

EFL Students' Perceptions of Joyful Communication Activities in assisted and non-assisted technology communication: General English Learning at Non-English Department

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EFL Students' Perceptions of Joyful Communication Activities in assisted and non-assisted technology communication: General English Learning at Non-English Department

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Abstract

Selecting joyful communication activities in English learning is indispensably essential. Undoubtedly, the students prefer joyful communication activities regardless the activities use assisted technology or not. Hence, this study sought to explore joyful communication activities based on EFL students' perceptions. It also aims to elicit students' attitudes toward technology-assisted and non-assisted communication activities. This study employed a mix-methods approach to obtain quantitative and qualitative data on 126 students from various non-English departments at a state university in Indonesia. Distributing the questionnaires was employed to obtain the quantitative data. Meanwhile, the qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews. The findings show that three kinds of activities are recognized as the most joyful communication activities, and 12 are the medium of joyful communication activities. Furthermore, the other 16 activities are at a low position (not recommended). Regarding technology-assisted and non-assisted language learning, the student's attitude shows that they prefer to enjoy technology-non-assisted learning activities over technology-assisted activities. However, several activities using technology-assisted learning still gain students' attraction. The study suggests that lecturers should implement recognized joyful communication activities based on students' preferences for enhancing their interest in communication skill mastery.

Keywords: EFL students, joyful communications activities, speaking skills, technology-assisted and non-assisted learning, technology communication.

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INTRODUCTION

English is a vital language for international communication in many countries (Sayuri, 2016; Nardini, 2018; Riadil, 2020; Suban, 2021; Larasati, 2018; Nazara, 2011; Rahmawati, 2019; Ratnasari, 2020). Moreover, English is essentially an important language to master (Netta, et al., 2020; Anggraeny, et al., 2020; Abrar et al., 2016). In the Indonesian context, English is commonly taught at school as the requirement for fulfilling the English subject grade. Therefore, English in Indonesian schools is merely taught as a subject and is more focused on grammar learning than speaking skills (Darmawan et al., 2021). This phenomenon leads to the passive output of learning English communication. The main reason for this phenomenon is fulfilling the English examination requirement at school that primarily focuses on grammar and reading. Nurdini (2018) also mentions in her study that only a few students are willing to speak in the classroom because they don't focus the speaking mastery or communication skills. Since the students only focus on grammar, most EFL students struggle harder and find many difficulties in English communication. The impact is the students' oral language development will be neglected (Hosni, 2014).

In addition, another researcher (Darmawan et al., 2021) believes that most EFL students try harder to master their English speaking skills. However, they cannot speak English properly. They believe that mastering speaking skill is still difficult. Therefore, some approaches are needed to create a more comfortable classroom atmosphere and challenging activities to ease English speaking mastery (Larasati, 2018). Most of the students experience the same problem related to speaking skill mastery, such as being unconfident, uncomfortable, unpleasant, and monotonous activities that make them feel bored (Darmawan, Alam & Nirma, 2021). These problems surely hamper their self-development and self-regulated learning in mastering speaking skills. Meanwhile, Shen & Chiu (2019) researched EFL learners' English speaking difficulties and found that most EFL students (83%) have limited vocabulary, and 64,9% of EFL students lack expressing their English.

Joyful communication activities are always related to positive psychology which the pioneers are Layard, (2006) and Seligman, (2011). Activities that bring happiness most likely boost the students to learn and perform better than monotonous activities since having positive emotions of happiness can broaden an individual's perspectives (Fredrickson, 2013). Furthermore, Learning another language is a cognitive process involving an emotional communication process (Pavelescu & Petrić, 2018). As Hinkel (2005) stated, English speaking is the most complex skill to master yet a frequent skill people use in daily communication. Given the insight that "more frequent L2 use with positive emotions directly impacts acquisition" (Saito et al., 2018). Meanwhile, another study (Chen, 2013) investigated the integration between technology and social experience in Foreign Language Classrooms. Furthermore, Gao and Hargis (2010) also employ technology-assisted learning to promote joyful active learning. They believe that technology can assist students to be more creative and active because they enjoy the facilities that ease them to involve their emotional senses anytime and anywhere via the technological platforms. However, technology has been employed in the recent decade to assist and improve language learning (Kranthi, 2017).

