

Self-Access English Learning Needs: Student and Teacher Perspectives

Jessie Choi

Abstract—The concept of self-access learning has been widely promoted and implemented in the higher education arena around the globe. As a result, the establishment of the self-access centre can be found in nearly every institute. The review of this paper emphasizes on the importance of needs analysis in the development of self-access learning materials and tasks by including different stakeholders, such as students and teachers, in the process. The purpose of this study is to find out the perceptions that a group of second language (ESL) learners and instructors have of their/students' English skills and learning needs for self-access English learning. A total of 110 ESL students majoring in different academic fields and 6 English instructors participated in the questionnaire survey of this study. Among them, 20 students and 4 instructors were invited to attend in-depth interviews to provide further information. Survey and interview information included respondents and interviewees' perceptions or evaluations on two major areas: English skills and learning needs. The results show there are both discrepancies and similarities of perceptions between students and instructors on English skills and learning needs. Finally implications for the present context are provided.

Index Terms—Needs Analysis, Self-Access Learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-access language learning is important for language education. It is generally referred to the creation of a communicative environment that can promote the development of language skills [1][2]. Self-access centres are the places where self-access language learning usually takes place. These centres provide “controlled and uncontrolled environments” [1] where learners can have access to the learning materials they require. In addition, they can be social spaces where learners can meet and interact with one another using the target language. These environments can contribute to self-access language learning in two ways: providing a “relaxed atmosphere” and chances for learning the target language in ways “related to every day activity” [3].

Needs analysis is particularly crucial for the self-learning process as it can help to identify “what is most desired” among learners [4]. By analysing learners' needs, the centres can help to shape the development of materials for self-access language learning. Needs analysis therefore is an essential component for the language learning process [5] that “helps clarify and validate true needs” [6]. In addition to the perspectives of learners on their needs, it is important that

the perspectives of all those others involved should be collected in the needs analysis process [7] as this can help to gather more valid and reliable data for providing better resources for learners [5]. In the current context under investigation, where the self-access language learning will take place in a self-access centre of a teacher-education institute, the key stakeholders were the English instructors and students of the institute. To allow for data validation, a questionnaire survey and focus group interviews were used to collect the data. The objective of the study is to examine learners' self-access English learning needs from both learners' and instructors' perspectives. More specifically, the study addresses the following questions:

- 1) What are learners' perceptions of their English skills and learning needs?
- 2) What are the English instructors' perceptions of the English skills and learning needs of learners?
- 3) Are there any significant differences between learners and English instructors in their perceptions?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. What Is Self-Access Language Learning?

Self-access language learning is about giving opportunities for learners to learn a language independently and actively with the readily accessible materials. “The essential pre-requisite to self-access learning is the provision of self-access materials within an organized framework so that [learners] can get what they need” [8]. It is believed that learning learners have to become autonomous in their learning process and ultimately they can be independent and lifelong learners [9]. Self-access centres are the places to provide individualized learning opportunities; however, they should not be just providing learners with access to self-access materials. There should be opportunities for learners to interact with other learners and teachers. Learners have to be able to choose and make use of the available resources effectively for their learning process and be able to learn the skills for lifelong learning. Different degrees of guidance are still required to guide students towards autonomy [10] and “learner training” can be provided by self-access centres [1] to be totally responsible for their learning process.

B. Why Using a Needs Analysis for Self-Access Language Learning?

The central question lies in the ways on how to make self-access centres become an environment that can facilitate learners' learning process. One of the essential elements is that “all self-access materials need to be developed from

principles driven by what is known about the needs and wants of the target users” [11]. Needs analysis is a crucial component of language courses which can help to inform the design and selection of materials [5] [12]. The underlying principle is that self-access centres should be able to provide learners with suitable materials through analysing learners’ needs in a needs analysis [13]. The use of a needs analysis is important for self-access language learning for two main reasons, namely developmental and pedagogical. The developmental aspect is about proposing future developments for the self-access centre based on the data from the need analysis [10]. The data may also be useful for informing decisions concerning the future funding [14] and directions [15]. The other reason is for pedagogical gain. Needs analysis can allow the self-access centre to further develop the centre resources and strategies to better help users. The results will help shape the development of material design. This will help educators provide better and accessible sources to meet learners’ needs and wants [5]. Assessment of learners’ needs is an important part of any language program as a successful design has to be responsive to learners’ needs [16]. Needs analysis should be carried out continuously in the self-access centre to collect information about learners’ needs in order to determine the centre’s directions and learners’ needs. It is also important to consider the different needs of learners in different language situations. Hence the specific needs of learners in the different aspects of self-access language learning should be identified accurately [17].

