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## Students' Perception towards English Teacher's Interpersonal Communication Skill at SMP Negeri 3 Kupang

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### Abstract

The students' perceptions to their teacher' interpersonal communication skill at Junior High School (SMP N 3 Kupang). This study aims at knowing: 1) the teacher's interpersonal communication skill perceived students; 2) the difference of male and female students' perception to their teacher's interpersonal communication skill. The research uses descriptive quantitative method. The research subjects of this study are 27 male and 27 female students which are chosen randomly with precision 16% out of 178 for female students and 15% out of 185 male students. The result shows that the teacher' interpersonal communication skill which includes openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. The male students perceived their teacher's interpersonal communication skill in which equality is as highest position at score with 18.51% usually, and then positiveness at 17.90%, followed by supportiveness at 15.34% and empathy at 15.27%, and the lowest position is openness at 14.19%. Meanwhile, female students have perception, such as; empathy takes place in the highest position at 17.12% on usually performance of teacher's interpersonal communication skill compared with supportiveness, positiveness, openness, and equality (16.40%, 14.81%, 13.27%, and 12.16%, respectively). Then, on sometimes perception, female students perceived that supportiveness is the highest score with 53.96%. Then followed by equality with 51.85%, empathy with 50.46%, openness with 49.69% and the lowest score is positiveness with 42.59%. Meanwhile, seldom perception is on the level of 42.59% at positiveness, 37.03% at openness, 35.97% at equality, 32.40% at empathy, and supportiveness at 29.62%.

**Keywords:** *students' perception, communication, interpersonal communication*

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## Introduction

Teachers and students are two components that can be analogous as symbiotic mutualism. If one of these components is passive, it certainly will not yield maximum impact. As a reciprocal good communication skills, students as learners should also have good communication skills. This will bring convenience for students to learn and teachers to teach, so it will bring a positive impact in adding willingness of students to be active in teaching and learning activities in schools. As presented by Iriantara (2013: 20) Effective teachers not only know the subject-matter of the students, but also they are able to communicate their knowledge to students. In presenting their knowledge to students, teachers automatically should have good interpersonal communication.

According to Syaripudin (2013: 20) interpersonal communication is a communication done by two communicators or more in expressing idea or sharing information and knowledge among them. Interpersonal communication is done by two communicators called as dyadic communication. This kind of communication is not only done by two communicators but also done by some communicators in small group. In educational setting, this communication can be found in communication between teacher and students in teaching and learning process.

In line with Syaripudin (2013), Devito (1997: 25) divides teacher interpersonal skills into five kinds, namely; openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness and equality. Openness skill is how teacher's willingness to open up himself/herself to his/her students during teaching and learning process. Empathy emphasizes that how teacher position himself/herself in students' situation. Supportiveness talks about how teacher's attitude is ready to support students in facing learning difficulties. Then, positiveness is the skill of a teacher in encouraging students to be active in learning, and equality is skill of a teacher in treating students to be equal to his/her as partners in classroom in order to students can be afraid of him/her in teaching and learning process. In having interpersonal communication skill, teacher will be easy in running his/her role in teaching students.

Communication skills are owned by every teacher either teachers of elementary schools or teachers of high schools. This phenomenon happens in schools in Kota Kupang. One of the schools which consider its teachers' interpersonal communication skills is SMP Negeri 3 Kupang. This school is located in Kelurahan Naikolan, Maulafa Sub District of Kupang city.

Armed with this idea, the researcher is interested to conduct a research to know students' perception towards their English Teacher Interpersonal Communication Skills. There are at least three reasons why this study is conducted. First, teachers' interpersonal communication skills are skills that can affect students' motivation and attention in learning. Second, schools should help teachers to know "how to be a good communicator" in transferring knowledge. Third, teaching and learning will be done well when there is a good relationship between teacher as communicators and learners as the communicant.

Having the reasons above, the researcher conducted the research at SMP 3 Negeri Kupang, because the phenomenon investigated can be found in this school which located near by the researcher' address. In the research conducted, the researcher would like to see the students' perception towards their English teacher's interpersonal communication skills. The students are divided into two group based on their gender; male and female students to see the different perceptions between them. Dividing students' into their gender is based on the theory of Xiong (2010) and Kissau (2006) that differ the students' perceptions which affect their motivation in learning English.

