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TIM REDAKSI

Alamat Redaksi : Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia
Fakultas Sastra dan Budaya, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo
Jl. Jend. Sudirman No. 6 Kota Gorontalo, 96128
Email: jurnalbdb@gmail.com
Telp. (62-435) 821125, Fax. (62-435) 821752

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Jl. Jend. Sudirman No. 6 Kota Gorontalo, 96128
email: jurnalbdb@gmail.com
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TOEFL WASHBACK ON TEACHING MATERIALS USED IN ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

Isharyanti Ningsih Sulila, Harto Malik, Nonny Basalama

Universitas Negeri Gorontalo

Abstract: This research aims at investigating the effect of TOEFL as a graduation requirement reflected in teaching materials. This research focuses on analyzing the teaching materials of courses related to TOEFL; Listening 3, Structure, and Reading 3 through qualitative method. The data are also obtained from an interview with decision makers regarding the implementation of the regulation, and teachers regarding the teaching material selection and their perception toward TOEFL, the regulation, and the use of teaching materials.

The result indicates that the regulation of TOEFL as a graduation requirement affects the selection of test-oriented materials. The datum shows that the Washback occurs in the selection of teaching materials because of the courses use more test-oriented materials, frequently refer to the test content and format, and assigning more practice opportunities to students using test-oriented materials. Another important finding is that these three teachers have different perception on the regulation that consequently affected on the model of Washback in teaching materials.

Keywords: TOEFL Washback, regulation, teaching materials, English Departments

INTRODUCTION

Universitas Negeri Gorontalo has been awakening of the importance of English language skills and competence as the essential for its' students' success, regarding the demand of accountably human resource for global market and competitive economic, as well as human resource growth. The frequency of English use has been noticeable, can be seen from the curriculum that considers English as a compulsory course in every major and department, or the use of English proficiency test for its graduating students. Another important fact to be considered is that many job vacancies, including a public officer, the most popular job among graduates, require an English proficiency certificate with a certain standard score. For example, the 2014 job vacancy in the Ministry of Trade requires a PBT TOEFL score 600, the Indonesia Prosecution Service job vacancy requires score 450, and some other ministries that require various scores of English proficiency test as a job vacancy requirement.

To answer this demand, for the past decade, some departments, majors, and study programs in Universitas Negeri Gorontalo (UNG) has been using the English proficiency test as a graduation requirement. In UNG particularly, there are two (but not limited) variety of English Proficiency test commonly accepted, those are Institutional Testing Program (ITP) developed by ETS, and TOEFL Prediction conducted by Language center of UNG. Both are paper-based TOEFL. There is no significant difference between these two in terms of content of the tests and the scoring system. The only things make them different are the price and the legalization. ITP is mostly accepted both nationally and internationally,

while TOEFL prediction is made or compiled by Language center of UNG and intended to be used in the institution only. The test covers three English skills, namely Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. Paper-based TOEFL is used because it is the most common and easiest test in terms of the English skills complexity and facilities needed to be prepared for the test (no need to prepare computer or high speed internet as for IBT or CBT. It only needs paper, pencils, sound player, and room).

Commonly, English proficiency test is regulated as a graduation requirement to show and control the graduation quality through establishing a certain standard score for some majors and study programs, including English major that has been imposing the requirement for few years. Unlike English department which established a specific score for its students to be graduated, for some majors the requirement is just simply having a TOEFL prediction certificate with no standard score as an introductory regulation. Through this regulation, it is expected that the English proficiency test to have an impact on English teaching and learning at the university; what and how teachers taught and what and how students learned.

As Petrie (as cited in Hsu (2009) stated, "it would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that evaluation and testing have become the engine for implementing educational policy" (p. 15), then it is not too much to expect that the regulation would lead the English teaching and learning process to a positive and effective direction where students could practice their English skills the English proficiency test hoped to encourage.

English Department, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo is the first major that implements this regulation during the past decade. Establishing the graduation requirement score 500 for paper-based test, this is not an illogical regulation since English major students supposedly familiar with the skills the TOEFL covers. Major English skills such as Listening, speaking, writing, and reading is taught since first year from basic to advanced level, not to mention the other relevant and advanced courses, as well as English literature they use during the study years.