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was done to collect data for the Arthur Samy Language Learning Centre (ASLLC) of the HK Institute of Education. Since the Centre was sponsored by University Grant Committee of Hong Kong Government, it was decided to delimit the study to undergraduate level of the Institute as it is where the target users were according to the funding policy. The population of the study comprised full-time undergraduate (Years 1 to 3) students studying at the English Enhancement Courses conducted by the Centre for Language in Education at HK Institute of Education and their English language instructors. The age range of the student participants was 20-25 and they were from different majors of study. The English language instructors were teaching English Enhancement Courses in the Centre of Language of Education of the Institute. The research collected data from students and instructors using the following two instruments in order to secure the validity and reliability of the research: An online questionnaire containing closed-response items and an in-depth, semi-structured follow-up participant interview. The data derived from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequencies and percentages for all items of the questionnaires were obtained. The data of the semi-structured interviews, which was analyzed qualitatively, underwent the procedures of data reduction and coding.

IV. FINDINGS

The total number of student respondents to the questionnaire was 110. 80% were female and 20% male. 67% were year 1 students and 31% were year 2 students (with 2% being unknown). The majority of them (42%) majored in Education. 20 of them were chosen randomly to participate in the in-depth interview. Among them, 10 were language students and the remaining ones were non language ones. The number of teacher respondents to the questionnaire was 6. The response rate was 40%. Half of them (50%) had 3-4 English teaching experience and the other half got more than 5 years. 4 of them were chosen randomly to participate in the in-depth interview.

A. Students’ Evaluation of Their English Language Skills

TABLE I shows students’ own evaluation of their English language skills based on their responses to question one of the student questionnaire. The question asked students to rate their performance in Listening, Writing, Reading, Speaking, Grammar and Vocabulary. The majority perceived their performance in all these aspects as average.

TABLE I: STUDENTS’ EVALUATION OF THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Skills	Very good + good	Average	Poor + Very poor
Listening	42%	49%	15%
Writing	28%	65%	17%
Reading	48%	52%	10%
Speaking	35%	54%	21%
Grammar	35%	53%	22%
Vocabulary	26%	58%	26%

Note: All decimals have been rounded up

B. Students’ Perception of Their English Language Learning Needs

There are seven questions (questions 2 to 8) in the questionnaire that elicited respondents’ perception of their English language learning needs. Questions 2 to 4 were about their general needs while questions 5 to 8 were about their specific needs.

1) General needs

a) Students’ perception of the skill to have improvement the most

When asked about the aspect that they want to have improvement the most in question 2, more than half of them (51%) regarded “Speaking” to be the top one in their list for making improvement (TABLE II).

TABLE II: STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF THE SKILL TO HAVE IMPROVEMENT THE MOST

Skills	Top priority for improvement
Speaking	51%
Vocabulary	44%
Writing	40%
Grammar	33%
Listening	29%
Reading	18%

Note: All decimals have been rounded up

b) Students’ major reasons for improving English skills

Based on the results of question 3, the major reasons for improving English skills given by the student respondents were somewhat different for various kinds of skills.

Improving listening (34%) and the use of grammar (37%) was perceived as important for preparing for language tests while improvement was regarded as necessary for reading (42%) and vocabulary skills (32%) as they were believed to facilitate studies. To better prepare for one's career, respondents chose to improve their speaking (54%) and writing skills (38%) the most. No one chose "for interest" as the major reason for improving any of their English skills.

