THE PERCEPTION OF “DIPLOMA-IV” ACCOUNTING STUDY PROGRAM OF SAMARINDA STATE POLYTECHNIC ON TOEFL

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Abstract

SEKTA LONIR OSCARINI WATI BHAKTI & MARWANTO: This Research investigated 178 “Diploma-IV” Accounting Study Program students of Samarinda State Polytechnic to see their perspective on the effectiveness of Polytechnic measures designed to enhance performance on Test of English as a Foreign language (TOEFL) – including a standard passing score of TOEFL and how TOEFL influenced students learning. This research belongs to a quantitative research. It is a survey design. A questionnaire was used to collect the data. The research revealed that the participants were giving more positive opinions than negative opinion regarding the effectiveness of TOEFL as a graduation requirement. Those in favor of the requirement thought the policy enhanced their English proficiency and motivated them to learn English. Although the students believed that standard passing score of TOEFL, English learning counseling, and English extracurricular activities were effective, the students were not confidence enough to pass the TOEFL.

Keywords: TOEFL, Students Perceptions, Survey

BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

Samarinda State Polytechnic is one of high education institutions in Samarinda, a small city in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, which has gotten ISO 9001:2000. It is a mean to achieve the objective in conducting the Total Quality Control that is expected to be able to answer the globalization development which its final destination is to reach the effectively and efficiency of an organization.

One of the commitments that have been established by the managements of Samarinda State Polytechnic is the average TOEFL of the students is 450. TOEFL is the only standardized English proficiency test that conducted in Samarinda State Polytechnic. The management uses this test to measure the students’ English proficiency skill. Perhaps, its graduations have English skills that can use to compete with other graduates to seek some jobs.

Although the TOEFL gives some benefits for the students in, it means nothing if they have negative perception on it. Based on the researcher’s experience in Samarinda State Polytechnic, the researcher notices that every student has his own perception on TOEFL so that the researcher will concern on the student’s perception on TOEFL as one of graduation requirements.

The objectives of the research are to find out the “Diploma-IV” Accounting Study Program of Samarinda State Polytechnic students’ experience in taking TOEFL and perception of the effectiveness of the Polytechnic measurement (e.g., policies, requirements, and program) designed to help the students prepare for these tests. Therefore, there are three questions of the research:

a. How do DIV Accounting Study Program Samarinda State Polytechnic students perceive TOEFL and their own test preparation?

b. What is DIV Accounting Study Program of Samarinda State Polytechnic students’ opinion about the effectiveness of polytechnic measures designed to promote English proficiency?
To what extent do demographic variables of gender, semester, test taking experience, interest in English, and English ability influence the DIV Accounting Study Program students’ perspectives on TOEFL as one of graduation requirements?

Review of Literature

The Definition of Test of English as Foreign Language

The Test of English as a Foreign Language™, better known as TOEFL®, is designed to measure the English proficiency of people whose native language is not English. The TOEFL is a measure of general English proficiency. It is not a test of academic aptitude or of subject matter competence, nor is it a direct test of English speaking or writing ability. Indonesia test taker was in the good rank among the ASIA and ASEAN test takers. It is being surprised since English is still as a foreign language in Indonesia. It shows that the development of English Proficiency of Indonesia increases from year to year. Perhaps, Indonesia test takers have already realize the importance of English and TOEFL for their lives. (Saukah:2003)

The Kinds of Test of English as Foreign Language

There are some kinds of TOEFL that Educational Testing Service provides to their users, such as, Paper Based TOEFL, Computer Based TOEFL, and Internet Based TOEFL. These kinds of TOEFL have their own characteristics and purposes. The definition of each kind of TOEFL below is cited from Educational Testing Service (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010)

The Importance of Test of English as a Foreign Language

In Indonesia, TOEFL is used for one of the requirements of the new employee admission in the government institutions as well as in the government and private companies, one of requirements of the S2 and S3 degree student enrollment, one of the requirement to propose the scholarship either from The government or from the private institutions, and one of the graduation requirements of the government and private universities. (toeflindonesia:2011).

