STUDENTS' VIEWPOINT: EARLY 21ST CENTURY SKILLS IN ENGLISH AREA IN MAJENE REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This deconstruction sought to determine students' views on the implementation of English Area on their English language skills and early 21st century skills. English Area was executed because seeing the situation in Majene Regency, there were still many students who lack English skills. In addition, students did not yet have a place to study after school hours end. This program was applied to improve their abilities, namely early 21st-century skills that are associated with English learning. This study wss descriptive quantitative where the instruments employed in this study were questionnaires and observation guides. The questionnaire used contains six indicators of early 21st-century skills, namely collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, character and collecting information. This study involved 28 students of grade VIII SMA 3 Majene. The results showed that the English Area program was able to improve collecting information skills with a value of 4.33, followed by collaboration and character skills with a value of 4.28. Therefore, further research needs to be done to enhance other early 21st-century skills associated with only one English skill so that the results are more significant.

Keywords: Students' Viewpoint, English, Early 21st Century Skills, English Area

INTRODUCTION

Language served as a method for people to communicate with each other. Without it, conveying information would have been impossible. In Indonesia, English is assumed a foreign language, due to its importance in global communication; English has been made a mandatory subject in the educational system. As stated by Abadi (2015) this requirement begins at the junior high school level and continues through to university. The same

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opinion expressed by Hustiana, Asdar, and Ahyadi (2023) that one of the efforts to furnish English language skills for the young generation of the Indonesian nation is to familiarize and introduce English at various levels of education such as in kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, high school or university. This practice echoes the country's recognition of English as a crucial skill for students, given its global significance and the role it plays in accessing international information, technology, and prospects. It has become an investment for everyone in this world since it is well-known as an international language Asdar, Hustiana, and Ahyadi (2023). For students, learning a language like English provided several key benefits. English, as one of the most widely spoken and understood languages worldwide, offered students access to a vast range of educational and career opportunities. By learning English, students gained the ability to access a wide variety of knowledge available in books, research articles, and online platforms, much of which was written in English. This exposure helped them understand different subjects better, develop critical thinking skills, and broaden their views on global issues.

Moreover, English was the main language for international transmission, science, technology, and business. Knowing English authorized students to interact with people from different cultures, take part in global conversations, and perform together. This skill was essential in an interconnected world where speaking numerous languages often gave people an edge in job searching. Speaking was paramount because communication was a fundamental part of everyday life (Paltridge and Phakiti 2015) . Mastering speaking involves not only knowing the rules of language but also understanding how to use it properly in different situations. This meant having the ability to choose the right words and expressions based on the context, purpose, and audience (Laisouw 2019). In other words, effective speaking requires both language skills and the ability to adapt language to fit various social situations which also helps students develop cognitive abilities like problem-solving, multitasking, and creative thinking.

An "English Area" in school was a designated space or activity where students were encouraged or required to use only English for all forms of communication. It could have been a specific classroom, a corner of the school, or a particular time set aside for speaking, listening, reading, and writing exclusively in English. The idea behind an English Area was to assemble immersive circumstances that permitted students to rehearse and use English naturally as if they were in an English-speaking country. By focusing solely on English, students constructed confidence, improved fluency, and learned to represent themselves in real-life situations. Because, in reality, as we know, the English language skills of teenagers in Majene Regency are still relatively low. Many students are not yet able to speak, they are not yet able to understand the meaning of English writing, and they still have not written texts in English. Another obstruction found in the field is that students do not have a place to study other than at school. Thus, they cannot heighten their knowledge after class at school completes.

The English Area program can help students to activate themselves, especially in communication. Communication is essential in an English Area because it helps bridge the gap between theoretical

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language knowledge and practical use. Students constantly speak English, whether chatting with friends, asking questions to teachers, or engaging in discussions. This continuous practice not only improved their speaking skills, pronunciation, and fluency but also allowed them to think directly in English rather than translating from their native language. Listening skills were also sharpened as students had to understand their peers, follow instructions, respond to questions, and participate in group discussions. These interactions expanded their vocabulary, improved comprehension, and exposed them to different accents and speaking styles, helping them grasp the nuances of the language.

Activities like role-plays, storytelling, and group projects were central to English Areas. These required students to communicate ideas, collaborate, negotiate meaning, and adapt their language to different contexts. Such activities enhanced vocabulary use and helped students learn grammar and syntax naturally through practical use. The interactive nature of these activities encouraged active learning, where students learn by doing, reflecting, and receiving immediate feedback. It allowed students to immerse themselves in the language, making learning more engaging and effective. Students who practised regularly in these zones became more confident and competent in using English, preparing them for real-world situations where effective communication was the key to success.