This regulation obviously shows a great concern for the university to have graduates who are able to compete within the international standard. However, ideally, making such a high-stake regulation should also followed by a clear concept and details on how it will be achieved. One thing the university should be concerned is to avoid the perception that the regulation of having English proficiency test as a graduation requirement is just to follow the trend and just simply copying system formulated in another universities, since a lot of top universities in Indonesia applied the same regulation. Because if this is true, what happens at the end is that it is difficult to determine whether the English proficiency test is effective to show the graduation quality.

A high stake regulation in an academic setting will obviously bring influences in the aspects of teaching and learning. Such response can be positive, negative or even ignorance. Andrews (1994) as cited in Cheng and Curtis (2004, p. 14) emphasizing the complexity of washback on curriculum innovation on three possible responses from the elements involved in the regulation: fight it, ignore it, or use it. The term 'fight it' refers to any effort of using the process and criteria as an exchange to the test, and considering the test as encouraging the expected educational practices. The term 'ignore it' means dissembling the stakes the test brings, as Andrews (1994) said, 'hiding its head on the sand' (p. 52). Meanwhile, the term 'use it' is the most common washback, promoting the utilization of a high stake test in achieving pedagogical goals. This washback is expected as a positive influence of test as a regulation for educational practices.

Furthermore, there has never been any investigation whether the implementation of TOEFL score as a graduation requirement in the English Department, UNG affects the process of teaching

and learning, or what strategies it takes for students to achieve the score. When entering university, English major students are not required to have a certain English proficiency score, nor have to take any English examination for university entrance. Supposedly, they do not have any expectation of having to achieve a certain standardized English score when graduating. The fact that more than half of English major students who took the test in 2013 and 2014 were failed to achieve the standard score at the first try according to Lakib P2B UNG makes it questionable if the test contributes any impact on teaching and learning in the English department.

Therefore, an investigation is needed on whether the test reflected in the process of teaching and learning in the English department, UNG in order to achieve the intended score. This investigation will help the decision makers, teachers, and students to see what effects the regulation brings to the process of teaching and learning, or the material selection in particular.

THEORITICAL BASES

A Brief Understanding on Paper-Based TOEFL

There are many kinds of English Proficiency test commonly used to measure the level of English skills, namely TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, etc. in Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, paper-based TOEFL is used for the economic and technical reason; paper-based TOEFL is cheaper than the other English proficiency test mentioned above, and that is the only English proficiency test available in Gorontalo, provided by language center, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo.

TOEFL is a brand of English proficiency test that originally established by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) as a way to prove English proficiency to be used for academic purposes. TOEFL stands for Test Of English as a Foreign Language. It is initially made to measure English skills of nonnative English speakers who want to study in the United States. There are two types of TOEFL; paper based-TOEFL and Internet-Based TOEFL. Paper-based, the one that UNG uses measure three English skills, namely Listening, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. The content covers aspects of English academic language proficiency such as academic course content, campus situation, and other familiar and related topics and the score ranged from 310 to 677.

Test skills: Listening

Listening section consists of 50 questions divided into three parts: questions according to short dialogues, questions according to longer conversations, and questions according to talks and lectures. The skills measured in the Listening part are as follows:

1. Listening for basic comprehension. The content measured are understanding main idea or purpose of a conversation or lecture, and understanding major points and important details of a conversation or lecture
2. Listening for pragmatic understanding. The content measured are: 1) recognizing the speaker's attitude, 2) recognizing the speaker's degree of certainty, 3) recognizing the speaker's purpose or motivation, and 4) recognizing how stress and intonation help convey the speaker's intended meaning.
3. Connecting and synthesizing information. The content measured are: 1) Recognizing organization of information presented, 2) understanding relationships between information presented, 3) making connections between or among pieces of information in a conversation or lecture, 4) recognizing topics changes, exemplifications, digressions, or aside statements in lectures and conversations, and 5) making inferences, form generalizations, predict an outcome, and draw conclusions based on what is implied.

