

Selecting English Study Programs in Higher Educations: Students' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

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This research was to know the students' reasons for choosing English study programs in higher education. This research was qualitative. There were 62 participants from the English Education study program in various colleges or universities in Indonesia, 32 students were from Public Higher Education, and the rest of the students were from Private Higher Education. The result showed two internal and external factors underlying the students' choosing English study programs. The internal factors were: 1) learning English is full of challenges, 2) English is the international language in the world, 3) it is an opportunity to get a scholarship abroad, 4) they are interested in learning, even deepening, oral and written English skills, 5) they have the desire to be an English teacher after graduation, 6) career prospects for English graduates are widely open, 7) English is the students' favorite subject at senior high school, 8) English scores are good on their school report card, and 9) English scores are good and satisfactory in the national exam. Several external factors include: 1) the desire to choose the English major appears from themselves (they are not influenced by their parents/family, friends, and school recommendation or request), 2) the prestigious image of being an English major student in the society, 3) no other major at college that attracts their attention, 4) good accreditation, 5) the good reputation of the study program, 6) the superiority among others, 7) the availability of tuition fee information, and 8) the desire to study at their favorite universities.

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Introduction

The ultimate goal of education is to enable a person to thrive in a chosen area or job while also positively influencing their surroundings (Assefa et al., 2008). Getting a guarantee for a better future is not enough to just graduate from and rely on a high school diploma or other equivalent levels. Most of the job vacancies offered to the public require a bachelor's degree (S1) or at least a Diploma's degree (D3) with a more specific area of expertise. Entering higher education, both public and private, is one of the goals of high school students after they graduate (Novel, 2017). Entering the world of lectures brings feelings of happiness and confusion in determining majors in college (Danufane, 2021). The question that often arises is what major is following the potential

owned by a person when choosing a major in college? (Diana, 2018).

Every student who will continue their education to the college level must choose the appropriate major. Moreover, many colleges and majors are currently available both at home and abroad. Thus, choosing a major is still a very important consideration. Choosing a college major is not easy (Pamungkas, 2013). According to Musrofi (2016), what is essential is not choosing which university to choose, but the priority of choice is the major or study program. This statement is in line with Smitina (2010) that the wrong choice of the course can affect the process of one's further education.

Holmegaard et al. (2014) state that choosing to attend high school is a long and complicated social process. In reality, making choices has many dimensions and impacts. Choosing is part of a problem-solving effort and a part of the decision-making process. The impact of making choices will bring short/long term effects, both in the form of profit and risk-bearing. Likewise, choosing a college is a decision that will affect a person's future. Eidimtas & Juceviciene (2014) stated in their research that the goal of high school graduates is to continue further education while highlighting the relevant variables. Educational variables (in the family: a style of education; at school: teacher and career counselor suggestions), information factors (open days, exhibits, mass media), economic factors (study costs, job possibilities), and other factors are revealed by the investigation (geographical location, ratings, personal skills and demography).

The decision-making process includes setting goals, limiting and analyzing problems, searching alternatives, selecting alternatives optimally, implementing decisions, and assessing and monitoring. The decision-making process is necessary to understand by high school graduates when entering college because through these stages, the decision taken will be more effective. The emergence of goals is usually motivated by the problems faced by someone. If a high school graduate wishes to continue his study, it is clear that the student has a goal. In their mind, there is a picture of the time in the future that is considered the best. One can realize their goals once they have completed the study. Therefore, high school graduates have a goal to be achieved, namely studying in college.

The decision to choose which college to enter is a realization of the goal achievement. After the goal is set, all the power and effort are devoted to achieving it. However, there is a gap between hope and reality since not everyone can achieve it. There will be problems for high school graduates who aim to continue their studies at colleges if they do not get the good college expected, such as a state university. Due to the limited capacity of state universities, high school graduates need to be realistic by limiting the problems.

There are many options for high school graduates who want to continue their studies at universities in Indonesia. The number of universities continues to grow. Because there are so

many available options, limiting alternatives by determining specific criteria to achieve the goals is necessary. Before prospective students choose a college to enter, they usually have several factors to consider in making decisions.

