Analysis of Students' Awareness Toward The Importance of Mastering English Skill for Their Future Career

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the awareness level of students in Politeknik Harapan Bersama regarding the importance of mastering English skills, specifically in the context of future career development. Using a structured questionnaire administered to 42 students from various departments, the results reveal a generally low level of awareness and motivation toward English language acquisition for professional advancement. Reliability and validity analyses were conducted, including Cronbach's alpha, item-total correlation, and p-value t-tests. The findings underline the urgent need for targeted interventions and curriculum reforms to enhance English proficiency and awareness among vocational learners.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of English as a global lingua franca cannot be overstated. English plays a central role in international communication, techonological advancement, and economic growth. Proficiency in English allows individuals to access global job markets, engage to cross-cultural communication, and keep pace with rapid developments in science and technology (Crystal, 2003: Graddol, 2006). In the context of vocational education, where students are prepared for specific trades and professions, English is equally vital. It is required for understanding manuals, participating in technical training, communicating with international clients, and accessing up-to-date knowledge. More

significantly, English is increasingly becoming a requirement for employement in bothdomestic and international contexts.

Despite this, the mastery of English among students in vocational institutions often remains underemphasized. The perception that English is irrelevant to technical and practical work contributes significantly to the lack of motivation and awareness. The current research aims to assess how students from different vocational departments perceive the importance of English, especially in relation to their career aspirations. This research is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language and often struggles to find a practical foothold in vocational curricula.

Several studies have explored the attitudes and awareness of English among students in non-academic tracks. Khan & Ahmad observed that many technical students consider English learning a formality rather than a necessity (Khan & Ahmad, 2017). Similarly, Nurkamto emphasized that English is often marginalized in Indonesian vocational schools due to a lack of integration with real-world applications (Nurkamto, 2011). The result is a low level of proficiency and confidence that directly impacts employability. Furthermore, motivation plays a central role in second language acquisition. Gardner developed a model linking motivation and success in language learning, suggesting that learners with integrative and instrumental motivation are more likely to succeed (Gardner, 1985). Furthermore, Dörnyei later refined these ideas, emphasizing the importance of learning environments and learner autonomy (Dörnyei, 2001). In vocational education, however, students may lack these forms of motivation because the curriculum does not contextualize English within their future career field. Contradictory with all the researchers above, Alghamdi & Al-Hattami focused on the use of technology in language learning can bridge this gap. Access to digital resources, online collaboration, and real-life simulations can make English more relevant (Alghamdi & Al-Hattami, 2014). However, such tools are underused in many vocational settings due to infrastructural or training constraints. Career-oriented language instruction has been found to significantly impact learners' confidence and application of English in professional scenarios (Jenkins, 2015).

Politeknik Harapan Bersama (PHB), as a leading vocational education institution in Central Java, is committed to preparing its students with practical, industry-ready skills

across diverse fields such as engineering, health, business, hospitality, and information technology. However, as the global job market increasingly demands English proficiency, it becomes clear that mastering English is not just an academic pursuit, but a crucial component of career readiness. Despite this, preliminary observations at PHB indicate that many students underestimate the relevance of English in their professional development. This disconnects between language learning and career awareness underscores the urgency of examining students' perceptions and understanding of English as a critical career asset.

Conducting this research at PHB is therefore both timely and necessary. The institution's strong engagement with industry partners and its alignment with national programs like *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* present a strategic opportunity to integrate English language competence into vocational education more effectively. By identifying gaps in awareness and motivation, this research aims to support PHB in designing targeted interventions such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), career-focused language workshops, and curriculum enhancements. The findings will not only contribute to the institution's continuous improvement efforts but also offer a model for other vocational institutions seeking to elevate their graduates' global employability.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative descriptive design using a survey method to assess the level of students' awareness regarding the importance of mastering English for their future careers. The survey focused on capturing students' perceptions, motivation, exposure, confidence, and planning related to English skills in a career context. This design was chosen for its effectiveness in measuring attitudes and behaviours in educational settings (Creswell, 2012).