TABLE III: STUDENTS' MAJOR REASONS FOR IMPROVING ENGLISH SKILLS

Major reason	Skill
To prepare for career	Speaking (54%) Writing (38%)
To facilitate studies	Reading (42%) Vocabulary (32%)
To prepare for language tests (e.g. IELTS, LPAT)	Grammar (37%) Listening (34%)
For interest	Nil responses

c) Students' preferred mode for self-access English language learning

Students' responses to Question 4 show that they were quite divided when choosing their preferred mode for self-access English language learning. Comparatively, more respondents opted for "working with printed sources" (34%). The second and third preferred modes were "working with others" (e.g. tutors, other students) (28%) and "working with online sources" (24%) respectively. 17% chose all of the given modes.

2) Specific needs

Questions 5 to 8 in the questionnaire asked respondents to choose the sub-skills which they perceived as the focus of the self-access material in the Learning Centre. Each question was about one English skill. The four questions covered the four English language skills, which were speaking (Q.5), listening (Q.6), reading (Q.7) and writing (Q.8).

a) Students' perceived most important Speaking sub-skills

As found in question 5, 44% of the respondents would like the Learning Centre to focus more on "pronunciation, intonation and stress" when developing or choosing material for Speaking Skill. The other two major chosen speaking sub-skills were "interviewing and being interviewed" (35%) and "suggesting and recommending" (32%). TABLE IV illustrates the responses to the different speaking sub-skills in the order of importance:

TABLE IV: STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO FOCUS OF MATERIAL ON SPEAKING SUB-SKILLS:

Sub-skill	% for most important
Pronunciation, intonation and stress	44
Interviewing and being interviewed	35
Suggesting and recommending	32
Organizing a topic	28
Asking for/giving opinions	25
Describing experience	24
Reading aloud	23
Asking for/giving clarification	20
Requesting	20
Agreeing and disagreeing	11

b) Students' perceived most important Listening sub-skills

As the results of Question 6 show, nearly 40% of the

respondents regarded that the listening material of the learning centre should focus on "listening for central ideas" while 37% thought "listening for specific information" was the most important. The responses to other listening sub-skills are illustrated in TABLE V.

TABLE V: STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO FOCUS OF MATERIAL ON LISTENING SUB-SKILLS:

Sub-skill	% for most important
Listening for central ideas	39
Listening for specific information	37
Identifying key information	30
Identifying attitudes and feelings	27
Identifying roles and relationships	25
Anticipating and predicting	21

c) Students' perceived most important Reading sub-skills

With regard to the most important reading sub-skills, 41% of the respondents chose "identifying key information and 39% of them took "guessing meanings from new vocabulary". The number of responses to each given reading sub-skill was fairly even as the percentage ranged from 28 to 39. The least important reading sub-skill was found to be "predicting".

TABLE VI: STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO FOCUS OF MATERIAL ON READING SUB-SKILLS:

Sub-skill	% for most important
Identifying key information	41
Guessing meanings from new vocabulary	39
Scanning and skimming	34
Using grammar to help understand	35
Analyzing questions and answers	32
Reading speed	28
Predicting	21

d) Students' perceived most important Writing sub-skills

According to the responses to Question 8, "organizing ideas" was the most important sub-skill chosen to be the focus of the learning centre's writing material. The other sub-skills, such as "giving reasons", "linking ideas", "constructing sentences" and "using context-specific writing styles", were also the chosen foci following "organizing ideas". The responses to the different writing sub-skills were showed in TABLE VII.

TABLE VII: STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO FOCUS OF MATERIAL ON WRITING SUB-SKILLS:

Sub-skill	% for most important
Organizing ideas	36
Giving reasons/explanations	35
Linking ideas	35
Constructing sentences	34
Using context-specific writing styles	34
Choosing content/ideas	31
Comparing and contrasting	23
Proofreading and editing	21
Sequencing ideas	20

C. Teachers' Evaluation of Their Students' English Language Skills

TABLE VIII shows teachers' evaluation of their students' English language skills based on their responses to questions one of the teacher questionnaire. The question asked teachers to rate their students' performance in Listening, Writing,

Reading, Speaking, Grammar and Vocabulary. “Listening” was the best one among all English skills as 83.3% of the respondents rated their students’ performance as “good”. The second best one was “reading skill” as half of the respondents (50%) gave the rating of their students’ performance as “good”. The performance of their students in the two productive skills, which are “writing” and “speaking” were viewed as “average” (83.3%). Half of the respondents (50%) regarded “grammar” and “vocabulary” as the poorest aspects of their students.