TOEFL in Polytechnic in Indonesia

In some state and private polytechnic in Indonesia, TOEFL is used as one of graduation requirements to fulfill their quality target in their management. The passing standard of TOEFL that stated in each polytechnic is various it is related to the standard that used, such as ISO 9001:2000 and Accreditation Standard. Here are some State and Private Polytechnic that stated TOEFL as one of graduation requirements that taken from many sources(Poliban:2011; Polnes:2011; Poltekes-smg:2011; Polpen:2011; Pens:2011; Poltekesdepkes2011; PoltekesJakarta3: 2011 & PNJ:2011)

The Concept of Perception

Eggen and Kauchack (2001) defines perception as the process by which people attach meaning to experience. Mussen in Haris (2007) also explains that perception is the process by which information acquired through the sensory receptor (eyes, ears, nose, and skin) is transformed into a percept of what we think, see, hear, smell, taste, or touch. He adds that perception is a creative process that involves much more than simple transformation of stimulus energy by the sensory receptors.

Gould (2007) supports this argument by saying that perception is the subsequent selection, organization, and interpretation of sensory input—it is the process of obtaining information about both the external and internal environments, which results, via integration utilizing memory, in the conscious experience, recognition, and interpretation of objects, object relationships, and events. It means that the students will use their senses to an attractive stimulus that address to them. Regarding the use of TOEFL as the students requirements to graduate from the college, it is assumed that TOEFL requirement is also an
attractive stimulus for students. Their senses will respond it directly and the product of the perception can be positive or negative.

Previous Research

Two previous researches are especially paved the way for the current one by collecting a small number of student's perspective on TOEFL using mixed methods, such as interviews, surveys and observations. First, Chen & Squires (2010) investigation at a Vocational College in Taiwan was designed to find out the student's perception on standardized English Proficiency Test that has already taken by them, whether it is TOEIC, TOEFL, or IELTS. Their overall conclusions observed that standardized English proficiency tests had little influence on English study strategies or on the amount of time studying.

The other's previous research's finding that gives contribution for this research is from Robert (2000) investigation at private language institute in Toronto. The participants of his research were adult Korean learners of English preparing for TOEFL. The finding of the research described that the participants believe that an important part of their TOEFL preparation education is to learn the test taking skills that help improve test scores without necessarily improving their language proficiency. These practices seem to subvert the TOEFL as a direct test of English language proficiency.

Research Methodology

This research applied quantitative design that is about explaining phenomena by collecting quantitative data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (Muijs, 2004:11). This research belongs survey study.

In this research, the researcher decided to take all “Diploma-IV” Accounting Study Program students of Samarinda State Polytechnic as the population. It is correlated to the statements that it may be possible to survey the whole population (Muijs:2004). Besides that, the researcher believed that the results of the research that taken from those students’ perception would give more comprehensive description about the TOEFL conducted in Samarinda State Polytechnic.

The questionnaire that used in this research was adapted from an established questionnaire by Chen & Squires (2010) that consisted of 23 items. The researcher decides to delete some questions and replace them with the questions that related to the situation and condition of the Samarinda State Polytechnic and in order to find out the depth information from the population to answer the problem questions of research.

Result and Discussion

Participants Demographic Information

First, the researcher would like to find out the demography of the participants such as the age, gender, semester, and English ability. It showed that there were 178 students from semester two (47 students or 26%), semester four (48 students or 27%), semester six (41 students or 23%) and semester eight (42 students or 24%). They were 123 female students or 69% and 55 male students or 31%. Their ages were 17 years old (7 students or 4%), 18 years old (41 students or 23%), 19 years old (41 students or 23%), 20 years old (42 students or 24%), 21 years old (33 students or 19%), 22 years old (9 students or 5%), and 23 – up years old (5 students or 3%). There were 78 students or 44% who had low English Proficiency, 45 students or 25% who had intermediate English Proficiency, and no students who had high English Proficiency.

