

THE PAPUAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH MAJORS

Nurteteng¹, Agus Setiawan², Ferla Yulia Kamandani Putri³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Pendidikan Muhammadiyah Sorong, Indonesia
nurteteng@unimudasorong.ac.id

Received: May 11, 2024

Revised: May 21 14, 2024

Accepted: May 23, 2024

ABSTRACT

The existence of English major in Southwest Papua is still become a big project for universities in improving the number of students to choose English major. Year by year, the new students who take this major is decreased. This is become the big reason to conduct this research that aims to discover the Papuan high school students' perceptions and attitudes towards English majors. The case study design was used to describe this case. This research involved five schools in Sorong and Raja Ampat Regency. The sample of this research was 50 Papuan high school students' taken from the five schools that participated. In collecting the data, the research used interviews and attitude questionnaires. The result regarding the students' perceptions is that most Papuan students think English is confusing and complex. It is because of the teaching method or strategy that the teacher considers monotone and boring. The pedagogical competence of an English teacher also influences this student's opinion. As an impact, fewer want to pursue English-related careers, like educators or tourism jobs. Most want to become civil servants after graduating from senior high school. Regarding the student's attitude, 86% of respondents have a negative attitude towards the English major. The significant cause is that they previously had no interest or motivation in learning English. As an impact, most of them do not want to choose English as their major at the university level.

Keywords: *Papuan Students, Perception, Attitude, English Major*

INTRODUCTION

Almost every Indonesian university has an English major. English has effectively established itself as a language of multicultural communication for doing business worldwide and researching globally. Grigoryeva & Zakirova (2022) convinced that the role of English in modern and future global has become officila language of international organizations, conferences, businees meetings and sports evnts. This major opened due to its popularity in the digital age. There are several reasons why most high school graduates choose this major. First, English majors have excellent career prospects. Students can prepare themselves for education, journalism, publishing, advertising, technical or creative writing, or editing jobs by

taking an English major. According to Alfiana et al., (2023) research, younger generations must learn English to compete in the global and millennial era.

In addition to the competition in the economic sphere commonly known as the Asian Economic Community (AEC), the younger generation increasingly demands to master English in communication. This is in line with what Shobikah, (2017) said in their research, which states that English played an important role in global communication with the existence of AEC. Given the economic situation of Sorong and Raja Ampat, which foreign tourists frequently visit, their ability to speak English became one of the determinants of their success in carrying out their journey, such as being a tour guide or resort service provider, or other professions related to foreign guests. It could be a measure that if they could speak English, then their economic lives would be more prosperous. This argument is supported by Ayu et al. (2021) who stated that one of the strategies for improving the economic life of the people in the tourist area is improving their English language skills.

Third, the English test is a prerequisite for getting a scholarship at home and abroad. The English test still controls some high school students who wish to pursue their studies with a scholarship. Tests like IELTS, TOEFL, and Duo Linggo use English as their test language. Students pursuing an English major will gain exposure to and expertise in these tests. It could be a unique skill only English students possess, setting them apart from other majors. Fauzi et al., (2023)) said that one of the reasons students study English is to improve their English language proficiency tests. As a result, this is considered important and one reason to choose an English major.

The number of enrolments in English courses at some universities has been increasing yearly, especially at universities on Java Island or Sulawesi. According to the Database of Higher Education, or PDDIKTI (2019, 2020, 2021), the number of students in the Department of English Language Education of the University of Muhammadiyah Makassar in 2019 was about 500. In 2020, the student population will still range from thousands to 1,199. As a result, these universities can open about five to ten classes for new students each year.

The data above indicates a high interest in English majors among high school students. It is still less than the number of students majoring in English in West Papua, especially at UNIMUDA Sorong. According to the English Language Studies Program's chairman, the number of new English students will be 23 in 2019. By 2020, the number of new students will fall to 18 because of COVID-19. By 2021, the number of new students had increased to 27. Finally, by 2022, the total number of new students will be 21. Ultimately, the university only opens one class for new students every year.