Joyful communication activities which create tight bonds (social presence) among the students may result in enjoyment (Fredrickson, 2001). In promoting English speaking to EFL students, the learning activities should involve their emotions on what activities they prefer to do in their learning. In other words, prioritizing students' preferences in selecting communication activities. In previous studies, there have been some efforts to investigate

the idea of enjoyment and positive emotion in language learning. The first study by Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) concluded that Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) is composed of social and personal aspects involving emotion. The social aspects are connected to the setting, such as classroom environment matters and interactions between teachers and students. Meanwhile, the personal aspects are connected to private feelings and reactions toward the learning process, such as having fun with Foreign Language Learning (FLL), enjoying the process, learning exciting matters, and getting attracted to achieve something. Another study (Resnik & Schallmoser, 2019) investigated tertiary students who perceived FLE. Their findings suggest positive links between students' perceived FLE and e-Tandem language learning.

Although previous studies (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2016; Resnik & Schallmoser, 2019; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020) have investigated the concept of enjoyment and positive emotion in language learning. However, the investigation related to students' enjoyment of language learning activities has not yet been done. Furthermore, the idea of mapping joyful communication activities in the form of technological-based activities and non-technological-based activities has little attention in current research. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate joyful communication activities based on EFL students' perceptions and attitudes toward technology-assisted and technology-non-assisted communication activities. Investigating joyful communication activities means that the researchers try to do mapping on various kinds of communication activities based on students' preferences. This investigation is beneficial especially to figure out communication activities that the student mostly prefers and to select the preferred activities as the priority in English language communication practices. Regarding the use of technology in learning. The present study also strives to investigate students' preferences regarding technology-assisted learning activities and technology-non-assisted learning activities. This present study gives implications on what communication activities should be selected by educators and how to prioritize the selected activities to be implemented in the classroom.

METHOD

This study employed purposive sampling on the third-semester students at one state university in Kalimantan Barat province, Indonesia. The sampling result confirmed that 60 students from various non-English departments participated in this study. Mix methods approach was used in this study which employed a questionnaire to obtain the quantitative data. In collecting the data, the questionnaires were distributed online to all the classes of various non-English departments. The result of quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS and Excel count access. The collected data from the questionnaire were analyzed by categorizing and mapping the joyful communication activities based on the scores of students' preferences. The next step is finding the highest score among the categories (Very pleasant, unpleasant, ordinary, pleasant, and enjoyable). In identifying these activities, the fulfillment of the score should be made to classify the activities into a particular category. Meanwhile, the qualitative data was obtained through ~~semi-structured interviews~~ with employed, and the online interview with all students to complete data about students' perceptions and preferences related to joyful communication activities they ever had. The overviews were made to show and prove that the selected communication activities are as based on the student's preferences or perceptions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Joyful Communication Activities

This study is carried out to find joyful English communication activities based on students' preferences and attitudes. All of these preferred activities are called authentic communication (Davies & Pearse, 2000). The analysis shows students' perception of some activities provided, whether the activities are pleasant or not. Students' preferences for communication activities are very impactful in prioritizing what communication activities should be implemented in the classroom. The implementation of preferable communication activities as students' perception gives more enjoyment to the classroom atmosphere and gives more opportunity for the lecturers to engage with their students (Fredrickson, 2001).

The analysis of students' perception of joyful communication activities is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' perceptions of joyful communication activities

Code	Communication activities	Total Score	Percentage
A1	Presenting a speech in front of the class	171	57%
A2	Presenting speech uploaded on YouTube channel	176	58.6%
A3	Telling a story in front of the class	200	66.6%
A4	Telling a story uploaded on a YouTube channel	190	63.3%
A5	Making Vlogs and uploading on social media	181	60.3%
A6	Having a podcast	191	63.6%
A7	Having a conversation in front of the class	225	75%
A8	Having a conversation uploaded on a YouTube channel	213	71%
A9	Doing a role-play (Drama) in front of the class	206	68.6%
A10	Doing a role-play (Drama) uploaded on a YouTube channel	190	63.3%
A11	Conducting a debate in English in front of the class	158	52.6%
A12	Reviewing some products, places, etc. in front of the class	206	68.6%
A13	Reviewing some products, places, etc. uploaded on social media (YouTube, Facebook, etc.)	193	64.3%
A14	Explaining the procedure of making or operating something in front of the class	199	66.3%
A15	Explaining the procedure of making or operating something uploaded on social media (YouTube, Facebook, etc.)	197	65.6%
A16	Participating in Quiz Content in front of the class	163	54.3%
A17	Doing a presentation about a particular topic in front of the class	168	56%
A18	Doing presentations about particular topics uploaded on social media (YouTube, Facebook, etc.)	165	55%
A19	Singing a song in front of the class	226	75%
A20	Singing a song uploaded on social media	204	68%
A21	Being an anchor in front of the class	179	59.6%
A22	Being an anchor uploaded on social media	177	59%
A23	Being an MC in front of the class	187	62.3%
A24	Being an MC uploaded on social media	174	58%
A25	Being a host in a talk show in front of the class	181	60.3%
A26	Being a host in a talk show uploaded on social media	173	57.6%
A27	Interviewing classmates in front of the class	183	61%