TABLE VIII: TEACHERS’ EVALUATION OF THEIR STUDENTS’ ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Skills	Good	Average	Poor
Listening	83.3%	16.7%	0%
Writing	0%	83.3%	16.7%
Reading	50%	50%	0%
Speaking	16.7%	83.3%	0%
Grammar	16.7%	33.3%	50%
Vocabulary	16.7%	33.3%	50%

Notes: All decimals have been rounded up; there was no response for “very good” or “very poor” from the teacher questionnaire

D. Teachers’ Perception of Their Students’ English Language Learning Needs

There are eight questions (questions 2 to 9) in the questionnaire that elicited respondents’ perception of their students’ English language learning needs. Questions 2 to 5 were about students’ general needs while questions 6 to 9 were about their specific needs.

1) General needs

a) Teachers’ perception of the skill students need to have improvement the most

When asked about the aspect that students need to have improvement the most in question 2, 67% of the respondents regarded “Writing” to be the one (TABLE IX). The second and third ones were “speaking” (20%) and “reading” (17%).

TABLE IX: TEACHERS’ PERCEPTION OF THE SKILL STUDENTS NEED TO HAVE IMPROVEMENT THE MOST

Skills	Top priority for improvement
Writing	67%
Speaking	20%
Reading	17%
Vocabulary	0%
Grammar	0%
Listening	0%

Note: All decimals have been rounded up

b) Skills students ask for help the most

TABLE X summarizes the respondents’ responses to the skills students ask for help the most in the consultation sessions of the Learning Centre. It shows that “speaking” was the skill teachers found that students frequently asked for help in the consultation sessions. The second one was “writing”. “Listening” was the skill they found that students asked for help the least comparatively.

c) Teachers’ perception of students’ major reasons for improving English skills

Based on the results of question 4, the major reasons that students improve English skills given by teachers were somewhat different from those of the students. Improving

speaking (83.3%) and writing (66.7%) was perceived as most important for students to prepare for language tests while improving “grammar” (75%) and “vocabulary” skills (33.3%) were mainly for facilitating studies. 83.3% of the teachers found that students worked more to improve their vocabulary to better prepare for their career. In the teachers’ perception, “for interest” was the major reason of students for improving their “reading” skill.

TABLE X: SKILLS STUDENTS ASK FOR HELP THE MOST AND LEAST

Skills	Response to “the most frequent”	Response to “the least frequent”
Speaking	83.3%	0%
Writing	33.3%	0%
Reading	0%	16.7%
Vocabulary	0%	0%
Grammar	0%	0%
Listening	0%	83.3%

d) Teachers’ preferred mode for students in self-access English language learning

Teachers’ responses to Question 5 show that over half of them (66.7%) believed that “working with others (e.g. students, tutors) was the best learning mode in self-access English language learning. One of them chose “working with online resources” and one opted for all options, which included working with online, printed resources and other people. The results were somewhat different from those of the students as “working with printed resources” was the option that received the most support from students (34%) than the other learning modes.

TABLE XI: TEACHERS’ PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS’ MAJOR REASONS FOR IMPROVING ENGLISH SKILLS

Major reason	Skill
To prepare for career	Vocabulary (83.3%) Reading (20%)
To prepare for language tests (e.g. IELTS, LPAT)	Speaking (83.3%) Writing (66.7%)
To facilitate studies	Grammar (75%) Vocabulary (33.3%)
For interest	Reading (40%) Listening (16.7%) Vocabulary (16.7%)

2) Specific needs

Questions 6 to 9 in the questionnaire asked teachers to choose the sub-skills which they perceived as the focus of the self-access material in the Learning Centre. Each question was about one English skill. The four questions covered the four English language skills, which were speaking (Q.6), listening (Q.7), reading (Q.8) and writing (Q.9).

a) Teachers’ perceived most important Speaking sub-skills

As found in question 6, 66.7% of the teachers would like the Learning Centre to focus more on “pronunciation, intonation and stress” when developing or choosing material for Speaking Skill. The second major chosen speaking sub-skill was “reading aloud”: “organizing a topic” came third in the choices.

