

**PREFERENCES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS
ENGLISH FOR ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS STUDIES
IN DIPLOMA III STIESIA SURABAYA**

Nanis Setyorini

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Indonesia (STIESIA) Surabaya

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mendeskripsikan tentang kesukaan mahasiswa terhadap cara belajar bahasa Inggris untuk studi ekonomi dan bisnis di STIESIA dan sikap mahasiswa terhadap kemampuan bahasa Inggris mereka untuk kebutuhan akademik dan profesi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dan mengambil data dengan teknik kuisioner.

Dari data yang diperoleh dapat diketahui bahwa mahasiswa diploma III STIESIA Surabaya lebih menyukai interaksi kelas yang komunikatif dan kegiatan kelas yang bervariasi. 55% mahasiswa menyukai jika diberi pekerjaan rumah dan 65% menyukai bila tugas-tugas/ketrampilan berbahasa mereka dikoreksi. 80% mahasiswa merespon positif terhadap kebutuhan menguasai bahasa Inggris. Sikap positif ini menunjukkan adanya motivasi yang tinggi dalam upaya meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris mahasiswa untuk kebutuhan studi dan karir di masa mendatang.

Kata kunci: kesukaan (preference), sikap (attitudes), bahasa Inggris untuk bidang ekonomi dan bisnis

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In this globalization era, English proficiency becomes one of the essential elements for human resources improvement. English language has been used as a medium for communication in many sectors (e.g. in education, business world, etc) worldwide. Thus, people learn English for achieving different purposes, such as: for communicating in the international forum, for supporting their academic qualification, for advancing career opportunities, and so on. Successful English learning can be achieved in terms of many factors. Preferences and attitudes are considered as two factors that can make students to be more motivated to study, to lead for their English competency development (Brown and Rodgers, 2002) and then to be able to improve their human resources advancement.

The important role of English language is also convenient in the education world. Schools and higher educations in Indonesia consider English language as a compulsory course to study, even with different purposes. As in STIESIA Surabaya –a college of economics- takes English language for facilitating students to study economics and business. STIESIA students are expected to have English proficiency for educational and occupational purposes.

As the educational purpose, students are intended to have knowledge and skills on how to use English as a foreign language to communicate for succeeding academic activities, for examples: (a) to read and comprehend textbooks, literatures or references written in English about economics and business; (b) to present visuals (e.g. graph, table, chart, diagram, etc) in English; and (c) to express their opinion formally for academic English. While as the occupational purpose, students are intended to develop their English skills for further communication or interaction in the workplace situation, for example: (a) to read and write business letters, reports, or accounting reports in English; (b) to response a set of job interview in English; (c) to present job descriptions in English; and etc.

Those goals can be achieved successfully depending on various factors, such as: the goals of language course, the needs of the individual student, and the students' methodological preferences and attitudes to the importance of various language skills (Kavaliauskiene, 2003). So, STIESIA policy makers as well as English lecturers must make profesional decisions to ensure effective teaching and learning of English for economic and business studies in all offered study programs. Hence, this research would like to carry out part of factors that influence foreign language learning. This intends to know the preferences and attitudes of STIESIA students regarding their learning and proficiency of English for economic and business studies at STIESIA Surabaya.

In this research, subject observed are students of diploma III STIESIA Surabaya. Diploma III students are considered as low input students . They are known as students who get the lowest scores in the results of STIESIA entrance test and who cannot be accepted in S1 classes. Many lecturers found difficulties in teaching diploma III students. These reasons lead this research to investigate more on how students' preferences and attitudes towards English for economics and business studies at STIESIA Surabaya. The results of this study might be useful for English lecturers in managing their classes as what students expected and in developing students' English competency, and for STIESIA policy makers in deciding regulation and providing supported facilities to develop successful English learning and teaching process in diploma III STIESIA Surabaya.

