

# The 4th International Conference on Research, Implementation, and Education of Mathematics and Science (4th ICRIEMS) Research and Education for Developing Scientific Attitude in Sciences and Mathematics



**Yogyakarta, Indonesia**

15-16 May 2017

**Editors**

Cahyorini Kusumawardani, Agus Maman Abadi, Slamet Suyanto,  
Warsono and Insih Wilujeng

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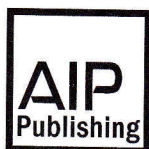
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Melville, New York, 2017  
AIP Conference Proceedings

Volume 1868

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ISBN 978-0-7354-1548-5

ISSN 0094-243X

Printed in the United States of America

Preface:  
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**AIP Conference Proceedings, Volume 1868**  
**The 4th International Conference on Research, Implementation,**  
**and Education of Mathematics and Science (4th ICRIEMS)**  
**Research and Education for Developing Scientific Attitude**  
**in Sciences and Mathematics**

**Table of Contents**

<b>Preface: 4th International Conference on Research, Implementation, and Education of Mathematics and Sciences (ICRIEMS)</b>	010001
<b>CHEMISTRY</b>	
<b>Amphiphilic chitosan derivatives as carrier agents for rotenone</b> Azlan Kamari and Nurul Farhana Ahmad Aljafree	020001
<b>Characterization of metal particles on supporting materials mordenite, ultra stable Y zeolita, and natural zeolit</b> Rujito Sesario, Khoirina Dwi, Fitria Rahmawati, Eddy Heraldly, and Rachmadani	020002
<b>Characterization of ecofriendly polyethylene fiber from plastic bag waste</b> Asril S. Soekoco, Noerati, Maya Komalasari, Kurniawan, and Agus Hananto	020003
<b>Determination of ultraviolet filter activity on coconut oil cosmetic cream</b> Eni Widiyati	020004
<b>Investigation of <math>Cu_2SnSe_3</math> preparation by simultaneous electrodeposition as precursor of <math>Cu_2ZnSnSe_4</math> thin film solar cell</b> Gunawan, Abdul Haris, Didik Setiyo Widodo, Wilman Septina, and Shigeru Ikeda	020005
<b>Screening of metabolites secondary compounds in extract of moringa fruit and determination of inhibitory effect on growth of the fungus <i>Candida albicans</i></b> Siti Nuryanti and Dwi Juli Puspitasari	020006
<b>Identification and antioxidant activity test of bioactive compound produced from ethanol extract of temukunci (<i>Boesenbergia rotunda</i>)</b> Sri Atun, Sri Handayani, and Luthfi Fitri Frindryani	020007
<b>Preparation of carboxymethyl cellulose produced from purun tikus (<i>Eleocharis dulcis</i>)</b> Sunardi, Nina Mutia Febriani, and Ahmad Budi Junaidi	020008
<b>Degradation of blue and red inks by Ag/AgCl photocatalyst under UV light irradiation</b> Hasan Daupor and Asmat Chenea	020009
<b>Antibacterial activity and the hydrophobicity of cotton coated with hexadecyltrimethoxysilane</b> Eli Rohaeti and Anna Rakhmawati	020010
<b>Voltammogram of stainless steel/Fe-Co-Ni electrode on water electrolysis in base condition with dahlia pinnata tuber starch media</b> Isana S. Y. L., Dewi Yuanita, Sulistyani, and Heru Pratomo Al	020011

**Contribution from philosophy of chemistry to chemistry education: In a case of ionic liquids as technochemistry**

Ahmad Mudzakir, Hernani, Tuszie Widhiyanti, and Devi Pratiwi Sudrajat

030012

**Identification of the students' critical thinking skills through biochemistry laboratory work report**

Yunita Arian Sani Anwar, Senam, and Endang W. Laksono

030013

**Misconception of pre-service chemistry teachers about the concept of resonances in organic chemistry course**

Hayuni Retno Widarti, Rini Retnosari, and Siti Marfu'ah

030014

**The nature of science and technology for pre-service chemistry teacher: A case of techno-chemistry experiment "From *Stannum Metallicum* to conductive glass"**