b) Teachers’ perceived most important Listening sub-skills

As the results of Question 7 show, both “identifying key information” and “listening for specific information” were

chosen by 33.3% of the teachers that they should be the most important foci of the listening material of the learning centre. The other sub-skills, such as “identifying attitudes and feelings” (20%) and “listening for specific information” (16.7%) were also regarded as important.

c) Teachers' perceived most important Reading sub-skills

With regard to the most important reading sub-skills, half of the teachers chose “predicting”, 33.3% of them took “identifying key information” and the other 33.3% chose “scanning/skimming”. “Guessing meanings from new vocabulary” also received 20% of responses.

d) Teachers' perceived most important Writing sub-skills

Based on the responses to Question 9, the most important reading sub-skills chosen by the teachers were “proofreading and editing” (50%), “constructing sentences” (50%) and “comparing and contrasting” (50%). The other sub-skill, such as “organizing ideas”, was also regarded as important (20%).

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

110 student and 6 English instructors participated in the online questionnaire surveys to assess their/students' English skills and learning needs. This section will further discuss the findings together with the data from the in-depth interviews with 20 students and 4 instructors who were chosen randomly from the participants of the online surveys for the task.

A. What Are Learners' Perceptions of Their English Skills and Learning Needs?

In the present study, most of the respondents rated their English skills as average. The skills they would like to improve the most were speaking and vocabulary. The major purpose for improving speaking was to prepare for their career. As for listening and grammar, respondents thought that improvement was needed to prepare for language tests to be taken, such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT). The major reasons given for improving reading and writing were to facilitate respondents' studies and prepare for career respectively. As for vocabulary, the main reason for improvement was to facilitate studies. Very few of them chose “for interest” as the reason for improving their English skills. The learning mode they would like to take for self-access language learning was working with printed resources. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents do not have much confidence with their English skills as most of them rated their performance in all the six English skills as average. The respondents are comparatively less confident with speaking skills. This explains why they chose that skill as the one they would like to have improvement the most. Most of them would like to improve their English skills for pragmatic reasons, such as for facilitating studies, preparing for career and language tests. This shows that very few of them have the intrinsic motivation in learning English skills.

In addition to the data from the questionnaire, some other findings were obtained from the in-depth interviews. The

data from the 10 non-language students reveal that 7 of them never goes to the Learning centre, 2 of them stays for 2 hours per week and the remaining one goes there for half an hour per week. Comparatively, the 10 language students are better in terms of the number of their visit to the Learning Centre as 9 out of 10 indicated that they go to the Learning Centre for about 0.5-2 hours per week. Only one stated he/she doesn't go to the Centre at all. The reasons given by those patrons vary from having entertainments (including reading newspapers and watching videos) to prepare for language tests, examinations and assignments. It is not surprising when the non-language students were asked about the problems they encountered in getting the material of the Centre for use, most of them expressed that they had no problems. Just as one of the respondents said, “I seldom encountered problems as I hardly go to ASLLC”.

For identifying the specific needs of respondents, there were questions in the questionnaire for finding the focus of material in the four skills of English: listening, writing, speaking and reading. The data reveal the major identified foci of the four English skills are as follows:

Speaking—Pronunciation, intonation and stress

Listening—Listening for central ideas

Reading—Identifying key information

Writing—Organizing ideas, giving reason/explanations, and linking ideas

In the interviews, 9 out of 20 language students indicated they would like to have more material for helping with their pronunciation, intonation or stress in the Speaking aspect. The results are similar to the one from the questionnaire and show that this is the important area for material development of the Centre. Some interviewees even suggested the use of group discussion and foreign teachers in the Centre for improving students' performance in pronunciation, intonation and stress. They would like to improve the skills because some of them stated that “in daily life, speaking English is the most important” and they can “get prepared for the Reading Aloud section in the LPATE exam”.

