



## **MARITIME CULTURE-BASED AUTHENTIC LEARNING: EVIDENCE FROM PAPUA ENGLISH EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract:**

The integration of local cultural contexts into English language learning has become an important approach to creating meaningful and authentic learning experiences. In multilingual and culturally diverse regions such as Papua, English learning requires contextualization that connects classroom knowledge with students' social environments. This study investigates students' perceptions of Real-World Authentic Learning (RWAL) based on Papua maritime culture in English language education. A quantitative survey design was employed involving 745 students from different educational levels in Papua. Data were collected using a questionnaire consisting of demographic information and 20 perception statements measured through a seven-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to identify students' attitudes toward English learning, authentic learning activities, maritime cultural integration, and communication confidence. The findings reveal that students demonstrate strong recognition of the importance of English for their future ( $M = 5.78$ ) and express a strong need for additional speaking practice ( $M = 5.60$ ). Students also perceive experiential learning approaches positively, particularly activities involving real-life contexts ( $M = 5.08$ ), direct experiences ( $M = 5.15$ ), and creative tasks such as videos, brochures, and presentations ( $M = 5.11$ ). Furthermore, students agree that Papua maritime culture can become an interesting source for English learning ( $M = 4.86$ ). However, students' confidence in using English for explaining local tourism, introducing Papua culture, and communicating maritime knowledge remains relatively moderate. These findings indicate that students have positive attitudes toward maritime culture-based RWAL but require structured learning experiences to transform cultural knowledge into English communication competence.

**Keywords:** *Authentic Learning, Maritime Culture, Papua, English Language Learning, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, RWAL*

### **INTRODUCTION**

English language learning in contemporary education has increasingly moved beyond the transmission of linguistic knowledge toward the development of meaningful communicative competence. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, however, students may acquire vocabulary and grammatical

knowledge without necessarily being able to apply English effectively in authentic communicative situations. This condition reflects a persistent gap between classroom-oriented language instruction and the communicative practices that learners encounter in real-life social and cultural environments. Conventional English instruction, which frequently relies on textbooks, grammatical exercises, and examination-oriented activities, may support linguistic accuracy but provide limited opportunities for learners to use English as a functional tool for communication. Consequently, contemporary English language pedagogy increasingly emphasizes contextualized, experiential, and authentic learning experiences that enable students to connect linguistic knowledge with meaningful situations.

One pedagogical approach that responds to this need is Real-World Authentic Learning (RWAL). Authentic learning emphasizes the connection between academic knowledge and real-world situations by engaging learners in meaningful tasks that resemble actual social, professional, and cultural practices. Rather than positioning students as passive recipients of linguistic information, authentic learning encourages them to construct knowledge through participation, interaction, problem solving, collaboration, and reflection. In English language education, this approach creates opportunities for students to use English for communicative purposes through activities such as conducting interviews, presenting information, developing media products, documenting cultural practices, and solving context-based problems. Such activities can provide learners with opportunities to develop not only linguistic competence but also the confidence and ability to communicate in situations beyond the classroom.

The relevance of authentic learning becomes particularly significant when English instruction is situated within students' cultural and social environments. Language learning does not occur in a culturally neutral space; learners bring their identities, experiences, communities, traditions, and local knowledge into the educational process. Integrating these resources into English instruction can make learning more meaningful because students are able to connect new linguistic knowledge with experiences that are already familiar to them. From this perspective, local culture should not merely function as supplementary content but can serve as an authentic pedagogical resource through which learners develop language competence while simultaneously interpreting and communicating knowledge about their own communities.

This perspective is particularly relevant in Papua, a region characterized by diverse cultural traditions and a strong maritime heritage. Coastal communities in Papua possess various forms of maritime knowledge and practices, including traditional navigation, fishing activities, knowledge of marine biodiversity, traditional boats, coastal traditions, and marine tourism resources. These cultural resources provide potentially rich contexts for English language learning because they represent experiences that are closely connected to learners' social and environmental realities. Incorporating such contexts into English instruction may enable students to learn English through subjects that are meaningful within their communities rather than through decontextualized linguistic materials.

The integration of Papua's maritime culture into English learning also has broader educational significance. On the one hand, local maritime contexts can provide familiar and meaningful situations through which students practice English communication. On the other hand, English can function as a medium

through which students represent, document, and communicate their local cultural knowledge to wider national and international audiences. In this sense, English learning can contribute simultaneously to communicative competence and cultural representation. Students may, for example, use English to describe maritime traditions, introduce local marine resources, develop tourism-related materials, interview community members, or present aspects of their cultural heritage. Such learning experiences position English not simply as an academic subject but as a communicative resource for engaging with broader intercultural contexts.