We need to consider several things when choosing a major in college. First, know our interests and talents; we use this to determine what study program we will choose. If it is as desired, it will certainly make it easier for us to learn, and most importantly, we will be encouraged to complete the study immediately. Second, choose a campus that fits your parents' budget. This means that we have to be smart in calculating how much we need when going to college. The cost of education on campus consists of the registration fee, building development cost, tuition fee, practice cost, photocopy, and book costs. If the distance between home and campus is too far, we must also calculate the daily cost of living in a boarding house. Third, look at the accreditation status. This status is given to the study program specifically, not to all majors at the university. This accreditation status determines the independence of a study program in carrying out the teaching-learning process and the curriculum. If the accreditation status is very good, of course, the quality of education there is unquestionable. Finally, another consideration is the prospect. Not all study programs at university promise job prospects after graduation. Some universities have a lot of networks and collaborate with other institutions to bring students into the world of work (Fitria, 2019). At least, we try not to be part of the increase of educated-unemployed number every year. Quynh (2016) also states that as the expense of education rises, fewer students would desire to enroll in university study programs. Their study also found a strong and favorable relationship between student decision-making and six factors: parents' background, financial assistance, teacher quality, available program, institution reputation, and location.

There were several studies related to this study. The first research was conducted by Misran et al. (2012). This research examined the impact of socio-economic status (SES) on matriculation of the student's decision on which university to go to and which undergraduate program to study. Low SES students have a higher desire to complete their education at the tertiary level compared to high SES students. The second research was conducted by Armayanti (2015). The results showed that the reasons for the students choosing science and social study majors at SMA Negeri I Benteng Selayar included the consideration for choosing a major in higher education, hobbies, pleasures, and value. The other factors included internal factors such as interests and needs, perceptions, attitudes, and external factors such as family and reference groups. The third research was conducted by Rasyid (2019). the factors influencing the students in choosing majors at SMK PGRI Tanjung Raja were: 1) interests and hobbies; 2) job opportunities from each program; 3) peer influence; 4) test scores when entering SMK; 5) media for obtaining graduation certificates, and 6) gender. The fourth research was conducted by Hidayat et al. (2018). The study

showed that the cost of education, promotion, brand image, motivation, and facilities have a favorable and substantial impact on the students' decision to choose private colleges in Medan.

The fifth research was conducted by Yarnefi et al. (2019). The findings indicated that home and school environments had a favorable and statistically significant impact on selecting a social major. The sixth research was conducted by Sembiring et al. (2019). The findings revealed that factors influencing new students' decisions to study at bachelor degree of accounting at Universitas Kristen Indonesia were the cost variables, self-desire, person, promotion, group references, and the process. The other factors included product variables, physical evidence, and family. The seventh research was conducted by Pinaraswati & Saibat (2020). According to the testing of the variables, the students' decision was influenced by the independent variables, which involved culture and social factors and personality and psychology. The eighth research was conducted by Hamta et al. (2021). Based on the findings, the new factor in choosing an accounting study program was the educational background of high school/vocational school. The students graduated from social science or accounting major.

The studies above showed that all studies discussed factors affecting the students choosing study programs. The first, second, and third researches focused on the factors affecting the students selecting a major/program in high schools. The fourth research focused on choosing a private college. The fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth researches focused on choosing study programs such as Social, Accounting, and Management. However, this research focused on the factors underlying the students' rationale in choosing an English major/ study program, both internal and external factors.

The subjects of the previous studies were only senior high school students and vocational schools. Meanwhile, this research chose the subjects from various English study programs in Indonesia. More specifically, this research aimed to know the students' rationale for choosing English study programs in higher education, either in public or private universities. This study can contribute to prospective students to prepare for their future educational aspects and to English Education department organizers to help them design the curriculum.