Test Skills: Structure and Written Expression

Structure and written expression is designed to measure the English ability according

to appropriate standard written English. There are two parts in the section; first is structure, consists of 15 multiple choice questions in the form of sentence completion. Second is written expression, consists of 25 questions in the form of error identification task. These 40 questions should be done in 25 minutes.

Test Skills: Reading

Reading section consists of 50 questions for 55 minutes. Test taker is provided academic reading such as passage from textbooks, newspaper articles, reference materials, fictions and non-fiction literature, historical and biographical works, technical manual, or academic journals. The texts include exposition, argumentation, and narrative forms. The contents of reading section are:

1. Reading to find information. The content measured are: 1) finding key facts and important information in a reading passage, 2) effectively scan textual material for information, and 3) increasing reading fluency and rate.
2. Reading for basic comprehension. The content measured are: 1) understanding the main idea of a passage, 2) understanding key facts and important information in a passage, 3) recognizing logical sequencing of written material, 4) understanding vocabulary meaning, 5) Correctly identifying the pronouns and the nouns they refer to in a text, and 6) Making inferences, forming generalizations, and draw conclusions based on what is implied in a passage.
3. Reading to learn. The content measured are: 1) recognizing the organization and purpose of a passage, 2) recognizing cause-and-effect relationships, compare-and-contrast relationships, and arguments, 3) creating a mental framework, such as a category chart or an outline/summary, for organizing and recalling major points and important details, 4) Distinguishing between major and minor points or information, 5) recognizing and creating accurate paraphrases of information from a text, and 6) understanding why an author explains concepts in a certain way.

The test contents above will then be the indicators for document analysis regarding Washback in the materials used in the English department, UNG.

Definition of Washback

According to Alderson & Wall (1996, p. 291), Washback or Backwash refers to the influence of testing on teaching and learning. Often the word"Washback" can be confused with "impact" as some researchers agreed that they are slightly different. Wall defined test impact as "any of the effects that a test may have on individuals, policies, or practices, within the classroom, the school, the educational system or society as a whole", while Washback as "the effects of test on teaching and learning". Spratt (2005, p.12) supported this idea by stating that washback is most likely appear to:

1. Curriculum- content of curriculum, time tabling
2. Teaching material- choice of textbook, use of past papers, teacher-made material
3. Teaching method- choice of methods, teaching of test-taking skills
4. Attitudes and feelings- both learners and teachers
5. Learning-the learning outcomes

However, some other researchers such as Hughes (1993) argued that Washback refers to the impact of a test on not only the teachers and learners but also on the educational system in general, and society at large. In case of test Washback in Gorontalo, the first definition suits better since the English proficiency test is an unfamiliar thing. Despite English department students, only those who concern in the academic field or pursuing school abroad are familiar with English proficiency test, and take it seriously by taking preparation class or updating their scores. Thus, it can be assumed that washback in

Gorontalo most likely occurs in terms of teaching and learning in the classroom in university context.

Hence, Washback in this study is the effect caused by the English proficiency test as a graduation requirement in English Department, UNG, on:

1. Teaching process regarding the English skills involved in the test (Listening, Structure and Written expression, and Reading). The teaching process itself including curriculum, materials, teaching method, and feeling and attitudes of teachers.
2. Learning - the learning outcomes

Washback can be positive or negative, depend on the elements involved. Whether the effect of testing is deemed to be positive or negative should depend on *who* it is that actually conducts the investigation within a particular educational context, as well as *where*, the school or university context, *when*, the time and duration of using such assessment practices, *why*, the rationale, and *how*, the different approaches used by different participants within the context (Cheng, Curtis, and Watanabe, 2004, p. 56).

Positive Washback refers to the expected test impact such as motivating students to learn the language. According to Pearson, Washback effect of a test will be negative if it fails to reflect the learning principles and course objectives to which the test supposedly relates, and it will be positive if the effects are beneficial and "encourage the whole range of the quality of the desired changes" (as cited in Cheng et.al, 2004, p. 11). Washback can be positive if it leads the teacher preparing the subject more thoroughly, and leads students to, for example, do their homework, pay more attention to the lesson being taught, etc.