Problems of the Study

The problems of this research are formulated as the following research questions:

1. What are students' preferences for learning English for economics and business studies in diploma III STIESIA Surabaya?
2. What are students' attitudes to proficiency of English for economic and business studies in diploma III STIESIA Surabaya?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are formulated as follow:

1. To know the students' preferences for learning English for economics and business studies in diploma III STIESIA Surabaya
2. To know the students' attitudes to proficiency of English for economic and business studies in diploma III STIESIA Surabaya

Significance of the Study

This research might be useful for:

1. English lecturers who are responsible to take decisions for further improvement of applicable teaching methods and of effective classroom management of English for economic and business studies at STIESIA Surabaya.
2. Policy maker in diploma III STIESIA Surabaya to take considerations in providing supported facilities to develop students' English proficiency.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Preferences and Attitudes to a Foreign Language Learning

Preference and attitudes are considered as part of important factors that can influence the foreign language learners. The term 'preference' generally refers to 'like' and 'dislike' (Kavaliauskiene, 2003) to something. And the word 'attitude' is defined as way of feeling, thinking, or behaving (Hornby, 1987).

Brown and Rodgers said that "where students see their needs, interests or preferences being well served, they are likely to be more motivated to study, more diligent in their work, and more convinced of the positive output of their efforts" (2002:191). Preferences in learning English as a foreign language for a particular purpose is because of emotional involvement with English speaker community and of direct interest or preference for English language (Petrides, 2006) of which involve certain goals and needs to be achieved.

While, attitude is closely related to motivation. There is evidence that students with a negative attitude toward a foreign language could not be motivated them, on the other

hand, students with positive attitude (e.g. I like English, it is easy to learn, it is useful for my study, it is essential for my job) will reach high achievement. In brief, positive preferences and attitudes are important aspects in successful learning of English as a foreign language as well as of English for economic and business studies.

English for Economic and Business Studies

English for economic and business is part of a language teaching genre, i.e. English for specific purpose (ESP). English for specific purpose is an approach to language teaching which aims to meet the needs of particular students (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987:21). The needs are categorized into two i.e. for study and for an occupation (Widdowson, 1988). For study, students are engaged in studying English for a particular subject for instance: economics, business, mathematics, or science; while for occupation, students follow a particular occupation, for instance: accountant, manager, secretary or nurse for which they need English for communication (Munby, 1991).

ESP classroom often uses the authentic materials, tasks or activities, and teaching strategies that reflect the students' specialist world (Basturkmen, 2002). Authentic materials of English for economic and business studies are described as teaching sources written in English of various topics about economics and business studies, including: accounting, finance, auditing, management, taxation, insurance, marketing, personnel, business cycle, business across cultures, and so on. These materials are performed in various classroom activities in the forms of class/group discussion, student presentation, role play, dialogue, language games, and etc. And the kinds of activities will be more effective when those are preferred by students to do and when strategies of communicative language teaching are applied well.

Communicative Language Classroom

A communicative language classroom is a classroom atmosphere in which students are given much opportunities to practice a language as a medium for communication and interaction as well as to know the functions of using the language for their real life or needs (Richards and Renandya, 2002). To the extents, type of activities performed in the classroom of English as a foreign language as well as of English for specific purpose should involve processes such as information sharing, negotiation of meaning, and interaction by using task-based materials (Brown, 2001). Additionally, the communicative language classroom can lead to classroom disruptions; influence students' educational aspirations and achievement; develop students' communicative and academic language functions, and encourage students for taking actively participants achieving in the classroom communication (Johnson, 1995). However, these advantages of this teaching methodology will be more applicable in a good classroom management.

Classroom Management

In the classroom, teacher has a responsibility to ensure effective language teaching and learning. Teacher manages by deciding how the classroom structured and organized for instruction, what atmosphere of classroom to be created, where the talk directed, who speaks and for how long, and what materials to be discussed (Pollard, 2002). Indeed, these deal with the structure of a syllabus which is essential for learning and teaching process in the classroom.

A syllabus should include the purpose, objective, content, learning process and outcomes, resources, and organization (Stringer, 2004:159). First, the purpose includes what the students need to achieve. Second, the objective is what the students need to do to achieve the purpose. Third, the content involves what knowledge and/or skills the students need to learn to reach the purpose. Fourth, the learning processes includes how the students learn the sets of knowledge and skills; and the learning outcomes includes how the students demonstrate the skills and knowledge acquired and how the students can use the knowledge and skills to perform the accomplishment of stated purposes. Sixth, the organization involves how the coherent program of learning is structured. Last, the resources involves what authentic materials are used. Authentic materials include three categories: (1) topics or texts which are authentic as student needs; (2) target language area that is required for developing students' knowledge and skills in using English that deals with business/economic content; and (3) skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

In language teaching, there are four skills performed in the classroom, i.e. listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Language created by the students in speaking or writing is referred as productive; while language conducted to students in reading and listening is called receptive (Nunan, 2003: 48). Those skills can be integrated in one lesson plan or be taught separately depending on the classroom situation. The following are explanations about the teaching process or strategies for developing student's listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills in an EFL or ESP classroom.

