
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD TEST OF ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY (TEAP) AS A REQUIREMENT FOR THESIS EXAMINATION: A Case Study at Non-English Study Program of IKIP PGRI Pontianak

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Abstrak

TEAP telah digunakan sebagai bagian dari persyaratan dalam berbagai aspek pendidikan tinggi, termasuk sebagai bagian dari persyaratan untuk mengikuti ujian tesis baik bagi mahasiswa program studi bahasa Inggris maupun program studi bukan Bahasa Inggris. Namun, tampaknya hanya sedikit penelitian yang menyelidiki persepsi mahasiswa terhadap TEAP sebagai persyaratan ujian tesis. Penelitian studi kasus kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi mahasiswa non-Inggris terhadap TEAP sebagai salah satu syarat ujian skripsi serta mengetahui tantangan dan kesulitan yang mereka alami dalam mengambil TEAP. Penelitian ini melibatkan 11 mahasiswa IKIP PGRI Pontianak non-Bahasa Inggris yang dipilih menggunakan purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan dokumen. Analisis data menggunakan analisis tematik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa TEAP dianggap sebagai penilaian pembelajaran dan penghambat penyelesaian pembelajaran tepat waktu. Temuan ini juga menunjukkan bahwa, sebagai persyaratan ujian tesis dianggap berguna untuk menilai kemahiran akademik bahasa Inggris mahasiswa dan memotivasi mereka untuk meningkatkan keterampilan akademik bahasa Inggris mereka. Temuan penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa tantangan dan kesulitan yang dialami siswa adalah kurangnya pemahaman sistem TEAP, kurangnya pelatihan, dan sulitnya mencapai nilai minimum TEAP. Penelitian ini menyoroti kegunaan TEAP bagi siswa yang bukan berbahasa Inggris, pentingnya mempertimbangkan dan mengantisipasi tantangan, dan kesulitan dalam mengambil TEAP, dan pentingnya mempersiapkan dan menawarkan pelatihan TEAP dan kursus bahasa Inggris yang memadai.

Kata kunci: Persepsi Mahasiswa, TEAP, Syarat Skripsi.

Abstract

TEAP has been used as a part of requirement in various aspects of tertiary education, including as a part of the requirement for undertaking thesis examinations both for English and non-English study program students. However, there appears few studies investigating the students' perceptions toward TEAP as a requirement for thesis examination. This qualitative case study aims to investigate non-English study program students' perception toward TEAP as one of the requirements for thesis examination as well as to investigate the challenges and difficulties they experience in taking TEAP. The study involves 11 non-English students of IKIP PGRI Pontianak who were selected using purposive sampling. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and documents analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The research finding shows that TEAP is perceived to be an assessment for learning and a hinderer to finish their study timely. The findings also show that, as a requirement for thesis examination, TEAP was perceived to be useful for assessing students' English academic proficiency and motivating them to improve their English academic skills. Furthermore, the research findings indicate that the challenges and difficulties experienced by the students include lack of understanding TEAP system, lack of training, and hard to achieve the minimum TEAP score. This research highlights the usefulness of TEAP for non-English language students, the importance of considering and anticipating the challenges and difficulties of taking TEAP, and the importance of preparing and offering non-English language students with sufficient training of TEAP and English courses.

Keywords: Students' Perception, TEAP, Thesis Requirements.

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that is considered as a foreign language in Indonesian educational contexts. English language proficiency has become one of the requirements for many educational programs such as for entering university, graduation requirements, and applying for a job (Etika, 2020). Most of the universities in Indonesia have been using English language proficiency test to measure student's ability in language, and each university has different requirements that students must fulfill before they complete their studies (Alek et al., 2019).

In IKIP PGRI Pontianak where the current study is conducted, TEAP has been used to measure students' English ability. TEAP is the test that is used to assess students' English ability for academic purposes. It is divided into three sections: Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. The TEAP is organized by UPT Bahasa IKIP PGRI Pontianak and is specifically required for students who will undertake undergraduate thesis examination (J.H. et al., 2020).

