

Teaching English to Gen Z English Learners: What are their responses to General English Topics?

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Abstract: Studies on General English topics that are pertinent to Generation Z are scarce, particularly in Indonesia. This study, thus, intends to examine the framework of questions on what the relevant general English topics are for Generation Z English learners. The census was implemented with quantitative-descriptive as an approach for this investigation. Additionally, this study used an online questionnaire shared using Google Forms to 680 first-year students out of 1560 targeted participants to collect data. The final statistics of this study were displayed by dividing the total number of responses into percentages using Microsoft Excel 2010. The findings of this analysis revealed that the topics of Introduction and Daily Activity were the most popular topics. Giving directions is also the least interesting subject, followed by describing places, procedural text, and reviews of popular tourist destinations. These topics are disliked for a variety of reasons, such as confusion, trouble understanding the language, limited vocabulary, beginner-level skills. Furthermore, the majority of the participants thought the topics of Introduction, Daily Activity, and Procedural Text (What to Need) were quite relevant. The reviews of tourist destinations and Living abroad, on the other hand, scored lower for relevancy. The results imply that Generation Z English learners favor subjects that are simple to study, have practical uses, and use basic, everyday language. Based upon the investigation, exploring potential strategies or approaches that could make these topics more engaging and relevant to Generation Z learners could also be explored in future research.

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Introduction

Learning English from one generation to another has undergone tremendous transformation. Prior to the advent of technology, it was difficult for learners to discover materials for English language learning. However, many students, in this digital era, find it easy to learn and to look for English learning resources because the technology-enhanced learning is becoming more prevalent in modern life (Bello Nawaila et al., 2020 & Mohammad, 2018). Therefore, the students can use a variety of English-learning technologies for their study activities, including Skype, Twitter, podcasting, and YouTube (Prayudi et al., 2021). Furthermore, Slim & Hafedh (2019) argued that as Facebook allows users to send and receive

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an unlimited number of text messages, photographs, and videos, English learners can also study using this platform. It implies that technology is a useful tool for pupils since it allows them easier to learn English.

The arrival of the internet in 1995 brought about a number of technical improvements, including the emergence of a new generation known as Generation Z (Gen-Z), which has been described as being digital natives, quick thinkers, and highly connected (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). In terms of learning English, Studies & Demir (2021) argued that students in Generation Z are fond of learning through visual resources in the classroom due to their fascination with viewing videos. They also enjoy learning English with the use of objects, the creation of images, or acting out the meanings of what is spoken (Maqbool et al., 2020). They, Additionally, favored using technology over conventional ways of instruction (Düzenli, 2021), especially the interactive Kahoot game, because it was more enjoyable and less stressful for them (Poláková & Klímová, 2019). Due to the engaging activities in this game, learners are also more motivated to learn English (Aidoune et al., 2022; Alharthi, 2020; Shih Min et al., 2021; and Wang & Tahir, 2020). Furthermore, Schwieger & Ladwig (2018) claimed that they enjoy working together in teams and utilizing collaborative technologies. They also value experimentation-based learning highly Instead of being taught what to do or reading monotonous books.

Yet, Along with the development of technology, Teaching Generation Z presents challenges for teachers due to their traits and learning preferences. It, moreover, can be tricky because of the difficulty to engage their imagination, curiosity, and understanding when teaching them using standard teaching-learning methods (Cilliers, 2017). Furthermore, Sugiarti (2019) stated that this cohort is challenging to instruct as the attention span of them is short. This could be a result of their extensive use of e-learning, smart boards, and smartphones. Therefore, they could find it boring to listen to lengthy and monotonous lectures, unlike prior generations who could sit silently during class (Nicholas, 2020). Therefore, it can be said that the qualities and learning styles of Generation Z pose difficulties for teachers, and traditional teaching techniques may not be effective for this age group.

In Universitas Hamzanwadi, a General English course was employed for all of the new college students. This program, according to Wathoni et al., (2022), was launched in 2016 with the goals to prepare English-speaking students and to assist the bilingual teaching class for freshmen. This English instruction is also being introduced to establish an English-speaking community on campus. A further goal of this program is to embody its motto, "Globally competitive". Moreover, this course of study consists of one-month learning conducted from 1 to August 31. The program's outstanding core is its comprehensive instruction and debriefing on communication as a social language in the college setting. The teaching contents, additionally, incorporate local content that has been chosen from a range of well-known topics to the learner's life.