Negative Washback refers to the unexpected and harmful impact, such as instructional that is focused on only the test preparation and ignoring the essence of teaching and learning. Negative Washback was reflected by Vernon, claimed that teachers tend to ignore subjects ad activities that did not contribute directly to passing the exam, and that examinations "distort the curriculum" (as cited in Cheng et.al, 2004, p.9). Wiseman claimed that paid coaching classes, which were intended for preparing students for exams, were not a good use of time, because students were practicing exam techniques rather than language learning activities (as cited in Cheng, Curtis, and Watanabe, 2004,p. 9). Davies (1990, p. 9) believed that the testing devices had become teaching devices; that teaching and learning was effectively being directed to pass examination papers, making the educational experience narrow and uninteresting. In other words, test would not reflect the learning principles anymore if the teacher teaches according to the test and ignore the rationale or aims of the test itself. Teachers tend to teach according to the test and narrowing the syllabus and curriculum. Students end up in anxiety and under pressure because the possibility of not passing the standard score.

Washback in Language Teaching Materials

One important aspect in teaching and learning affected by a high stake test is materials. The term material here refers to the material related to the test. It is commonly accepted that the higher the stake of a test, the bigger the influence in the process of teaching and learning, including selecting the materials to be taught. What always happen is when a test has a big impact on teaching and learning, suddenly a lot of writers and publishers compete to write or produce test-related books. This is somehow help teachers and schools enriching their prescribed materials by providing supporting materials to be integrated. However, issues come up on how and how much teachers use these test-related materials. Lam (1994) stated that although the test-related materials such as past papers can be used in some innovative way i.e. the use of teacher-produced authentic materials, it is also possible to drive teachers to be "textbook slaves" and "exam slaves" who become heavily dependent on the test-related materials. He added that this way teacher believes students can be best

prepared for the exams. Andrews, Fullilove, and Wong (2002, p. 15) find out on his study in Hong Kong classroom that the teachers spend two-third of teaching time by discussing the test-related published materials. Confirmed this finding, Hayes and Read (2003) stated that 90 percent cases in IELTS study in New Zealand use exam preparation books. This means that many teachers who taught those within the necessity to achieve a standard score in a test tend to teach according to the test.

Given the fact above, Spratt (2005, p. 10) suggest that washback study on teaching materials focuses on material production, the use of materials, students and teachers' view of the exam material, and the content of the materials. Another thought comes from Andrew (2004, cited in Maniruzzaman and Hoque 2010, p. 63) suggested that a test-related material resulted from: 1) Teacher's need resulting from familiarity/ unfamiliarity of the test, 2) test format and content, and 3) the purpose of test use. Based on this, Washback on teaching material can be seen based on following aspects:

1. The material selection
2. Content of textbook and additional materials
3. Reliance on test-related materials
4. Influence on the design of the curricula/ syllabus
5. Teachers'/students' perception

While to investigate the occurrence of Washback in teaching materials, Hsu (2009, p. 116), suggested the indicators as follows:

1. Use more test-oriented materials. If Washback occurred, the regulation will affect teachers to what they teach. Teachers would employ exam practice workbook and/or mock exam to prepare students for the tests, or assigned test-oriented sources to students.
2. Frequently refer to the test requirement. If washback occurred, the teacher would talk about the content and format of English proficiency test and frequently remind students of the graduation requirement to reflect the existence and importance of the regulation in the classroom.
3. Assign more practice opportunities to students. If washback occurred, there would be a more student-centered classroom provided by the teaching materials that allows students to engage in activities to develop their English proficiency using test-oriented materials.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed qualitative method. English Department is chosen to be the place of this research because this is where the highest stake of the TOEFL in UNG occurs, since it requires the students to have a certain score to be graduated. Focusing on teaching materials used in class related to the test: listening course, structure course, and reading course, the research employed document study, and interview with the decision maker and teachers in obtaining the data. Time allocated for the research is in accordance with the need to obtain, complete, and analyze the data required. The model of data analysis is by Cresswell, began by organizing and preparing the data, including transcribing interviews and organizing materials. Next is reading through all the data to get a general sense of the information, then coding the data into categories as well as labeling them. This coded data then will result in a description of categories and themes for analysis. The next step is advancing the description and themes into qualitative narrative, and interpreting the results. The very last step is validating the data accuracy to avoid bias.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Regulation of TOEFL as a Graduation Requirement.

