

Students' Interest In Learning English Language A Survey to Sixth Graders AT SDS AMKUR Bengkayang In the Academic Year 2025/2026

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify and analyze the interest of sixth-grade students at a private school in Bengkayang in learning English during the 2025/2026 academic year by examining two main dimensions: knowledge of English and need for English. The study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive survey design with a cross-sectional method. The sample consisted of 30 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a validated 12-item questionnaire on a four-point Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that students demonstrated a high level of interest in learning English, with an overall mean score of 39.60 ($SD = 3.77$, range = 14, min = 31, max = 45). The majority of students were classified into the high (46.7%, $n = 14$) and very high (40.0%, $n = 12$) interest categories, with only 13.3% ($n = 4$) in the moderate category and none in the low or very low categories. Furthermore, out of 360 item responses, 87.22% were positive (43.89% agree, 43.33% strongly agree). Students showed substantial familiarity with English through daily exposure (songs, games, social media) and strongly recognized the necessity of English for future education and global communication. The study concluded that knowledge of English and perceived need for English are two vital dimensions shaping primary students' interest, providing empirical support for English curriculum implementation in primary schools.

Keywords: learning interest, English language, elementary school, knowledge of English, need for English

INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalization and rapid technological advancement, English has become an essential medium for international communication, education, science, technology, and economic collaboration. As the world's dominant lingua franca, English enables individuals to access global knowledge, participate in cross-cultural communication, and compete in an increasingly interconnected society (Rao, 2019). This global status has encouraged many countries, including Indonesia, to incorporate English into their educational systems. Aunurrahman *et al.* (2020) stated that English has been widely learned around the world, including in Indonesia, reflecting its growing importance in supporting students' academic development and communication skills. Consequently, developing English proficiency from an early age has become increasingly important because young learners are more likely to develop positive language attitudes, acquire fundamental communication skills, and establish a strong foundation for future language development (Nikolov & Timpe-Laughlin, 2021).

Despite the growing importance of English, developing English proficiency remains a considerable challenge in Indonesia. English is taught as a foreign language, and many students continue to experience difficulties in mastering basic language skills due to limited exposure to English, inadequate learning resources, differences in learning environments, and psychological factors that influence language acquisition. According to EF Education First (2024), Indonesia remains in the moderate proficiency category, indicating that substantial improvements are still needed to prepare students for global communication and academic competitiveness. Similarly, Deswalantri *et al.* (2024) reported that Indonesian learners frequently encounter obstacles such as limited opportunities to use English, insufficient learning facilities, and affective barriers that

reduce the effectiveness of English language learning. These findings suggest that improving English education requires attention not only to curriculum development but also to learner-related factors that contribute to successful language learning.

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian government has implemented several educational reforms to strengthen English language instruction. Under previous curriculum policies, English was generally offered only as a local-content subject in elementary schools, limiting students' opportunities to receive systematic English instruction during the early stages of education (Alfarisy, 2021). More recently, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and the issuance of the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 12 of 2024 concerning Curriculum in Early Childhood Education, Basic Education Levels, and Secondary Education Levels (2024) concerning Curriculum in Early Childhood Education, Basic Education Levels, and Secondary Education Levels have reintroduced English as a subject at the elementary school level, with broader implementation planned for the 2027/2028 academic year. This policy demonstrates the government's recognition that English proficiency is an important competency for future generations. However, curriculum reform alone cannot guarantee successful learning outcomes because the effectiveness of language instruction is strongly influenced by students' willingness to participate actively in the learning process.

Among the learner-related factors influencing successful language learning, students' interest in learning plays a particularly important role. Interest is a motivational disposition that encourages learners to pay attention, actively participate, and persist in learning activities (Murayama *et al.*, 2019). Students with higher levels of interest generally demonstrate greater curiosity, stronger engagement, and better learning outcomes than those with lower levels of interest (Harackiewicz *et al.*, 2016; Wong *et al.*, 2020). In English language education, learning interest is especially important because it supports students' willingness to communicate, practice language skills, and overcome learning difficulties. Conversely, students with low levels of interest may become passive during classroom activities and gradually lose motivation to improve their English competence. Therefore, understanding students' interest in learning English is essential, particularly at the primary school level where attitudes toward language learning begin to develop.

