
**STUDENTS' PREFERENCES FOR SPEAKING ACTIVITIES AND
INPUT MATERIALS IN AN ESP FASHION DESIGN PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skill is an essential component of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction in vocational education, particularly for Fashion Design students, as it supports effective communication in professional and workplace contexts. This study aims to explore students' preferences regarding speaking activities and input types in ESP classes. The research employed a descriptive quantitative research design. Data were collected through a close-ended questionnaire administered to 67 students of the Fashion Design major at SMKN 2 Bukittinggi. The collected data were analyzed descriptively using percentage analysis. The findings reveal that role play was the most preferred speaking activity (47%), followed by question-and-answer activities (26%), indicating students' strong preference for interactive and communicative tasks. In terms of input types, authentic audiovisual materials (39%) were most favored, followed by picture-supported monologues (30%) and vocabulary-supported monologues (27%). Additionally, most students preferred medium-length texts (56%), materials sequenced from easy to difficult (57%), and learning materials accompanied by illustrations or tables (80%). These results suggest that ESP speaking materials for vocational learners should be interactive, multimodal, and contextually relevant. This study provides practical implications for ESP teachers and material developers in designing speaking materials that better address the needs of Fashion Design students in vocational education.

Keyword : *ESP, speaking activities, input types, students' preferences, fashion design*

INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) plays a vital role in vocational education, as it is designed to meet learners' specific academic and professional needs by tailoring language instruction to particular fields of study or work contexts (Basturkmen, 2010; Hutchinson, Tom & Waters, 1987). In vocational schools, especially in programs such as Fashion Design,

speaking skill is considered essential because students are required to communicate ideas, present design concepts, describe products, and interact with clients or colleagues in professional settings (Wanci & Abdullah, 2024). In the Indonesian vocational education context, particularly at vocational high school (SMK), the ability to speak English is increasingly important to support students' future employability.

Despite its importance, the development of speaking competence among vocational students remains challenging. Previous studies have reported that students often face difficulties in speaking due to limited vocabulary, low self-confidence, and a lack of opportunities to practice oral communication meaningfully. These problems are frequently linked to instructional practices that emphasize text-based learning and controlled language use rather than communicative interaction (Nunan, 2004). As a result, students may struggle to apply English effectively in real-life vocational situations.

These challenges are closely related to the types of speaking activities implemented in the classroom. Traditional activities that focus mainly on written exercises or individual performance may not sufficiently support students' oral development (Harmer, 2007). In contrast, task-based language teaching highlights the importance of meaningful interaction and purposeful communication in speaking instruction (Nunan, 2004). For vocational learners, speaking activities should reflect real-life tasks and professional situations relevant to their field of study (Syafitri et al., 2024; Wulandari et al., 2023; Handayani et al., 2024). This suggests that the selection of speaking activities should be aligned not only with curricular goals but also with students' learning preferences.

In addition to speaking activities, the type of input materials used in ESP speaking instruction plays a crucial role in supporting learners' oral production. Authentic materials have been shown to increase learners' motivation and provide exposure to real-life language use, which is particularly beneficial for speaking development (Safitri, 2017). Visual supports such as pictures, diagrams, tables, and other multimodal elements can further enhance comprehension and fluency, especially in visually oriented disciplines like Fashion Design (Mardianti, Newin, Eliza, 2022). According to Tomlinson (2008), effective language learning materials should be engaging, meaningful, and relevant to learners' needs, while also providing appropriate linguistic and cognitive support.

Given the close relationship between speaking activities, input materials, and learners' engagement, needs analysis becomes a fundamental step in ESP material development.

Understanding students' preferences is essential because materials that align with learners' preferences are more likely to facilitate effective learning. Ahmad and Pakaya (2022) emphasize that instructional materials should be designed to meet clear criteria, including language skills coverage, task types, and task structure. Similarly, Munir (2019) argues that ESP materials should be project-based to enhance students' knowledge, creativity, and practical language use in vocational contexts. These perspectives highlight the importance of grounding material design in learners' actual needs and preferences rather than relying solely on assumed instructional expectations.