From the data, it could be said that the interest of high school students to take English major is low compared to the region of Java and Sulawesi. This condition only occurs in West Papua, especially in Sorong. Focus on the native students of Papua; the number of native pupils of Papua who take major English is still small. In other words, he can count fingers. According to UNIMUDA Sorong's New Students Admission Data, 2019, there were only 3 students in Papua. 2020 there were 5 new students, and in 2021, there were only 4 new students. It proves that the interest of Papua students in learning English is still low. Most students in Papua prefer primary school teacher education and sports education.

This situation contrasts with the government's mission to accelerate Papua Welfare (Perindustrian et al., 2020). Papuan students must have a good job and a good education. Where all these programs require English skills. As a result, not all students in Papua can access the offer because of the lack of English language skills. The program is often only accessible to students who speak English.

Besides West Papua, especially Sorong, Raja Ampat is a tourist destination. This opportunity should encourage high school students or the Papua community to study. At all times, tourists from different countries come to Sorong Raja Ampat. They need someone, especially the Papua people, to communicate with them. Only a few tour guides from Papua can communicate in English smoothly. Their abilities also come from learning by doing, not from formal schools like universities or courses. As a result, some resorts employ people from outside Sorong and Raja Ampat to help them deal with tourists.

Based on the above background, the researchers intend to investigate the perception and attitude of Papua native high school students towards the English major. It is important because it could impact the sustainability of English courses at some of the universities in Sorong. The novelty of this study is that it took place in Sorong, West Papua, and the first case study focused on the perception and attitude of students, especially those native to Papua. Besides, there is a lack of research that specifically studies the perceptions and attitudes of native students of Papua to the English major.

Although there has been previous research on education in Papua, it focuses on other aspects such as curricula, teaching methods, or challenges in learning English. One example is the study conducted by Pramudia Kusuma Wardani et al., (2023) which studies the implementation of the 2013 curriculum in students in the district of Asmat South Papua. The research is focused on the curriculum, but no study specifically digs into the perception and attitude of indigenous students of Papua to the major English. As for this study, there are two: to know the opinion and attitude of the original pupils of Papua regarding the English language specialty.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The design of this study used a case study. A case study is performed when a researcher wants to answer a descriptive question, an explanatory question does something, or when a researcher is interested in studying a process (Gay et al., 2012). The sample of this research involved five high schools in Sorong and Raja Ampat. The schools are SMAN 2 Kabupaten Sorong, MA Muhammadiyah Aimas Kabupaten Sorong, MA Emyodere Kota Sorong, SMAN 1 Raja Ampat, and SMAS Guppi Raja Ampat. The researchers selected Papuan third-grade students from the school who were interviewed and given a questionnaire. In each school, 10 students were taken as samples. So, the total sample in this study is 50 students from five schools.

In data collection, researchers used interviews and an attitude questionnaire. The interviews were used to gather data on student perceptions. The questionnaires were used to collect data about student attitudes. The researchers interviewed three

Papuan students from each school—however, all samples of the five schools filled out the attitude questionnaire. To analyze the results of interviews, researchers used Miles' techniques (Miles et al., 2020). These techniques will involve data reduction, data presentation, and imaging/verification. The questionnaires were analyzed using quantitative analysis. The questionnaire results were checked quantitatively after all the questionnaires were collected. The findings that have been classified were then examined by counting percentages on each point, interpreting the data by including in-depth interview details, and comparing data with related literature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Papuan Students' Perception towards English Major

The Students' Perceived Importance of English

Based on the results of interviews with the Papuan students, they generally perceive that English is a difficult and confusing subject. The students struggled to read and pronounce the words accurately. The perception of English as a complex language arises from students' difficulties in learning different language components. This negative opinion comes from the teaching method the teacher applied in the classroom. The teacher focuses on delivering material rather than the student's understanding and practicing the language taught. The lack of pedagogical competence and classroom management worsens the English class atmosphere. Some students stated that the teacher's ability to pronounce English words is unclear and complex to repeat.