Furthermore, the research was conducted at Politeknik Harapan Bersama, involving 42 students selected through purposive sampling from various departments, including Engineering, Health, Accounting, and Hospitality. The participants were chosen to represent a diverse cross-section of vocational research programs and to reflect a broader understanding of student awareness levels across disciplines (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

A structured questionnaire consisting of 35 Likert-scale items was developed and validated for this research. The questionnaire was adapted from frameworks used in language awareness and career-readiness research (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 1985) and divided into five sections:

1. Perceived Career Relevance of English
2. Career-Oriented Motivation and Attitude
3. Confidence in Using English Professionally
4. Practical Exposure and Career Preparation
5. Career Goals and Planning with English

Each item used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument was designed to encourage honest self-reflection, including negatively framed items to reduce acquiescence bias (Brown, 2011).

The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Form and made accessible to students through class WhatsApp groups and institutional emails. Students were informed about the voluntary and anonymous nature of their participation in accordance with ethical research practices (Bryman, 2016). Data were collected over two weeks in April 2025.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The analysis included:

a. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate internal consistency (Taber, 2018)
b. Validity testing through item-total correlation analysis (Field, 2013)
c. One-sample t-tests (p-value analysis) to compare item means against a neutral score (3) to assess levels of awareness
d. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to summarize trends in students' response

The data processing was conducted using SPSS, ensuring accurate computation of statistical indicators. A low average score (below 3) on most items was interpreted as low awareness of the importance of English for career development.

RESULTS

Reliability and Validy Test

The instruments must be reliable enough to measure the students' awareness level in order to find out the exact results. For that purpose, the researcher used the SPSS to measure the level of reliability of the questionnaire to be used as a tool for measuring the students' awareness level. The reliability of the student's awareness of mastering English skill toward their future career questionnaire, consisting of 35 items, was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The questionnaire was spread by using google form to the students of Politeknik Harapan Bersama. However, there are 42 respondents that filled the questionnaire.

Table 1. Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.769	35

The analysis of reliability test toward the questionnaire yielded a value of 0.769, indicating that the instrument demonstrates acceptable internal consistency. This means that the items in the questionnaire are sufficiently correlated and consistently measure the same underlying construct — in this case, students' career awareness.

This level of reliability supports the use of the questionnaire for further statistical analysis, including validity testing and hypothesis testing. The consistency among the items suggests that the instrument is appropriate for use in educational settings and research focusing on student attitudes, perceptions, and awareness related to career development.

Furthermore, the validity test should be taken to ensure the questionnaire measure what it's supposed to. Validity was assessed using item-total correlation. A common threshold in educational research is that items should have a correlation coefficient of at least 0.30 with the total score to be considered valid. Based on the analysis, most items met or exceeded this threshold, indicating that they were appropriately aligned with the underlying construct of career awareness. Items such as Q12 (r = 0.487) and Q17 (r =

0.417) demonstrated strong relationships with the total score. However, a few items, including Q11 (r = 0.182), Q15 (r = 0.174), and Q18 (r = -0.027), showed lower or even negative correlations, suggesting potential misalignment with the scale and warranting further review or revision.

Mean

Calculating the mean of the data is essential to provide a clear summary of the central tendency of a variable, allowing researchers to understand the average value within a dataset. This helps to quickly identify general patterns or trends, such as whether students, on average, have a high or low level of awareness about a particular subject. The mean also plays a crucial role in comparing different groups within the data, such as male and female students, to observe potential differences in responses.

Table 2. Respondents' Means Scores (35 Items)

Report

	Student ID	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30	Q31	Q32	Q33	Q34	Q35
N	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Mean		2.57	2.50	2.40	2.57	2.55	2.36	2.50	2.40	2.48	2.62	2.55	2.57	2.43	2.52	2.29	2.48	2.64	2.64	2.52	2.55	2.55	2.48	2.52	2.33	2.60	2.38	2.62	2.45	2.57	2.57	2.55	2.40	2.29	2.55	2.64
Std. Deviation		.703	.634	.665	.630	.504	.577	.741	.665	.552	.623	.670	.590	.630	.707	.636	.671	.727	.533	.773	.633	.593	.634	.594	.650	.587	.592	.661	.593	.859	.630	.739	.701	.554	.705	.577

From 42 respondents for 35 items, the means scores for all items ranged between approximately 1.86 and 2.38, with most values falling below the neutral midpoint of 3. This indicates that respondents tended to disagree or remain unsure about many of the statements related to career awareness. Such results may reflect a broader trend of uncertainty or lack of confidence among the participants regarding their career planning and decision-making processes.

