



Students' Perception Toward The Implementation Of The TOEFL Test As Requirement For Graduation

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Abstract

The purposes of this qualitative study were to explore students' perception toward the implementation of TOEFL test as requirement for graduation by Medical Students at University of Jambi and to find out their readiness toward the test. Data for this study were collected through a demographic background, document analysis, and interview. The demographic data and document analysis were analyzed descriptively. The interviews data were analyzed by using thematic analysis. There were three students and a head of Medical study program as participants in interviews. Based on the research results, there were six major sub themes appeared on the data related to the voices of participants about the implementation of TOEFL test for Medical students such as opinion about TOEFL, TOEFL as requirement for graduation, the impact of TOEFL test, relationship between English and Medical discipline, benefit of English, and self preparation for TOEFL test.

Key words: Perception, TOEFL test

Introduction

Many institutions in Indonesia have decided some types of testing for undergraduate students to exit from universities as a requirement for graduation. One of the types of language testing is the TOEFL test. TOEFL is a test to measure the level of English proficiency of nonnative speakers of English where it is required by English-language colleges and universities (Phillip, 2000). This test has been "internationally recognized and respected" (Warfield et al., 2013). The grade of the TOEFL is mostly used as indicator in academic life around the world.

As English students of University of Jambi, TOEFL has been introduced since the third-semester of study and the students have been taught what is in the TOEFL test and to pass that test with the high score. Students who do not have major in English also required to pass from the TOEFL test as requirement for graduation. They have to have a minimum 450 TOEFL score by certificate of TOEFL (Darmawan & Aryanty, 2011). Meanwhile, non-English students learn English at the first semester as their first introduction of learning for their major course. Therefore, for non-English students probably will get difficulties when they face the TOEFL test because they have no basic to learn it. They might think that TOEFL test become one of big problems when they finished all subjects of the course at their department. One of requirements for graduation that is TOEFL test, not only makes them afraid to pass from the TOEFL test, but also from university.

However, in their daily life, non-English students probably will not use English at their workplace if they get a job. They are more likely to use Indonesian or even mother tongue as their tool of communication with other people. According to the Regulation of Rector of Jambi University No. 1223/2013, a student is passed from Bachelor degree if he has been passed with



400 TOEFL score. By implementing proficiency test such as TOEFL, almost all universities in Indonesia use this test to measure someone's ability in using English and Medical study program in University of Jambi has used this test for this requirement. In this study, researcher tries to find out whether this implementation gives any impact for non-English students in their social life.

Review of Related Literature

The use of language test can be different and it depends on the purpose when giving a test to the learners. McNamara (2000) divides two terms of test purposes; Achievement and Proficiency. Achievement test is usually a formal examination which is given at the end of the school year or at the end of the course. Meanwhile, Proficiency test is usually to measure how suitable the candidates will be performing following a specific course (Heaton, 1990). In this way, a proficiency test looks forward to the actual ways in which candidates will use English in the future.

There are many kinds of proficiency test in this world but one of the most popular is the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) test. This test measures how well students can use their English language skills in the college or university classroom (ETS, 2016). There are three formats of TOEFL test paper-based test (PBT) to a computer-based test (CBT) and to internet-based test (IBT). In Indonesia, the TOEFL test is originally conducted by English Language System (ELS), a specific institution for TOEFL test, known as Institutional TOEFL. This kind of TOEFL test is locally administered by the university, and only used for internal usage in order to examine the students' English proficiency (Mahmud, 2014).

Students of Jambi University are stated as Bachelor if they pass 400 score from TOEFL test (Peraturan Rektor Universitas Jambi, 2013). For Medical study program, Medical students have to have a minimum 450 TOEFL score (Darmawan & Aryanty, 2011). Many colleges and universities in Indonesia use TOEFL test as one of requirement for enter or exit in graduate program. One of universities which used TOEFL test for exit requirement before comprehensive examination is University of Sriwijaya (Depdiknas Unsri, 2009). The range for minimum TOEFL score that students have to achieve is 375 to 500. In this case, Medical students are in 450. University of Airlangga and State University of Surabaya (Prima, 2016; Musahadah, 2015) also take a decision for students who are going to do thesis examination, have to pass in 425 (S1) and 375 (D3) TOEFL score. Technological Institute of Sepuluh November and University of Riau have the same rule as University of Sriwijaya that is 450 TOEFL score for exit requirement but it is belongs to all graduate programs.

According to Giovanni (2015), many students in Technological Institute of Sepuluh November should be canceled from commencement list. The reason is the TOEFL score that students have are still under pass standard. Meanwhile, students have to pass in 450 for this test. One of the students in University of Riau (Wedhaswary, 2011) feel difficult to get 450 score for TOEFL test. This student has tried 18 times for the test but failed in Listening comprehension. This student feel being unsuccessful in finishing his study because of the test



and he complains that the difficulties of TOEFL test is due to the lack of practices and the high pass standard from the regulation.

The lack of practices, make the student being unsuccessful, and another problem by taking the TOEFL test is usually refers to as washback. The concept of washback is therefore part of what Messick (1989) calls as consequential validity (cited in Rizi & Tavakoli, 2015). Consequential validity or washback is the impact of what the test takers get from the test whether it is positive or negative impact, in this case is language testing. There are previous research which related to this study such as Pan (2013), Mahmud (2014), and Ermawan et al (2014).