“Diploma-IV” Accounting Study Program Students’ Perceptions on TOEFL

When the participants were asked about their experience in taking TOEFL, approximately 123 students or 69% had ever taken TOEFL test before, and only 58 students or 31%. Most of them took TOEFL in Samarinda State Polytechnic (115 students or 96%), and the rest of them also took TOEFL in their Senior High School (38 students or 32%). When they asking about how they prepared themselves in facing TOEFL, most of them answered by reading books or listening to radio programs (96 students or 54%). It was followed by taking course (48 students or 27%), other answers such as, watching movies, playing games, asking someone who knows TOEFL, and studying online (46 students or 26%), and using the resources at self-access language learning centre (40 students or 22%). Unfortunately, no students went to language school.

“Diploma-IV” Accounting Study Program Students’ Opinions regarding the Effectiveness of Polytechnic Measures for Enhancing English Proficiency

Among 11 measures, the three items thought effective by the largest number of participants were English learning counseling (77% effective or very effective), standard TOEFL score 450 (71% very effective or effective) and English extracurricular activities (71% very effective or effective). On the other hand, the three items thought ineffective by the smallest number of the participants were English content area course (28% very effective or effective) and waiving the freshmen’s English course by passing the standardized English proficiency test (39% very effective or effective). Participants were divided in
their opinion regarding the TOEFL as the graduation requirement. 97 participants or 54% perceived TOEFL as graduation requirement was effective or very effective, while 53 participants or 29% perceived that it was ineffective or very ineffective, and only 28 participants or 16% had no opinion (see Table 6.3)

**Correlation between Participants’ Perspective on TOEFL as a Graduation Requirement and Demographic Variables**

The two most frequent reasons given for its effectiveness is that it can enhance English proficiency (45%) and enhance motivation to learn English (41%). The least frequent reason given for an English graduation requirement is that other colleges have the same requirement (4%).

The two most frequent reasons given for the ineffectiveness of the English graduation requirement were the participant’s lack of confidence that they would be able to pass the English the English proficiency tests (68%) and learning English is not helpful for career and advanced studies (17%). None of the participants agree that it can decrease study time on content knowledge.

There were 43 female students and 16 male students. 14 of them were never following TOEFL test. Most of them also had low proficient English (39 students) compared to the students who intermediate proficient English (6 students). They also prepared themselves for facing the TOEFL by reading and listening radio (30 students). Although most of them were somewhat confidence in passing the TOEFL (38 students) but they most of them interested in learning English (33 students)

**Conclusion and Suggestion**

**Conclusions**

The Study revealed that more participants (54%) thought that TOEFL as graduation requirement was effective than those thought it was ineffective (16%). Most of the participants believed that the policy could enhance their English proficiency and motivate them to learn English.

Even though, there was reported that no one of the students had high proficiency in English and most of them had low proficiency in English (78 participants), most of the participants were very interested in learning English (119 participants). It happened because most of the participants were not confidents in passing TOEFL test (92 participants). The participants delivered their negative opinions mostly on their confidence in passing the TOEFL (40 participants or 68%) and learning English is not helpful for career and advanced studies.

Three measures perceived to be effective by the most participants were English learning counseling (137 participants or 77%), English extracurricular activities (126 participants or 71%), and Standard TOEFL score 450 (126 participants or 71%). There were only 40 participants or 28% perceived English lecturer in content are were effective.

**Suggestions**

According on the findings of the survey on the students’ perception on TOEFL, the researchers would like to give some suggestion that could give contribution to the management of Samarinda State Polytechnic. First, the management needs to appeal to the English lecturers to give some exercises to their students about TOEFL since TOEFL is not included in curriculum of Samarinda State polytechnic. And then, the management and the lecturers need to increase the students’ confident in passing or conducting the TOEFL, such as, giving some seminar of TOEFL and conducting TOEFL competition. Since it was reported that TOEFL test had little influence on English study strategies or the amount of time studying, the management to give an extra course for students to take so that they will prepared them well for the test.

**References**