First is listening skill. Listening is said by Tricia Hedge (2000: 229) as an ability that can be automatically developed through practice of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Moreover, it has a role in language acquisition so it can facilitate to develop student's reading, speaking, and writing skills by applying some teaching strategies. The effective teaching strategies for listening are for example: (a) predicting that is effective for students as listeners to think about what they will hear; (b) inferring that is useful for students to listen between the lines; (c) monitoring in which students good listeners notice what they can do or do not understand; (d) clarifying in which students as listeners ask questions and give feedback to the speaker; (e) responding in which students react or give response to what they hear; and (f) evaluating in which students evaluate on how well

they can understand the speakers (Nunan, 2003: 35). Those strategies can be improved well by the use of authentic texts.

Second is reading skill. Reading is an important ability in order to develop other language skills. Therefore, an EFL teacher should help students in developing their reading skill and motivate students to read by (a) selecting or creating appropriate or authentic texts which meet student's specific needs; (b) designing useful reading tasks; (c) managing the effective and supportive classroom environment; and (d) encouraging critical reading. Moreover, classroom activities that can be employed in helping student's reading skill are for example: (a) have students to express their ideas about the topic being taught; (b) have students to review their own experiences in relation to the topic; (c) ask students questions and they think about it, and etc. Those can be done by talking or by showing pictures, charts, or diagram accompanying the text.

Third is speaking skill. Speaking skill has a role to develop classroom interaction that facilitates the language acquisition (Nunan, 2003: 262). Indeed, speaking is a means of expressing opinions orally to response other's saying or to initiate an interaction (Susanto, 1994: 79). One is said to be able to speak English if she has knowledge of the English language elements (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary) and ability to perform a social interaction by using those elements (Harris, 1969). Moreover, speaking ability is influenced by some individual factors, i.e: social, cognitive, and affective factors (Schuman and Schuman, 1977). Social factor relates to the student and the foreign language; and to the students and other students of the same native language. Cognitive factor related to the student's problem solving strategies. And affective factor related to the student's emotional response that can arises from an attempt to learn the foreign language. Those factors are, then, carefully concerned to the effective teaching in developing student's speaking skill. Therefore, there are various teaching strategies that can be applied to help students to gain practice in speaking English as a foreign language. They are (a) information gap in which students can share information; (b) jigsaw activity in which a pair or group has some information the other pairs or groups need; (c) role play in which a student plays a role, for example, being an accountant who is reporting his accounting to his manager; (d) simulation that is more elaborate than role plays since it needs documents and a somewhat realistic environment for language practice; (e) discussion in which students can discuss or talk about a range of authentic topics which engage their interests, opinions, histories, and experience (Hedge, 2000: 277) and so on. Those activities should be created or managed in a reassuring classroom environment so students can prepare to take risks and experiment with the language.

Forth is writing. Writing is a complex activity since it needs some strategies to organize a writing text. Strategies for writing relate to a number of activities, such as: setting objectives, creating ideas, arranging information, planning a draft, reading and reviewing it, then revising and editing (Hedge, 2000: 302). However, those strategies can be applied

successfully or not depending on the natural student's age, background, interests, or needs for writing, especially in English as a foreign language classroom. Therefore, effective teaching of writing for EFL as well as ESP should provide students with different kinds of writing activities, such as: writing responses to a reading text, journal entries, summaries, and etc. These can encourage student's ideas more creative and develop their writing skills (Nunan, 2003: 93).

All in all, listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills are essential in the acquisition of English as a foreign language. Thus, activities and materials employed in the teaching English in the classroom of English as a foreign language as well as of English for economic and business studies should be managed well in order to develop the classroom interaction which also facilitate to the development of student's English proficiency. Moreover, successful and effective classroom management might be created well after knowing students' preferences and attitudes to English learning for specific purposes.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research is designed in a descriptive qualitative approach. It uses a survey research technique. In this research, survey is used to compile and describe the preference and attitudes, in the forms of questionnaire. Questionnaires, that are open-response, are administrated in writing to the respondents.