A. Mudzakir, T. Widhiyanti, Hernani, M. Arifin, A. N. Lestari, and S. Jauhariansyah

030015

**Content knowledge development in a chemistry teacher preparation program: A current potentials and challenges**

Tuszie Widhiyanti, David F. Treagust, Mauro Mocerino, and Venkat Vishnumolakala

030016

**MATHEMATICS**

**A review on eigen values of adjacency matrix of graph with cliques**

Ema Carnia, Moch. Suyudi, Isah Aisah, and Asep K. Supriatna

040001

**Mapping the Indonesian territory, based on pollution, social demography and geographical data, using self organizing feature map**

Kuswari Hernawati, Nur Insani, Bambang S. H. M., Nur Hadi W., and Sahid

040002

**A remark on the Miller-Mocanu Lemma**

Marjono and Saadatul Fitri

040003

**Queueing system analysis of multi server model at XYZ insurance company in Tasikmalaya city**

Ahmad Muhajir and Nikenasih Binatari

040004

**Volatility modeling for IDR exchange rate through APARCH model with student- $t$  distribution**

Didit Budi Nugroho and Bambang Susanto

040005

**Detecting P and S-wave of Mt. Rinjani seismic based on a locally stationary autoregressive (LSAR) model**

Nurhaida, Subanar, Abdurakhman, and Agus Maman Abadi

040006

**Classification of toddler nutritional status using fuzzy inference system (FIS)**

Dian Permatasari, Isnaini Nur Azizah, Hanifah Latifah Hadiat, and Agus Maman Abadi

040007

**Analyzing bin-width effect on the computed entropy**

Sri Purwani, Julita Nahar, and Carole Twining

040008

**Limited memory Broyden-Fletcher-Goldfarb-Shanno (L-BFGS) method for the parameter estimation on geographically weighted ordinal logistic regression model (GWOLR)**

Dewi Retno Sari Saputro and Purnami Widyaningsih

040009



<b>Accuracy evaluation of Fourier series analysis and singular spectrum analysis for predicting the volume of motorcycle sales in Indonesia</b>	Yoga Sasmita and Gumgum Darmawan	040010
<b>The accuracy comparison between ARFIMA and singular spectrum analysis for forecasting the sales volume of motorcycle in Indonesia</b>	Yosep Oktavianus Sitohang and Gumgum Darmawan	040011
<b>Eigen values in epidemic and other bio-inspired models</b>	A. K. Supriatna, N. Anggriani, E. Carnia, and A. Raihan	040012
<b>MATHEMATICS EDUCATION</b>		
<b>Can goal-free problems facilitating students' flexible thinking?</b>	Sity Rahmy Maulidya, Rusi Ulfa Hasanah, and Endah Retnowati	050001
<b>Problem based learning to improve proportional reasoning of students in mathematics learning</b>	Misnasanti, Ratna Widiyanti Utami, and Fevi Rahmawati Suwanto	050002
<b>The comparison of learning model viewed from the student cognitive style</b>	Astunnisyah, Budiyo, and Isnandar Slamet	050003
<b>The analysis of probability task completion; Taxonomy of probabilistic thinking-based across gender in elementary school students</b>	Dwi Ivayana Sari, I. Ketut Budayasa, and Dwi Juniati	050004
<b>Fraction in shot-put: A learning trajectory</b>	R. I. I. Putri and Zulkardi	050005
<b>Gesture analysis of students' majoring mathematics education in micro teaching process</b>	Agnesya Maldini, Budi Usodo, and Sri Subanti	050006
<b>Improving attitudes toward mathematics learning with problem posing in class VIII</b>	Alfa Vionita and Dyah Purboningsih	050007
<b>Analysis of junior high school students' difficulty in resolving rectangular conceptual problems</b>	Aliksia Kristiana Dwi Utami, Mardiyana, and Ikrar Pramudya	050008
<b>Strategic competence of senior secondary school students in solving mathematics problem based on cognitive style</b>	Andi Syukriani, Dwi Juniati, and Tatag Yuli Eko Siswono	050009
<b>The use of CORE model by metacognitive skill approach in developing characters junior high school students</b>	Dahlia Fisher, Poppy Yaniawati, and Yaya Sukjaya Kusumah	050010
<b>Mathematical visualization process of junior high school students in solving a contextual problem based on cognitive style</b>	Edy Setiyo Utomo, Dwi Juniati, and Tatag Yuli Eko Siswono	050011

