terms of how helpful/preferable they are for you when learning English.

Learning English in class, I find:

	not helpful		very helpful	
1. Reading	1	2	3	4
2. Listening to CDs and cassettes	1	2	3	4
3. Playing games	1	2	3	4
4. Having conversations	1	2	3	4
5. Watching film or video	1	2	3	4
6. Writing in notebook	1	2	3	4

Teacher's role

I find when the teacher:

	not helpful		very helpful	
1. Explains everything to students	1	2	3	4
2. Gives students problems to solve	1	2	3	4
3. Helps students to talk about their interest	1	2	3	4
4. Tells the students all their mistakes	1	2	3	4
5. Allows students find their own mistakes	1	2	3	4

Grouping arrangements

	not helpful		very helpful	
1. Studying English alone	1	2	3	4
2. Studying English by talking in pairs	1	2	3	4
3. English activities in small groups	1	2	3	4
4. English activities with the whole class	1	2	3	4
5. Going out in a group and speaking English ...	1	2	3	4

Language focus

	not helpful		very helpful	
1. Studying grammar	1	2	3	4
2. Learning new words (vocabulary)	1	2	3	4
3. Practicing the sound and pronunciation	1	2	3	4

Sensory modality

	not helpful		very helpful	
1. Learning English words by seeing them	1	2	3	4
2. Learning English words by hearing them	1	2	3	4
3. Learning English words by writing them	1	2	3	4
4. Learning English words by all of these	1	2	3	4

Outside class activities**Learning by:**

	not helpful		very helpful	
1. reading at home	1	2	3	4
2. watching TV in English	1	2	3	4
3. listening Cds and cassettes	1	2	3	4
4. studying English text books	1	2	3	4
5. talking to friends in English	1	2	3	4
6. listening to English programs	1	2	3	4
7. using English to foreigners	1	2	3	4

Thank you for your help!

Appendix C: Information Sheet for Participant

The results of the study will be included in a minor thesis and possibly a written article of the completion of the study. At the completion of the study I will make available a brief summary of the results for all participants. You will be able to get a copy through requesting one through the Head of the English Department.

Generally, as English is increasingly becoming a universal language, the more people in Indonesia who are competent users of English, the better may be the country's communication with the global community.

Confidentiality

Any information you provide will be kept confidential and no personal details about you or anyone else will be recorded.

Enquiries

If you have further enquiry regarding to the result of this survey, feel free to contact me: Urip Sulisty, 58 Scott Grove, Kingsbury Vic. 3083. Email: Usulisty@student.trobs.edu.au or Usulis2000@yahoo.com

Complaint

If you have any complaints or queries that the investigator has not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may contact the secretary, Faculty Human

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PROMOTING STUDENTS' AUTONOMY IN LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH THEIR PREFERRED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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