Method

This research was descriptive qualitative research. This research approach did not involve statistical analysis (Henning et al., 2009). This research method utilized qualitative data, and the data were analyzed descriptively. The data were collected through a questionnaire. Kara (2018) states that a questionnaire is a method of collecting data from individuals using writing. It contained different types of questions. This research used an online questionnaire which was distributed via Google form. It included questions regarding this research (Thornburg et al., 2021).

Here, the participants acted as respondents filling it. There were 62 participants from the English Education study program at various colleges or universities in Indonesia, consisting of 32 students from Public Higher Education and 30 students from Private Higher Education. They were from some provinces in Indonesia, such as Central Java (17), West Java (5), South Sulawesi (6), East Java (8), Banten (3), North Sumatra (3), Yogyakarta (3), Riau (3), West Nusa Tenggara (3), Jakarta (3), Aceh (3), Maluku (1), Southeast Sulawesi (1), West Sulawesi (1), North Sulawesi (1), North Kalimantan (1), East Kalimantan (1), South Kalimantan (1) and Central Kalimantan (1).

The analysis technique used three ways of analysis, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion, as stated by Miles & Huberman (1994) and Punch (2005). The researcher reduced data from the questionnaire by summarizing, selecting the main things, and focusing on the important things. Then, the researcher presented the data in tables or figures. Here, the researcher only explained the results of the percentage analysis obtained from the questionnaire descriptively. The researcher also concluded the results of the analysis and discussion descriptively.

Results

This research aimed to know the students' reasons and opinions for choosing English study programs in higher education. It involved both internal and external factors. There were several findings found in this research.

Table 1. Intrinsic Factors Influencing Students in Choosing English Study Program

No	STATEMENTS	INDICATOR		
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
1.	Learning English is interesting, fun, and full of challenges.	46 (74.2 %)	14 (22.6 %)	2 (3.2 %)
2.	I believe that English is an international language in the world.	51 (82.3 %)	10 (16.1 %)	1 (1.6 %)
3.	By studying in English major, I have the opportunity to get a scholarship abroad.	27 (43.5 %)	30 (48.4 %)	5 (8.1 %)
4.	I am interested in learning and deepening oral English skills.	38 (61.3 %)	23 (37.1 %)	1 (1.6 %)
5.	I am interested in learning and deepening my written English skills.	35 (56.5 %)	25 (40.3 %)	2 (3.2 %)
6.	I have desire to be an English teacher at school after graduating from my college.	29 (46.8 %)	25 (40.3 %)	8 (12.9 %)
7.	Career prospects for English graduates are very widely open.	30 (48.4 %)	22 (35.5 %)	10 (16.1 %)
8.	English was my favorite subject at school when I was in senior high school.	36 (58.1 %)	24 (38.7 %)	1 (3.2 %)
9.	My English scores were good on the school report card.	29 (46.8 %)	28 (45.2 %)	5 (8.1 %)
10.	My English scores were good and even satisfactory during the national exam at school.	33 (37.1 %)	29 (46.8 %)	10 (16.1 %)

Table 1 above showed that several intrinsic factors influenced the students choosing the

English Education program. The 1st statement was, "Learning English is interesting, fun, and full of challenges". There were 46 students (74.2 %) strongly agreed, 14 students (22.6 %) agreed and 2 students (3.2 %) disagreed. It showed that 74.2 % of the students strongly agreed that learning English is full of challenges. The 2nd statement was "I believe that English is an international language in the world". There were 51 students (82.3 %) strongly agreed, 10 students (16.1 %) agreed and 1 student (1.6 %) disagreed. It showed that 82.3 % of students strongly agreed that English is an international language in the world. The 3rd statement was, "By studying in English major, I have the opportunity to get a scholarship abroad". There were 27 students (43.5 %) who strongly agreed, 30 students (48.4 %) agreed, and 5 students (8.1 %) disagreed. It showed that 48.4 % of students strongly agreed that they could get a scholarship abroad by studying an English major.