Another finding is that the teaching and learning process that the teacher creates in the classroom lacks practice; as we know, the students need to practice the language taught, as one of the achievements of language teaching. Moreover, the teacher explains the grammar and text in depth without incorporating them into speaking and writing practice. The imbalance between focusing solely on grammar instruction and neglecting speaking practice often leads to students' challenges in applying their language skills effectively in real-life conversations, hindering their communication abilities.

The Students Interest Taking English Major

The study shows that many Papuan high school students do not want to major in English in college. Most pupils say they do not want to keep studying English and instead want to enter the military or police force. This preference for immediate employment over further education shows how many students seek stable and secure job prospects. One of the main reasons students say they do not want to major in English is that they think the subject is complex and tedious. Numerous students think English is hard and dull, making them not want to study it further at the university level. Students do not want to major in English because they think it is boring.

One of the main reasons students choose the academic paths they do is that they want to get fixed jobs quickly, especially civil servant like the military or police. Students choose job security over academic progress because they think that stable work and immediate career prospects are more appealing than the benefits of majoring in English. Finding a stable job is essential to students because it shows how realistic they are about their futures and affects the subjects they choose for college.

Carrier Aspirations in Tourism

Even though many Papuan students live in places like Sorong and Raja Ampat, which are known for their natural beauty and tourism potential, the study shows that many do not want to work in the tourism industry. Even though these tourist spots are appealing and can help the economy grow and develop, many students do not think working in tourism is a good job choice. One interesting finding from the study is that some Papuan students do not understand the importance of knowing English regarding tourism. English is a critical skill in the tourism industry and a global language of communication. However, many students do not think it is essential for their future jobs in the tourism industry. Students cannot picture themselves working in tourism-related jobs because they do not know how important it is to communicate well in English with foreign tourists and enter global tourism markets.

The Students Attitude towards English Major

In gaining the students attitude, the researcher distributed questionnaire to all samples in this research which consist of 50 Papuan students. The result of students' questionnaire can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. The Result of Attitude Questionnaire

Attitude Level	Frequency	Percentage
Positive Attitude	7	14
Negative Attitude	43	86
Total	50	100

The table above explains the students' attitudes toward the English majors. Only 7 out of 50 respondents, or 14 %, have a positive attitude toward English. In other words, they still have an interest in English and intend to take English major as one major chosen at the University level. Instead, most of them have negative attitudes towards English majors. It can be proven that 43 of 50 respondents, or 86%, categorized negative attitudes from the questionnaire result. In conclusion, the result of students' attitudes has a significant correlation with their perception of English.

Based on the findings above, regarding with the Papuan students' perception towards English major there are three main point that will be discussed. First, the students perceived importance of English. Generally, they think that English is a difficult and confusing subject. It is supported from the previous research findings which is conducting in Sorong by Maji et al. (2022) stated that the main difficulties encountered by student while speaking English were caused by linguistic factors, for instance: lack of vocabularies, poor pronunciation and lack of grammar knowledge.

Another findings come from Nurteteng & Setiawan (2021) stated that one of the biggest problems of students speaking is lack of vocabulary and pronunciation. This negative perceived come from the teacher qualities that lack of pedagogical competence. The lack of teachers' pedagogical competence is

positively influence the students opinion and attitude towards English subject in the classroom (Faidal et al., 2020).

Moreover, the teaching and learning process which happened in the classroom lack of speaking practice. In accordance with (Daar, 2019) siad that teaching method which more focus on grammar explanation make the students lack of understanding in English acquisition. The impact of this perception makes the students too lazy to join the English class. While as we know that students attitude play important roles in lesson (Safitri, Dollah, & Munir, 2023).