The pedagogical rationale for this approach can be further understood through the intersection of authentic learning, situated learning, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Situated learning emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through participation in social and cultural contexts rather than acquired as an isolated cognitive activity. Similarly, culturally responsive pedagogy recognizes learners' cultural backgrounds as valuable educational resources and seeks to connect academic learning with students' lived experiences. When these perspectives are incorporated into English language education, local cultural knowledge can become a foundation for meaningful language practice. For students in Papua, maritime culture therefore offers a potentially situated and culturally responsive environment in which English can be used to express existing knowledge, interpret local experiences, and communicate cultural meanings to broader audiences.

Despite the growing attention to authentic learning and culturally responsive approaches in language education, an important research gap remains. Existing discussions have frequently examined authentic learning and culturally responsive pedagogy as separate pedagogical perspectives, while studies integrating indigenous or local cultural contexts into English learning have often focused primarily on the use of cultural materials rather than on students' engagement in authentic communicative practices. Moreover, empirical evidence concerning students' perceptions of maritime culture-based authentic English learning remains limited, particularly in the context of Papua. Understanding students' perceptions is important because their perceived relevance, interest, readiness, and perceived challenges may influence the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing culturally grounded authentic learning in English classrooms.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates students' perceptions of Real-World Authentic Learning based on Papua maritime culture in English language learning. Specifically, the study seeks to examine students' perceptions of the importance and challenges of learning English, explore their attitudes toward the integration of Papua maritime culture into English learning, and analyze their readiness to apply English in authentic cultural and social contexts. By examining these dimensions through empirical evidence from 745 students, this study contributes to the growing discourse on culturally grounded English language pedagogy by positioning local maritime knowledge as a potential context for authentic communication practice. More broadly, the study seeks to demonstrate how English language learning can connect linguistic competence, students' lived cultural experiences, and the communication of local knowledge within contemporary educational contexts.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design to examine

students' perceptions of Real-World Authentic Learning (RWAL) based on Papua maritime culture in English language learning. A quantitative survey design was considered appropriate because the study sought to measure students' perceptions systematically and identify patterns across several dimensions, including English learning motivation, maritime cultural awareness, authentic learning engagement, and English communication confidence.

In addition to descriptive analysis, the study incorporated instrument reliability testing and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The combination of these procedures enabled the researchers to describe the overall tendency of students' perceptions and explore the underlying dimensions that constituted their perceptions of RWAL-based English learning.

The analysis was conducted in three sequential stages. First, descriptive statistics were calculated using means, standard deviations, and percentage distributions. Second, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's Alpha. Third, the construct structure of the instrument was explored using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

### Participants

The participants were 745 students from Papua who were enrolled at junior and senior secondary education levels. The sample included students from Grade VII to Grade XII, allowing the study to capture perceptions across different stages of secondary English education.

The demographic distribution of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Respondent Characteristics by Gender**

| <b>Gender</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Male</b>   | 326              | 43.8%             |
| <b>Female</b> | 419              | 56.2%             |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>745</b>       | <b>100%</b>       |

The distribution indicates that female students constituted 56.2% of the sample, while male students accounted for 43.8%.

The participants were also distributed across six grade levels, as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Respondent Distribution by Educational Level**

| <b>Grade</b>      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Grade VII</b>  | 304              | 40.8%             |
| <b>Grade VIII</b> | 171              | 23.0%             |
| <b>Grade IX</b>   | 198              | 26.6%             |
| <b>Grade X</b>    | 41               | 5.5%              |
| <b>Grade XI</b>   | 17               | 2.3%              |
| <b>Grade XII</b>  | 14               | 1.9%              |
| <b>Total*</b>     | <b>745</b>       | <b>100%*</b>      |

*Percentages are based on the total sample; minor differences may occur because of rounding.*

Most respondents were students in Grade VII–IX, indicating that the

sample was predominantly composed of junior secondary learners. This distribution is relevant because these learners are in a formative stage of English language development and may particularly benefit from contextualized and experience-based learning approaches.

### Instrument Development

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from relevant theoretical perspectives on language learning motivation, indigenous and local knowledge integration, authentic learning, and communicative competence. The questionnaire initially consisted of 20 perception items representing four conceptual dimensions.