<b>The relation between learning mathematics and students' competencies in understanding texts</b> Hapipi, Syahrul Azmi, Sripatmi, and Amrullah	050012
<b>The comparison of Missouri mathematics project and teams games tournament viewed from emotional quotient eight grade student of junior school</b> Indra Setyawan, Budiyo, and Isnandar Slamet	050013
<b>Consistency and inconsistency of prospective teachers' beliefs in mathematics, teaching, learning and problem solving</b> Muhtarom, Dwi Juniati, and Tatag Y. E. Siswono	050014
<b>Improving of prospective elementary teachers' reasoning: Learning geometry through mathematical investigation</b> Nana Sumarna and Izlan SENTRYO	050015
<b>The effectiveness of snow cube throwing learning model based on exploration</b> Nenden Mutiara Sari	050016
<b>Profile of mathematics anxiety of 7<sup>th</sup> graders</b> Patrisius Afrisno Udil, Tri Atmojo Kusmayadi, and Riyadi	050017
<b>Mathematical thinking styles of undergraduate students and their achievement in mathematics</b> Risnanosanti	050018
<b>Mathematical literacy skills of students' in term of gender differences</b> Siti Lailiyah	050019
<b>Indonesian pre-service teachers learning motivations and goal achievements: A qualitative study</b> Tian Abdul Aziz, Yopy Wahyu Purnomo, and Puri Pramudiani	050020
<b>Fractions division knowledge of elementary school student: The case of Lala</b> Yopy Wahyu Purnomo, Chairunnisa Widowati, Tian Abdul Aziz, and Puri Pramudiani	050021
<b>Developing learning trajectory on the circumference of a cycle with realistic mathematics education (RME)</b> Novi Indriani and Hongki Julie	050022
<b>The first cycle of the reflective pedagogical paradigm implementation in the introduction probability theory course</b> Hongki Julie	050023
<b>Science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) as mathematics learning approach in 21<sup>st</sup> century</b> Naila Milaturrahmah, Mardiyana, and Ikrar Pramudya	050024
<b>Mathematical disposition of junior high school students viewed from learning styles</b> Arief Karunia Putra, Budiyo, and Isnandar Slamet	050025



<b>The students' ability in the mathematical literacy for uncertainty problems on the PISA adaptation test</b>	Hongki Julie, Febi Sanjaya, and Ant. Yudhi Anggoro	050026
<b>The difficulties of Indonesian fourth graders in learning fractions: An early exploration of TIMSS 2015 results</b>	Ariyadi Wijaya	050027
<b>Effectiveness of discovery learning model on mathematical problem solving</b>	Yunita Herdiana, Wahyudin, and Ririn Sispiyati	050028
<b>Contextualizing symbol, symbolizing context</b>	Septiani Yugni Maudy, Didi Suryadi, and Endang Mulyana	050029
<b>The application of brain-based learning principles aided by GeoGebra to improve mathematical representation ability</b>	Nanang Priatna	050030
<b>Pre-service mathematics teachers' attitudes towards learning English: A case study in Yogyakarta</b>	Wahyu Setyaningrum	050031
<b>Measuring and factors influencing mathematics teachers' technological pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK) in three southernmost provinces, Thailand</b>	Lilla Adulyasas	050032
<b>Analysis of junior high school students' attempt to solve a linear inequality problem</b>	Muhammad Taqiyuddin, Encum Sumiaty, and Al Jupri	050033
<b>The development of AR book for computer learning</b>	Muneeroh Phadung, Najela Wani, and Nur-aiynee Tongmnee	050034
<b>Exploration the conception of prospective students teacher about limit of function</b>	Usman, Dwi Juniati, and Tatag Yuli Eko Siswono	050035
<b>Mathematics teachers' beliefs about scientific approach (SA) and implementation in mathematics learning</b>	Ahmad Abdul Mutholib, Imam Sujadi, and Sri Subanti	050036
<b>The development of a valid discovery-based learning module to improve students' mathematical connection</b>	Erna Kuneni, Mardiyana, and Ikrar Pramudya	050037
<b>PHYSICS</b>		
<b>The chemical bonds effect of <i>Amaranthus hybridus L.</i> and <i>Dracaena Angustifolia</i> on <math>TiO_2</math> as photo-sensitizer for dye-sensitized solar Cells (DSSC)</b>	A. H. Ahliha, F. Nurosyid, and A. Supriyanto	060001
<b>Effect of carbon black on thermal properties of charcoal and salacca leafstalk briquettes</b>	Chewa Thassana and Witoon Nuleg	060002