TEAP has been used as a part of the requirement for undertaking thesis examinations. This requirement needs to be completed prior to their thesis examination. This policy is based on a circular issued by the Rector of IKIP PGRI Pontianak with letter number L202/035/REKTOR/VI/2022 concerning the TEAP as a requirement for taking the undergraduate thesis exam. The minimum score that must be achieved by students of English study program is 450, while the minimum score for students of all non-English study program students is 380. The students who have undertaken the TEAP will receive a certificate of the TEAP and this certificate is valid for one year from the time the test is carried out.

The current study is prompted by concerns and issues that non-English study program students experience regarding the TEAP test at IKIP PGRI Pontianak. These students feel worried and pessimistic about achieving the required minimum score of 380, as English is not their main academic focus. They have limited exposure to English, which makes the TEAP test particularly challenging for them. Indeed, Sari et al., (2021) stated that the TEAP test is hard for English students and will be more challenging for non-English students because English is not their main academic focus.

Previous research on students' perceptions of taking TOEFL as a requirement for entering and leaving university have been conducted. A study by Karjo and Ronaldo (2019) found that students believe the TOEFL is necessary to enter professional life. Another study

found that TEAP can increase students motivation (Lestari, 2017). In contrast to these previous studies, the current study does not only focus on students' perceptions regarding TEAP in general, but it also investigates deeper into the challenges, and difficulties of implementing TEAP as a thesis examination requirement with a minimum score of 380 for non-English students. Regarding perceptions, of course, students have different perceptions related to the topic. Perception refers to the way we understand the world around us, and it is essentially subjective because there is never a definite recording of events or situations (Hafis, 2013).

METHOD

This research used a qualitative case study as the research design. Case study is defined as an intensive study about a person, a group of people, or a unit, which is aimed to generalize over several units, and examines a bounded system, or a case, over time in-depth (Gustafsson, 2017). The case in a case study may include a program, an event, an activity, or a set of individuals bound in time and place (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2014). There are three kinds of case studies intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This case study is considered instrumental because the researcher chose one bounded case namely a group of non-English study programs who took TEAP as a requirement for undertaking their thesis examination to illustrate a wider phenomenon of non-English students taking TEAP. The focus was investigating an issue regarding the perceptions of non-English study programs as they undertook TEAP as a requirement for thesis examination and investigating the challenges and difficulties they experienced. This study involved 11 non-English students of IKIP PGRI Pontianak as the research subjects who were selected using purposive sampling. The data collection techniques in this study included interviews and document analysis. The data gathered from interviews were transcribed into written form and then analyzed using thematic analysis. Furthermore, the documents related to the TEAP certificate were also analyzed to supplement the interview data.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This Chapter presents the findings of the Thematic analysis of the data gathered from individual interviews with the 11 participants. The interview data were supplemented with documentary data related to the participants' certificate of TEAP they obtained after taking TEAP. The results of data analysis showed five themes as follows:

Theme 1. TEAP as an Assessment for Learning

The results of the analysis showed that non-English study program students perceived the TEAP test as an assessment for learning, particularly for learning academic English. Even though the program did not require them to take TEAP preparation program after taking the TEAP, they perceived that having the TEAP test provided them with an opportunity to know or to experience the TEAP test which is important for them, particularly for non-English study programs. For example, one of the participants said that, “even though English is not our major, we are given the opportunity to know the English test” (P2). Additionally, this participant stated that undertaking the TEAP test “will broaden our experience as students in foreign language test” (P2).

The participants said that by having the test, they had an opportunity to assess their English proficiency. For example, one of the participants said that the TEAP test enables them to “know whether their English skills are good or not” (P8). After having the test, they felt motivated to continuously learn more English. As P2 said, after having the test “I can learn more to understand the words in English that have not understood before”. In addition, the participants felt that they were motivated to learn more about academic English, particularly in writing thesis abstract in English. For example, P4 said, “Implementation TEAP is good so, we can learn more because in our thesis there is an abstract written in English and also in a thesis must be English words”. Furthermore, the participants felt they were more motivated to learn more academic vocabulary related to some words or terms that may be used in their thesis and learn English to undertake the thesis exam. As mentioned by P3, “before passing the TEAP test, we cannot take the thesis exam, because this is a requirement for it. it’s motivated me to learn so I can take the thesis exam and get a degree”.