Previous studies have identified various factors related to students' interest, attitudes, and engagement in English language learning. Diem and Ramadhia (2025) found differences in students' engagement in learning English based on gender, whereas Hafizah and Fithriani (2023) emphasized the importance of teachers' instructional practices in maintaining students' motivation and classroom participation. In examining situational engagement, Wahyuni *et al.* (2025) highlighted the multidimensional nature of young learners' interest in Indonesian primary EFL classrooms, demonstrating that learning interest extends beyond academic performance to encompass affective and contextual involvement. Furthermore, recent needs analysis studies have underscored the critical role of perceived relevance; Sukarno and Jinabe (2024) revealed that primary school students' English learning needs are substantially shaped by informal exposure within the family environment as well as institutional goals, while Khoiriyah *et al.* (2025) and Amalia and Albiansyah (2023) demonstrated that young learners' attitudes and interest are closely linked to their perceived communicative utility and learning preferences. From the perspective of instructional barriers, Marhamah (2022) reported that limited learning media contributed to primary school students' low interest in reading English texts, while Laila *et al.* (2023) highlighted the influence of inadequate facilities, limited teacher availability, and unfavorable learning environments in rural elementary schools. Additionally, classroom interaction, technology integration, and instructional strategies significantly affect students' motivation and engagement in English learning (Sabil *et al.*, 2024; Suryanto &

Brawijaya, 2024). Although these studies provide valuable insights into external pedagogical factors and learning obstacles, they have rarely isolated how students' existing knowledge of English and their perceived need for English collectively construct their learning interest from an internal standpoint.

Several important research gaps therefore remain. First, previous studies have predominantly investigated motivation, teaching strategies, classroom environments, technology integration, and learning challenges, while relatively few studies have specifically explored students' interest in learning English. Second, existing studies tend to emphasize external factors affecting learning interest, whereas limited attention has been given to students' internal perspectives, particularly their knowledge of English and their perceived need for English as important dimensions of learning interest. Third, empirical evidence concerning elementary school students' interest in learning English in Indonesia remains limited, especially following the government's policy to reintroduce English into the elementary school curriculum. Consequently, there is still insufficient understanding of how primary school students currently perceive English and how these perceptions may support the implementation of the new educational policy.

To address these gaps, this study investigates the interest of sixth-grade students at a private school in Bengkayang in learning English by focusing on two complementary dimensions, namely students' knowledge of English and their perceived need for English. Unlike previous studies that primarily examined external instructional factors, this study explores students' own perspectives regarding their familiarity with English and the extent to which they perceive English as important for their academic development and future lives. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the interest of sixth-grade students at a private school in Bengkayang in learning English during the 2025/2026 academic year by addressing two research questions: (1) What are the levels of students' knowledge of English in relation to its use in everyday life? and (2) How do students perceive the need for English for their future education and participation in society? The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing body of research on English language learning in Indonesian primary schools and provide practical implications for teachers, school administrators, and policymakers in enhancing students' engagement in English learning

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive survey design to investigate students' interest in learning English. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. In this study, a cross-sectional design was implemented, in which data were collected at a single point in time to describe the current condition and distribution of primary school students' interest in learning English (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The population of the study consisted of 30 sixth-grade students from a private school in Bengkayang in the academic year 2025/2026. Purposive sampling was used to select the research participants. As Cohen et al. (2018) noted, purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants based on specific characteristics and criteria that directly align with the research objectives. The students were chosen as the primary sample because they represented the targeted educational level and learning context.

The study measured one research variable, namely students' interest in learning English, which was operationalized through two complementary dimensions: knowledge of English and

need for English. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 14 initial items developed based on indicators of these two dimensions and measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), to strongly disagree (1). The four-point scale without a neutral midpoint was intentionally employed to encourage decisive responses and minimize central tendency bias among young learners (Cohen et al., 2018).

Before the main data collection, the questionnaire was piloted with 30 sixth-grade students of a public school in Ngabang to examine its validity and reliability. Item validity was assessed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient with the assistance of PSPP version 1.6.2. The results showed that 12 items met the validity criteria ($r_{\text{count}} > r_{\text{table}}$), whereas two items were excluded from the final instrument. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced a coefficient of 0.83, confirming a high level of internal consistency and stability of the research instrument (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques with the assistance of Microsoft Excel 2021. In line with Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Cohen et al. (2018), descriptive statistics summarize the overall tendencies and variability within the dataset. The analysis encompassed frequencies, percentages, means, medians, modes, standard deviations, and score ranges to describe the level, distribution, and patterns of students' interest in learning English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated sixth-grade students' interest in learning English at a private school in Bengkayang across two primary dimensions: knowledge of English and perceived need for English. The findings and their theoretical and pedagogical interpretations are presented in the following subsections.