As has been explained in previous statement, teacher's interpersonal communication skills are very important to be considered in teaching and learning. But on the other hand, there are many schools that don't care about their teachers' interpersonal skill in general or English teacher in particular. One of these schools is SMP Negeri 3 Kupang does not measure or consider well about its teachers' interpersonal competence.

## Research Method

This study uses descriptive quantitative research method to analyze the data using descriptive statistic. The writer analyzes the students' perceptions toward their English teacher' interpersonal communication skill in EFL classroom. The populations of this study are students of grade VIII of SMP Negeri 1 Kupang. They are 363 students which divided to be 178 male students and 185 female students. These students are chosen using random sampling technique that is 15% male students and 15% female students. Therefore, the samples are male students are 27 students and female students are 27 students. To get the data of this study, the writer distributed questionnaire to students to be fulfilled based on their perceptions to their English teacher' interpersonal communication skill.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

This study found that the students' perceptions toward their English teacher's interpersonal communication skill are summarized in the following findings.

#### Students' Perceptions

The students' perceptions to their English teacher's interpersonal communication skill are divided into group, namely, male students' perception and female students' perceptions.

#### Male Students' Perception

In Figure 1 the researcher displays that male students perceived their teacher's interpersonal communication skill in which supportiveness is as highest position at score 95.37%, then equality at 92.59%, followed by empathy and positiveness at 88.88%, and the lowest position is openness at 74.81%. The students show their disagreement on openness at 16.29%, empathy at 6.79%, supportiveness with 4.62%, positiveness at 4.44%, and equality at 16.29%. Meanwhile, those who are neutral distributed in openness at 8.88%, empathy 4.32%, supportiveness at 0%, positiveness at 6.66%, and equality at 4.44%.

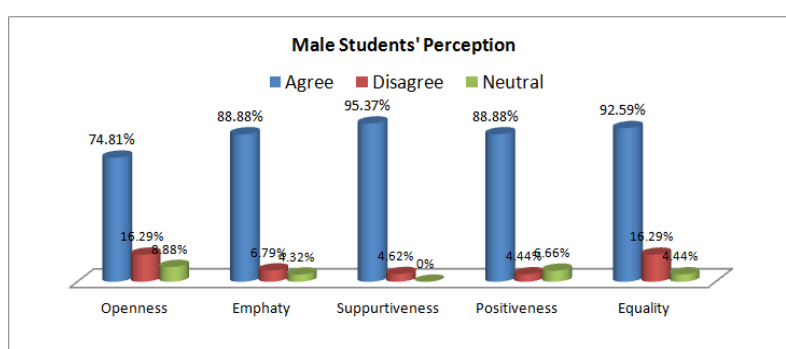


Figure 1. Male Students' Perception

#### Female Students' Perceptions

In Figure 2, the researcher compares the five perspectives of the English teacher's interpersonal communication skills. The comparison presents that positiveness and equality take place in the highest position at 97.77%, then supportiveness at 95.37%, followed by empathy at 89.50%, and lowest position is openness at 81.48%.

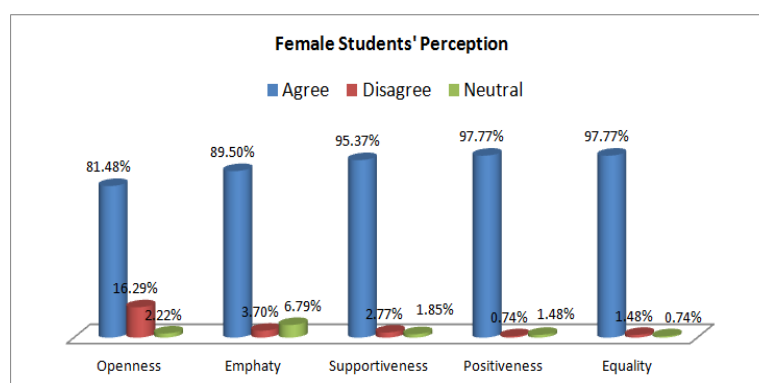


Figure 2. Female Students Perception

#### The Difference of Male and Female Students' Perception

The researcher would like to see the difference of male and female students' perceptions to their English teacher is to answer the problem statement number 2 in chapter I. The researcher basis this

comparative study on the research of Xiong (2010) and Kissau (2006) who state that gender differences can cause the different of students motivation in learning English. Therefore, in the research process the researcher has investigated that male and female students' perception to the same English teacher. The findings are presented in Figure 3.