On the instruction of general English, numerous researches have been conducted, such as Nilubol (2020) did a research on L1 integration's effects on general English classrooms. The study found that both native and non-native English speaker's instructors, experiences exert an impact on attitudes toward the integration of the students' L1. Additionally, Khalil & Kholofelo Semono-Eke (2020) carried out a study on the best teaching techniques for general English and English for specific purposes from the instructors' views. The findings indicated that most of

English language instructors prefer to implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) combined with other teaching strategies. Moreover, Falah & Chairuddin (2022) investigated The perspectives of learners regarding blended learning in the general English course employing Google Classroom. The study showed that the use of Google Classroom for blended learning in the general English course went smoothly with 76.3% of the students expressing satisfaction. It can be concluded that there were several researches conducted on General English previously. However, study on the topics of General English that are relevant to Generation Z is little, especially in Indonesia. This research, as a result, aims to look into the framework of inquiries on what the relevant topics of general English for Generation Z English learners. In addition, this study shows what the best and least interesting general English topics for them. It also looks into the reasons why the subjects are liked and disliked by students.

Research Method

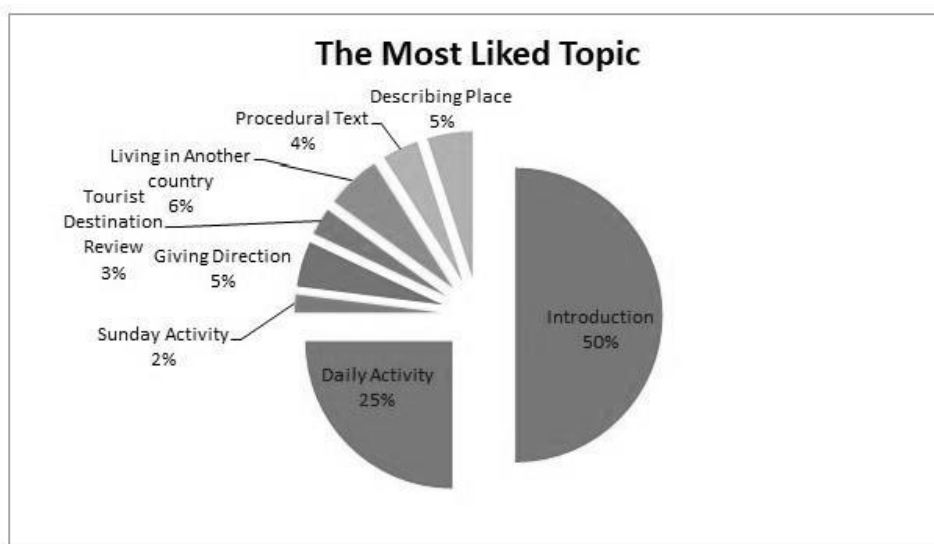
In this study, the census method was employed in tandem with quantitative-descriptive research methodology. The census research method is a quantitative data collection technique that uses the entire population as the unit of analysis instead of a sample, as in survey research. Any survey's foremost objective is to provide an insightful response to an engaging research topic for the larger target audience (Story & Tait, 2019). Due to the significance of the data representation, the accuracy of this method is more obvious. It is also useful for dispelling any uncertainty regarding the reliability of a variable under investigation. The research in this study was based on the demographic data of all of the freshmen at Universitas Hamzanwadi for 2023–2024 academic calendars. They are from 22 academic programs across six faculties; faculty of engineering, faculty of mathematics and natural science, faculty of language, arts, and humanities, faculty of health, faculty of educational study, and faculty of social and economic science. In addition, in collecting the data, this study used an online questionnaire distributed employing Google Forms to 680 first-year students out 1560 targeted. Moreover, the questionnaires also ask on the most and least intriguing topics as well as whether or not the subjects are applicable to students' daily lives. The students were also questioned regarding the reasons why they liked and disliked the topics. The final data of this research was demonstrated by dividing the total number of responses into percentages utilizing the Microsoft excel 2010 and performing a descriptive analysis on the results.

Result

All freshmen at the university were enrolled in a general English course. The objectives of this program, which was started in 2016, are to help the bilingual teaching class for new college students and to prepare learners who speak English. The program's additional purpose is to live up to its tagline, "Globally competitive". The learning for this course of study takes place from 1 to August 31 over the period of one month. The comprehensive instruction and debriefing on communication as a social language in the college setting form the program's remarkable core. In addition, local content from a variety of well-known subjects relevant to the learner's life is included in the instructional materials. Additionally, the total number of the students responded to the questionnaire are 680 out of 1560 targeted. The students who were unable to answer to the Google Form were from rural areas without access to the internet as well as the amount of information available to each student, and the quantity of students

participating in the course would all be significant causes. They, as a result, were unable to respond to it. All of the participants who answered this Google form are generation z students of Universitas Hamzanwadi aged from 17 to 23.