The 4th statement was, "I am interested in learning and deepening oral English skills". There were 38 students (61.3 %) who strongly agreed, 23 students (37.1 %) agreed, and only 1 student (1.6 %) disagreed. It showed that 61.3 % of the students strongly agreed that they are interested in learning and deepening oral English skills. Besides, the 5th statement was "I am interested in learning and deepening written English skills". There were 35 students (56.5 %) who strongly agreed, 23 students (37.1 %) agreed, and only 2 students (3.2 %) disagreed. It showed that 56.5 % of the students strongly agreed that they are interested in learning and deepening written English skills.

The 6th statement was, "I have desire to be an English teacher at school after graduating from my college". There were 29 students (46.8 %) strongly agreed, 25 students (40.3 %) agreed and 8 students (12.9 %) disagreed. It showed that 46.8 % of the students strongly agreed that they desire to be an English teacher at school after graduating from college. Besides, in the 7th statement, "Career prospects for English graduates are very widely open", there were 30 students (48.4 %) strongly agreed, 22 students (35.5 %) agreed and 10 students (16.1 %) disagreed. It showed that 46.8 % of the students strongly agreed that career prospects for English graduates are open very widely.

The 8th statement was, "English was my favorite subject at school when I was in senior high school". There were 36 students (58.1 %) strongly agreed, 24 students (38.7 %) agreed and 1 student (3.2 %) disagreed. It showed that 58.1 % of the students strongly agreed that English was their favorite subject in senior high school. Besides, in the 9th statement, "My English scores were good on the school report card", there were 29 students (46.8 %) strongly agreed, 28 students (45.2 %) agreed and 5 (8.1 %) students disagreed. It showed that 46.8 % of the students strongly agreed that their English scores were good on their school report cards. The 10th statement was "My English scores were good and even satisfactory during the national exam at school". There

were 33 students (37.1 %) strongly agreed, 29 students (46.8 %) agreed and 10 students (16.1 %) students disagreed. It showed that 46.8 % of the students strongly agreed that their English scores were good and even satisfactory during the national exam at school.

Table 2. Extrinsic Factors Influencing Students in Choosing English Study Program

No	STATEMENTS	INDICATOR		
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
1.	I chose to major in English because of the encouragement of my parents/family.	9 (14.5 %)	15 (24.2 %)	38 (61.3 %)
2.	I chose the English major because my friends also chose it.	1 (1.6 %)	6 (9.7 %)	55 (88.7 %)
3.	I chose English major because of a recommendation or request from the school.	4 (6.5 %)	6 (9.7 %)	52 (83.9 %)
4.	The image of being a student majoring in English is good in society.	25 (40.3 %)	33 (53.2 %)	4 (6.5 %)
5.	I chose to major in English because there was no other major in college that attracted my attention.	16 (25.8 %)	24 (38.7 %)	22 (35.5 %)
6.	I chose the English department because the accreditation of the English study program at the university is good	15 (24.2 %)	30 (48.4 %)	17 (27.4 %)
7.	I chose the English study program because it is superior to other study programs in universities	15 (24.2 %)	24 (38.7 %)	23 (37.1 %)
8.	I chose English major because the image/reputation of the study program at the university is good	14 (22.6 %)	27 (43.5 %)	21 (33.9 %)
9.	I chose English major because the tuition fee in the study program is available	14 (22.6 %)	27 (43.5 %)	21 (33.9 %)
10.	I chose English major because I want to study at my favorite university	13 (21 %)	22 (35.5 %)	27 (43.5 %)

Table 2 above showed that several extrinsic factors influenced the students in choosing English Education program. The 1st statement was, "I chose to major in English because of the encouragement of my parents/family". There were 9 students (14.5 %) strongly agreed, 15 students (24.2 %) agreed and 38 students (61.3 %) disagreed. It showed that 61.3 % of the students disagreed that they chose to major in English because of the encouragement of their parents/family. The 2nd statement was, "I chose to major in English because my friends also chose it". There were 1 student (1.6 %) strongly agreed, 6 students (9.7 %) agreed and 55 students (88.7 %) disagreed. It showed that 88.7 % of the students disagreed with choosing the English major because their friends also chose it. Then, for the 3rd statement, "I chose to major in English because of a recommendation or request from the school", there were 4 students (6.5 %) who strongly agreed, 6 students (9.7 %) agreed, and 52 students (83.9 %) disagreed. It showed that 83.9 % of the students disagreed that they chose an English major because of a recommendation or request from the school. It showed that the students chose an English major based on their consideration, without any recommendation and suggestion from their parents, family, teachers,