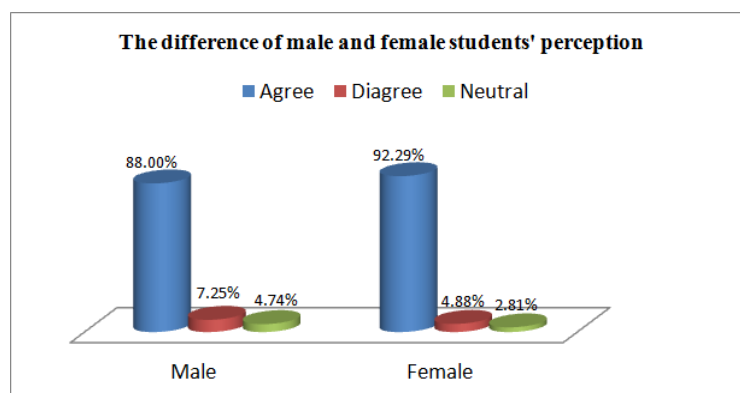


Figure 3. The Difference of Male and Female Students' Perception

In line with the data display above, the researcher also compares male and females students' perception. This chart shows that males agree the interpersonal communication skills of their teacher at 88%, and females at 92.29% which means they have gaps 4.29% agree, 2.37% disagree, and 1.92% neutral. Therefore, there are differences between male and female students in perceiving their English teacher's interpersonal skill at SMP Negeri 3 Kupang in the school year 2015/2016.

## Discussion

### Male Students' Perception

There are five interpersonal communication skills which perceived by male students. These perceptions are based on De Vito's (1997: 259) perspectives which have presented in the findings in previous discussion.

The researcher found that male students' perceptions on teacher's openness skill are 74.81% agree, then 16.29% disagree, and 8.88% are neutral. They are all agree about the indicator which state that teacher gives them chance to express and idea, and teacher gives them important idea when they have problem of learning English. These indicators indicate that teacher is open up himself/herself to his/her students in giving chance to express their idea and also teacher supports them when they have learning problems.

Students perceived their teacher by disagreeing with teacher' performance to give them change to express their feeling inside and outside classroom in which they disagree case at 66.66% out of 27 students, and they just agree with this at 11.11%. Therefore, the researcher concludes that English teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Kupang in the school year 2015/2016 did not care much about his/her students' feelings.

The second skill which perceived by male students is teacher's empathy that refers to how teacher position himself/herself to students' position or have the feeling of students. There are 88.88% students out 27 who agree with their teacher's empathy, 6.79% who disagree and 4.32% who don't give any responses. The students' perceptions are still higher for agree, means the teacher is trusted in having good empathy.

There are two indicators out of six for teacher's empathy which all agreed by male students, such as, 3) teacher understands and cares about students' weaknesses in learning English, and 4) teacher uses language instruction which is easy to be understood. These indicators illustrate that male students perceived that their teacher is care and full of understanding to his/her students' weakness and level of understanding. Beside these two indicators, the four others were variously perceived, that is indicator 1) 92.59% agree, 3.70% disagree and 3.70% neutral, 2) 92.59% agree, and 7.40% neutral, 5) 66.66% agree, 25.92% disagree, and 7.40% neutral, and 6) 81.48% agree, 11.11% disagree, and 7.40% neutral.

The third interpersonal communication skill of the English teacher is supportiveness is perceived by male students at 95.37% agree, and 4.62% disagree. This means that the English teacher's supportiveness is good in which there are two of four indicators which got perfect score (100% agree out of 27). Meanwhile the other indicators were perceived differently; the indicator number 3) 88.89% agree, and 11.11 disagree, 4) 92.59% agree and 7.40% disagree.