Theme 2. TEAP Hinders Study Completion Timely.

TEAP was perceived to hinder the non-English study program students to finish their study timely. They said that the TEAP may delay their thesis examination and delay their graduation. As mentioned by P2, “TEAP can make the graduation process take longer because we have to pass according to the score requirements set by the institution”. Furthermore, P8 another participants said that TEAP is, “burden for the students in 8th semester to register for the thesis exam. Because if we don't take the TEAP test, that means we won't be able to take the thesis exam”. This particularly happened to those who needed to take the test more than one time. Indeed, the documents analysis indicated that 10 out of 11 participants interviewed were required to undertake the test twice because they failed for

their first test. They considered the standard minimum of the TEAP test score was high and hard to reach as mentioned by P8, "With a score of 380, that is very high for me." Likewise, P3 also stated that, "The score is high and makes it difficult to pass."

Non-English students also perceived that TEAP might also hindered their study completion timely because of financial issues. In this case, they had to pay for the test any time they had to repeat the test when they failed to achieve the standard score required. As P5 said, "the costs mainly become an issue, because the cost is expensive". In addition, P4 expanded his words about financial issues and said,

It's like not all students can afford it, even though everyone has the money. If you fail up to five times, think about how much money has been spent. Especially if someone has already tried twice or more, and they retake it and get the same score, or if it suddenly drops to 200. That makes their hope of passing even further away."

Based on the financial issues they experienced, non-English students claimed that the costs needed to be reconsidered. As explained by P10, "If someone has already taken the test twice or more, please reduce the fee". Another P3 suggested, "to allow them to pay half of the normal cost". In addition, the time to take the TEAP test put the participants in a dilemma because if they took the test early, the certificate would be useless. They would not be able to use the certificate because it would be expired as they were ready to undertake their thesis examination. For example, P9 said that because, "the test is only valid for one year, many students took the TEAP in their 8th semester, which they feel rushed. If possible, it should be held earlier or the validity period should be extended."

Theme 3. Lack Of Understanding TEAP System.

One of the major challenges in undertaking TEAP perceived by non-English study program students is a lack of understanding of the TEAP test system. P3 gave an example that he took the test, he was surprised that the test had more questions than he had expected. He said, "I didn't expect there to be many questions. I thought there would only be around 50 questions." This lack of understanding included an understanding of the format test. They thought that TEAP was like a regular test of English. As P2 said, "I thought it would be like a regular exam, but it turned out there were quite a lot of questions. There were reading sections, listening sections, and grammar questions". This indicated that when taking the test, they were not aware of the sections in the test format.

Another lack of understanding is regarding the information of the test that is provided by the institution that organized the test. This included the schedule of the TEAP registration

where they thought there was no exact schedule for the test and this led them to miss the opportunity to take the test when they missed the information. As mentioned by P5, "The scheduling of the TEAP test registration is not fixed, so we are as students sometimes miss the opportunity to take it." Besides, the challenge that non-English students faced in undertaking the TEAP test is that there is no blueprint for them to prepare for the TEAP test. As P3 said, "There is no blueprint provided by the university." As a result, they did not know what to prepare for the test because they had no idea what the test would be like. One of the participants said they did not do any preparation because "we don't know what to study" (P3).

Theme 4. Factors influencing TEAP Test

The results indicated that three major factors influenced non-English students' ability to undertake the TEAP. One of the major factors is academic English skills. This included difficulties in doing the listening section. For example, when P6 was asked about the challenges that she faced, she said, "the challenge was in the listening section". Participants also perceived reading section to be the most challenging to do. As P5 explained, "the challenge that I felt was in the reading section". Another section such as structure and written expression also becomes challenging for the students. For example, P6 explained that, "the challenging section matches the words, like noun, present tense something like that". Out of the three sections of the test, the most challenging part of taking TEAP is reading comprehension. Indeed, the document indicated that the reading section was the lowest score obtained by the students among the other sections in taking TEAP. Moreover, listening and structure were also considered to be the challenging parts for them in taking the TEAP. For example, P1 explained that the listening section is difficult "because the accent is British, so I do not understand". The other participants explained the challenges in the listening were:

"I struggled to understand what was being said. I didn't understand at all, so it was difficult to comprehend the content of the questions, and what was being heard. There were also many words I didn't understand." (P2)

"In the listening section the speaker speak too fast and it can't be repeated, so it's difficult for us to understand what is being said". (P5)

This implies that listening was challenging because hard to understand the accent, lack of understanding, the speaker spoke too fast, and lack of vocabulary. Besides that, the audio cannot be repeated so it also challenging for the students.

The reading section was perceived to be the most challenging for the participants because they were not able to grasp the meaning of the passage. As P6 said, "The reading section was challenging because I didn't understand what it meant." Another participant explained that the reading was challenging because, "The texts are very long and numerous, which makes reading them exhausting". This implies that the reading section was challenging because of the dense reading passages and this might have caused them not to be able to get the meaning of the text.

In addition to the factor of academic English skills, participants' ability to do the TEAP was also influenced by psychological factors, such as feeling anxiety, feeling sleepy, and burden for the students. For example, one of the participants said that when taking the test, he felt scared and worried because they thought they would not be able to get the minimum score required. This participant said, "I'm a bit scared, worried that I won't reach the minimum target score." P11 also stated, "It [TEAP] is difficult and a burden for students because they need a score of 380." Moreover, P8 said, "It [TEAP] makes me lose motivation, and the long texts make me feel sleepy."

Theme 5. Lack of TEAP Training

Another interesting result is that non-English students experienced a lack of TEAP training before taking the test. As mentioned by P3, "there is also no training or guidelines". This lack of training had caused them difficulty in passing the test because English was not their major. P10 explained that the TEAP is difficult, "because it is related to English, it's also quite difficult, so I felt it's very burdensome for us". P11 also said, "English is not our basic skill". Participants reported that they got English course for introduction only. For example, P4 explained that before undertaking the TEAP, "We had an English only in the first semester, but it was just the basics".

This lack of training had caused them to have no idea what to prepare for the test. The participants explained that before taking the TEAP test, they did not have any idea what to prepare. P3, for instance, said that he did not do much preparation for the test, "because we don't know what to study". Many of them suggested that preparation should be provided for the students as P1 said, "Students must be prepared, like in-depth training in English, especially for non-English study program". Furthermore, P4 suggested that, "The training could possibly focus on specific training like teaching us how to answer the questions TEAP, for example, giving tips and tricks on how to solve TEAP questions easily". In addition, P7 explained that TEAP training needed to be close to the test TEAP "because in the early

semester, we learned English but we may forget about what we learned because it's been several semesters since we learned English. Then, when it's time for the test, we face difficulties”.

Based on the results above, this qualitative case study provided with an in-depth understanding of non-English students perceived TEAP test, and the challenges and difficulties in undertaking TEAP as a requirement for thesis examination. The finding of this study provided insight that TEAP is useful for the university students to assess their English proficiency for learning. For example, TEAP can help the participants especially for non-English study program to know their English skills and to experience the English test. This finding is in line with the research findings of a study conducted by Putri (2023) who also found that TEAP can measure students' English proficiency, especially for non-English students. In addition, having the TEAP is useful for motivating university students to learn more about academic proficiency, such as learning about vocabulary and writing thesis abstracts in English. This research is in line with research conducted by Ermawan et al (2014), who found that TEAP, such as TOEFL, can motivate the participants to learn more and develop their English even though it was framed as a requirement for thesis examination.