and friends. Besides, in the 4th statement, "The image of being a student majoring in English is good in society", there were 25 students (40.3 %) strongly agreed, 25 students (53.2 %) agreed, and 4 students (6.5 %) disagreed. It showed that 53.2 % of the students disagreed that the image of being a student majoring in English is good in society.

The 5th statement was, "I chose English major because there was no other major in college that attracted my attention". There were 16 students (25.8 %) strongly agreed, 24 students (38.7 %) agreed and 22 students (35 %) disagreed. It showed that 38.7 % of the students agreed that they chose English major because there was no other major in college that attracted their attention. The 6th statement was, "I chose the English major because the accreditation of the English study program at the university is good". There were 15 students (24.2 %) strongly agreed, 30 students (48.4 %) agreed and 17 students (27.4 %) disagreed. It showed that 48.4 % of the students agreed that they chose an English major because the accreditation of the English study program at the university is good. The 7th statement was, "I chose the English study program because it is superior among other study programs in universities". There were 15 students (24.2 %) strongly agreed, 24 students (38.7 %) agreed and 23 students (37.1 %) disagreed. It showed that 38.7 % of the students agreed that they chose the English study program as it is superior to other university study programs. The 8th statement was, "I chose English major because the image/reputation of the study program at the university is good". There were 14 students (22.6 %) strongly agreed, 27 students (43.5 %) agreed and 21 students (33.9 %) disagreed. It showed that 43.5 % of the students agreed that they chose an English major because the image/reputation of the study program at the university is good. The 9th statement was, "I chose English major because the tuition fee in the study program is available". There were 14 students (22.6 %) strongly agreed, 27 students (43.5 %) agreed and 21 students (33.9 %) disagreed. It showed that 43.5 % of the students agreed that they chose an English major because the tuition fee in the study program is available. The 10th statement was, "I chose English major because I want to study at my favorite university". There were 13 students (21 %) strongly agreed, 22 students (35.5 %) agreed and 27 students (43.5 %) disagreed. It showed that 43.5 % of the students agreed to choose an English major because they wanted to study at their favorite university.

Discussion

After graduating from high school or vocational school, some student usually continues their education to the higher education levels. Currently, many universities can be the options to continue their studies. In addition, there are various courses the students can choose according to their wishes. However, sometimes, we meet people who are still confused about choosing a college

major. We should not be careless in choosing a college major because it will determine our success in the future.

It is not an exaggeration if the choice of major in college determines the fate of life for years to come. Getting the right knowledge also determines life for years after university, from careers to social relationships, achievements, and lifestyle. Therefore, we should have careful consideration in choosing a college major. (Anabel, 2017; Anwar & Nugroho, 2018; Fitria, 2017; Larasati, 2019; Pane, 2012; Purfitasari, 2021) state that strong motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) leads the students to choose study programs. The students may be affected by various factors, including intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivation (Muazza et al., 2017). However, college choice does not always determine the fate of a career. Some people get jobs that are not in line with the fields studied while in higher education. It is a job prospect and the determination of college majors that affect prospective students' seriousness undergoing all lectures in several years.

Continuing their studies in the Department of English Education, the students will learn many things related to linguistics, literature, and education. Generally, they will study for four years or eight semesters. At the beginning of college, they will be honed in their reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills. They also have to devour grammar materials. Furthermore, they will also examine various works in English, the use of English in business, and the development of the English language learning curriculum. Some courses they will find include Speaking, Writing, Reading, and Listening. Besides, there are also the other courses such as Grammar/Structure, Linguistics (Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Phonetics, and Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantic), English Language Teaching (ELT) involving Curriculum and Material Development, English Language Teaching Assessment, Integrated Intensive Course, Literature, and many more. Some courses are usually slightly different from those in the other universities. They will also acquire teacher training and education. Of course, they are prepared to be English teachers at schools.