Contrast to the three interpersonal communication skills of English teacher above, the male students also perceived positiveness skill differently where they did not perceived the available indicators perfectly but some of them still disagree and neutral. The researcher displays that the female students' perception towards their English teacher's positiveness, students agree the five indicators of supportiveness at 97.77%, disagree at 0.74% and neutral at 1.48%. From this findings, the perceptions of the male students are distributed into five indicators, those are 1) 96.29% agree, and 3.70% neutral, 2) 81.48% agree, 14.82% disagree, and 3.70% neutral, 3) 81.48% agree, 3.70% disagree, and 14.81% neutral, 4) 88.89% agree, 3.70% disagree, and 7.40% neutral, and 5) 96.29% agree, and 3.70% neutral.

The last interpersonal communication skill of the English teacher which perceived male students is equality. The male students' perception are 92.59% agree, 2.96% disagree and 4.44% neutral to the five indicators given. This perception is based on the five indicators which perceived variously by the male students which distributed as 1) 96.29% agree, and 3.70% neutral, 2) 88.89% agree, 3.70% disagree, and 7.40% neutral, 3) 81.48% agree, and 7.40% disagree, 4) 100% agree, and 5) 96.29% agree, and 3.70% disagree.

Male students perceived their English teacher's whole interpersonal communication skills at good level at 88% agree, 7.25% who disagree, and 4.74% who are neutral. The scores are distributed into five components in which, supportiveness positions the highest position at 95.37%, equality at 92.59%, then followed by empathy and positiveness at 88.88%, and at the lowest is openness at 74.81%. Therefore, the English teacher has good supportiveness skill, and he/she is not openness enough.

The disagreement to the English teacher's openness are because of teacher focuses more on teaching, teacher is too busy to listen students' expression of feeling, teacher sometimes does not see the students' errors/mistakes thoroughly, and students are always absent joining English class. Then, for teacher's empathy is perceived differently by students who disagree with reason are; teacher does not pay attention to students well (1), teacher is too serious (5), and students are afraid to talk with their teacher when they have difficulties in learning English in classroom (5). In addition, supportiveness also has 5 disagreement which represented into two reasons, namely; students are lack of attention during teaching and learning process (3), and students are rarely join the discussion of learning problem solving. In line with, openness, empathy, and supportiveness, positiveness also has the same problem, that is; teacher worries about students' opinion because they are naughty at school (2), teacher sometimes does not response students' opinion directly (2), the student sometimes does not enjoy the learning process (3), and students never gets high score (4). Furthermore, the last skill, equality is disagreed by male students which argued in a reason, that is; students do not pay attention well to their teachers (2).

### **Female Students' Perception**

Female students' perception to their teacher's interpersonal skill is obviously seen through the questionnaire distribution which has been fulfilled. The Female students perceived their English teacher variously which are spread out in five skills, include openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness and equality. They perceived openness skill as 81.48%, disagree 16.29%, and 2.22% of having no answer. Empathy is perceived at the level of 89.50 % agree; disagree at 3.70% and neutral at 6.79%. Supportiveness obtained 95.37% agree, 2.77% disagree, and 1.85% neutral. Students agree the five indicators of supportiveness at 97.77%, disagree at 0.74% and neutral at 1.48%. And, for equality is 97.77% agree, 1.48% disagree, and 0.74% neutral.

The female students perceived the teacher's openness according to the five indicators which have been prepared. Their perceptions at indicator number 1 and 2 are 100% agree which indicate that the teacher is very opensive to give chance to students to express their idea and to give them an important give in solving their problem in English learning. Indicator number 3 has 25.52% agree, 70.53% disagree, and 3.70% neutral. Then indicator number 4 is perceived at 96.29% agree, and 3.70% disagree. And indicator number 5 is at 85.18% agree, 7.40% disagree, and 7.40% neutral.