Respondents

In this research, there are 100 respondents who are students of diploma III program of accounting and taxation management, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Indonesia (STIESIA) Surabaya, academic year 2007/2008. They are taking a course of English 2 in the second semester.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The data are gathered from respondents' methodological preferences for learning English for economics and business studies at STIESIA Surabaya and from respondents' attitudes toward the needs of having English proficiency for academic and professional goals. Respondents' preferences include what they like or dislike in available teaching and learning types, interaction, activities, tasks, correction ways, and learning progress that are performed in the English classroom at STIESIA. And respondents' attitudes include what they think about their needs in improving their listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills; and in using English for specific purposes, e.g.: for translation, for work,

for study, for exams, and etc. Then, data are examined using a slightly adapted questionnaire from Kavaliauskiene in 2003, suitably modified to this research settings. The results of learner responses are analyzed and presented in percentage. Percentage is considered as a more tangible way of presenting statistical data (Brown and Rodgers, 2002).

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The following are data analysis that are performed and discussed qualitatively in percentages as the results from student responses. The percentages are also displayed in the form of table and graphs in order to make clearer understanding.

1. Students' preferences to English language learning

There are six questions in the available questionnaire to know students' preferences for learning of English for economic and business studies in diploma III program of accounting and taxation management, STIESIA Surabaya. Students' responses are presented and discussed below.

a) Students' preferences for classroom interaction

There are various kinds of classroom interaction in learning a foreign language. From the results of students' responses show that 51% of the students prefer learning in a small group, and the rest of students prefer learning individually (26%), in pairs (10%), and in large group (13%). Clearly these are displayed as the following pie graph.

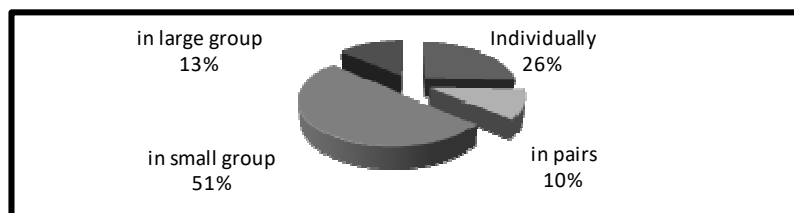


Figure 1
student's preference for classroom interaction

Source: Results of data analysis

It is evident that the goal for applying communicative language classroom proposed to students in diploma III STIESIA Surabaya has been in regard with the students' preference and need. In other words, classroom of English for economic and business studies is accepted by diploma III students since 74% of respondents like

having a class in group for both in small or large groups and doing a work in pairs. In contrast, only 26% of respondents dislike to study English communicatively. So, further effective teaching way for this case is better to lead students working the tasks or activities in groups or in pairs, even sometimes to have students working individually.

b) Students' preferences for English classroom activities

As the results of questionnaire 2, students give responses for the kinds of classroom activities that they find useful for English learning. They are performed and ranked as the following table:

Table 1
Student's preference for classroom activities

No.	Kinds of Classroom Activities	Percentages
1	Listening English songs	39%
2	Doing a dialogues/conversation	33%
3	Writing grammar exercises	25%
4	Discussion	25%
5	Talking with and listening to other students	23%
6	Student presentation	20%
7	Making projects in group	12%
8	Writing summaries/letters/reports	10%
9	Language games	8%

Source: Results of data analysis

We can conclude from the results above that students' preferences for classroom activities vary depending on their experiences of English learning that impact how easy they can catch the point of materials from their previous English teachers. This conclusion is represented in preferences in listening English songs, language games, doing a dialogue, and talking with and listening to other students. Moreover, students may favor doing certain activities because of their needs for future usages or for working, for example: writing summaries, letters, or reports; discussion, and presentation.

c) Students' likes and dislikes on doing homework

On the questionnaire 3, students are also asked whether they want to do homework or not out of classroom activities, and how much time they usually spend on doing a homework. The results are 52% of students like to have homeworks from lecturer after class, 42% students do not like to have homeworks, and 6% of students do not give any answers. For those who want to have homework state that they need 1 hour up to 3 hours to do each homework.

