

EFL Learners' Perception Toward MBKM PMM Program

Sartika Sartika¹

Sam Hermansyah²

Buhari Buhari³

Syahrir L⁴

Nurul Faradillah⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang, Indonesia.

¹sartika100802@gmail.com

²sam.hermansyah82@gmail.com

³buharifakkah9@gmail.com

⁴syahrir.lau00@gmail.com

⁵nurulfaradillahums@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to explore the perceptions of English Language Teaching (ELT) students regarding the Independent Campus Learning Program (MBKM) and Independent Student Exchange (PMM) initiatives introduced by the Indonesian government in 2020. The research focuses on a sample of ten fourth-semester students from the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang, selected through random sampling techniques. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews, employing a qualitative methodology for analysis. The findings indicate that the MBKM program is well-facilitated by universities, faculties, and study programs, which has resulted in high student interest and participation. The MBKM initiative allows students to develop diverse skills and knowledge by engaging in learning activities both within and outside their main study programs. It also promotes cultural exchange and integration, as evidenced by the experiences of students participating in the Nusantara module. Overall, the research highlights that the MBKM program significantly enhances students' capacity to become multifaceted individuals, better prepared for the demands of the modern workforce. The program's emphasis on independent and cross-disciplinary learning aligns with the government's objective to create a more versatile and competent graduate pool.

Keywords : *perceptions, PMM MBKM, independent campus learning*

Introduction

Higher education in Indonesia is undergoing significant transformation with the introduction of the Independent Campus Learning Program (Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka or MBKM) and the Independent Student Exchange Program (Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka or PMM) initiated by the government. These programs are designed to provide students with greater flexibility in pursuing higher education, allowing them to explore various fields of knowledge and develop skills that are directly relevant to the modern workforce. This policy shift aims to foster a more dynamic,

adaptable, and well-rounded graduate profile that aligns with the evolving demands of the global job market. The MBKM program was officially launched in 2020, marking a significant policy change in Indonesian higher education. It encourages students to engage in various educational activities outside their primary study programs, both within and outside their home institutions. The main objective is to provide students with opportunities to gain practical experience, enhance their competencies, and develop a broader perspective by participating in internships, research projects, community service, entrepreneurial activities, and cultural exchanges. The PMM program, as a component of MBKM, specifically focuses on student mobility, allowing students to study at different universities across Indonesia for one semester.

The English Language Teaching (ELT) community, like other academic fields, has shown diverse responses to these initiatives. ELT students, who are training to become future educators, face unique challenges and opportunities under the MBKM and PMM programs. Their perceptions of these programs are crucial, as they reflect the broader acceptance and potential success of such educational reforms. Understanding these perceptions can provide valuable insights into how these programs can be improved and better aligned with the needs and expectations of students. This study aims to explore the perceptions of ELT students regarding the MBKM and PMM programs. By examining their experiences and viewpoints, this research seeks to identify the factors that influence their attitudes towards these initiatives. The study focuses on fourth-semester students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang, utilizing qualitative research methods, including questionnaires and interviews, to gather data. The selection of respondents through random sampling ensures a diverse representation of opinions and experiences. Preliminary observations indicate that while many students view these programs positively, citing opportunities for personal and professional growth, others express concerns about potential challenges. These include uncertainties about the program's implementation, the quality of education, and the financial implications of participating in such programs. Additionally, the extent to which universities and faculties support and facilitate these initiatives significantly impacts student perceptions and participation rates.

The MBKM and PMM programs represent a strategic effort by the Indonesian government to modernize the country's higher education system. By promoting interdisciplinary learning and practical experience, these programs aim to produce graduates who are not only academically proficient but also possess the skills and adaptability required in a rapidly changing world. This study's findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how these programs are perceived by those at the forefront of their implementation—the students. Such insights are essential for policymakers, educators, and academic institutions striving to enhance the effectiveness and reach of these educational innovations. As Indonesia continues to reform its higher education landscape, the perceptions and experiences of students will play a pivotal role in shaping the success of these initiatives. This research will provide a critical analysis of ELT students' views on the MBKM and PMM programs, offering recommendations for future improvements to ensure these programs meet their intended goals and benefit the broader academic community.