A28	Interviewing classmates uploaded on social media	171	57%
A29	Doing stand-up comedy in front of the class	141	47%
A30	Doing stand-up comedy uploaded on social media	142	47.3%
A31	Doing role-play as a wedding consultant	164	54.6%

A = Activity, A1 = Activity 1

Table 1 shows students' perceptions of what communication activities they prefer. The students have their own choice on what communication activities they need. They have the freedom to determine what learning they need to experience. Students scored on every communication activity based on their perception of how far the activity provided them the enjoyment in learning. The higher the score, the higher the enjoyment of the communication activity. In addition, the higher the enjoyment of communication activity, the higher its opportunity to be categorized as joyful. Based on students' perception in Table 1, the result of the analysis proves that some joyful communication activities attract the students to learn the English language. In other words, three communication activities get great attention as joyful activities from students' responses (71%-100%), those are having a dialog in front of the class (A7), having a conversation on the YouTube channel (A8), and singing some songs in front of the class (A19). A7 got a score of 225 (75%), A8 got 213 (71%), and A19 got the highest score, namely 226 (75%). These three activities get the highest score among other communication activities, indicating these are the most joyful communication activity based on students' perceptions. Then, these selected activities are labeled as the most enjoyable activities. Thus, these three communication activities are the prior activities to be applied in the teaching and learning process, in this case, to improve students' speaking skills.

Besides, some other communication activities have also reached their score as pleasant activities (61%-70%). The lowest score to reach this category is 183 (61%), while the highest score for a pleasant category is 210 (70%). The present analysis shows that 12 communication activities have reached the score scale. In other words, 12 communication activities have fulfilled the pleasant activity category; they are A5, A25, A21, A22, A2, A24, A26, A1, A28, A17, A18, A31, A16, and A11. Thus, these analysis results confirm that 12 communication activities can be prioritized as the second option to be implemented to improve students' English-speaking skills. Lecturers are expected to be good facilitators during the activity, giving praise such as (applause, giving points, and smiling) to appreciate students' active participation. The lecturers can create a positive emotional atmosphere in the class contributing to the higher Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) score. (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020). In this way, the selected preferable communication activities will surely be more fun and enjoyable. A more detailed measurement of the enjoyment of communication activities can be seen in Figure 1.

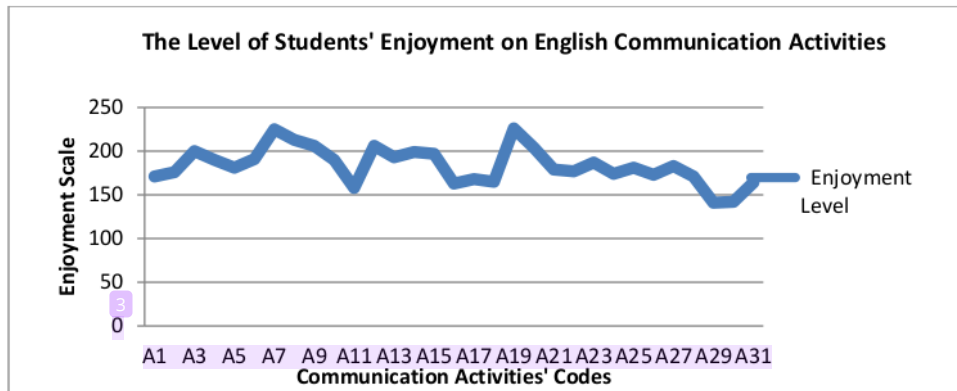
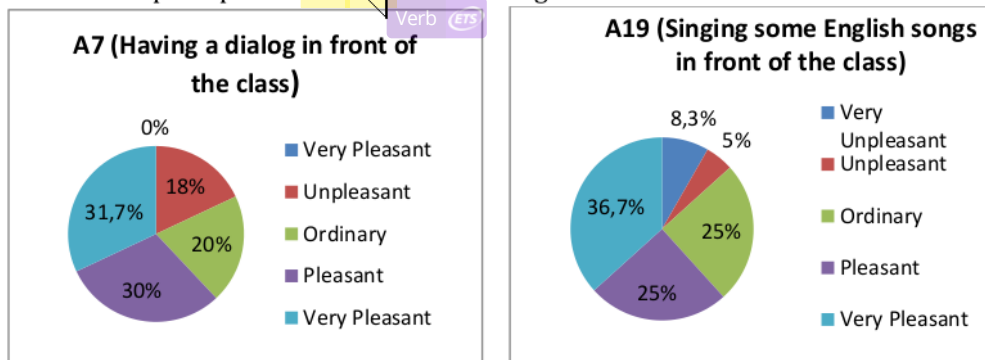