Although previous studies have discussed ESP instruction, speaking skill development, and the use of authentic and contextual materials in vocational education, research that specifically investigates students' preferences for speaking activities and input materials in the Fashion Design program remains limited. This gap is particularly evident in the context of Indonesian vocational high schools (SMK), where learners' voices are often underrepresented in ESP material development. Most existing studies focus on general ESP needs or instructional effectiveness, rather than examining learners' preferences as a basis for designing speaking materials tailored to a specific vocational field.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the preferences of 11th-grade Fashion Design students at an Indonesian vocational high school regarding speaking activities and input materials in an ESP context. By focusing on students' preferences, this research seeks to provide empirical evidence that can inform the development of ESP speaking materials that are interactive, contextualized, and relevant to vocational needs. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to ESP research by supporting the development of learner-centered speaking materials, guiding teachers in selecting appropriate speaking activities, and assisting material developers in designing ESP instruction specifically for the Fashion Design program in vocational education.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative survey design to investigate Fashion Design students' preferences for speaking activities and input types in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes. A descriptive quantitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to describe and summarize students' preferences without

manipulating variables or implementing instructional treatments. This design allowed the researcher to capture students' responses as they naturally occurred in the learning context.

The participants of this study were 67 eleventh-grade students majoring in Fashion Design at SMKN 2 Bukittinggi. Total sampling was applied because the population size was relatively small, and involving all students ensured comprehensive representation of the target population. Data were collected using a questionnaire consisting of 25 items with several selectable options. The questionnaire was originally designed to measure students' target needs (necessities, lacks, and wants) and learning needs (input, procedure, setting, learners' roles, and teachers' roles). However, for the purposes of this article, only items related to speaking activities and input types were analyzed.

The development of the questionnaire was guided by principles of ESP needs analysis proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (Hutchinson, Tom & Waters, 1987) and task-based language learning theory (Nunan, 2004). The speaking activity items included role play, question-and-answer sessions, group discussions, and presentations. Meanwhile, the input-related items covered audiovisual materials, picture-supported texts, vocabulary-supported texts, and plain monologues, as well as preferences regarding text length, sequencing of materials, and visual layout.

To ensure the validity of the instrument expert judgment was employed as a form of content validity. The questionnaire was reviewed by two English lecturers and one English teacher, who evaluated the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of each item in relation to the research objectives and students' vocational context. Based on their feedback, several items were revised to improve wording clarity and alignment with the intended constructs. The reliability of the instrument was analyzed using inter-rater reliability, since the validation results were based on expert ratings rather than numerical data from respondents. Inter-rater reliability refers to the level of agreement or consistency between two or more raters who independently assess the same set of items. High inter-rater reliability indicates that the ratings are consistent and not influenced by subjective bias.

The questionnaire was administered during regular class sessions. Students were instructed to select the options that best represented their preferences, and the completion time was approximately 15 minutes. To minimize potential misunderstandings, the researcher provided clear instructions and remained available to clarify any questions during the administration process.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency and percentage. The percentages were calculated based on the proportion of each response in relation to the total number of respondents, in order to describe students' preference tendencies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Students' Preferences for Speaking Activities

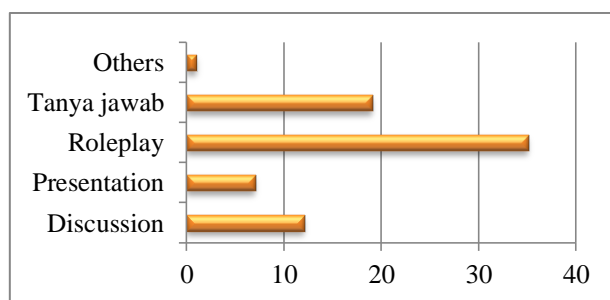


Figure 1: Students' Preferences of Speaking Activities

Regarding the preferences learning activities for practicing speaking, the majority of responses pointed to role play, with 35 students (47%) choosing this option. Question-and-answer activities were the second most preferred, gaining 19 (26%) responses, while group discussions were selected by 12 students (16%). Presentations were the least favored activity, with only 7 responses (9%). These findings suggest that students are more engaged in interactive and simulated communication tasks, where they can actively practice speaking in realistic contexts, rather than more formal or individual activities such as presentations.

Students' Preferences for Input Materials

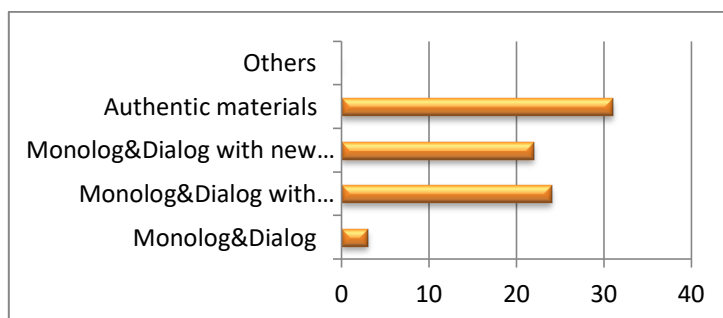


Figure 2: Students' Preferences of Forms Input Materials

The result related to the preferences forms of input materials in speaking activities show that most students were interested in authentic materials such as radio, films, and songs, with 31 responses (39%) indicating this choice. Meanwhile, 24 responses (30%) preferred monologues and dialogues accompanied by pictures, and 22 responses (27%) selected monologues and dialogues enriched with new vocabulary. Only 3 responses (4%) chose simple monologues and dialogues without additional support.