# Pre-service mathematics teachers' attitudes towards learning English: A case study in Yogyakarta

Wahyu Setyaningrum

Citation: *AIP Conference Proceedings* **1868**, 050031 (2017); doi: 10.1063/1.4995158

View online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1063/1.4995158>

View Table of Contents: <http://aip.scitation.org/toc/apc/1868/1>

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# Pre-service Mathematics Teachers' Attitudes towards Learning English: A case study in Yogyakarta

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**Abstract.** This study investigated attitudes of pre-service mathematics teachers towards English as one of the subject at the university. It is a qualitative study in which questionnaire and face-to-face interview were employed to collect the data. The participants of this study were sixty students of mathematics education department at one of the university in Yogyakarta. The main research question was concern with how pre-service mathematics teachers perceive the importance of learning English. This study found that most of the participants perceive English as an important language that should be acquired by mathematics teachers. Their beliefs about the importance of English were mostly due to instrumental orientation rather than integrative orientation, such as getting a good job, getting a scholarship and understanding learning sources that are written in English. The data also revealed some obstacles faced by pre-service mathematics teachers in learning English as an additional language for them. The main obstacles were related to the differences between English for mathematics and English in daily life including its vocabulary and structure. Most of the participants argued that several mathematics vocabularies had precise meaning and different from daily English. In addition, they found difficult to understand some sentences used in the paper journal due to its structure. This study therefore, provided an insight into the pre-service mathematics teachers' perception and obstacles when learning English that could be use in improving pre-service teachers' education.

## INTRODUCTION

English is an additional language for Indonesian. Pre-service mathematics teachers at several university should take English courses as part of their training. Nowadays, there is a need to gain proficiency in English for non-native speakers [1]. Some schools in non-native English countries such as South Afrika, Filipina, Malaysia and Indonesia use English as medium of instruction for mathematics and science. Moreover, some resources of teaching and learning are written in English. Therefore, there is the necessity for mathematics teachers and pre-service teachers to be proficient in English. However, previous research on English proficiency of Indonesian students show that the English proficiency of the Indonesian students are low and they are leaving from high schools or graduating from university without sufficient communicative skills [2,3].

Attitudes play crucial role in learning language [4]. Gardner [5] found that attitudes have an impact on motivation and learning achievement. Using a socio-educational model, Gardner identifies two types of motivational orientation namely integrative and instrumental. Integrative orientation related to awareness or interest in knowing native English speakers and their culture. Meanwhile, instrumental orientation refers to the potential practical advantages in relation to language proficiency. This two types of orientation have positive correlation to learning achievement [6]. Philipp [7] defined attitude as one's opinion towards certain things that manifested into acting, feeling, or thinking. Attitudes may involve positive or negative feelings "of moderate intensity and reasonable stability" [8].



Many studies have been conducted in the field of pre-service mathematics teachers attitudes towards mathematics such as van Zoest, Jones, and Thornton [9], Amato [10], Uusimaki and Nason [11], White, Perry, Way and Southwell [12], Maasepp and Bobis [13], and Cooke [14]. There are also many studies on the perception of pre-service mathematics teachers in relation to pedagogical knowledge [15,16,17]. However, less attention has been focused on the mathematics pre-service teachers' attitudes towards learning English. Pre-service teachers should be prepared not only in terms of knowledge and skills in their subject area but also the competence in the language of instruction.