DISCUSSION

The results of the statistical analysis indicate that the questionnaire used to assess students' awareness of mastering English skill to their future career demonstrated a good level. With a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.769, the instrument showed acceptable internal consistency, meaning the items in the questionnaire were reliably measuring a cohesive underlying construct. This level of reliability is consistent with standards in educational and psychological research, where values above 0.70 are generally regarded as adequate. It reflects that the responses across the items were consistent, and the instrument is

suitable for drawing meaningful conclusions about student perceptions and attitudes regarding their awareness toward the importance of mastering English skill for their future career.

Validity testing was conducted using item-total correlation, which reveals how strongly each item correlates with the overall score. Most items met the minimum threshold of 0.30, suggesting that they were well-aligned with the broader construct being measured. High-performing items such as Q12 (r = 0.487) and Q17 (r = 0.417) indicate a strong contribution to the overall scale. However, a few items like Q11 (r = 0.182), Q15 (r = 0.174), and Q18 (r = -0.027) showed low or even negative correlations, which implies they may not reflect the same concept as the other items. These items should be reviewed for clarity, relevance, or potential misinterpretation by respondents.

The mean scores for individual items fell mostly between 1.86 and 2.38, which is notably below the neutral midpoint of 3 on the Likert scale. This trend suggests that students generally tended to disagree or remain neutral in response to statements about their career awareness. These results may point to a general lack of confidence, knowledge, or engagement in career planning among the sample population. It could also indicate limited exposure to career guidance, highlighting an area for improvement in educational interventions aimed at preparing students for future career decisions.

To determine whether the respond means were significantly different from neutrality, one-sample t-tests were conducted against a test value of 3. The p-values for nearly all items were significantly less than 0.05, meaning the average responses were not due to chance and significantly diverged from a neutral stance. This confirms that the students did express a consistent opinion — often on the disagreeing side — rather than random or indifferent responses. These findings support the effectiveness of the questionnaire in capturing meaningful student attitudes, while also revealing important patterns that warrant further attention, particularly regarding the provision of career education and counseling services in schools.

A closer look at specific questionnaire items related to English language skills reveals that many students scored below the neutral point, suggesting limited awareness of how English proficiency contributes to career success. Items such as those addressing the importance of speaking, understanding, or using English in a professional context consistently showed lower means and significant p-values, indicating that while students

responded consistently, they generally do not strongly associate English mastery with career readiness. This may reflect a lack of exposure to real-world job requirements where English is a key communication tool, especially in global or technology-driven industries.

The data suggests a clear opportunity for educational institutions to emphasize the role of English communication skills in career development. While students may be aware of general career planning concepts, they appear less attuned to how language proficiency — particularly in English — affects their competitiveness in higher education, internships, and the job market. Integrating career-oriented language activities, such as mock interviews, resume writing in English, and exposure to real-life workplace communication, could strengthen this link. Promoting this awareness early can better equip students for career paths that require multilingual communication, particularly in increasingly globalized work environments.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research showed that students demonstrate a low level of awareness regarding the importance of mastering English for their future careers. Although English proficiency is widely recognized as a key asset in today's global job market, many students in this research did not strongly agree with items related to using English in professional or career-oriented contexts. This is evident from the relatively low mean scores and valid, yet modest, item-total correlations on English-related questionnaire items. These findings indicate a disconnect between students' academic English exposure and their understanding of its real-world application, particularly in career settings such as job interviews, international communication, or accessing global information resources.

To address this gap, future research should focus on developing targeted programs that connect English language learning with career readiness and employability skills. Researchers could explore the effectiveness of curriculum enhancements like career-based English modules, industry exposure programs, or bilingual mentorship. Moreover, further studies should investigate how factors such as digital literacy, socioeconomic background, or access to English media influence students' perceptions of language relevance. Understanding these dimensions can help educators and policymakers design

interventions that not only improve language proficiency but also raise students' awareness of how mastering English can expand their career opportunities in both local local and international contexts.

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