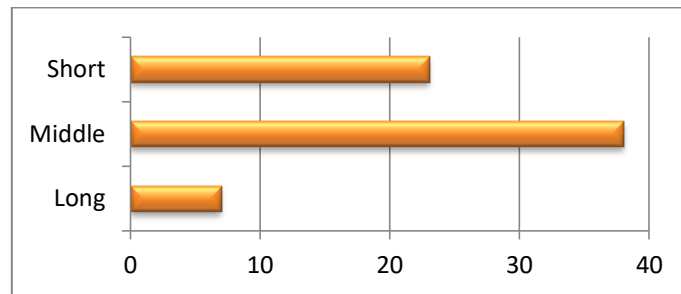


Figure 3: Students' Preference Length of Texts Used in Speaking Materials

Regarding the preference length of texts used as input, the majority of responses indicated a preference for medium-length texts (150–200 words), with 38 students (56%) selecting this option. Meanwhile, 23 responses (34%) preferred shorter texts of less than 150 words, and only 7 responses (10%) chose longer texts of more than 250 words. These findings reveal that students favor materials that are not too short to limit the content but also not too long to overwhelm them, suggesting that balanced input with manageable length is more suitable for their learning.

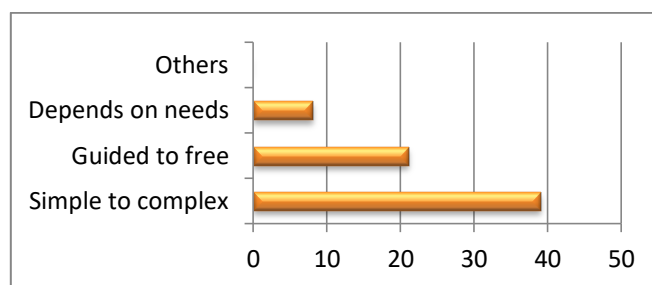


Figure 4: Students' preference of materials order

Concerning the preference order of learning materials, 39 students (57%) expressed that they prefer materials to be organized from the easiest to the most difficult. Additionally, 21 responses (31%) favored materials that move gradually from guided to independent learning, while only 8 (12%) responses supported a random order based on situational needs. These

results suggest that students generally prefer a structured and sequential progression in speaking materials, which can help them build confidence and mastery step by step.

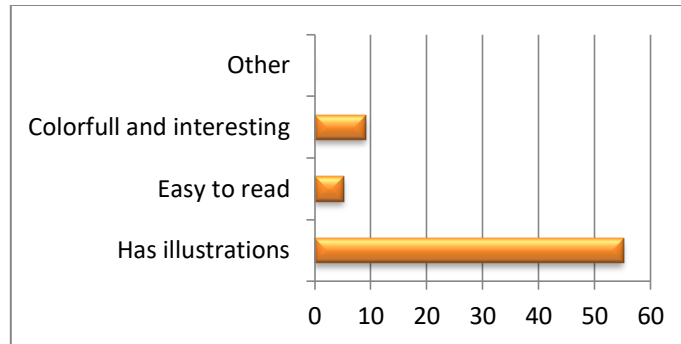


Figure 5: Students' Preference toward the Layout of Materials

Regarding the preference layout of speaking materials, the majority of students 55 favored (80%) materials that include illustrations, tables, or graphs to support explanations. A smaller portion of 9 respondents (13%) showed interest in materials with colorful designs to increase learning motivation, while only 5 students (7%) preferred text-focused materials with simple, readable fonts. This indicates that most learners value visually supportive and engaging layouts that make the content easier to understand and more appealing.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that students' preferences for speaking activities, input materials, text length, material organization, and layout are interconnected and reflect a unified set of learning needs in ESP speaking instruction. Students tend to favor interactive activities supported by authentic and visually enriched input, presented in a structured sequence with manageable text length. These preferences highlight the importance of designing ESP speaking materials that are communicative, supportive, and systematically organized to meet the needs of vocational learners, particularly in the Fashion Design program.

Discussion

Preferences of Speaking Activities

The findings of this study highlight that vocational students in the Fashion Design program tend to value speaking activities that emphasize interaction and practical communication rather than individual or form-focused tasks. This preference reflects the nature of vocational education, where speaking skills are not only used for academic purposes but also for real workplace communication (Rena, I. P., Al-Baekani, A. K., & Kamil, 2023).