English is an international language that is the standard language used in communication between countries. Therefore, English education cannot be underestimated. In this day and age, many parents have prepared their children to be fluent in English early because the ability to speak English is needed now and in the future. Therefore, the presence of professional English educators is highly sought after and needed.

This study program is suitable for anyone who aspires to be a teacher, especially an English teacher. Since this is English education, we can be English teachers. You can teach according to the class or level you are competent at. English teachers not only can teach in formal schools but also English courses. However, many other job prospects also require English education graduates apart from teachers. In the era of an increasingly competitive world of work, someone who

masters English automatically has job opportunities (Supadi et al., 2014).

Both internal and external factors influence the students in choosing English study programs in higher education. Related to the internal factors, 74.2 % of the students stated that learning English is full of challenges. Then, as much as 82.3 % of the students strongly agreed that English is the international language in the world. Next, 48.4 % of the students strongly agreed that they could get a scholarship abroad by studying in an English major. Moreover, 61.3 % of the students are interested in learning and deepening oral English skills, while 56.5 % are interested in learning and deepening written English skills. 46.8 % of the students strongly agreed that they desire to be an English teacher at school after graduating from college, and 46.8 % of the students strongly agreed that they believe career prospects for English graduates are opened very widely. 58.1 % of the students strongly agreed that English was their favorite subject when they were in senior high school. Next, 46.8 % of the students agreed that their English scores were good on the school report card. Lastly, 46.8 % of the students strongly agreed that their English scores were good and even satisfactory during the national exam at school.

Several extrinsic factors influencing the students in choosing English Education program were:

- 1) 61.3 % of the students disagreed that they chose to major in English because of the encouragement of their parents/family,
- 2) 88.7 % of the students disagreed that they chose English major because their friends also chose it,
- 3) 83.9 % of the students disagreed that they chose English major because of a recommendation or request from the school. It showed that the students chose English major based on their own consideration, without any recommendation and suggestion from their parents, family, teachers, and friends,
- 4) 53.2 % of the students disagreed that the image of being a student majoring in English is good in society,
- 5) 38.7 % of the students agreed that they chose English major because there was no other major in college that attracted their attention,
- 6) 48.4 % of the students agreed that they chose English major because its accreditation is good,
- 7) 38.7 % of the students agreed that they chose English study program as it is superior among the other study programs in universities,
- 8) 43.5 % of the students agreed that they chose English major because its image/reputation is good,
- 9) 43.5 % of the students agreed that they chose English major because the tuition fee in the study program is available,
- 10) 43.5 % of the students agreed that they chose English major because they want to study at their favorite university.

Based on the findings, the analysis results are similar to Armayanti (2015). The results showed that the reasons why the students chose study majors included consideration for choosing a major in higher education, hobbies, pleasures, and value. This impacted the selection of majors according to the students' interests. The factors influencing the students in choosing science and social majors included internal factors such as interests and needs, perceptions, and attitudes. However,

the external factors involved family and reference groups. These research results are also similar to Rasyid (2019). Based on the study results, the factors that influence students in choosing majors were: 1) consideration of interests and hobbies towards the expertise program being taught; 2) consideration of job opportunities from each program; 3) peer influence; 4) consideration of test scores.

Conclusion

To realize the desire to study at college, choosing a major must be accompanied by planning and full effort earnestness. There are several things to consider when choosing a college major. The students can take majors that have high enough job opportunities. They can conduct research related to the majors to take. This research can be done by finding the location, courses, graduates, semester tuition fees, and department profiles. They can choose majors according to their interests and ability. They can consult their teachers, parents, seniors, or anyone more skilled in this field. Before the college entrance test, they should try to choose a major they want to go to. The present study, however, only involves a small number of participants. For future researchers, it is expected that they can conduct similar research by inviting more participants from various backgrounds.

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