B. What Are the English Instructors' Perceptions of the English Skills and Learning Needs of Learners?

First of all, in evaluating the English skills of learners, a majority of them thought that their learners are good at listening skills. The other skills they were also happy with were reading, speaking and writing (in order of the satisfaction level). Grammar and vocabulary were found to be the least satisfactory ones. As far as improvement is concerned, more than half of them regarded that their learners need to work more on writing. Contrary to the findings on the evaluation of the performance of learners, grammar and vocabulary were not chosen by instructors as the top priority for learners' improvement. This may be due to the fact that writing is a core skill to be assessed in most of the language tests and examinations and to be used in assignments. In consistent with the findings from the student questionnaire, which shows that speaking was chosen as the top priority for improvement, the teachers' responses indicated that most of the students asked for help in speaking in the consultation sessions of ASLLC. Listening was the skill that students asked for help the least among all English skills. The result

matches the previous findings from teacher questionnaire that their learners seem to have better performance in listening skills. Also, a majority of them gave more comments on Writing than the other three English skills. This shows that they valued more on the Writing skill.

In relation to the learning purposes, a majority of them thought that learners would like to improve their speaking and writing skills because they had to prepare for language tests. According to the teacher respondents, learning the use of grammar and vocabulary was for facilitating learners' studies and preparing for their career respectively. The purpose for learners to enhance their reading skills was regarded as "for interest". As for listening skills, no major learning purpose was provided. With respect to the learning mode of self-access English learning, a considerable number of teacher respondents opted for "working with others", which means that they regard learners will learn better if they work with learners or teachers. None of them chose "working with printed resources" and only one found that "working with online resources" was the best learning modes for learners. This reflects that most of the respondents still have reservation with the use of the online learning modes.

In general, the interview results from the four English instructors support the questionnaire findings. All of them pointed out that their learners have various types of problems with the use of vocabulary and grammar, which directly affects their performance in Listening, Writing, Speaking and Reading. Also, they appeared to focus more on the Writing skill as comparatively they gave more comments on this aspect.

For identifying the specific needs of learners, there were questions in the teacher questionnaire for finding the focus of material in the four skills of English: listening, writing, speaking and reading. The data reveal the major identified foci of the four English skills by teacher respondents are as follows:

Speaking—Pronunciation, intonation and stress; reading aloud

Listening—Listening for specific information; identifying key information

Reading—Predicting; identifying key information; scanning and skimming

Writing—Proofreading and editing; constructing sentences; comparing and contrasting

With respect to speaking sub-skills, the interview findings match the ones from those of the questionnaire. The results reflect the needs of learners in the speaking skills. As most of them need to take language tests, such as IELTS or LPATE, in the course of studies, thereby it is important for learners to be well prepared for the pronunciation and reading aloud requirements of the speaking tests. There are, however, teacher interview findings which do not totally support the questionnaire findings. As far as listening sub-skills are concerned, the foci chosen by the interviewees are different from the ones from the questionnaire. Nearly all of them would like learners to learn more vocabulary/expressions and have more listening practices using authentic (for social context; dialogues) materials. They regarded these as crucial for building up learners' listening skills. With regard to reading sub-skills, two of the respondents gave nil responses.

One concerned about the reading speed and the other on preparing learners for examination. The responses are not exactly the same as those identified by the questionnaire. In relation to writing sub-skills, nearly all of the interviewees focused on developing learners' academic skills. They tended to look at the needs in a broader sense and with the consideration of the real needs of learners, who have to take IELTS or LPATE in the coming years. This explains why the micro skills involved were not mentioned in the interviews.

C. Are there any significant differences between learners and English instructors in their perceptions?

With respect to the evaluation of English skills, there are some differences in the perceptions of students and teachers. The differences are found when the two groups were asked to rate the performance of learners in the English skills. Students regarded themselves as average in all the six aspects while teachers found that students were "good" at listening and satisfactory in speaking and writing, but they were poor at grammar and vocabulary.

As for learning needs, there are both differences and similarities in the views of students and teachers. Firstly, when asked for the aspect that improvement was needed the most, students chose "speaking" whereas the teachers' choice was "writing". This could be viewed as a difference but at the same time, a similarity, as both groups weighed on the English "productive skills", which are important for preparing for language tests/examinations. When choosing the learning mode, differences occurred. Students opted for "printed sources" while teachers chose "working with others". It is interesting that "working with online sources" was not the major choice of the two groups. Printed sources were chosen by students as this was the most popular learning mode for them. As for teachers, they tended to think that interaction brings "better learning".