Some of them confessed to frequently skipping the English class, demonstrating a lack of commitment to their language learning. In addition, the students' interest in and motivation for English lessons is shallow and poor. As a result, none of them are profoundly interested in learning English, making it an essential skill in finding a job. Furthermore, they overlook the significant benefits of English skills for their tourism site, missing out on valuable opportunities for personal and professional growth. This is because they are not interested in or motivated to learn English. This result contrast with Kurniawan et al. (2023) who find that English becomes one of the most essential factors in improving the tourism industry and plays a significant role in developing economy.

Second, the students' interest in taking English major. Most of them don't want to take English in collage because of negative perception in high schools. Most of them also directly want to find the stable job after graduate from high schools. This result is reverse with Fitria et al. (2022) study about the students reason to persuing English major is bacause learning English is full of challenges, English is the international language in the world, it is an opportunity to get a scholarship abroad, and they are interested in learning, even deepening, oral and written English skills.

Third, the student's carrier aspirations in tourism. Based on the findings above, most of the students don't want to have carrier in tourism industry. This result is contrast with Islami (2020) research that conducted in Banda Aceh find that most of the students chose English because students' interest in choosing

English because they were familiar with tourism sector and have interest with tourism sector.

Additionally, the study shows that many Papuan students do not actively consider pursuing careers in tourism or making the most of their regions' tourism potential. While having careers in tourism especially for the local in Raja Ampat considered as the new chances and challenges for Papuan (Chloe, 2017). Even though the tourism industry can help the economy grow, bring people from different cultures together, and improve communities, some students do not see it as a good job choice. This lack of interest in tourism-related jobs shows how much more education, awareness, and support are needed to give Papuan students the tools they need to explore and take advantage of the tourism possibilities in their areas.

Regarding with Papuan students' attitude towards English, based on the data above 86% of them give negative attitude. The significant percentage of students who are pessimistic about pursuing an English major prompts inquiry into the fundamental elements that shape their perspectives. This result is contract with Herwiana & Laili (2021) and Gunawan & Anwar Korompot (2023) that find that most of the higher school students have positive attitude in English. It is imperative to thoroughly investigate the underlying causes of the widespread antipathy towards English as a primary study area. Potential causes contributing to this pessimistic attitude could include misunderstandings regarding job opportunities, perceived complexity of the subject matter, or insufficient knowledge about the potential advantages of pursuing English studies (Shahid Kazi, 2017). Gaining a comprehensive understanding of these elements is crucial for educators and policymakers to effectively tackle any misunderstandings or obstacles that discourage students from viewing English as a feasible academic choice.

Furthermore, the robust link between students' attitudes and their judgments of English underscores the interdependent relationship of these variables in influencing students' academic choices. The results indicate that students' general disposition towards pursuing an English major is strongly linked to their perceptions of the topic. Individuals with a positive view of the English language are more likely to have a favorable attitude toward selecting it as their major

(Humaira & Putri, 2022). Conversely, individuals with a negative opinion of English are less likely to view it as a feasible option for their studies. This correlation emphasizes the significance of addressing students' opinions and attitudes towards various academic disciplines to provide them with more significant support in making informed and meaningful decisions regarding their educational paths.

CONCLUSION

From the research findings, we can draw two important conclusions. Regarding the students' perception, most Papuan students think that English is a confusing and complex subject. It is because of the teaching method or strategy that the teacher considers monotone and boring. The pedagogical competence of an English teacher also influences this student's opinion. As an impact, fewer want to pursue English-related careers, like educators or tourism jobs. Most want to become civil servants after graduating from senior high school. Regarding the student's attitude, 86% of respondents have a negative attitude towards the English major. The significant cause is that they previously had no interest or motivation in learning English. As an impact, most of them do not want to choose English as their major at the university level.