Literture Review

The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) and Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM) programs represent pivotal reforms in Indonesian higher education. Launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2020, these programs aim to

enhance the flexibility and relevance of higher education by allowing students to engage in a wide array of learning experiences beyond their primary fields of study. The core objective is to equip students with practical skills and knowledge that align with the evolving demands of the modern workforce. According to Nadiem Makarim, the Minister of Education and Culture, the MBKM initiative embodies the philosophy of educational independence and flexibility, fostering an environment where students can explore diverse academic and professional opportunities (Makarim, 2020). The MBKM and PMM programs are grounded in several educational theories, including experiential learning, constructivism, and transformative learning. Experiential learning, as proposed by Kolb (1984), emphasizes the importance of learning through direct experience and reflection. This aligns with the MBKM's emphasis on internships, community service, and other hands-on activities. Constructivist theory, particularly Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, underlines the significance of social interactions and cultural context in learning, which is reflected in the PMM's focus on cultural exchanges and student mobility. Transformative learning theory, introduced by Mezirow (1991), suggests that transformative experiences can lead to significant changes in a learner's perspectives and attitudes, a core aim of the MBKM and PMM initiatives.

Numerous studies have explored student perceptions of educational reforms and programs similar to MBKM and PMM. A study by Fauzannur et al. (2023) highlighted that quality education is a crucial goal in modern educational systems, and programs like MBKM are designed to address this need by promoting diverse and relevant learning experiences. Another study by Ramli et al. (2022) indicated that students generally view MBKM positively due to its potential to enhance their employability and practical skills. However, concerns about the implementation, such as the adequacy of institutional support and the quality of off-campus learning experiences, were also noted. The PMM program, with its focus on student exchanges, aims to foster cultural understanding and tolerance among students from different regions. Research by Wulan et al. (2023) demonstrated that such exchanges can significantly enhance students' cultural awareness and interpersonal skills. The Nusantara module, a mandatory component of PMM, is designed to introduce students to Indonesia's rich cultural diversity, promoting a sense of national unity and social cohesion. This aligns with Bakar's (2015) findings that cultural immersion experiences can reduce prejudices and increase appreciation for cultural diversity.

While the MBKM and PMM programs offer numerous benefits, they also present several challenges. One of the main challenges is the financial burden associated with participating in these programs, including tuition fees, living expenses, and transportation costs. A study by Junaidi (2002) pointed out that financial constraints can significantly impact students' ability to participate in exchange programs. Additionally, logistical issues such as credit transfer and recognition of courses completed at other institutions pose significant challenges.

The success of the MBKM and PMM programs heavily depends on the support provided by universities and faculties. According to a study by Muslikh (2020), the role of academic and administrative support is crucial in facilitating the smooth implementation of these programs. Universities need to provide clear guidelines, adequate resources, and continuous support to ensure students can fully benefit from these initiatives. Furthermore, faculty members play a pivotal role in mentoring and guiding students through their MBKM and PMM experiences. The MBKM and PMM programs represent a significant shift in Indonesian higher education, aiming to create a more flexible, relevant, and practical learning environment for students. While these

programs offer numerous benefits, including enhanced employability, cultural awareness, and practical skills, they also pose several challenges that need to be addressed. Understanding student perceptions and experiences is crucial for the continuous improvement of these programs. As the Indonesian government and educational institutions continue to refine these initiatives, ongoing research and feedback from students will be essential to ensure their success and sustainability.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the perceptions of English Language Teaching (ELT) students regarding the MBKM and PMM programs. Qualitative research is chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, attitudes, and perspectives. The focus is on gathering rich, detailed data through interviews and questionnaires, which are then analyzed to identify common themes and insights. This approach is particularly suited for exploring complex phenomena and understanding the nuances of student perceptions.

The participants in this study are ten fourth-semester ELT students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. These students were selected using random sampling to ensure a diverse representation of opinions and experiences. The criteria for selection included enrollment in the ELT program and awareness of the MBKM and PMM initiatives. The chosen participants provide a relevant and informed perspective on the research topic, given their direct involvement and interest in these educational programs.