The information obtained from the interviews with the Head of Department revealed that English Department had tried to improve its graduation' English proficiency through

implementing TOEFL score as one of graduation exit, and it has been implemented for almost ten years now. There was a general understanding that such proficiency test would encourage students to study harder.

Since the first it was initiated until 2014, the standard score for English students was very low compared to the other universities, and it had never changed. There was a general agreement that the department needed to concern on students' wide range of ability, and that the score was a 'comfort zone' for everybody. Gradually, the requirement became less important and a little bit 'forgotten' of its existence, until when the students needed to do the paperwork for graduation exit.

The department recently has been aware of this issue, and implementing a new innovation on the regulation; rising up the standard score to fulfill market demand and making changes on the design of the curriculum to meet up this new score. This showed that the department had a positive attitude toward the implementation of the regulation. The department believed that the higher the score, the higher the stake, the higher students' motivation to study and improve their English proficiency. The new score also made the department feel more confident of its graduates to compete in the market demand.

Since the department has started on the new innovation on the regulation, English proficiency test will play more important role. Regarding the issue of there will be a reduction in the amount of graduates every academic year, the department believed that the changes made in curriculum, syllabus, teaching materials, course credit given, etc., and time to get adjusted with the changes would overcome the issue. The department certainly believed that English proficiency test was an effective tool to control the quality of its graduates.

Selecting Teaching Materials and Supporting Materials

Three teachers were interviewed to investigate the teaching material selection. Each teacher representing courses related to skills tested in TOEF, namely Listening 3, Structure, and Reading 3. All the teachers said that choosing what to teach was all decided by team teaching, therefore, all teachers involved had a big role in designing syllabus, lesson plan, and of course teaching materials.

Regarding the regulation, all said that they were aware of the existence of TOEFL as a graduation requirement, and that is why they most likely chose test-related materials for the courses. They accommodate the regulation by allocating test-related meetings into syllabus, and shared test-taking strategies to the students. Some of the teachers even used a TOEFL preparation book as one of the main textbook used in the classroom, spent times searching additional test-oriented materials from internet and other sources, and using TOEFL-like test as final examination. This showed that Washback of TOEFL as a graduation requirement reflected on how teaching materials are selected by the teachers to be used in the classroom.

Content of Textbook and Additional Materials

Three courses had been investigated to find out if TOEFL Washback reflected on teaching materials. Using themes from ETS and TOEFL prediction test from Language center, UNG, the instrument used to evaluate the textbook and the additional materials was the Instrument for the Analysis of Teaching Materials (IATM). The evaluation included the general information of the book, general aim and organization of the textbook, language features covers by the book (listening), question/tasking techniques in the book, communicative activities, text types and topics in the book, and the overall book's treatment of the skills.

The evaluation concluded that:

1. Two out of the three courses (Listening 3 and Reading 3) were using TOEFL preparation book for their teaching materials in meetings

that specifically designed to prepare students for the TOEFL, while the other one (structure) combined textbook for course materials and TOEFL preparation book in all the meetings.

2. The TOEFL book was specifically used to prepare students for the test. The aim and the organization of the textbook are designed explicitly as a test preparation materials, and teachers understood and aware the publisher's intention on writing the book.
3. Although the format of the questions and tasking were the 'cloning' of a real test, the content and language features covers by the book were 'easier' compare to the real test. For example, the conversation in the listening audio was much slower than the test used by Language center, UNG. The reading texts on the textbook were also shorter than the real test, made it unrepresentative for students to get the real picture of TOEFL test.
4. Despite the real TOEFL test that designed as an individual test, the TOEFL-oriented materials were delivered using communicative activities such as pair work and group discussion.
5. Seeing from the marking and grading, the teaching materials did not really driven by TOEFL. This shown by the fact that the TOEFL-related material did not involve TOEFL conversion score to measure students' proficiency. This might because the conversion score provided by the book is different with what the real TOEFL uses.