**Table 3. Questionnaire Constructs and Item Distribution**

| Construct                        |          | Theoretical Foundation                 | Item Numbers | Number of Items |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| English Motivation               | Learning | Language learning motivation theory    | 1–6          | 6               |
| Maritime Awareness               | Cultural | Indigenous/local knowledge integration | 7–10         | 4               |
| Authentic Perception             | Learning | Authentic learning theory              | 11–15        | 5               |
| English Communication Confidence |          | Communicative competence theory        | 16–20        | 5               |
| <b>Total</b>                     |          |                                        | <b>1–20</b>  | <b>20</b>       |

The questionnaire was designed to capture both students' general orientation toward English learning and their perceptions of applying English in culturally meaningful and authentic contexts. All perception items were measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 to 7

**Table 4. Seven-Point Likert Scale**

| Score    | Response          |
|----------|-------------------|
| <b>1</b> | Strongly Disagree |
| <b>2</b> | Disagree          |
| <b>3</b> | Somewhat Disagree |
| <b>4</b> | Neutral           |
| <b>5</b> | Somewhat Agree    |
| <b>6</b> | Agree             |
| <b>7</b> | Strongly Agree    |

### Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through the administration of the structured questionnaire to the participating students. Before responding to the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the general procedure for completing the instrument. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were instructed to provide responses based on their actual experiences and perceptions of English learning. The questionnaire focused particularly on students' perceptions of English learning in relation to real-world experiences, Papua maritime culture, local contexts, communication activities,

and culturally relevant learning materials.

### Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively using three complementary procedures: descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and exploratory factor analysis. First, descriptive statistics were used to identify the central tendency of responses. Item-level means were calculated to determine the relative strength of students' perceptions across the questionnaire items. Percentage distributions were also used to describe respondent characteristics. Second, the reliability of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. This procedure was used to assess the internal consistency of the 20 questionnaire items. Third, EFA was conducted to investigate the latent structure underlying students' perceptions. Before extraction, the suitability of the data for factor analysis was examined using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. A high KMO value and a statistically significant Bartlett's test were interpreted as evidence that the correlation matrix was appropriate for factor analysis.

**Table 5. Reliability Statistics**

| <b>Instrument</b>                                       | <b>Number of Items</b> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> | <b>Interpretation</b>          |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| RWAL Maritime Culture-Based English Learning Perception | 20                     | 0.900                   | Excellent internal consistency |

The questionnaire produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.900, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the 20 items. The result suggests that the items functioned consistently as a measure of students' perceptions of RWAL-based English learning.

### Descriptive Analysis of Students' Perceptions

The descriptive analysis was conducted at the item level. Table 6 presents the mean scores of the perception items, arranged from the highest to the lowest mean score.

**Table 6. Mean Scores of Students' Perception Items**

| <b>Rank</b> | <b>Item No.</b> | <b>Statement</b>                                                | <b>Mean</b> |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1           | 1               | English is important for my future life                         | 5.781       |
| 2           | 4               | I need more speaking practice                                   | 5.600       |
| 3           | 6               | I have internet/HP access for English learning                  | 5.498       |
| 4           | 13              | Experience-based learning makes me active                       | 5.149       |
| 5           | 15              | Videos, brochures, and presentations improve my English ability | 5.113       |
| 6           | 12              | Real-life activities make English easier                        | 5.077       |
| 7           | 11              | Local-context materials are easier to understand                | 5.039       |
| 8           | 9               | Papua maritime culture is an interesting English source         | 4.862       |

|    |    |                                                           |       |
|----|----|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 9  | 14 | I want to explain local culture using English             | 4.781 |
| 10 | 3  | I am confident using English in real situations           | 4.776 |
| 11 | 10 | I am interested in learning English through Papua culture | 4.824 |
| 12 | 18 | I can have simple conversations with tourists             | 4.412 |
| 13 | 8  | I know Papua maritime traditions                          | 4.376 |
| 14 | 17 | I can introduce Papua culture to foreigners               | 4.227 |
| 15 | 20 | I can communicate Papua culture in English                | 4.090 |
| 16 | 7  | I have direct maritime activity experience                | 4.083 |
| 17 | 19 | I can use maritime English vocabulary                     | 4.055 |
| 18 | 16 | I can explain local tourism places in English             | 3.847 |

The item numbering and means above reproduce the values supplied in the study data. The original list contains 18 reported items although the instrument is described as containing 20 items; Items 2 and 5 therefore need to be checked against the raw dataset before publication. The descriptive results show that the highest reported perception concerned the importance of English for students' future lives ( $M = 5.781$ ). The relatively high mean for the need for speaking practice ( $M = 5.600$ ) also indicates that students recognize the importance of developing practical oral communication skills.