Two primary data collection instruments are used in this study: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

1. **Questionnaires:** The questionnaire consists of 20 items, designed to capture students' perceptions of the MBKM and PMM programs. It includes both closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing for a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The closed-ended questions use a Likert scale to measure the level of agreement or disagreement with various statements about the programs. The open-ended questions provide participants with the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences and opinions in more detail.
2. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews are conducted with each participant to gain deeper insights into their perceptions and experiences. The interview guide includes a set of predetermined questions but allows flexibility for probing and follow-up questions based on participants' responses. This method facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' attitudes towards the MBKM and PMM programs.

Data collection is carried out in two phases:

1. **Questionnaire Distribution:** The questionnaires are distributed to the participants electronically. Participants are given a specified period to complete and return the questionnaires. This method ensures convenience and flexibility for participants to provide thoughtful and reflective responses.
2. **Conducting Interviews:** Following the completion of the questionnaires, individual interviews are scheduled with each participant. The interviews are conducted either face-to-face or via online video conferencing, depending on the participants' preferences and availability. Each interview lasts approximately 30-45 minutes and is audio-recorded with the participants' consent for accurate transcription and analysis.

The data analysis process follows Miles and Huberman's (1984) interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

1. **Data Reduction:** The initial step involves condensing the raw data from questionnaires and interviews. This process includes transcribing interview recordings, organizing responses, and identifying significant statements and patterns.
2. **Data Display:** The reduced data is then displayed in a structured format, such as tables, charts, and thematic maps. This visual representation helps in identifying recurring themes and relationships among the data.
3. **Conclusion Drawing/Verification:** The final step involves interpreting the displayed data to draw conclusions about students' perceptions of the MBKM and PMM programs. The findings are verified through member checking, where participants review the summarized data to ensure accuracy and validity.

Ethical considerations are paramount in this study. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, ensuring they are fully aware of the research objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity are maintained throughout the research process. Participants' personal information is protected, and data is stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

1. **Student Interest in the PMM MBKM Program.** The questionnaire results indicate a high level of interest among ELT students in the PMM MBKM program. Specifically, 70% of respondents agreed, and 30% strongly agreed that they were interested in participating in the program. None of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement about their interest in the PMM MBKM program. This strong interest is attributed to several factors:

Exposure to Different Cultures: Many students expressed excitement about the opportunity to learn about different cultures, languages, and traditions through the PMM program. They viewed this as a unique chance to broaden their cultural understanding and develop intercultural communication skills.

Academic and Personal Growth: Students believed that participating in the PMM MBKM program would enhance their academic knowledge and personal development. They anticipated that the program would help them become more well-rounded individuals by exposing them to new perspectives and diverse learning environments.

Perceived Benefits of the PMM MBKM Program The interviews provided deeper insights into the perceived benefits of the PMM MBKM program. Students highlighted several advantages:

- **Skill Development:** Students felt that the program would help them develop various skills, including adaptability, independence, and social sensitivity. They believed that interacting with students from different backgrounds would improve their social and collaborative skills.
- **Academic Enrichment:** Participants noted that the PMM MBKM program offered them the opportunity to study subjects outside their major, allowing for a more interdisciplinary education. They valued the chance to gain knowledge and skills relevant to multiple fields.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Students appreciated the opportunity to build a network with peers from other universities and regions. They believed that these connections could be beneficial for their future careers and personal growth.

3. Challenges and Concerns

Despite the overall positive perceptions, some challenges and concerns were identified:

- **Financial Constraints:** Several students mentioned the financial burden associated with participating in the program. Costs related to travel, accommodation, and living expenses were significant concerns, particularly for those from lower-income backgrounds.
- **Logistical Issues:** Issues related to the transfer of credits and the recognition of courses taken at other institutions were highlighted. Some students were unsure whether the credits earned during the exchange would be accepted by their home universities.
- **Implementation and Support:** The level of support provided by universities and faculties was a critical factor. Students stressed the need for clear guidelines, adequate resources, and continuous support to navigate the challenges of the PMM MBKM program.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with existing literature on student perceptions of educational reforms and exchange programs. The high level of interest and perceived benefits among ELT students reflect the positive impact of the MBKM and PMM initiatives in promoting interdisciplinary learning and cultural exchange (Fauzannur et al., 2023; Ramli et al., 2022). The emphasis on skill development and academic enrichment supports the theoretical framework of experiential learning and constructivism, which highlight the importance of hands-on experiences and social interactions in the learning process (Kolb, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). The transformative learning theory also resonates with the students' anticipation of significant personal growth through these programs (Mezirow, 1991).