This study therefore, explores the attitudes pre-service mathematics teachers towards learning English with regard to their integrative and instrumental orientation, that initially proposed by Gardner [5]. The attitudes explored in this study more focus on motivation of learning English as a language because motivation and attitudes are similar, there is no clear distinction between attitudes and motivation in the areas of second language acquisition [18]. This study also investigates obstacles that they faced when learning English. Knowing pre-service teachers' attitudes and obstacles could be beneficial for policy maker and teacher-training institution to formulate a better approach on teaching and learning processes to improve the attitudes and minimize the obstacles.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Participants

The participants were sixty students or pre-service mathematics teachers in one of the teacher-training institution in Yogyakarta district, Indonesia. This study was qualitative in nature hence limiting the number of participants is not aimed to generalize but clarify the idea [19]. They were purposively selected for the study because they were enrolled in English for mathematics education course in second semester of the academic year 2016/2017. They were aged between 19 and 22 years old, among them twenty-six students are male and the rest thirty-four students are female. In terms English background, a majority of the participants have been learnt English or about six to eight years as English is one of subject learnt at secondary school. The demographic information of the participants is summarized in table 1.

TABLE 1. Participants detail information

Gender		Age (years old)			Learn English for (years)		
M ale	Fe male	< 18	19 – 20	>2 1	1– 5	6–8	>8
26	34	0	56	4	6	37	17

### Instruments

This qualitative study employed questionnaire survey and interviews as the tools to gather data. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section focused on general demographic information included age, gender, English background, and their ethnicity. The second section aimed to uncover students' attitudes towards learning English. It presented 25 statement with Likert-type that modified from Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) developed by Gardner [5] and Vizconde [1]. This section was divided into two sub-construct of attitudes: integrative orientation (14 items) and motivational orientation (11 items). In relation to reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach alpha's value was 0.76 and the reliability value for all statement items was 0.86 which can be considered as good [20].

In the last section, students were presented with three open-ended questions related to the obstacles they faced when learning English more specifically English for mathematics education. The original survey was written in Bahasa Indonesia and the participants could answer it either in English or Bahasa Indonesia. It was administered anonymously and required approximately 30 minutes to complete.

A semi-structured interview was employed as it allows the researcher to clarify and probe deeper into the answers of the participants. There were twenty-one interviewees who represent participants who hold positive and negative attitudes towards learning English. All interviews were done voluntarily and they could use Bahasa Indonesia or English in expressing their answers or opinions. The participants were informed that the exchanges

were to be tape-recorded. The interviews lasted for a minimum of twenty to forty minutes per participants and they were assured of the confidentiality of their answers.

## Data Analysis

Data from the three different sections of the questionnaire were examined separately. Data from section one were analysed descriptively in order to provide additional information for the results of sections two and three. Meanwhile, data obtained from section two that involving ratings scales were analyzed using SPSS statistical software to calculate descriptive statistics, frequencies, and percents. This section measured pre-service mathematics teachers' attitudes towards learning English that utilized a five-point Likert scale that included "Strongly Disagree" (1), "Disagree" (2), "Unsure" (3), "Agree" (4), and "Strongly Agree" (5). Score 5 (SA) was the most supportive or favorable result that implied positive attitudes and 1 (SD) was the least supportive or least favorable response implied negative attitudes, 3 (U) was considered the midpoint that indicated neutral position. The scores for negative statements in the questionnaire are vice versa. "Strongly Disagree" (5), "Disagree" (4), "Unsure" (3), "Agree" (2), and "Strongly Agree" (1). There were fourteen positive statements and eleven negative statements in the questionnaire.