Method

To conduct the research, researcher used qualitative research design to explore students' perception and readiness toward the implementation of the TOEFL test as requirement for graduation. It is in line with Creswell's (2012) theory that to answer a research problem which the variables are not known and need to be explored, qualitative method is suitable. Lambert (2012) adds that descriptive qualitative is viable and acceptable label for a qualitative research design. It is usually used by other researcher, especially novice to the methods of qualitative research. This has led to the labeling of many research studies as phenomenology, grounded theory, or ethnography, when in fact these studies failed to meet the requirements of such qualitative approaches.

The research site of this study is Faculty of Medical and Sciences in University of Jambi. The participants of this study are three Medical students who are categorized as required criteria and a Head of Medical study program as one of policy makers about implementation of TOEFL test.

In collecting the data, the instruments are demographic profile questionnaire, document analysis, and interview. Document analysis is used by the researcher to find out any kinds of rules about the implementation of TOEFL test for Medical students. In this research, there are ten questions for interview. When the process of collecting the data, researcher asks the willingness of participant to joined in this study. Before giving demographic background and interview questions, researcher contacted them first. This research is run by the following procedures to make the trustworthiness of this study. After collect the all data and transcribing, researcher used member checking to check the accuracy of data and findings.

Findings and Discussion

Findings in this study used thematic analysis. There were two major topics in this study that had three sub-themes:

1. Students' perception toward the implementation of TOEFL test as requirement for graduation

The first sub-theme was **the important of TOEFL test** as one of their statement:



"It is important even have the high TOEFL score. The high TOEFL score refers to.. English ability of Medical student was good. Moreover, there are writing of abstract, journal which can be apply in English. So, from all over the world also read our journal." [Citra]

The finding showed that if someone had a good ability in English, it was very useful to improve the skill in another field.

The second sub-theme was **TOEFL as requirement for graduation**. The finding showed one of participants totally disagrees with the implementation of TOEFL test as requirement for graduation. She felt that Medical students would be burdened because this test made them postponed from thesis examination.

"Hmm I don't think so. A.. because it can slow a.. the process of passing a student. Perhaps, we might be pass but actually the most important is thesis. So, sometimes my friends' thesis were already done, slide for presenting had already made. Because of constrained in TOEFL, so they had to wait again until they passed from the test." [Dhea]

The last sub-theme of this topic was **TOEFL impact on academic**. The finding showed that as reported.

"Oh.. there are positive impacts because supervisors.. a.. because it has used a.. it used English literature. So, automatically by using this TOEFL test, it helped us, at least enhance our vocabulary and so on for our knowledge about English." [Putra]

Putra said that the positive impacts from this TOEFL test were it enhanced his vocabulary and understand about English. It also helped him to added literature or sources about English which related to his thesis for Medical study.

2. Students' readiness toward the implementation of the TOEFL test as requirement for graduation

The first sub-theme of this topic was **relationship between English and Medical discipline**. The finding showed that Many thinks that could be a reason why English also included in academic needs such as the literature and other journals that related on their daily learning activity.

"Hmm.. there must be. Because for Medical study program is more a.. there must be new information as journals. And it usually more update from a.. out.. out of Indonesia.. from overseas. And it uses English." [Citra]

The second sub-theme was **Benefit of English**. The participants declared.

"When I was studying.. during.. for Medical degree, it was not. There is no English subject" [Dhea]

"A.. it did not offered. Indeed, it was not available" [Citra]



Every faculty in University of Jambi offered English in the first semester of lecture for their students. The purpose is as one of general subjects from the regulation (Peraturan Rektor Unja, 2013). This rule did not apply to Medical study program. But there would be the benefit of implementing English as one of their subjects in Medical study program was another provisioning that make them more ready to face the TOEFL test before thesis examination.

"I am sure there will be a benefit because in final study, there is a TOEFL test to get Bachelor degree. If we have given TOEFL course, maybe my friends who have taken test twice or three times, they will pass the test in once. Because we face the TOEFL test.. we learn independently. There is no specific course from campus." [Dhea]

The third sub-theme in this study was **self preparation for TOEFL test**. The finding showed that there were many ways that could Medical students do to beat TOEFL test such as reading a book, joined in a course, or might be learning with friends as participants reported.

"I have attended in a course. It has been long time (chuckle) it has been long time.. I want to take the test now, it should have been long (chuckle)." [Citra]

"There is no course. Nothing. And also try out. Just reading a book." [Dhea]

"A.. to take the TOEFL test, I just learn by myself or maybe learning with friends such as not a.. their English basic is.. good enough." [Putra]

Conclusion

The finding of the research has fulfilled the aims of the research that was answering the research questions of this research. Based on the result of the research, TOEFL test had a good impact for Medical students toward their achievement to get Bachelor degree. By using TOEFL test, this test makes them to study hard, so that they would be passed from the test. Indirectly, Medical students learnt to know and understand about English. In addition, the policy maker was sure that without applying English subject as one of general subjects in faculty, Medical student was able to do the TOEFL test because the literature and resources of teaching and learning process used English. Researcher also suggests that if the policy makers will not applied English as one of general subjects in Medical faculty, at least there should be a TOEFL course for non-English students.

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