For empathy, female students perceived 100% agree with indicator 3 and 4 which proves that teacher understands and cares about his/her students' weaknesses and their level of understanding. Then, the other indicators are perceived differently, such as, number 1 which indicates the teacher

knows well the students' position in communication is 81.48% agree, 3.70% disagree, and 14.28% neutral. Indicator number 2) teacher understands the students' attitude is perceived at 74.07% agree, 7.40% disagree, and 8.51% neutral. This means that this teacher is has a little problem in identifying his/her students' attitude well. Meanwhile, indicator number 5) teacher talks by making jokes shows that this teacher is humorous. The last indicator (6) considers the teacher's care to ask the students to share their learning difficulties is perceived at 88.88% agree, 7.40% disagree, and 3.70% neutral.

The third interpersonal communication skill of the English teacher, supportiveness is perceived through four indicators, in which 2 out of 4 at 100% agree (number 1 and 2), number 4 about the teacher's responsibility in teaching process is at 96.29% agree, and 3.70% disagree which means that most students perceived that their teacher's responsibility is good. Meanwhile, the cooperation between teacher and students in solving learning problem is not good enough because students perceived this skill at 85.18% agree, 7.40% for disagree and neutral.

Positiveness was the fourth interpersonal communication skill of English teacher perceived by female students. Through the students' perceptions, the researcher found that this teacher is appreciative which proved by indicator number 1) teacher always appreciates all of your opinions, and 2) teacher always gives award when students succeed, and he/she is also a good communicator in which he/she always communicates with his/her students using language which is easy to be understood. Then, the other indicators include number 2) the teacher's feedback is good enough but not accepted all by female students by perceiving it at 95.59% agree, and 7.40% neutral, and number 3) teacher is innovative at 96.29% and disagree at 3.70%.

The last skill is equality which represented in 5 indicators. Female students perceived that teacher's equality at 100% agree which means that their teacher is respectful, kind and polite as in the indicators number 1) teacher always shows his/her respect using polite language, 2) teacher always smiles and be kind when he/she talks with students, and 4) teacher always acts politely when he/she communicates with students. In addition, the other two indicators are perceived differently; the indicator number 3 (teacher treat students kindly when he/she communicates with students inside and outside classroom) is perceived at 92.59% agree, 3.70% for disagree and neutral, and the indicator number 5), *teacher* always greets students using comfortable language perceived at 96.29% agree and 3.70% disagree.

Focusing on the disagreements of the female students to English teacher's interpersonal communication skill is varied significantly. First, The female students disagree with the openness because teacher focuses on teaching and learning only so there is no time for students to express their feeling, teacher does not give chance to express students' feeling because there is no enough time, teacher focuses more on students' mistakes/errors than paying attention students' feeling, and teacher does not know how students are honest or not. Second, female students disagree the teacher's empathy because teacher sometimes gets angry when students are too talk active (1), too many students in a classroom so the teacher is hard to know the students' behaviour one by one (2), and teacher doesn't have enough time to make joke with students when break time (5). Third, supportiveness has 3 disagreement which accumulated into two reasons, that is, students do not pay attention well to all of teachers activity in classroom (3), teacher sometimes does not involve students to solve the problem when it is too difficult. Fourth, positiveness also has same problem with the previous skills, that is, the student does not pay attention well to the teacher's teaching. The last, female students students argue that for disagreeing the equality are student never communicates with her teacher (3), and teacher never greets a student only but she just greets all students in classroom.

According to the male and female students perceptions towards their teacher's interpersonal communication skills can be concluded that the English teacher is he/she gives chance to students to express an opinion, gives an important idea when students have a learning problem, understands and cares about students' weaknesses in learning English, teacher uses language instruction which is easy to be understood, teacher advises and motivates students when their test result is not good, motivates students to be enthusiastic in learning English through many ways, and always acts politely when he/she communicates with students.

### ***The Difference of Male and Female Students' Perceptions***

The difference of male and female students' perceptions are based on the how they perceived their teacher interpersonal skill differently; there are significant difference between male and female students in perceiving their teacher interpersonal communication skills. Male students agree openness skill at 74.81% and female students at 81.48%, and they are same in disagreeing openness at 16.29%, and they are neutral at 2.22%. There are 6.66% gaps between them in agreeing the skill and also 6.66% for neutral. Male and female students have different perceptions on indicator number 3, 4, 5.