The Reliance on Test-Related Materials

The reliance on test-related materials was shown right form the design of the syllabus. All three courses mentioned TOEFL in the course description and competence standard on the syllabus. The interview result revealed that teachers accommodated the implementation of the regulation into syllabus design by teaching test-taking strategies, practice, and approach. However, some said that it did not mean they were driven by the test. One teacher perceived that she intentionally rely on TOEFL-oriented materials because the materials could contribute a lot to students' English ability and proficiency.

1. Teachers' perception toward TOEFL, the regulation, and how they reflect it on the teaching materials.

Perhaps the most interesting information comes from the interview to investigate the perception toward TOEFL, the regulation, and how the regulation reflected on teaching materials. Similar answer came from respondents when it comes to their perception toward TOEFL, stated that they understand that TOEFL aims to measure the English proficiency test that an English Department student should have and mastered during their process of learning. They also understand that the regulation is made to ensure their graduates are qualified, not only by the degree certificate, but also by the English proficiency proven by the TOEFL certificate.

However, different answers came on whether the score is really useful. While teacher A said that TOEFL score they obtained will be beneficial to pursue the next level of education, teacher C stated that the score is most likely useless once the students are graduating. This might be because most of English department graduates are expected to be an English teacher and to be an English teacher (mostly for public school) does not require any TOEFL score as one of the qualification. These different perception leads to the different model of Washback on teaching materials. Although all the courses that had been investigated here were involved TOEFL-oriented materials that intentionally or intentionally prepare students for TOEFL, the model were vary from 'test slave', 'just taking benefit from the test', and 'just to fulfill what is written on the syllabus".

Therefore, from the findings on teachers' perception above, it can be said that the washback occurred not only because of the regulation, but

because teachers' awareness of the significance of TOEFL to their students. The model of washback on teachers' perception regarding the teaching materials they use in the classroom is not only lead to merely positive and negative Washback as stated in the previous chapter, but also include Washback because of the regulation of TOEFL as a graduation requirement, and teachers' perception and belief about the use of TOEFL.

CONCLUSION

Evidence from the data obtained during the research shows that the Washback does appear in the teaching materials, as all these courses used test-oriented materials and allocated a certain amount of time practicing the test. The model of Washback is varied; one appears because of the regulation, others because of the benefit given by the test to teaching materials. One of the reasons behind the model of Washback is the different perceptions among teachers toward the regulation and use of TOEFL score.

This research supports the opinion that Washback is not simple but rather complex (Wall & Anderson, 1993, p. 5). It does seem that the regulation evokes varied and unpredictable responses. The reflection on teaching materials are also various, from a 'TOEFL preparation book slaves' to 'use it for benefit only'. Another finding is that the different perception on the use of TOEFL score can lead to different model of Washback.

The implementation of TOEFL as a graduation requirement requires proper treatment by the department. Regulating such as high stake test can be a suicide for students if the department ignores to provide students the proper way to achieve the aims intended by the regulation. Making TOEFL as a tool for quality control will be failed if there is no agreement among parties involved on what, why, and how to achieve it. Teacher C said that the TOEFL-related meetings designed on the syllabus were not effective for students to get the intended score, and that the score would also useless after the graduation. This might be true; it seemed to be a dilemma when the score 425 required by the department to be graduated was indeed hard to achieve by English Department students (according to the data of 2012-2014 from language center, UNG, more than 50% of English students were failed to chive this score at the first try), while in the world of work this score was useless since the average minimum score required by market demand was 500.

Therefore, the department's decision on rising up the score to 500 in 2015 is a risk if there is no change in the curriculum innovation. Regarding the department's revamping this year; the result of this research would significantly contribute information that can support the department in making decision. While the department is changing all the curriculum according to KKNI and reforming all the courses into more critical thinking learning, the result leads to the importance of evaluation on what the students needs after they graduate regarding the use of TOEFL, teachers' perception toward the regulation, the reflection of the regulation in teaching materials, as well as the product (students' outcome) after the teaching materials.

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