REFERENCES

- Alfiana, A., Muhayyang, M., & Abduh, A. (2023). Students' Interest in Learning English During New Normal Era of Covid-19 Pandemic. In *Journal of Technology in Language Pedagogy (JTechLP)* (Vol. 2, Issue 1).
- Chloe, K. (2017). *Tourism in Raja Ampat: New Chances and Challenges*. https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection
- Daar, G. F. (2019). *Problems of English Learning in Context (Based on Some Studies in Manggarai)*.
- Faidal, N. F., Nur, R., & Suriani, S. (2020). The Teachers' Pedagogic Competence in Teaching English through Online and Offline Setting. *ELT Worldwide: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(1), 42. <https://doi.org/10.26858/eltww.v7i1.13294>
- Fauzi, A., Kusuma, S., & Maharani, A. (2023). *Persepsi Mahasiswa PGSD Terhadap Dampak Tes Terhadap Proses dan Capaian Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris*.
- Fitria, T. N., Pudjiati, D., & Wulandari, F. (2022). Selecting English Study Programs in Higher Educations: Students' Perspectives. *Ahmad Dahlan Journal of English Studies*, 9(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.26555/adjes.v9i1.4>
- Gay, L., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2012). *Educational Research*. Pearson Education, Inc.

- Grigoryeva, L. L., & Zakirova, R. R. (2022). The role of English in intercultural communication: Past, modernity and future global perspectives. *Training, Language and Culture*, 6(2), 45–55. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2521-442X-2022-6-2-45-55>
- Gunawan, H., & Anwar Korompot, C. (2023). Students' Attitude towards English Language Learning: A Study of Year 9th Students of SMPN 3 Labakkang. *Journal of Technology in Language Pedagogy (JTechLP)*, 2(4), 570–599.
- Herwiana, S., & Laili, E. N. (2021). Students' Attitude Towards English Language Learning. *Journal of Educational Method and Technology*, 2(3). <https://doi.org/10.36412/jemtec.v2i3.1026>
- Humaira, L., & Putri, H. P. (2022). The Correlation between Students' Attitude in English Lesson and Their Achievement. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v7i1.216>
- Islami, D. (2020). *Exploring Students' Interest in Pursuing English for Tourism*.
- Kurniawan, T., Suaidi, I., Laely, R., Kementarian, I., Kanwil, A., & Ntb, P. (2023). English For Tourism Industry: Descriptive Study On Economic Growth Appeal. *JREA : JURNAL RISET EKONOMI DAN AKUNTANSI*, 1(3), 90–101. <https://doi.org/10.54066/jrea-itb.v1i2>
- Maji, E., Samanhudi, U., & Mokoagouw, M. E. (2022). *Students' Difficulties in Speaking English: (A Case Study in SMKN 3 Sorong)*. 5(1).
- Miles, M., Huberman, M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. In *Zeitschrift fur Personalforschung* (Vol. 28).
- Nurteteng, & Setiawan, A. (2021). The English Student Problems in Speaking of Fifth Semester at UNIMUDA Sorong. *INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa*, 8(2).
- Perindustrian, M. (2020). *Instruksi Presiden Republik Indonesia*. <https://jdih.maritim.go.id/cfind/source/files/inpres/salinan-inpres-nomor-9-tahun-2020-1.pdf>
- Pramudia Kusuma Wardani, A., Kusuma Wardani, M., Hidayati, N., & Khuriyah. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum 2013 Pada Siswa Dan Siswi Di SD Darussalam Agats Asmat Papua Selatan. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan (JISIP)*, 7(3), 2598–9944. <https://doi.org/10.58258/jisip.v7i1.5421/http>
- Shahid Kazi, A. (2017). *Factors Affecting Students' Career Choice*. <http://www.ue.edu.pk/jrre>
- Shobikah, N. (2017). The Importance of English Language in Facing ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). *At-Turats Jurnal Pemikiran Pendidikan Islam*, 11(1), 85–93. <http://jurnaliainpontianak.or.id/index.php/atturats>
- Widiastuti, I. A. M. S., Astawa, I. N. D., Mantra, I. B. N., & Susanti, P. H. (2021). The Roles of English in the Development of Tourism and Economy in Indonesia. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 11(3).

How to find the Article to Cite (APA style):

https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=J7RwxgAAAAJ&view_op=list_works&sortby=pubdate