Figure 1. The level of students' enjoyment of English communication activities

The level of enjoyment of communication activities in Figure 1 describes the most recommended activities which are categorized as joyful communication activities. Those enjoyable activities are dialog in front of the class (A7), having conversations on the YouTube channel (A8), and singing songs in front of the class (A19). These three communication activities are preferred a lot by the students. Meanwhile, the second preferable communication activities are A9, A12, A20, A3, A14, A15, A13, A6, A4, A10, A23, and A27. On the other hand, the communication activities that have less concern based on students' preferences in Figure 1 are A5, A25, A21, A22, A2, A24, A26, A1, A28, A17, A18, A31, A16, and A11 because the percentages of students' preferences are very low, namely 47%-60.3% (No color). The range of the percentages 0%-60% is categorized as unattractive communication activities. Although these activities get lower preferences level, these communication activities (lower level) can still be used as alternative activities to diversify the existing activities. Meanwhile, activities A30 and A29 are not recommended as the primary communication activities in language teaching and learning since they get the lowest level based on students' preferences.

The most joyful communication activities which get the highest recommendation based on students' perceptions are can be seen in figures 2 and 3.



Figures 2 and 3. Having a dialog in front of the class (A7) and Singing a song in front of the class (A19).

Based on the preference percentage comparison in figures 2 and 3, it has been proven that those communication activities *Having a dialog in front of the class (A7)* and *Singing a song in front of the class (A19)* are the most joyful based on students' perceptions. Students prefer doing the activities they like. This is related to how positive emotion works. The easiest way to get the students' positive emotions in learning is by providing the learning activities they prefer. In this way, the students will engage their learning more since they are eager to participate actively in the preferred learning activities. This phenomenon leads to autonomous learning in which the students enthusiastically run their preferred learning activities independently. Furthermore, the students give some emphasis in the interview that they prefer to sing a song and have a dialog with their friends, as in excerpts 1 and 2:

[Excerpt 1] "Learning by singing is joyful because it impresses our mind and can do the learning longer than usual."

[Excerpt 2] "One of the most joyful communication activities is having a conversation or dialog with our classmate. It was so fun when we could practice together about any topic in daily life. Having a dialog with our classmates about daily life makes us confident. We also can do singing and tell our experience as we will."

Based on all the results of the analysis, it shows that three communication activities are the most preferred by the students (most enjoyable category), and 12 communication activities are preferred (pleasant category). As the result, the number of communication activities that can be categorized as joyful communication activities based on students' perceptions is 15 communication activities. Based on this result, these 15 communication activities are enjoyable activities that the students prefer to participate in actively. The 15 communication activities that have been investigated as joyful activities are A7, A8, A19, A9, A12, A20, A3, A14, A15, A13, A6, A4, A10, A23, and A27. These joyful communication activities are more promising than doing some activities randomly without referring to students' needs and preferences. Therefore, investigating joyful communication activities is crucial for teachers and students in building engagement, activeness, motivation, and positive emotion.

Students' Attitude to Technology Assisted Learning Activities and Technology Non-Assisted Learning Activities

It is undeniable that technology principally helps students in overcoming learning activities. The second research question will reveal how students perceive technology in supporting their joyful learning activities. It is found that the majority of students prefer the learning atmosphere without utilizing technology for technology-assisted learning. Based on the data (in table 1) on the previous page, it can be seen how students score on the implementation of learning by not involving technology in it. The result of the analysis also highlights that there are slight differences in speaking activities that students prefer to conduct using non-technology assistance and technology assistance. For example, telling a story in front of the class is far more exciting and challenging than telling a story uploaded on a digital platform such as a YouTube channel. This result proves that most of the students prefer to conduct face-to-face activities in which directly talk with their classmates and assume that such natural conversation can involve their social and psychological engagement during speaking. This can be seen in the interview as follows.

[Excerpt 3] "I love learning English by speaking in front of the class directly with classmates where the conversation is accompanied by joking and something fun. This activity makes me and my friends not feel pressured or bored with the task."