This research is important because it strives to demarcate the best way to involve the English Area for students, identify challenges, and improve its effectiveness. Moreover, there has been a lot of shift in the education system in Indonesia, especially in the learning process, where previously, the learning process was centered on teachers (teacher center), it has changed to be more centered on students (student center), namely students are given more opportunities to express opinions, aspirations, and input in the learning process (Asdar dkk. 2024). The objective was to enhance English language improvement and early 21st-century abilities expressed by the NEA in Sulistyaningrum, Winata, and Cacik (2019), namely, collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, character and collecting information among students at SMAN 3 Majene. The success of the learning process depends on factors such as teaching approaches, methods, tools, media, and student psychology. The English Area was one such device. It was expected that this program would encourage students to develop collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, character and collecting information skills fostering not just activity but also intellectual engagement, motivation, and openness to new ideas.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive quantitative research method. In this approach, researchers collected and analyzed numerical data to describe variables without altering them. Paltridge and Phakiti (2015) explained that quantitative descriptive research utilizes statistics to explain, illustrate, foretell, or arrest the splendor under study. This method often needs a large sample size and focuses on using numbers and statistical analysis to address research questions. It might concern reporting average scores,

percentages, or rankings to understand characteristics, opinions, or attitudes. This approach mainly relies on descriptive statistics.

For this study, data was collected from 28 students who attended a three-day English Area. These students came from SMAN 3 Majene boarding School students grade two. The researchers used a questionnaire as their main tool for gathering information. This questionnaire, like a written interview, consisted of a series of statements designed to collect data from the students. It included various statements about the students' views on the English Area and its effectiveness in enhancing their English skills. The questionnaire utilized a Likert Scale with options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. To ensure that the students comprehended the questions, the questionnaire was presented to the researcher if there were any questions students did not understand. Besides, the researcher also conducted an observation to correspond the outcomes of the questionnaire with what transpires in the field.

To submit the questionnaire, the researchers first obtained permission from both the headmaster of SMAN 3 Majene. Once authorization was granted, the researchers dispersed the questionnaires to the participants via WhatsApp application. The questionnaire consists of six indicators, namely Collaboration, Communication, creativity, critical thinking, character, and collecting information skills. The researcher provided clear instructions to the students to ensure accurate completion of the questionnaire. The students were given 1 hour to carefully read the statements and mark their responses.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
English Area was a program that was executed to improve English language skills. Participants were asked to use English in any circumstances during the program. This study concerned students' views on enhancing their English language skills associated with early 21st century skills, namely collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, character, and collecting information. Data were collected through a questionnaire-filling process. The following are the results of the questionnaire data processing.

The overall results of students' opinions about early 21st century skills regarding students' English language abilities could be seen in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Students' Perception about early 21st century skills
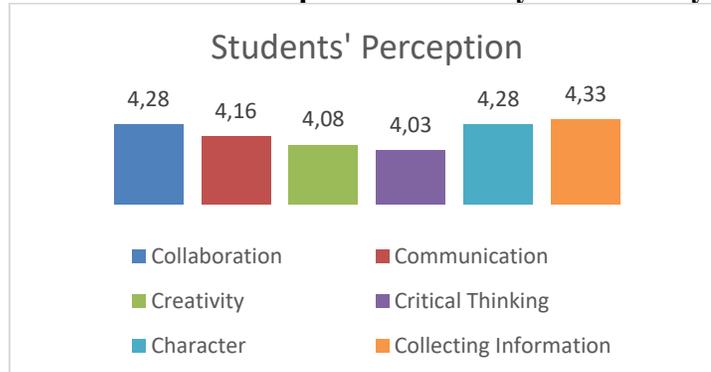
Based on the results of the questionnaire above, it was found that of the six indicators of early 21st-century skills, the skill that increased the most was collecting information skil with a value of 4.33, followed by collaboration and character skills with a value of 4.28. The more detailed discussion was described as follows:

a. Collaboration

Collaboration is the existence of patterns and forms of relationships carried out between individuals or organizations who wish to share, participate fully with each other, and agree to take joint action by sharing information, resources, benefits, and sharing responsibility in joint decision-making to achieve an ideal to achieve common goals or to solve various problems faced by those who collaborate (Choirul 2020).