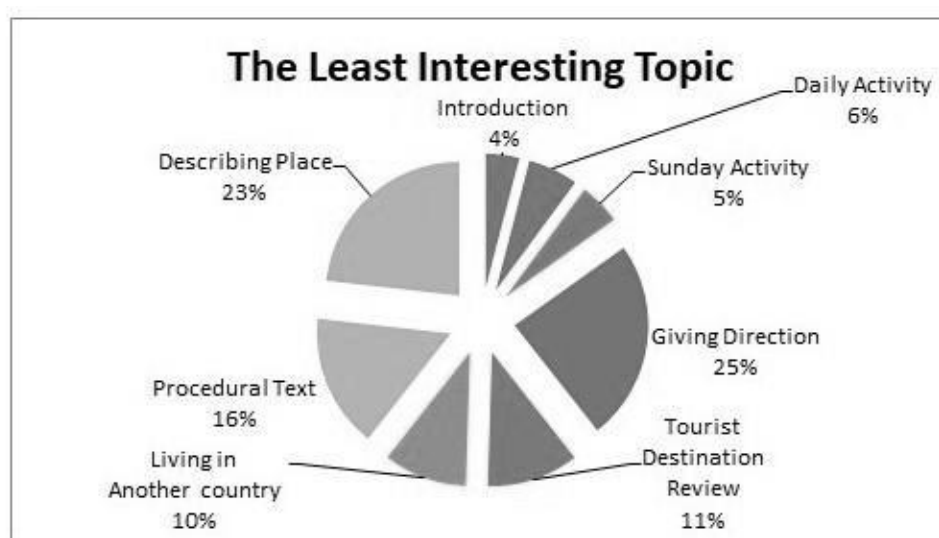
Google Forms-shared questionnaires are used to get all of the collected data. It takes four days to retrieve the data. Furthermore, the questionnaires related to the General English topics. There are 8 teaching contents studied in the General English course; introduction, daily activity, Sunday activity, giving direction, tourist destination review, what to need (procedural text), living in another country, and describing places. The general English students, in addition, were instructed to fill out three types of questionnaires; the best topic, the least interesting topic, and the relevant topic of their daily lives to learn. The first type aimed to determine what the most liked topic among the 8 teaching contents instructed on General English. Moreover, the second questionnaire talked about the uninteresting teaching content and the last type of the questionnaire discussed whether the material on general English pertains to the students' lives. Additionally, the pupils were asked why they favored or did not enjoy each of the teaching contents. The data of this study showed in pie chart and table. The most liked and least interesting topics demonstrated in pie chart and the teaching contents that pertain to their lives showed in table.



Picture 1. The Most Liked Topic

This pie chart shows the topics that Generation Z English learners most enjoy learning in the general English program offered by Universitas Hamzanwadi. The data revealed that, out of the eight topics covered in the English course, respondents found the Introduction lesson the most engaging or appealing. According to the 50% respondents or 340 students who enjoy learning introduction, this subject is relatively easy to study and the vocabulary is also very common to them. Furthermore, the general English learners like it since they can get to know with the other new students. Besides that, they perceive that introducing their selves to others or a new environment is highly essential and they said that with this material they could exchange information about their identity to each other. Daily Activity is the next topic that

majority English students in general English program enjoy the most. 25% of the learners or 170 participants are interested in this subject since it is uncomplicated to comprehend. This teaching content, additionally, is also highly applicable to their lives. Furthermore, as they have no trouble describing their day-to-day activities in English, the students believe this content to be of great value to learn. Moreover, learning the vocabulary for this subject is not particularly difficult for them. The results of the investigation indicate that students prefer standard English instructional material that includes simple and practical language. They also found that both Introduction and Daily activity topics were applicable to their lives.



Picture 2. The Least Interesting Topic

This pie chart indicates the topic that the Generation z English learners dislike the most in general English program. According to the data, giving directions is the least appealing general English topic. 25% of respondents, or 165 students, believe that this material is the least fascinating due to confusion and difficult-to-understand language. The next material that disliked by the students is describing places. 23% of the participants or 154 learners think that the material was least fascinating as they are still beginners in learning English so they have difficulty constructing the sentence and they also have limited vocabulary to describe the places. Procedural text (what to need) is the following topic that has the lowest level of attention. 109 students or 16% of the participants despised the course content due to the fact that the text procedure demands additional knowledge to produce a product. They also have to be skilled at making things in along with speaking English, which is a necessity. The following topic is tourist destination review. 11% of respondents, or 78 students, felt that the course content about tourist destination review was not particularly relevant to their lives and that the vocabulary employed in this course topic was quite challenging.