Perceptions concerning experience-based learning ( $M = 5.149$ ), the use of videos, brochures, and presentations ( $M = 5.113$ ), real-life activities ( $M = 5.077$ ), and local-context materials ( $M = 5.039$ ) were also relatively high. These findings indicate that students generally respond positively to learning activities connected with authentic experiences and local contexts. In contrast, several items related to the application of English in authentic cultural and tourism contexts received comparatively lower mean scores. The lowest reported score concerned students' ability to explain local tourism places in English ( $M = 3.847$ ), followed by the ability to use maritime English vocabulary ( $M = 4.055$ ) and communicate Papua culture in English ( $M = 4.090$ ). The pattern suggests a distinction between students' recognition of the importance of English and their perceived readiness to use English for culturally situated communication.

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

To examine the underlying structure of the students' perceptions, an Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted. The adequacy of the correlation matrix was first assessed using the KMO measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity.

**Table 7. KMO and Bartlett's Test**

| Test                                            | Value       |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy | 0.928       |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity – Chi-square      | 5853.011    |
| Degree of Freedom                               | 190         |
| Significance                                    | $p < 0.001$ |

The KMO value of 0.928 indicates a high level of sampling adequacy for factor analysis. In addition, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 5853.011$ ,  $df = 190$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix and that the inter-item correlations were

sufficient to proceed with factor extraction.

### Emerging Perception Dimensions

The EFA identified four conceptual dimensions underlying students' perceptions of RWAL-based English learning. These dimensions are presented in Table 8.

**Table 8. Emerging Dimensions of RWAL-Based English Learning Perceptions**

| Factor   | Dimension                                    | Main Indicators                                                                                             |
|----------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Factor 1 | English Communication and Learning Readiness | English importance, speaking practice, confidence, readiness for communication                              |
| Factor 2 | Maritime Cultural Integration                | Awareness of Papua maritime culture, local knowledge, culturally relevant learning materials                |
| Factor 3 | Authentic Learning Engagement                | Experience-based learning, real-life activities, videos, presentations, projects                            |
| Factor 4 | Cultural Communication Application           | Introducing Papua culture, explaining tourism sites, maritime vocabulary, cultural communication in English |

### 3.9 Interpretation of the Emerging Factors

The four factors identified through the exploratory analysis provide a multidimensional picture of students' perceptions of Real-World Authentic Learning (RWAL) in Papua maritime culture-based English learning. Rather than representing isolated dimensions, the factors reveal a progression from general learning orientation to contextual awareness, authentic engagement, and practical cultural communication. This pattern is particularly important because it demonstrates that students' positive orientation toward English does not automatically translate into confidence in using English in culturally situated real-world contexts.

Factor 1: English Communication and Learning Readiness.

The first factor represents students' foundational orientation toward English learning. The relatively high mean score for the importance of English for future life ( $M = 5.781$ ) indicates that English is perceived as a relevant form of future-oriented capital. At the same time, the high score for the need for additional speaking practice ( $M = 5.600$ ) suggests that students recognize a gap between understanding the importance of English and having sufficient opportunities to use it communicatively. This distinction is pedagogically significant. Students appear to possess learning readiness and instrumental motivation, but their readiness has not necessarily developed into equivalent communicative confidence.

The pattern is reinforced by the lower score for confidence in using English in real situations ( $M = 4.776$ ). Thus, the first factor can be interpreted as reflecting a motivation–practice gap: students value English and want to develop their speaking ability, but they still require opportunities to transform learning motivation into actual communicative performance. Within an RWAL framework, this finding supports the importance of learning activities that move

beyond language knowledge toward repeated communication in meaningful situations.

#### Factor 2: Maritime Cultural Integration.

The second factor demonstrates that Papua maritime culture has potential relevance as a contextual resource for English learning. Students responded positively to the idea of using local-context materials, with the item concerning the ease of understanding local-context materials receiving a relatively high mean score ( $M = 5.039$ ). Similarly, Papua maritime culture was perceived as an interesting source for English learning ( $M = 4.862$ ), while interest in learning English through Papua culture reached  $M = 4.824$ .