Another slight difference in the technology assistance while learning is seen in the activity of doing a role-play drama in front of the class compared to the role-play drama uploaded on YouTube. They assume that having this activity without technology assistance provides them with more confidence in the real atmosphere.

[Excerpt 4] "Having a role-play on drama in front of the class allows us to practice English as it is. Besides, this activity permits us to talk about daily activities. We do not need much technology to do so."

Nevertheless, the researchers found that technology-assisted language learning is still needed for students when they perform by themselves (Chen, 2013). As seen in A17 and A18 (in Table 1) when students prefer to present a particular topic in front of the class. Respondents give 168 or 56 % to have such activity without technology while 165 scores or 55 % of respondents need technical assistance when practicing this activity. The following excerpt shows that students need technology-assistance language learning in a particular situation.

[Excerpt 5] "When we have a task on a presentation for a certain topic, we prefer technology assistance to non-technology assistance. This opportunity supports our confidence and preparedness while presenting the topic. We can show and illustrate the pictures, diagrams, and data so everyone everywhere at any time can show our presentation online since it is uploaded on social media."

It can be implied that some students also expect technology assistance when the lecturer assigns them a task. The tasks should benefit the students and attract them to participate in the learning process actively (Kohn, 2018; Kohn & Hoffstaedter, 2017). Moreover, students feel more confident and firmer in presenting topics with technology assistance since audiences can be typically auditory-visual. Besides that, the presentation will become more understandable. Another proof that best describes the analysis of technology non-assisted learning activity is seen on A23 and A24 (being an MC in front of the class and being an MC uploaded on social media). The students who prefer being an MC in front of the audience firmly stated that they need social presence and involvement when presenting it.

[Excerpt 6] "We would like an activity involving our friends' interaction, such as becoming a host, mc, or moderator. The interaction trains our self-confidence and can reduce nervousness since the situation is directly in front of the audience."

The data shows that the students prefer to have activities without technology assistance. They require a more dominant social and psychological presence while having such tasks. The finding of the student's attitude toward technology-non-assisted learning is supported by the studies of Rospinah et al., (2021) that the majority of students actively participate in group work activities using the conventional way since it helps them improve their speaking accuracy and fluency. As seen in the data where there are activities in which they need less technology presence, such as A1, A3, A7, A9, A12, A14, A17, A19, A21, and A29, while only at activity A30 do the students need more technology-assisted learning than technology non assisted learning to support their activities.

In brief, learning activities without technology assistance are dominant because they need social presence and engagement, which can affect their positive emotions. Participants

in online learning sections felt more pessimistic in group work than in face-to-face sections, according to Hadiyanto et al., (2021). Because online learning norms dictate that students work separately and asynchronously, many students are dissatisfied with their group work. In other words, the face-to-face learning activity is also still needed for their involvement since they can manage to involve their emotion, resulting in them being active and the situation being fun. Conventional learning methods substantially impact both Scientific Process Skills and Learning Activities when used (Hadiyanto et al. 2021). Therefore, if the student can communicate with other speakers, it will encourage the development of the learner's language abilities (Bernales, 2016).

Meanwhile, the Indonesian higher education curriculum body overviews students center learning (SCL) which can apply both online and face-to-face learning in developing students' knowledge and skills (Ristekdikti, 2015). In addition, both student engagement and learning effectiveness play roles in the implementation of technology-assisted learning on learning satisfaction (Paul et al., 2010). Notwithstanding, the difference is very slight since students also require some activities that involve technology-based learning activity (Chen, 2013). It can be proved that some activities dealt with technical assistance that students prefer to do (as illustrated in A18 and A30). The findings of this study can strengthen the theories on the application of technology-assisted learning activities and technology-non-assisted learning activities for communication.

CONCLUSION

Successful English language teaching depends on how an educator gives interesting materials and how the educator instructs the students to do particular activities. However, most educator has forgotten that giving instructions and activities which students do not prefer to do is quite problematic. Consequently, the students do the learning activities by force and follow the activities just to please the educators' willingness. In this case, students cannot fully enjoy their English learning. Therefore, recognizing students' preferences for joyful activities is essential. The recognized joyful communication activities are necessary to implement since they impact students' positive emotions in learning. This study has found 13 activities that are categorized as joyful communication activities. All of the recognized joyful communication activities in this study can be references for any educators to distinguish the priority among the existing communication activities. This study suggests that educators should identify their students' preferences for searching joyful learning activities and prioritize the recognized activities to be applied in the real teaching and learning process. Therefore, further study is encouraged to investigate other enjoyable communication activities as students desire. Then, mapping those activities is also essential for subsequent study.

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