The data obtained from section three were analysed using the content analysis. Content analysis is a method of analyzing documents systematically and objectively in order to describe and quantify phenomena [21,22,23,24]. This method attempts to examine meaning and identify pattern of the data in their context [25,26]. It was aimed to provide an insight about pre-service mathematics teachers' obstacles when learning English by analyzing data into several categories of obstacles. The sixty students' answers on the three open-ended questions survey items were placed into three conceptual categories or themes: obstacles to understand mathematical text, to comprehend mathematical vocabulary and to clearly articulate their ideas in English.

Data from the interviews were transcribed carefully using non-verbatim approach. The transcribed data were then analysed using content analysis approach. Answers were categorized into three main classifications: positive, neutral and negative attitudes towards the language. Results were reviewed and analyzed thoroughly using NVivo software. The data were then summarized and interpreted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Attitudes towards English as a Language

Data from questionnaire revealed that more than half of the participants (55%) have positive attitudes towards English (Table 2). In the contrary, 15% of the participants hold negative attitudes towards English. Meanwhile, the rest 30% stayed neutral.

TABLE 2. attitudes of pre-service mathematics teachers towards learning English

Attitude	Number of participants	Percentage
Positive	33	55%
Neutral	18	30%
Negative	9	15%

The interviews aimed to discover the reason participant hold certain attitudes. Most of the participants who have positive attitude believed that English is an important language in the globalization era where there is no barrier among the countries around the world (as summarized in Table 3). The result is consistent with the findings of the previous studies that state English has a prestigious place in Asia [27,28,29,30] involving Indonesia [31,32]. This finding also support the argument that English is a way to see the broader world, in other world, it is "a window to the world" [33].



**TABLE 3.** Reason for having Positive Attitudes

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Learning English support learning mathematics	64%
Pursuing study	21%
Participating in academic events (international conference, guest lecturer, etc)	15%

On the other hand, pre-service teachers who have negative attitudes argued that it is not a compulsory for pre-service mathematics teachers to be proficient in English. They believed that mastering subject matter, in this case mathematics, is more important than mastering English as a language. Some others claimed there are limited number of school that use English as the language of instruction in Indonesia thus they prefer and plan to teach in regular school where the language of instruction is Bahasa Indonesia.

The participants who stayed neutral stated that they just follow the curriculum. They believed that English important language but it did not an obligatory for mathematics teachers to acquire English proficiency. Therefore, their orientation of learning English was pass the course.

**TABLE 4.** Attitudes towards learning English by gender

<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Positive	9	24	33
Neutral	10	8	18
Negative	7	2	9

Table 4 shows the attitudes differences with regards to gender. Female tend to have positive attitude towards learning English compared to male. Among the participant who hold positive attitude, around 73% are female. On the other hand, more than 78% of the negative attitudes are male. This finding support the claim that female have positive attitudes towards learning language [34,35,36]. Previous studies show that female tend to learn language better than their counterpart [37]. This might explain this phenomenon. Another possibility explanation is that the fact that the number of female participant is bigger than the female one. However, there is no clear-cut explanation about this attitude tendency as shown in the previous studies [38,39].

### **Integrative versus Instrumental Orientation**

Integrative orientation in this study defined as a desire to learn a language in order to know the identity, culture or way of life of the target language and people who speak it. The items in the questionnaire uncover pre-service teachers' perspective when learning English, including: learning English to communicate with other people from native English speakers, learning English to know their way of life and to know the culture. Meanwhile, the instrumental orientation refers to desire to learn a language due to the utility of the target language such as getting a job, being high skilled people, being professional teachers and understanding teaching and learning resources.

Data from the questionnaire revealed that pre-service mathematics teachers in this study more focus on the instrumental orientation rather than intergrative one. It can be seen from the mean score between the two categories of orientation (Table 5).

**TABLE 5.** Mean score for each orientation category

<b>Orientation</b>	<b>Mean score</b>
Integrative orientation	2.98
Instrumental orientation	4.37

Tabel 5 shows that instrumental orientation has relatively higher mean score than integrative one in the case of learning English for pre-service mathematics teachers. They interested to learn English in order to be prepare their future for example to be skilled and profesional teachers to compete in globalization era, to communicate when traveling abroad, and to help them mastering mathematics concepts since there many good mathematics resources written in English. From the data thus it can be conclude that pre-service teachers share common similarity that is emphasizing on the value of English as an international language. This finding in line with Krikpatrick [40] and Bradford [41] which found learner more focus on the utilitarian of English is a lingua franca. Moreover, pre-service mathematics teachers did not have strong desire to know the cultures or lifestyle of the people speaking the target language.