Collaboration is one aspect of early 21st-century skills that must be retained by the younger generation. Collaboration can be applied in English classes, such as in the implementation of the English Area Program. In this program, twenty-eight students were divided into several groups to cooperate in various activities during the program. The results of the questionnaire about their views on collaboration skills in English classes in the English Area program could be seen in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Collaboration Aspect in Improving English Skill in English Area Program

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Verbal Interpre-tation
1.	English Area program made me more initiative to learn English in groups	14 (50%)	9 (32,1%)	4 (14,3%)	0	1 (3,6%)	4,24	Very good
2.	English Area program taught me to take responsibility with the team	17 (60,7)%	9 (32,1%)	1 (3,6%)	0	1 (3,6%)	4,45	Very good
3.	English Area program allowed me to help friends in completing the tasks given	12 (41,4%)	12 (41,4%)	5 (17,2%)	0	0	4,24	Very good
4.	English Area program opened my mind that English is easy, namely by learning with friends	13 (46,4%)	9 (32,1%)	4 (14,3%)	2 (7,1%)	0%	4,21	Very good
Weighted mean							4,28	Very good

Based on Table 1 above, it could be represented that the students' capacity to collaborate in class in the English Area Program has a positive interpretation, namely very good with a weighted mean value of 4.28. This revealed that students relished working together to complete English assignments. For instance, they assisted each other in translating Indonesian words or sentences into English when asked to speak in front of the class. In addition, they also collaborated to complete assignments in the English area module. Another example found from the observation results was that students who were incapable of answering the instructor's questions would be helped by other friends who can answer. This is in line with what was explained by Agustina and Setiawan (2020) collaboration is a group appointment that generally concerns a small number of students working together to accomplish a task. This is also in line with what was expressed by King et al., in Scoular, C., Duckworth, D., Heard, J., & Ramalingam (2020) that Collaborative activities such as asking questions, counterpart mentoring, and supplying feedback can support students to solve problems they may have otherwise not been able to solve and therefore permit them to advance towards higher levels of expertness. Therefore, the more often students interacted or collaborated with their friends, the more it would assist them to enhance their English skills. This greatly supports the early 21st-century skills possessed by students who will certainly play an influential role in their future. People who can collaborate will be easily accepted by society. They tend to be easy to socialize and consider collaboration to be a way to gain new knowledge.

b. Communication

Communication is one of the 21st-century skills that people must maintain. The capability to communicate is still closely related to the capability to collaborate. As stated by Scoular, C., Duckworth, D., Heard, J., & Ramalingam (2020) communication with others echoes the nature of collaboration and the directional discharge of communication. Students may ask questions or for clarification, they may also react to other requests or questions. In the English Area program, students are expected to be able to improve their communication skills.

The ability to communicate is closely corresponding to students' speaking skills. Based on the results of filling out the questionnaire, the following results were found:

Table 2. Communication Aspect in Improving English Skill in English Area Program

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	English Area Program taught me strategies in the process of learning English	14 (48,3%)	10 (34,5%)	4 (13,8%)	0	1 (3,4%)	4,24	Very good
2.	English Area Program helped me listen to	13 (44,8)	12 (41,4%)	1 (3,4%)	2 (6,9%)	1 (3,4%)	4,17	Very good

	English conversations more actively							
3.	English Area Program made me more courageous to express ideas in English	15 (51,7%)	7 (24,1%)	5 (17,2%)	1 (3,4%)	1 (3,4%)	4,17	Very good
4.	English Area Program made me learn many interesting English learning techniques	12 (41,4%)	10 (34,5%)	5 (17,2%)	0	2 (6,9%)	4,03	Very good
Weighted mean							4,16	Very good

Based on Table 2 above, it could be represented that the students' capacity to communicate in the English Area Program has a positive interpretation, namely very good with a weighted mean value of 4.16. This is in line with the results of observations that indicated that students dare to articulate ideas, namely they could make simple sentences even though they incorporated English with Indonesian or employed grammar that was not yet grammatically acceptable. This term is challenging to apprehend because students do not comprehend the patterns of the sentence or omit the sentence patterns that should be used (Hustiana, Bahtiar, and Meiliza 2024). In addition, they have also attempted to summarize the material at the end of the learning session. This denoted that this program could improve students' communication skills. However, before this communication occured, students initially became active listeners in the first minutes when the class started. In this case, the communication process that occured began with the listening process. This is in line with what was explained by Sreena and Ilankumaran (2018) that Listening is a persistent exertion to acquire sounds and construct meaning and it is the first phase of reacting to transmission occurrences.