The current study also provides insights into the usefulness of taking the TEAP test as a requirement for thesis examination because it can provide the students with an opportunity to assess the extent of their English language abilities. This finding is in contrast to a study conducted by Zuhrayana (2018), who found that TOEFL is not effective because it cannot measure their English proficiency as they never learn about it in their major. Furthermore, this study provides an understanding that TEAP might hinder the university students to complete their study timely. This particularly happened to those who undertake TEAP but English is not their major of study. The findings indicate that there are several aspects that TEAP may delay university students finishing their studies on time. These include the score requirement that is set is high for the non-English students. This high score standard may lead them to take the test more than one time and this retaking test may lead them to delay their thesis examination. This finding is in line with a study (Putri, 2023), who found that many students' graduations have been postponed because of the test policy which requires students to take an English proficiency test with a predetermined minimum score. This finding suggests the importance of considering and adjusting the standard score that may suit the ability of non-English study program students. This finding also suggests the

importance of considering whether or not TEAP needs to be a requirement for thesis examination, as an assessment, or both.

Another insight from the study is that the TEAP is challenging for non-English study program students because of a lack understanding about the TEAP system. This includes a lack of understanding about the format test, the information of the test, and the blueprint of the test. This finding suggests that TEAP can be challenging when they have a lack of understanding of the TEAP system. Thus, this study provides a key insight that it is important to provide non-English students sufficient understanding when taking the TEAP. Furthermore, this study provides insight that TEAP becomes challenging and difficult to achieve the score required when they do not have enough academic English skills. The TEAP test includes some sections such as listening, reading, and structure and written expressions (J.H. et al., 2020). These sections require some specific skills in order to be able to answer each section and pass the minimum score. The study also provides insights into how psychological factors can influence non-English study program students' ability to undertake the test, such as anxiety. These findings are in line with a previous study by Narayana and Soepriyanti (2023), which also showed that the challenges faced by the students during the test is related to listening, reading, and structure and written expressions. Besides, the test such as TEAP, becomes a burden for students because it can increase students' anxiety.

Finally, this study provides insights that a lack of TEAP training can be a factor influencing the students' ability in undertaking TEAP. This finding suggests that the participants felt the test was difficult and unprepared due to a lack of training and guidelines they received before taking the TEAP. This study aligns with a study by Alek et al (2019) who found that the students who were preparing for the test TEAP as TOEFL had increased motivation as they expected to meet their goals for taking the test. Furthermore, TEAP can be more challenging for them to take the test because English is not their major and they get English just for introduction to the main course. This study is supported by Mahmud (2014) that the difficulties that students experience during the TEAP as TOEFL test are due to the lack of English language skills among students, especially for students who are not majoring in English. Theses students have no basic skills in English. In addition, this study also provides insight that it will be better if the students receive in-depth training focusing on the specific skills needed for the test. Additionally, this finding emphasized the importance of the training being provided close to the time of the test to avoid forgetting the learned material.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concludes that non-English study program students perceive that TEAP as a requirement for thesis examination is beneficial for assessing their English proficiency. Undertaking TEAP helps students measure their language skills and experience a standardized English test. Furthermore, the TEAP is useful as it can motivate them to improve their academic English proficiency. Particularly, undertaking TEAP motivates them to expand their vocabulary and enhance their skills in writing academic content, such as English words or terms that may appear in their thesis and writing thesis abstracts.

This study also conclude that many participants still find TEAP challenging and difficult for them. The study found that many students still experience challenges and difficulties in taking the test. The challenges faced by participants is a lack of understanding of the TEAP system, including not understanding the TEAP format, the test information, and the test blueprint. Additionally, the lack of training is also a factor that makes TEAP challenging for them because they feel unprepared and do not know what to prepare, especially since English is not their major. The findings suggest that there should be more training focusing on the specific skills needed for the test and provided the training that is close to the test date. This training is believed to be able to help students have better preparation for the test and have better performance in their test. Additionally, the difficulties experienced by non-English students include the high score requirements and their insufficient academic English skills. Each part of the TEAP, such as listening, reading, and structure and written expression, requires specific skills to be able to answer each section and pass the minimum score. If the students do not have sufficient academic English skills, they will have difficulty and may lead them to retake the test several times to meet the required standards score and this will cause them delay in their thesis examinations which, in turn, delay their study completion timely. Therefore, it is important to consider adjusting the TEAP score requirements to better align with the abilities of non-English students and considering if TEAP needs to be set as a requirement for thesis examination.

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