However, the challenges identified, particularly financial constraints and logistical issues, underline the need for improved support mechanisms and clear policies to ensure the successful implementation of the PMM MBKM program. These findings are consistent with the concerns raised in previous studies (Junaidi, 2002; Muslikh, 2020). The role of universities and faculties in facilitating these programs is crucial. As indicated by Muslikh (2020), academic and administrative support can significantly influence student participation and satisfaction. Therefore, institutions must prioritize providing comprehensive support to address the logistical and financial challenges faced by students. The research findings highlight the positive perceptions and high interest of ELT students in the PMM MBKM program, driven by the opportunities for cultural exchange, academic enrichment, and skill development. However, addressing the challenges related to financial constraints and logistical issues is essential to maximize the benefits of these programs. By understanding and addressing these concerns, policymakers and educational institutions can enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of the MBKM and PMM initiatives, ensuring that they achieve their intended goals of fostering a more dynamic, adaptable, and well-rounded graduate profile.

Conclusion

Based on research regarding students' views on the Merdeka student exchange program, it can be concluded that the program has attracted students' attention. The majority of students consider this program to provide valuable experience in developing academic and life skills. Although there are several challenges faced, such as costs and administrative preparations, most respondents feel the benefits outweigh the obstacles faced, such as costs and administrative preparations, most respondents feel the benefits

outweigh the obstacles faced. This conclusion shows that the Merdeka student exchange program is considered positively by students as an opportunity to increase cross-cultural understanding and overall self-development.

Students who aim to gain new knowledge, new insights, new experiences, expand relationships, learn about the customs of other cultures, want to experience studying at another university in a new atmosphere, etc. Motivation is one of the things that encourages students to participate and succeed in PMM, both from within themselves and from outside. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the main motivation for students to take part in the PMM program is intrinsic motivation. Students' motivation to take part in PMM activities stems from their desire to be able to improve themselves through education. This is a very useful starting point for mathematics teachers to follow when participating in various PMM activities, because internal motivation or motivation that comes from within is a strong impulse that encourages a person to complete a task. Students' motivation to take part in the PMM program comes from their inner strength to endure various difficulties, setbacks and setbacks that they may experience while studying outside their home country and without affecting others. In this regard, it is hoped that all students can follow PMM diligently in order to achieve the best results and successfully carry out the programs included in the MBKM Curriculum.

Student Exchange is part of the Merdeka Belajar Kmapus Merdeka policy. Student motivation to take part in the Independent Student Exchange is something that encourages students to take part in the Independent Student Exchange program activities. Motivation that comes from within the student and motivation that comes from outside. Student motivation for producing six motivations as a result of this research. The Independent Student Exchange is an insight into changing the energy of students in order to create a feeling of realizing independent learning activities. The recommendation of this research is the need for a study regarding the benefits and how to implement Independent Student Exchange activities.

For the organizers, hopefully they can continue to organize the Teaching Campus program in the future. So that students in Indonesia can truly experience and participate in the world of education and can be part of efforts to educate the nation's future students. The following researchers provide several suggestions:

The implementation of the Merdeka Campus is expected to increase independence, dedication and be able to design and determine the future of students as well as transparency in the process of implementing the independent campus policy, because if the implementation of the independent campus is carried out well it can increase the interest of students majoring in English education in participating in the Merdeka program Independent Campus Learning.

The government is expected to continue to improve the quality of MBKM policies, right on target according to the target group, namely students, improve the quality of implementing elements (implementors), both institutions and individuals, to be responsible for obtaining implementation and monitoring of the policy implementation process in order to improve performance to increase student interest. will take part in the MBKM program.

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang should continue to implement the MBKM program, more massively in inviting its students to be directly involved in implementing Independent Campus programs, establishing and expanding cooperation with companies or related partners, providing students with an understanding of the

program's challenges, because student interest is key to the successful implementation of the MBKM program.

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