CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The Indonesian nation's aspiration, as stated in the 1945 Constitution's fourth paragraph, is to cultivate intelligent and prosperous individuals. This aligns with the national education's objective, which aims to intellectualize the nation's life and develop well-rounded individuals with knowledge and skills (Constitution No. 20, 2003). The purpose of national education is to equip the Indonesian people with the ability to compete locally, nationally, and globally. An analysis of the objective circumstances reveals a significant challenge in the form of low proficiency in English, which is a language of paramount importance.

Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (2019) presents the average results of the National English Examination at different educational levels. The scores indicate the following: 50.23% at the junior high school level, 45.94% at the MTs level, 53.58% in Natural Sciences at the high school level, 49.13% in Language Studies at the high school level, 44.78% in Social Sciences at the high school level, 38.51% in Protestant high schools, 37.51% in Catholic high schools, 47.12% in Language Studies at the MA school level, 46.99% in Natural Sciences at the MA school level, 44.22% in Religions at the MA school level, 40.59% in Social Sciences at the MA school level, and 41.78% in vocational high schools. Additionally, the National Equivalency Exam for high school students achieved the following scores: 38.11% for Package B, 31.08% for Package C (Science), and 23.5% for Package D (Social Sciences). Moreover, data

from SMA Negri 1 Jayapura, Papua, indicates an average score of 50.67% for Natural Sciences, 46.65% for Language Studies, and 38.41% for Social Sciences in the National English Examination.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that English proficiency in Indonesia, particularly in SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura, Papua, remains relatively low. A majority of students have not achieved mastery, while only a few have. Consequently, this inadequacy hampers the effectiveness of English education and the development of high-quality human resources in Indonesia.

This problem becomes a significant burden when it comes to job competition. Many applicants struggle and fail to meet English language requirements during recruitment processes due to insufficient knowledge (Tiara Nur F & Lin Emy P., 2020). Several governmental and private institutions demand a TOEFL certificate as a prerequisite for registration. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is a standardized test that evaluates an individual's English proficiency through listening, writing, structure, expression, and reading assessments (Sukur, 2013). Moreover, every university in Indonesia requires a TOEFL test to gauge the English proficiency of its students (Sugeng et al., 2010). This is evident from the implementation of the TOEFL test as a graduation requirement at both the undergraduate (S1) and postgraduate (S2) levels in various universities. Additionally, accredited scholarship programs for studying abroad also officially impose TOEFL score requirements, typically set at a minimum of 550 or 600, depending on the field of study and university policies (Aries Utomo & Pardmi, 2019).

Based on the objective data regarding low English proficiency in Indonesia, especially in SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura, Papua, innate factors such as language aptitude significantly contribute to students' English learning achievements. Many researchers, including Carroll (1990), Politzer & Haffield (1969), Anu Sharma (2021), and Idris et al., (2020), argue that language aptitude is an inherent ability that can be formed and enhanced through practice, leading to high levels of achievement.

On the basis of the problem of low mastery of English and the requirements for English mastery at international, national, and local levels in Papua, particularly at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura, and acknowledging the opinions of experts, it becomes evident that language aptitude plays a crucial role in fostering English language skills and student learning achievements. Therefore, the researcher is motivated to conduct a study titled *"The Relationship between Language Aptitude and English Learning Achievement at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura"*.

1.2 Research Question of the Study

Based on the background of the study above, the writer has identified the following problem formulation:

1. How is students' language aptitude at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura?

2. How is the students' English learning achievement at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura?

3. Is there any significant relationship between language aptitude and English learning achievement at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aims of this research are as follows:

1. To get information about students' language aptitude at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura.

2. To find out students' English learning achievement at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura.

3. To know whether there is or not a significant relationship between language aptitude and English learning achievement at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

The primary goal of this research is to examine the relationship between language aptitude and English learning achievement at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura. The study employs the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) developed by Carroll and Sapon (1959), which includes Number Learning, Phonetic Script, Spelling Clues, Word Sentences, and Paired Association. The researcher specifically focuses on an eleventh-grade language class consisting of 34 students.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of this study are anticipated to provide valuable insights for the field of education, particularly in enhancing lesson plans that adapted to language aptitude.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

1. Relationship

   As stated by McClave, Benson, and Sincich (2014), a relationship denotes a connection or association between two or more variables. In statistical analysis, assessing this relationship can aid in explaining and predicting specific phenomena or events. In the context of this research, the term relationship pertains to examining the relationship between language aptitude and English learning achievement at SMA Negeri 1 Jayapura.

2. Language Aptitude

   According to Carroll (1990), language aptitude refers to an individual's inherent potential to acquire a foreign or second language more easily, quickly, and effectively compared to their peers.

3. Learning Achievement

   According to Syafi'I et al (2018), learning achievement encompasses the outcomes attained following the teaching and learning process, which encompass cognitive, affective, and psychomotor goals. It is measured through tests and documented in final reports. In this research, learning achievement specifically refers to English learning achievement, including proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.