From an ESP perspective, this supports the principle that language instruction should be aligned with learners' specific professional needs and communicative contexts (Hutchinson, Tom & Waters, 1987).

The strong inclination toward interactive activities such as role play and question-and-answer tasks can be interpreted through the lens of task-based language teaching (TBLT), which emphasizes meaningful interaction and goal-oriented communication as central to speaking development (Putri & Assapari, 2025). In vocational settings, role play allows students to simulate professional situations, such as presenting fashion designs, negotiating with clients, or explaining product details. This aligns with Harmer's view that speaking activities like role play, discussions, and Q&A are effective in promoting communicative competence. Similarly, Hardi (2019) and Harmer (Harmer, 2007) argues that effective speaking instruction involves activities such as discussions, interviews, dialogues, reporting, and Q&A, which require learners to actively construct meaning.

In the context of Indonesian vocational high schools (SMK), these preferences may differ from those of general EFL learners or students in academic English (EAP) programs. SMK students are oriented toward practical skills and immediate applicability, which explains their preference for speaking activities that resemble real-life communication rather than formal academic presentations (Alfina, A., Eliza, E., Roza, V., & Melani, 2024). Therefore, this study provides context-specific evidence that enriches the literature on ESP speaking instruction in vocational education, particularly in the Fashion Design field.

Preferences of Input Materials

In addition to speaking activities, students' preferences for input materials emphasize the importance of authenticity and support in ESP speaking instruction. The preference for authentic audiovisual materials and visually supported texts suggests that vocational learners benefit from exposure to real-life language use that mirrors professional communication. This supports previous studies highlighting the role of authentic materials in increasing motivation and facilitating natural language processing in speaking activities (Safitri, 2017; Widyastuti, 2017).

For students in visually oriented programs such as Fashion Design, visual input plays a crucial role in supporting comprehension and oral expression. Multimodal input combining images, videos, and text provides contextual cues that help learners generate ideas and

express them more fluently (Mardianti, Newin, Eliza, 2022). This finding is consistent with the principles of effective material design proposed by Tomlinson (Tomlinson, 2008), which emphasize meaningful content, learner engagement, and appropriate support. It also aligns with Anggraini (2022), who argues that learning materials should be adapted to students' needs and learning styles to maximize effectiveness.

The preference for scaffolded input, including vocabulary support and structured progression from simple to complex materials, further reflects vocational learners' need for gradual skill development. This sequencing helps reduce cognitive load and speaking anxiety while promoting confidence in oral performance. From an ESP needs analysis perspective, these findings confirm that input materials should be carefully selected and designed to match learners' characteristics, learning conditions, and disciplinary demands.

The results of this study have important implications for ESP teaching and material development in vocational high schools. First, ESP teachers are encouraged to design speaking instruction that prioritizes interactive activities such as role play, Q&A, discussions, and project-based speaking tasks. Project-oriented speaking activities are particularly relevant in ESP contexts, as they allow learners to integrate language use with vocational content and creativity (Otodu, 2023; Sirajul, 2019).

Second, material developers should incorporate authentic, multimodal, and visually supported input into ESP speaking materials. Materials should be structured progressively, beginning with guided tasks and moving toward more independent speaking activities while maintaining adequate support. Such design not only aligns with students' preferences but also supports effective speaking development and reduces anxiety (Ariani Yola, Eliza, 2020).

By explicitly focusing on students' preferences, this study addresses a research gap in ESP vocational literature, particularly in the context of Fashion Design programs in Indonesian. Previous studies have discussed ESP instruction and speaking development in general terms; however, this research provides empirical evidence that highlights the importance of learner preferences as a foundation for designing speaking activities and input materials tailored to a specific vocational field.

Overall, this study contributes to ESP research by demonstrating that speaking instruction for vocational learners should be learner-centered, task-based, and contextually grounded. The findings are particularly relevant for ESP teachers and material developers in Fashion Design programs, as they offer practical guidance for designing speaking activities

and materials that reflect students' preferences, reduce speaking anxiety, and support real-world communication needs in vocational education.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that Fashion Design students in a vocational ESP context prefer interactive speaking activities such as role plays and question and answer tasks, supported by multimodal input including audiovisual materials, visual aids, and vocational vocabulary, because these reflect real workplace communication and increase student engagement. Therefore, ESP speaking instruction should focus on authentic and well structured activities that simulate professional situations and provide gradual support to help students develop confidence and speaking ability. However, since this study was conducted in only one vocational school and relied solely on questionnaire data, future research should involve a wider range of contexts and use additional methods to examine how preference based ESP materials influence students' speaking proficiency.

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