These findings suggest that cultural integration is not merely an additional contextual feature but can function as a bridge between students' lived experiences and English learning content. Maritime traditions, local tourism, community practices, and indigenous knowledge can provide concrete communicative content through which students learn vocabulary, expressions, descriptive language, presentation skills, and intercultural communication. The relatively moderate score for students' knowledge of Papua maritime traditions ( $M = 4.376$ ), however, indicates that the existence of cultural resources does not necessarily mean that students possess equally strong cultural knowledge. Consequently, RWAL should involve not only the incorporation of local culture into English materials but also opportunities for students to explore, document, and critically communicate their own cultural environment.

#### Factor 3: Authentic Learning Engagement.

The third factor concerns students' orientation toward learning through experiences that resemble real-world situations. The mean scores for experience-based learning ( $M = 5.149$ ), videos, brochures, and presentations ( $M = 5.113$ ), and real-life activities ( $M = 5.077$ ) demonstrate relatively positive perceptions of experiential and contextualized learning.

This pattern provides an important empirical basis for implementing RWAL in English instruction. Students appear to respond positively when learning is connected with activities, experiences, products, and situations beyond conventional classroom exercises. In the context of Papua maritime culture, such activities could include creating tourism brochures, producing short videos about maritime traditions, conducting interviews with community members, presenting local destinations in English, or developing digital storytelling projects. Such activities allow language learning to occur through meaningful tasks rather than through decontextualized linguistic exercises.

Importantly, however, positive perceptions of authentic learning activities should not be interpreted as evidence that students have already developed strong authentic-learning competencies. The descriptive results indicate that students appreciate experience-based learning, while their confidence in performing specific English communication tasks remains comparatively moderate. This distinction suggests that engagement may precede competence: students are receptive to authentic learning environments, but they need systematic scaffolding to convert engagement into communicative proficiency.

#### Factor 4: Cultural Communication Application.

The fourth factor represents the most explicitly performance-oriented dimension. It concerns students' perceived ability to use English to communicate Papua cultural and tourism knowledge. Compared with the more general perceptions of English importance and authentic learning, several application-oriented indicators produced lower mean scores. For example, students' perceived ability to explain local tourism places in English was the lowest reported item ( $M = 3.847$ ), while the ability to use maritime English vocabulary ( $M = 4.055$ ) and communicate Papua culture in English ( $M = 4.090$ ) remained comparatively modest.

This pattern is analytically important because it indicates a contextual communication gap. Students may understand that English is important and may support authentic learning approaches, but they are less confident when required to transform local knowledge into English-mediated communication. Therefore, the challenge is not simply increasing students' exposure to English or local culture independently; rather, instruction needs to develop the interface between cultural knowledge and communicative language use.

For example, students may know a local maritime tradition in Indonesian or a local language but still lack the English vocabulary, discourse structures, pronunciation, and presentation strategies necessary to explain that tradition to international audiences. RWAL can address this gap by designing progressively scaffolded tasks, beginning with vocabulary and sentence construction and progressing toward interviews, presentations, tourism descriptions, digital storytelling, and authentic interaction with visitors.

#### 3.10 Cross-Factor Interpretation

Taken together, the four factors reveal a meaningful pattern in students' perceptions. The findings can be conceptualized as a progression:

English Learning Readiness → Maritime Cultural Integration → Authentic Learning Engagement → Cultural Communication Application

This progression suggests that students' perceptions encompass both affective-cognitive readiness and practical communicative application. The first three dimensions indicate relatively positive orientations toward English, local cultural content, and authentic learning experiences. The fourth dimension, however, reveals that translating these positive orientations into actual cultural communication remains more challenging. The pattern can therefore be interpreted as a readiness–engagement–application continuum. Students appear to be ready to learn English, receptive to culturally contextualized materials, and supportive of authentic learning experiences, but they require additional pedagogical support to apply English confidently in culturally situated situations.

This finding has an important implication for RWAL implementation. Authentic learning should not simply mean adding local cultural topics to English lessons. Instead, authenticity needs to be operationalized through meaningful communicative tasks with recognizable real-world purposes. In the Papua maritime context, English learning could involve students acting as local cultural interpreters, tourism promoters, community interviewers, digital content creators, or presenters of maritime heritage. Such roles provide a concrete communicative purpose for English use while simultaneously strengthening students' engagement with their local cultural environment.

#### Pedagogical Implications

The factor structure suggests several pedagogical implications. First, English instruction should provide more structured speaking opportunities, particularly because students explicitly recognize the need for speaking practice. Second, Papua maritime culture can be systematically integrated into learning materials rather than being treated as supplementary content. Third, authentic activities should involve tangible products and real audiences, such as tourism brochures, videos, presentations, podcasts, or digital storytelling. Fourth, cultural communication tasks should be scaffolded so that students gradually move from recognizing and describing cultural elements toward independently presenting them in English.