Additionally, some of them believe that learning this instructional content is not substantially necessary for their lives. From the text above, it can be concluded that the Generation Z English learners have certain topics in general English programs that they dislike. Giving directions is the least appealing topic, followed by describing places, procedural text,

and tourist destination review. The reasons for disliking these topics vary, including confusion, difficulty in understanding the language, beginner-level skills, limited vocabulary, the need for additional knowledge, and the belief that the content is not necessary for their lives.

Table 1. The Relevance of The Topic

Topic	Sum		Percentage	
	Relevant	Irrelevant	Relevant	Irrelevant
Introduction	651	19	97%	3%
Daily Activity	631	39	94%	6%
Sunday Activity	588	82	88%	12%
Giving Direction	545	12	81%	19%
Tourist Destination Review	511	159	76%	24%
Procedural Text	580	90	87%	13%
Living in another Country	447	223	67%	33%
Describing Places	554	116	83%	17%

This table represents the relevance of various topics to General English learners. The table includes the names of the topic and two columns indicating the number participants who considered the topic to be relevant or irrelevant. Additionally, it demonstrates the percentage respondents within each category. Looking at the data, it is evident that the Introduction topic was thought relevant by 97% of the respondents, with only 3% considering it not relevant. This indicates that the majority of general English learners find this topic is highly crucial to learn. The daily activity teaching content similarly highly for relevance, with 94 of the respondents or 631 students find it pertinent. Only 6% of the respondents assumed this topic was not vital. The Sunday activity topic had slightly lower relevance score compared to previous topics; with 88% of the respondents assume it relevant. Yet, 12% of the participants did not share the same feeling. Giving direction was also thought to be significant by the majority of the respondents (81%), who agreed. Conversely, 19% of the students did not think this subject was noteworthy. Furthermore, Tourist Destination review also had a lower relevance scored compared to previous ones, as only 76% considered it relevant. Notably, 24% of the respondents considered the topic was not relevant.

Additionally, Procedural text received a high relevance score, with 87% of the general English students considered it pertinent and 13% or only 90 of the students considered it was not relevant. Living in another country had relatively lower relevant score compared to previous teaching contents, with 447 students or 67% of the participants perceived this material was related to their lives and a significant proportion of the Gen Z English learners, 33% participants, found the course content was not relevant to their lives. Finally, Describing Places received a relatively high score with 83% of the students considered it relevant and the rest did not. In conclusion, the data indicates that Introduction, Daily activity, and procedural text (what to need) topics were considered highly relevant by most of the participants. On the other hand,

Living in another Country and Tourist Destination review had a lower relevance score which indicates that a significant portion of the students did not find these topics relevant to them.

Discussion

General English Program being offered by Universitas Hamzanwadi which is run from August 1 to August 31 annually adopted a theme "Embracing the global". The campus' objective of being globally competitive, which emphasizes the importance of English as a language, is also presented in this mass course for first-year students. In instructing the General English course, the teaching materials employed a local content and an integrative learning approach for the course. Local content is a set of educational resources that are directly derived from local knowledge and uniquely combined while still referring to quality standardization. This general English course has eight topics: Introduction or making acquaintance, Daily activities, Sunday activity, Giving directions, Reviewing popular tourist destinations, what to need (procedural text), Living abroad, and Describing locations. The educators allowed the students plenty of practice time in the classroom while teaching this content. He et al., (2021) stated that encouraging students to participate in presentations in class stimulates their enthusiasm to study English, boosts their self-confidence, and lays a solid foundation for future English progress.

26 tutors were selected by language center team of universitas hamzanwadi to instruct in this general English program. Senior students of English education and tourism serve as the instructors on this mass course. In the 52 classes that make up the general English instruction, there are 26 tutors who teach each two classes. There were two classes in actual practice. The first class held from 08:00 to 09:30 and the second one from 10:00 to 11:30. The students attend class from Monday through Thursday, with a fun learning event known as "Crazy Day" at the end of the week. It is to improve the interest of learners in learning English (Putra & Priyatmojo, 2021). On the Crazy Day, the learners will find their partner for practicing the prior material. Additionally, this lowers boredom in the classroom.