c. Creativity

According to Lubart and Thornhill-Miller In Thornhill-Miller et al. (2023) creativity is depicted as the capacity to assemble a novel, genuine work that coordinates with task restraints and has consequences in its context. In the implementation of the English Area program, students were asked to be more creative in constructing new and unique something. The results of their views on their creative abilities during the program were as follows:

Table 3. Creativity Aspect in Improving English Skill in English Area Program

No.	Pernyataan	SS	S	N	TS	STS	Mean	Verbal Interpre-Tation
1.	English Area Program allowed me to choose the right media to learn English	12 (41,4%)	11 (37,9%)	3 (10,3%)	1 (3,4%)	2 (6,9%)	4,03	Very good
2.	English Area Program helped me communicate through writing	11 (37,9%)	11 (37,9%)	5 (17,2%)	0	2 (6,9%)	4,00	Very good
3.	English Area Program increased my creativity	10 (34,5%)	12 (41,4)	5 (17,2%)	1 (3,4%)	1 (3,4%)	4,00	Very good
4.	English Area Program enabled me to find new ideas	10 (34,5%)	12 (41,4%)	4 (13,8%)	1 (3,4%)	2 (6,9%)	3,93	Good
5	English Area Program taught me to learn from mistakes	18 (62,1%)	8 (27,6%)	2 (6,9%)	0	1 (3,4%0	4,45	Very good
Weighted mean							4,08	Very good

Table 3 above showed that the student's capacity to be creative in the English Area Program has a positive interpretation, namely very good with a weighted mean score of 4.08. This implied that students presumed that they can be creative during the program. This is in line with the consequences of field observations which demonstrate that students could be creative in assembling sentences if they did not know the English word, namely by combining it with Indonesian, using gestures, or trying to find the appropriate equivalent. In addition, students had also been able to create simple sentences using the formula taught by the instructor by linking them to everyday conditions. As expressed by Robinson in Taqwim and Saihul Atho Alaul Huda (2024) the Evaluation of students' creative thinking skills can be done through various indicators, including the ability to forge new ideas, unravel problems with innovative approaches, and notice things from a different perspective. Another example was, that students could create English cheers that were never planned before. They created cheers as an inducement for their group. This is in line with what was argued by Astuti and Aziz (2019) that Creativity is the ability to consider something in a new and unusual way and construct unique resolutions to the concerns faced. Creativity is created because of collaboration and communication between members of a

team. Thus, it can be concluded that creativity that is composed in a person cannot be disconnected from the capacity to collaborate and communicate, where the person must exchange ideas to assemble something.

d. Critical Thinking

A skill to discover the basis of the problem, involve new approaches and find the appropriate resolution to solve the problem called Critical thinking (Supena, Darmuki, and Hariyadi 2021). The English Area program was implemented to improve students' critical thinking skills. The results of students' views on their critical thinking skills were as follows:

Table 4. Critical Thinking Aspect in Improving English Skill in English Area Program

No.	Statements	SS	S	N	TS	STS	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	English Area Program made me diligent in asking questions	12 (41,4%)	8 (27,6%)	5 (17,2%)	3 (10,3%)	1 (3,4%)	3,93	Good
2.	English Area Program made me understand English skills, be it listening, reading, speaking or writing	15 (51,7%)	9 (31%)	3 (10,3%)	1 (3,4%)	1 (3,4%)	4,24	Very good
3.	English Area Program made me able to connect what I learn with everyday life	14 (48,3%	8 (27,6%)	5 (17,2%)	0	2 (6,9%)	4,10	Very good
4.	English Area Program made me understand what my friends say in English	12 (41,4%)	11 (37,9%)	4 (13,8%)	0	2 (6,9%)	4,07	Very good
5	English Area Program made me understand the meaning in my friends' writing	11 (37,9%)	9 (31%)	7 (24,1%)	0	2 (6,9%)	3,93	Good
6	English Area Program made me able to conclude the material	8 (27,6%)	14 (48,3%)	4 (13,8%)	1 (3,4%)	2 (6,9%)	3,86	Good
7	English Area	10	14	3	1	1	4,07	

Program made me able to complete English assignments in the future	(34,5%)	(48,3%)	(10,3%)	(3,4%)	(3,4%0		
Weighted mean						4,03	Very good