When asked for the focus of the material in each of the English sub-skills for the Learning Centre, a similarity was found on speaking as both groups chose "pronunciation, intonation and stress" as the major focus of the speaking sub-skill. However, a divergence of perceptions between the two groups in the sub-skills of other aspects was noted. In listening skills, students perceived "listening for central ideas" as the most important while teachers opted for "listening for specific information" and "identifying key information". The greatest differences existed in the reading and writing skills. Instructors perceived "predicting" as an important sub-skill for reading but students did not view it as the focus. Instead, they thought "identifying key information" as more important. What is also notable is that instructors and students had very different perception on the focus of the sub-skills of writing. The three items, which were "proofreading and editing", "constructing sentences" and "comparing and contrasting" were not in the list of the students. On the contrary, they opted for "organizing+ ideas", "giving reason/explanations", and "linking ideas". As shown above, the divergences between instructors and students stem from their identities. As students, they will concern more on the material they will help them in examinations, so they focused on the sub-skills that can help them in this aspect; while as instructors, they value more on promoting the

learning of the English language itself, which explains the reasons for the choices of the sub-skills.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the self-access English learning needs of a group of ESL students in Hong Kong and if there are discrepancies between the perceptions of the students and those of their instructors in the evaluation of English skills and needs.

The findings show that students are not very confident with their English skills as they gave an average to their performance on all English skills and would like to improve their speaking skills the most. The instructors, however, regarded the students' "listening skills" as good while their speaking and reading skills as average. As for improvement, the instructors thought that the students need to work more on their writing skills.

The data reveal that the students and instructors have had some discrepancies towards the evaluation of English skills and learning needs. If we would like to promote self-access learning, we have to create a learning environment that can address the real needs. We cannot just take the views of one side as "objective language learning need can only be appropriately recognized if both teachers' valuable experiences and students' reasonable subjective wants are taken into accounts" [18]. It is important to examine the precise needs of students to prepare them for their future tasks and needs, especially when the views of the students and the instructors do not match. The needs analysis of this study may just be an initial step to gauge the needs of students and serve as the starting point for more in-depth investigation. Constant and ongoing evaluation and assessment should be carried out to ascertain students' self-access learning needs and the prioritization of the Centre's materials development.

VII. IMPLICATIONS

The data from the study have illustrated a number of significant implications for implementing self-access English language learning.

First of all, the findings of the study show that the current arrangements are not at all in agreement with the real needs of users. Similar to other studies on needs analysis, the findings of this study indicate that there are discrepancies between the perceptions of students and instructors [19]. The results show that instructors alone may not be able to gauge the real needs of students. A self-access English language learning centre has to be able to address the real needs of users if it has to be successful, thereby an identification of the real needs by taking into the different perceptions of stakeholders is essential for the continuous running of the centre, including for both materials development and administration mode. Ongoing assessments with different parties, which can inform materials design specifications [12], are a critical component for the development of a self-access learning centre.

Furthermore, it is shown in the focus group interviews that most of the interviewees were not very motivated to go and

use the centre. Their unwillingness in using the centre might be due to the lack of orientation on the use of Centre among students of the Institute or the mismatch of the materials and facilities provided and the ones required. What is suggested for this issue is that the Centre should provide more orientations on the use of materials and facilities as orientations could "heighten students' awareness of resources in the center, thereby allowing them the opportunity to make greater use of these materials" [20]. In addition, an integration of students, ESL teachers and specialists in the development process of the Centre is essential.

Moreover, the present study also indicates that the self-access language learning centre of this study has to do more to help students develop learner autonomy. Language learning learners must possess autonomy [21]. Hence a self-access centre needs to help promote autonomous language learning. Learner training should be provided to prepare learners to be an independent learner who has the necessary skills and strategies to be autonomous in their learning. By doing so, the intrinsic motivation of learners can be cultivated, which will ultimately enhance the use of the self-access language learning centre.

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Jessie Choi holds a doctoral degree in Education (Applied Linguistics and TESOL). She has been involved in English teaching in the Hong Kong tertiary level for more than ten years. Jessie has research interests in peer writing, online learning and the use of the computer in language education. She has conducted studies in online writing collaboration, peer discourse and the use of e-portfolios.