The investigation's result showed that the majority of the students think that the material which has high relevance to their lives is interesting to learn. This study has correlation with Seo (2022) which conducted a research on Korean college students' preferences for the design of effective instructional videos of online general English classes. This research also found that a material that adopted the real-life situation exerted a significant engagement in learning English language for the General English context. Furthermore, in terms of course design, Кулик (2023) stated that the needs and expectations of the student must be carefully considered by course designers while designing English curricula. These demands should be taken into account by instructors and course designers, and the current curriculum ought to be modified to incorporate some exclusions and additions that accommodate to the needs of the students. Particularly in teaching English to the Generation Z English learners, the instructor should include digital technologies into the teaching of languages and modify their lesson plans accordingly. To move language learners in the twenty-first century from a traditional to a transformational learning model, computers, smart boards, tablets, and even mobile phones should be an essential component of the classroom (Studies & Demir, 2021).

In General English context, previous research also discussed about the analysis of a Turkish university's preparatory curriculum for general English language teaching's

effectiveness. the result of this study conducted by Coşkun (2013) demonstrated through assignments like report writing and presentations, the curriculum should place a strong emphasis on academic English. Some Turkish as well as foreign researchers have underlined the need to take into account students' educational demands in addition to their general English needs. Universities in Turkey that provide English programs should address the students' academic English necessitate as well as general English ability, rather than just teaching grammar as they do presently. He also stated that the curriculum of general English courses, which concentrate on everyday interaction in the local context, should differ from that of English courses designed to prepare students for an English-medium academic environment. He, in addition, argued that to better prepare students with the language skills required to meet the demands of university study, an academic-oriented program focusing on crucial study skills such as taking notes, summarizing, inferring word meanings from context, and interpreting graphs and diagrams should be created.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from the data collected in this study provide valuable insights into the preferences and relevance of various topics in the General English program offered by Universitas Hamzanwadi. The study focused on Generation Z English learners, specifically freshmen at the university, between the ages of 17 and 23. From the data analysis, it is evident that the Introduction topic was the most liked among the respondents, with 50% of the participants finding it engaging. This topic was praised for being relatively easy to study, with common vocabulary that was familiar to the students. Additionally, the Introduction topic provided an opportunity for students to get to know their peers and exchange information about their identities. The Daily Activity topic was the next most enjoyable for the students, with 25% of the respondents expressing interest in this subject. They found it easy to comprehend and highly applicable to their lives. The students had no difficulty describing their day-to-day activities in English and saw value in learning the vocabulary related to this topic.

On the other hand, the Giving Directions topic was the least appealing to the Generation Z English learners, as 25% of the respondents found it confusing and difficult to understand. The Describing Places topic also received low interest, with 23% of the participants struggling to construct sentences and having limited vocabulary to describe places. The Procedural Text (What to Need) topic was disliked by 16% of the students as it required additional knowledge and practical skills, such as making things, in addition to speaking English. The Tourist Destination Review topic was not particularly relevant to the students' lives, with 11% finding the vocabulary challenging and not necessary for their daily lives. Regarding the relevance of the topics, the Introduction and Daily Activity topics received high relevance scores, with 97% and 94% of the participants considering them important to learn, respectively. The Procedural Text topic also received a high relevance score, with 87% finding it pertinent. In contrast, the Living in Another Country and Tourist Destination Review topics had lower relevance scores, with 67% and 76% considering them relevant, respectively.

Additionally, the findings suggest that Generation Z English learners in the General English program at Universitas Hamzanwadi prefer topics that are easy to study, have practical applications in their lives, and include simple and practical language. The relevance of the topics is also an important factor, with the majority of the respondents considering the

Introduction, Daily Activity, and Procedural Text topics highly relevant. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the General English program continues to prioritize engaging and relevant topics in their curriculum. Additionally, efforts can be made to improve the teaching materials and approaches for the Giving Directions, Describing Places, and Tourist Destination Review topics, considering the specific challenges and preferences of Generation Z English learners. Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of the preferences and relevance of topics in the General English program, allowing for continuous improvement and better alignment with the needs and interests of the Generation Z English learners at Universitas Hamzanwadi.

Recommendation

One suggestion for future research would be to delve deeper into the reasons why certain topics are disliked by Generation Z English learners. This could involve conducting interviews or focus groups to gain additional insights and understand the specific challenges they face in understanding and using the English language in relation to these topics. Additionally, exploring potential strategies or approaches that could make these topics more engaging and relevant to Generation Z learners could also be explored in future research.

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