Table 4 above revealed that among other early 21st-century skills, critical thinking skills entertained the lowest position, with a weighted mean score of 4.03. In this case, students were still unable to think and analyse more deeply regarding the material provided in the English Area program. As explained by Heard et al. (2020), that critical thinkers must have six core skills namely interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation and self-regulation. Students were still unable to investigate and to merge between problems and solutions to solve these problems. Based on the results of observations in the field, students only asked questions about material that they did not comprehend and when the questions were answered by the instructor, they directly agreed without giving an addition or adding the other questions. In addition, in the Brand Ambassador activity, students were given broad questions to train their critical thinking. However, in reality, they still could not convey arguments with long narratives. Thus, it could be concluded that critical thinking skills require longer enrichment and training. Students must be given a lot of experience to be able to think critically.

e. Character

In addition to cognitive-related abilities, other early 21st-century abilities are capabilities in the affective domain, namely character building. A person's success does not only count on perspicuity and technical competence (hard skills), but also on self-management skills and others (soft skills) (Juliani and Bastian 2023). The results of filling out the questionnaire related to improving student character through the English Area program were elaborated below:

Table 5. Character Aspect in Improving English Skill in English Area Program

No.	Statements	SS	S	N	TS	STS	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	English Area Program taught me to consider before giving my opinion	12 (41,4%)	10 (34,5%)	5 (17,2%)	0	2 (6,9%)	4,03	Good
2.	English Area Program taught me to respect others	17 (58,6%)	10 (34,5%)	1 (3,4%)	0	1 (3,4%)	4,45	Very good
3.	English Area Program increased my concern for others	13 (44,8%)	13 (44,8%)	2 (6,9%)	0	1 (3,4%)	4,28	Very good
4.	English Area Program made me embrace	16 (55,2%)	10 (34,5%)	2 (6,9%)	0	1 (3,4%)	4,38	Very good

diversity							
Weighted mean						4,28	Very good

The English area program was intended to enhance students' English skills which have a positive side to building students' character. This could be seen in Table 5 above which showed the weighted mean value reaching 4.28. The character that was constructed during the English area program process was politeness towards the instructor. They listened carefully to the instructor's explanation using English. This also trained their listening skills. In addition, they worked in teams, thus it increased their social sensitivity if they saw friends who needed help, for example helping friends to transcribe words or sentences, helping friends remember the correct sentence structure, and helping friends to make sentences requested by the instructor. The willingness to work together was then practiced through activities and activities that were depicted in cooperation skills. Thus, students need to be stimulated to be keen and able to interact and intercommunicate with other fellows (Hasanah and Himami 2021).

f. Collecting information

Another early 21st-century skill in the English area program was the ability to gather information. It is known that not everyone can gather information even though they have been given a place to collect the information. Therefore, students were asked for their views on the benefits of this program for their ability to gather information which was elaborated as follows:

Table 6. Collecting information Aspect in Improving English Skill in English Area Program

No.	Statements	SS	S	N	TS	STS	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1.	English Area Program made me get new information about English	19 (65,5%)	8 (27,6%)	1 (3,4%)	0	1 (3,4%)	4,52	Good
2.	After English Area Program I was able to use the information in everyday life	17 (58,6%)	8 (27,6%)	2 (6,9%)	1 (3,4%)	1 (3,4%)	4,32	Very good
3.	The learning methods and learning media used by the instructor make it easy for students to understand the material given	13 (44,8%)	10 (34,5%)	4 (13,8%)	1 (3,4%)	1 (3,4%)	4,14	Very good
Weighted mean							4,33	Very good

English Area program obtained positive comebacks from students about information-gathering skills with a weighted mean value of 4.33. Students assumed that this program supplies a lot of new information not only English material, but also strategies that could be employed when learning English. During the program, students collected information by recording all materials, using their cellphones, taking pictures, and asking instructors. Thus, it can be concluded that the ability to compile information was closely related to the ability to communicate.

CONCLUSION

This study examines students' perceptions of the implementation of English Area. Students who are teenagers in Majene Regency were used as research samples with the consideration that they are the young generation who have the potential to continue the dissemination of knowledge. English Area which emphasizes the use of English in various situations makes students have their own views. The indicators used in this study are early 21st-century skills consisting of collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, character and collecting information. All skills are associated with students' views when learning English. The results of the questionnaire are that the English Area program is able to improve collecting information skills with a value of 4.33, followed by collaboration and character skills with a value of 4.28.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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