Results of the Study

The descriptive analysis presented in Table 1 indicates that students generally demonstrated a high level of interest in learning English. The distribution of scores tended to cluster in the upper score categories, suggesting that students possessed favorable perceptions toward English learning activities and showed readiness to engage in the learning process.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Interest in Learning English

No.	Statistics	Score
1.	Number of Respondents (N)	30
2.	Mean	39.60
3.	Median	40.00
4.	Mode	39 and 41
5.	Standard Deviation	3.77
6.	Minimum Score	31
7.	Maximum Score	45
8.	Range	14

The categorization of students' interest shown in Table 2 further supports these findings. Most students were classified into the higher categories of interest, whereas none of the respondents were included in the lower categories. This finding suggests that English learning

was generally perceived positively by the participants and that students had developed a favorable orientation toward learning the language.

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Interest Levels

Category	Score Interval	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	41 – 48	12	40.0
High	34 – 40	14	46.7
Moderate	27 – 33	4	13.3
Low	20 – 26	0	0.0
Very Low	12 – 19	0	0.0
Total		30	100

The overall pattern of questionnaire responses presented in Table 3 also demonstrates that positive responses dominated students' answers. This tendency indicates that students generally enjoyed English learning activities, valued the importance of English, and were willing to participate in English-related learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Questionnaire Responses

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	2	0.56
Disagree	44	12.22
Agree	158	43.89
Strongly Agree	156	43.33
Total	360	100

Discussion

The overall empirical findings demonstrate that sixth-grade students at a private school in Bengkayang possess a high level of interest in learning English. This result supports the argument proposed by Murayama et al. (2019), who emphasized that interest serves as a primary motivational disposition that encourages learners to actively engage in learning activities and maintain their participation in the learning process. Similarly, Harackiewicz et al. (2016) and Wong et al. (2020) explained that students with higher levels of interest tend to demonstrate stronger engagement, greater curiosity, and more positive learning outcomes. Therefore, the high level of interest identified in this study provides an essential psychological foundation for students' future English language development.

One important dimension contributing to students' interest was their knowledge of English. Students reported being familiar with English through various forms of exposure outside the classroom, including songs, films, games, social media, and internet content. They also demonstrated familiarity with basic English vocabulary and simple expressions commonly encountered in daily life. In addition, students expressed curiosity toward unfamiliar English words and showed willingness to discover their meanings.

These findings suggest that exposure to English beyond classroom instruction contributes positively to students' familiarity with the language and helps reduce feelings of anxiety when learning English in school. Frequent interaction with English appears to strengthen students' confidence and support the development of positive attitudes toward language learning. This finding is consistent with Nikolov & Timpe-Laughlin (2021), who

emphasized the importance of meaningful language exposure for young learners. Similar findings were also reported by Diem and Ramadhia (2025), who found that students with greater opportunities to interact with English tended to demonstrate stronger confidence and better mastery of basic vocabulary.

Another important dimension identified in this study was students' perceived need for English. Students viewed English as an important skill for supporting future education, improving employment opportunities, communicating internationally, and participating in broader social activities. In addition, students reported receiving encouragement from parents and expressed enjoyment in learning English.

These findings indicate that students do not merely perceive English as a compulsory school subject but also recognize its practical value beyond the classroom. Awareness of the usefulness and relevance of English is likely to strengthen students' willingness to engage in learning activities and maintain their motivation over time. This finding supports Rao (2019), who argued that English functions as a global language used in education, science, technology, business, and international communication.

The findings of this study are generally consistent with previous studies conducted in Indonesian educational contexts, which reported that students tend to develop positive attitudes toward English learning and perceive English as an important skill for education and future careers (Diem & Ramadhia, 2025; Hafizah & Fithriani, 2023; Sabil *et al.*, 2024). However, unlike previous studies that mainly focused on attitudes, motivation, or perceptions, the present study examined students' interest through two specific dimensions, namely Knowledge of English and Need for English. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how students' familiarity with English and their perceptions of its usefulness interact in shaping their interest in learning the language.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students' interest in learning English was shaped by two complementary dimensions, namely knowledge of English and need for English. Students who were familiar with English through daily exposure and who understood the importance of English for their future tended to demonstrate more positive attitudes toward English learning. Furthermore, the increasing availability of digital media and internet resources may contribute to strengthening students' exposure to English and enhancing their awareness of its importance in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that sixth-grade students at a private school in Bengkayang demonstrated a positive interest in learning English. Students showed a good level of familiarity with English through their exposure to various forms of English content encountered in their daily lives, such as songs, films, games, social media, and internet resources. They also recognized the importance of English for supporting their future education, career opportunities, international communication, and participation in society. The findings indicate that students' interest in learning English was shaped by two complementary dimensions, namely their knowledge of English and their perceived need for English. Students who were more familiar with English and who understood its relevance to their future tended to show more positive attitudes toward English learning. Therefore, strengthening students' exposure to English and increasing their awareness of its practical value may contribute to the development of stronger interest and engagement in English learning at the primary school level.

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