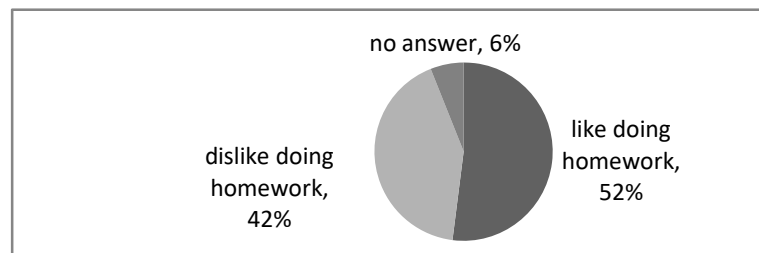


Figure 2
students' preferences on doing homework

Source: Results of data analysis

Homeworks can be good or bad depending on one's preferences. More than a half students favor to have homeworks due to their necessity in improving their English skills and proficiency. And the rest do not like to have homeworks eventhough they realize for the importance of English for international communication as well as for their academic and professional needs. Surprisingly, 42% of students say that they dislike doing homeworks since they are so busy at work. Otherwise, they are workers who have spent their entire time for working in the office or private and govermental institutions. As these facts, the English lecturers in diploma III STIESIA Surabaya should understand their real condition, furthermore, to be able to arrange particular teaching strategies and classroom management for solving this problem. Lecturers may negotiate with the students for win-win solution for keeping the classroom rules for students' English proficiency development.

d) Students' preferences for learning types

As the questionnaire 4, students state their preferences for learning types of English for economic and business studies in diploma III STIESIA Surabaya. Here students may choose more than one choices on available items. They are ranked as follow:

Table 2
Types of student learning preferences

No.	Types of student learning preference	percentages
1	Learning by reading and taking notes	53% of students
2	Learning by getting information themselves	36% of students
3	Learning by repeating what they hear	23% of students
4	Learning by problem solving	20% of students
5	Learning by copying from chalkboard/OHP/LCD	20% of students
6	Learning by listening and taking notes	16% of students
7	Learning by memory	7% of students

Source: Results of data analysis

As the response results, there are various ways of learning which each student favors to do. More than a half of responses like learning by reading and taking notes. Noticing this priority, effective classroom management could be redesigned by employing some teaching strategies as suggested by Nunan (2003), for examples: by selecting or creating appropriate or authentic texts which meet student's specific needs i.e. texts about economics and business written in English; designing useful tasks that can support students' reading comprehension about economics and business; managing the effective and supportive classroom environment for reading comprehension, for example, by using visuals or computer mediated facilities that can be interesting to students.

Besides, there are other opinions from respondents for their learning types preferences such as: learning by getting information themselves, by repeating what they hear, by problem solving, by copying from chalkboard/OHP/LCD, by listening and taking notes, and by memory. These should also be considered by STIESIA English teachers in order to create purposeful and applicable classroom activities so that students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be explored more for achieving higher English proficiency.

e) Students' preferences in correction ways

On questionnaire 5, students are asked "when you speak do you want to be corrected by your teacher/peer: (a) immediately, (b) later, at the end of activity, and (c) later, in private. The response results are 44% students prefer to be corrected later, after the activity done; 35% of students like to be corrected immediately, in front of other students; and 21% of students like to be corrected later but in private, meaning after the activity finishes and not in front of other students. Furthermore, STIESIA English teachers should pay much attention to 65% of students who like to be corrected not directly. It seems that most of diploma III students follow Indonesian culture, mostly, javanese culture i.e. not to say directly for the bad things. In fact, culture is a part of consideration for developing successful learning of English for economic and business studies at STIESIA Surabaya.

f) Students' sense of learning satisfaction

Based on the questionnaire results, diploma III STIESIA Surabaya students get a sense of satisfaction in the classroom of English for economic and business studies are from the three aspects. 51% students say that they prefer being told that they have made progress; 39% of students get a sense of satisfaction from feeling more confident when using English; and 10% of students prefer having their work graded by the lecturers. Thus, English teacher need to state or report for students' progress in English learning either during in the classroom activities or after they do homeworks or projects. It seems that 'positive notice' from the teacher to students'

progress is necessary in the way to motivate students in improving their proficiency of English for economic and business studies.