Taking into the gender differences, the pattern of the participants' responses show that female have higher instrumental orientation towards English than male. This result remains consistent when comparing integrative orientation between male and female. These findings differ from previous studies that conducted in pre-service teachers whose major is language. One of the possibility is that pre-service teachers whose major in mathematics more interested in mastering the subject matter, that is mathematics, rather than learning language. On the other hand, pre-service language teachers are expected to master the subject matter, English, and knowing the culture, the people and all aspects related to English. However, it should be noted that the number of participants of this study might not sufficient to represent the general of view of pre-service mathematics teachers.

### **Obstacles in Learning English**

This study was also aimed to investigate obstacles pre-service mathematics teachers faced when learning English as a course at the University level. Analysing pre-service teachers' responses on the open questions in the third section of the questionnaire, reveals two categories of obstacle namely obstacles in the written English and obstacle in the spoken English. The first category includes obstacles pre-service faced when reading learning sources that are written in English and writing academic assignments. The later category involves obstacles that they experienced during understanding the explanations from lecturer or guest lecturer (either native or non-native English speakers) and understanding learning resources (either audio or audio visual) in English.

Obstacles in the first category that found in this study are the differences in terms of language style in academic writing such as different vocabularies and sentence structures. Pre-service mathematics teachers argued that the language used in academic writing and others learning resources are more complicated than the language they learnt at high schools. In relation to the vocabulary differences, the interviews reveal that mathematical vocabularies are the main source of difficulties because the meaning of the mathematical vocabularies are differed to the everyday English and some others are only used in mathematics. It is need time for pre-service mathematics teachers to familiarized with the mathematical vocabularies. They also found more difficult when reading academic papers that are written by native English speaker as they argued that the native English speakers tend to use precise vocabularies that are unfamiliar for them. This result consistent with the findings of Moschkovich [42] and Lager [43] that point out the characteristic differences between mathematical language and everyday English as the source of problems for non-native English speakers.

In relation to obstacles in understanding spoken English, pre-service mathematics teachers experienced some problems when they have to understand what native English teachers said in the video or tape. They argued that some pronouciation are different from those that they have learnt. In addition, the differences between American English, British English and others put more tension for the pre-service teachers. This difference lead to differences on the accent and the vocabulary they used. This finding support Carlo [44] argument that states the divergences between English used in America, Great Britian and others places could be one of source of confusion. It is interesting that pre-service teachers could spot the differences between American and British English, since Indonesian are more familiar with American English. However, more studies are needed to explore the obstacles they faced for an example looking more detail on the difficult vocabularies they found.



## CONCLUSION

The positive attitude held by most of the pre-service mathematics teachers is an important aspect in achieving language proficiency. Based on the attitudes orientations identified in this study, it gives an insight that the pre-service teachers aware of the necessity of English such as employment and social and academic advancement. This study also discovers the similarity of obstacles experienced by other non-native English speakers such as understanding the accents, vocabularies and sentence structures in both written and spoken English. Although the study was limited to sixty participants from one institution, there is a great possibility that pre-service mathematics teachers to equip their own with subject matter as well as language of instruction even though some obstacles identified. Implication for teaching English for pre-service mathematics teachers is that the lecturers should more aware of the variability of attitudes, its various factors, orientations and obstacles behind them and thus the findings of this study could as an input to plan an effective and efficient teaching practice. However, this study is insufficient to draw meaningful conclusions about pre-service mathematics teachers' attitudes towards English across such a large and diverse country. Further studies can be undertaken using respondents in other teacher-training institutions across the country for more conclusive databases.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors thank to the Faculty of Mathematics and Science, YSU, due to the funding for this work.

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