The relatively lower scores for tourism explanation and cultural communication should therefore not be interpreted simply as weaknesses. Rather, they identify specific areas where instructional intervention can be concentrated. The results provide empirical support for designing RWAL activities that connect students' existing cultural knowledge with progressively more demanding English communication tasks.

### Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the general purpose and procedure of the research. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis processes, and individual respondents were not identified in the reporting of findings. The data were analyzed and presented in aggregate form to ensure that the results represented overall patterns of student perceptions rather than identifiable individual responses.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined students' perceptions of Real-World Authentic Learning (RWAL) based on Papua maritime culture in English language learning through a quantitative survey involving 745 students. The findings demonstrate that students generally recognize the importance of English and show positive perceptions toward authentic, experiential, and culturally contextualized learning. However, the findings also reveal a noticeable gap between students' strong orientation toward English learning and their perceived ability to apply English confidently in authentic cultural and tourism-related communication.

The strongest perception was related to the importance of English for students' future lives ( $M = 5.781$ ), indicating a strong future-oriented orientation toward English learning. Students also expressed a clear need for additional speaking practice ( $M = 5.600$ ) and responded positively to experience-based learning ( $M = 5.149$ ), multimedia learning resources ( $M = 5.113$ ), and real-life activities ( $M = 5.077$ ). These findings indicate that students are receptive to learning environments in which English is used for meaningful and contextualized purposes rather than being treated solely as an academic subject.

At the same time, the comparatively lower scores for explaining local tourism places in English ( $M = 3.847$ ), using maritime English vocabulary ( $M = 4.055$ ), and communicating Papua culture in English ( $M = 4.090$ ) indicate that students' perceived communicative application remains less developed. The findings therefore suggest a readiness–application gap: students value English and are receptive to authentic learning, but require greater opportunities and structured scaffolding to transform their cultural knowledge into English-mediated communication.

The findings further demonstrate the pedagogical relevance of Papua maritime culture as a contextual resource for English learning. Students' positive perception of Papua maritime culture as an English learning resource ( $M = 4.862$ ) suggests that local maritime knowledge can provide meaningful contexts for vocabulary development, speaking practice, presentation, digital storytelling, tourism communication, and environmental education. In this regard, culture is not positioned merely as supplementary instructional content but as a potential bridge between students' lived experiences and global communication.

The instrument demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.900, while the KMO value of 0.928 and significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ( $\chi^2 = 5853.011$ ,  $df = 190$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicated that the data were suitable for exploring the underlying perception structure. The analysis identified four dimensions: English Communication and Learning Readiness, Maritime Cultural Integration, Authentic Learning Engagement, and Cultural Communication Application. Together, these dimensions illustrate that students' perceptions of RWAL encompass motivational, cultural, experiential, and communicative components.

The principal contribution of this study is therefore the conceptualization of RWAL as an approach that can begin from learners' own cultural and geographical environments. Authenticity in English learning does not necessarily require an externally defined or foreign context. In the Papua maritime setting, authenticity can emerge from students' everyday relationships with maritime environments, cultural practices, local tourism, community knowledge, and ecological realities. Such contexts can provide meaningful purposes for using English while simultaneously enabling students to represent their own cultural knowledge to wider audiences.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings support the development of maritime culture-based English projects, including tourism-guiding activities, cultural interviews, digital storytelling, bilingual brochures, environmental communication projects, and presentations of local maritime traditions. These activities can provide structured opportunities for students to move progressively from cultural recognition and language learning toward authentic communication.

Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted within the limitations of the study. The cross-sectional survey design captures students' perceptions at a particular point in time and therefore does not establish the causal effects of RWAL on English proficiency. In addition, perception data do not directly demonstrate students' actual speaking or communicative performance. Future research should consequently combine quantitative perception measures with performance-based assessments, classroom observations, interviews, longitudinal designs, and intervention studies. Further research could also examine differences across coastal and inland communities and investigate how digital technologies can support the documentation and international communication of Papua maritime knowledge.

Overall, this study suggests that the educational value of RWAL lies not only in making English learning more authentic but also in creating opportunities for students to use English to communicate knowledge that is personally and culturally meaningful. English learning becomes more meaningful when students learn not only how to communicate in English, but also how to communicate their own world through English.

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