2. Students' attitudes to English proficiency

The following are the results of students' responses on their attitudes to proficiency of English in different aspects of language skills (including: reading, speaking, writing, listening); and of other usages for translating from and into English and etc. The results are presented in percentage based on three ranked options: unimportant, important, and fundamental. 'Unimportant' term means it is not important to do; 'important' term means it is essential and useful to do; and 'fundamental' term relates to activity which is very necessary or fundamental to do as part of requirement during the classroom of 'English' taken in STIESIA Surabaya and of future usages at work or other settings.

Table 3
Students' attitudes to proficiency of English in different aspects

READING	UNIMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	FUNDAMENTAL
Text of English for economics	12%	57%	31%
Newspapers	16%	72%	12%
Magazines	33%	53%	14%
Books	7%	59%	34%
SPEAKING	UNIMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	FUNDAMENTAL
Presentations	23%	57%	20%
Formal Conversations	5%	68%	27%
Informal Conversations	19%	53%	28%
WRITING	UNIMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	FUNDAMENTAL
Summaries	21%	55%	24%
Formal letters	5%	71%	24%
e-mails	37%	52%	11%
LISTENING TO	UNIMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	FUNDAMENTAL
Lectures	-	50%	50%
TV/Radio	20%	61%	19%
English speakers	16%	64%	20%

TRANSLATING	UNIMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	FUNDAMENTAL
From English	1%	61%	38%
Into English	1%	64%	35%

OTHER USAGE	UNIMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	FUNDAMENTAL
For working	5%	49%	46%
For studies	-	57%	43%
For travelling	12%	68%	20%
Grammar	13%	61%	26%
For exams	13%	71%	16%

Source: Results of data analysis

To simplify comprehension of data presented in the table 3, the summary of prevailing students' preferences is showed in the table 4. Students responses have been ranked in the order of chosen priorities and by adding 'important' and 'fundamental' scores.

Table 4
Ranking students' preferences

No.	Language Usages	Important+fundamental
1	Learning English for studies	100%
2	Listening to lecturers	100%
3	Translating from English into Indonesian	99%
4	Translating from Indonesian into English	99%
5	Learning English for working	95%
6	Writing formal letters	95%
7	Speaking for formal conversation	95%
8	Reading books in English	93%
9	Reading texts for economics	88%
10	English for travelling	88%
11	For exams	87%
12	For doing grammar exercises	87%
13	Reading newspapers in English	84%
14	Listening to English speakers	84%

Source: Results of data analysis

Here, the findings show that most of all diploma III students greatly realize the importance of English usages for various purposes. Their attitudes toward English study are mostly positive. We can see from table 4 that percentages which add the two rank 'important+fundamental' show high scores of their preferences and attitudes. Their positive preference and attitude can be a good news for English teaching process in

diploma III STIESIA Surabaya; it can be indicated that actually they have high motivation to study English for economic and business studies at STIESIA Surabaya. High motivation they have may lead their success for their academic and professional needs.

CONCLUSION

This research investigates students' preferences and attitudes towards their learning and competency needs of English for economics and business studies at STIESIA Surabaya. The population of this research are students of diploma III who were considered to have low motivation to study. It is evident from the data analysis that there are various students' likes and dislikes on classroom interaction and activities, learning styles, correction way on speaking time, homeworks, and so on. 74% of diploma III students favor an interactive English classroom to perfecting their language skills, indicating from students' preferences by working in groups (in small and large ones) and in pairs. More than 50% of students like communicative and various activities and various learning types in the classroom of English for economics and business studies. 52% of students like to be given homeworks to assess their improvement out of class. All students are hoped to be corrected in speaking activities even in the different ways and to be told that they have made progress on English learning.

Other findings, there are more than 80% of diploma III students who have positive attitudes toward English for economic and business studies. This higher result is a surprised thing. A positive attitude means a higher level of having motivation to study. Students will be able to get high achievement since they have high motivation to study English and great understanding on the necessity of English usages in various aspects for worldwide communication.

The implications of this research for language teachers is to find the ways of motivating students to lifelong English learning and to purposeful English learning for their academic as well as professional needs, to negotiate with students on their priorities for various activities in class, to incorporate activities that students prefer, and to inform STIESIA Surabaya policy makers to be able to provide supported facilities for improving students English qualification. Furthermore, this research still have limitation that should be improved for the future research. This subjects of this research are still diploma III students. This might be different if it is applied for S1 students at STIESIA Surabaya or other institutions since each has different characteristics. Hopefully, the results will give broader knowledge and implication.

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