The researcher found that there are differences between male and female students in perceiving teacher's empathy. The differences are male agree the empathy at 88.88% and female at 89.50%, meanwhile they disagree with the empathy at 6.79% for male and 3.70% for female, then neutral at 4.32% for males and 6.79% for females. Therefore, the gaps between them are 0.61% agree, 3.08% disagree and 2.46% neutral. Both male and female students are different in perceiving indicators number 1, 2, 5, and 6.

The researcher found that male and female students have same perception in agreeing the teacher's supportiveness at 95.37%, and have different perception to disagree with the empathy of the teacher at 4.62% and 2.77%, so do to neutral at 0% and 1.85%. Clearly, the differences just happen on disagree and neutral which respectively has gaps 1.85%. They have different perceptions on supportiveness indicators number 3 and 4.

In distinguishing male and female students' perceptions towards their teacher's positiveness, the researcher displays the differences based on the table 4.14 above. The differences are male agree the positiveness at 88.88%, and female at 97.77%, then male disagree this skill at 4.44%, and female at 0.74, neutral 6.66% for males and 1.48% for females. The gaps among them are 8.88% for agree, 3.70% for disagree, and 5.18% for neutral. Then, the different perceptions of male and female students to supportiveness are for all indicators.

Table 4.15 shows that male and female students have different response to their teacher's equality skill. The differences are distributed agree with skill at 92.59% for males and 97.77% for females; disagree at 2.96% for males and 1.48% for females, and neutral at 4.44% for males and 0.74% for females. Meanwhile the gaps between them are 5.18% for agree, 1.48% for disagree, and 3.70% for neutral. Furthermore, the differences are cause by the perceptions on indicators prepared as in number 1, 2 and 3.

If male and female students are compared according to how they perceived their English teacher's interpersonal communication skill is also different. Male students perceived are more various than female students in which males have higher score at 7.25% or there are 49 disagree answers out of 675 (27 x 25) and 4.74% or there are 32 neutral answers out of 675 than females who just have 4.88% or 33 disagree answers out of 675, and 2.81% or 19 neutral answers out of 675. On the other hand, male students are also more courageous in perceiving their English teacher's interpersonal communication skills in which they have more disagree (7.25%) or 49 out 675 answers compared to females who just have 4.88% or 32 out of 675 answers. This case is caused by gender differences which then can cause different motivation that obviously supported by Xiong (2010) and Kissau (2006) who state that gender differences can cause the different of students motivation in learning English. Therefore, in the research process the researcher has investigated that male and female students' perception to the same English teacher are different.

## Conclusion

This research aims to know to know the teacher's interpersonal communication skills perceived by students, and to find out the difference of perceptions of male and female students to their teacher's interpersonal communication skill. This research focuses on two issues; English teacher's interpersonal communication skill perceived by students, and the difference of male and female students' perceptions to their English teacher's interpersonal communication skill.

The researcher concludes that this researcher has found that students perceived that their English teacher's interpersonal communication skills regarding five perspectives; openness, empathy, supportiveness, positiveness, and equality. They perceived that the English teacher is good at giving chance to students to express an opinion, giving an important idea when students have a learning problem, understanding and caring about students' weaknesses in learning English, using language instruction which is easy to be understood, advising and motivating students when their test result is not good, motivating students to be enthusiastic in learning English through many ways, and acts politely when he/she communicates with students. The degree of perceiving the English teacher's interpersonal communication skill is males agree the interpersonal communication skills of their teacher at 88%, and females at 92.29%.

The perceptions of between male and female students in perceiving their teacher interpersonal communication skills are different significantly. This case is caused by gender differences which then can cause different motivation that obviously supported by Xiong (2010) and Kissau (2006) who state that gender differences can cause the different of students motivation in learning English. Therefore, in the research process the researcher has investigated that male and female students' perception to the same English teacher.

Male students perceived are more various than female students in which they have higher score at 7.25% or there are 49 disagree answers out of 675 (27 x 25) and 4.74% or there are 32 neutral answers out of 675 than females who just have 4.88% or 33 disagree answers out of 675, and 2.81% or 19 neutral answers out of 675. On the other hand, male students are also more courageous in perceiving their English teacher's interpersonal communication skills in which they have more disagrees (7.25%) or 49 out 675 answers compared to females who just have 4.88% or 32 out of 675 answers.

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