

Paradigm Shift in English Learning: Exploring Hope and Healing for Students
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ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH LEARNING NEEDS OF AcEPT ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST COURSE PARTICIPANTS

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Abstract

The AcEPT test is a certificate that is recommended to be used as a graduation requirement besides TOEFL. There are differences between TOEFL and AcEPT. In terms of questions, AcEPT is different from TOEFL. TOEFL tests three language skills (listening, structure, and reading), while AcEPT tests five language skills (listening, vocabulary, structure, reading, and composing skills). This difference triggers learning difficulties for students in preparing themselves before the test. For this reason, course programs are followed to support adequate results. However, the course program has not carried out an adequate needs analysis of its students. For this reason, this research was conducted to analyze the needs of participants in the AcEPT test preparation course related to attitudes, difficulties, and participant needs. The research methods used were questionnaires and limited interviews. From the research conducted, course participants have a positive attitude towards English. The learning difficulties experienced include listening, vocabulary, and composing skills. For this reason, course participants need improvement in difficult aspects and training in productive skills (presentations and writing scientific essays), tips for working on questions, and AcEPT simulations once a week.

Keywords: AcEPT, English language test, English learning needs analysis, needs analysis

Introduction

In Indonesia, at the level of higher education institutions, English is taught for one semester or two semesters. English language teaching is included in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Joubar, 2013; Sabrina, 2013). However, in practice, EAP learning in universities has not adapted to student needs and is still carried out with limited frequency. As a result, students still experience language learning difficulties that are not detected during learning (Hermayawati, 2010). Apart from that, students do not yet have English language skills according to their respective fields.

Dehnad et al (2010) stated that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is student-centered and pays special attention to students' needs in specific activities. The existence of ESP is caused by the spread of English as an international language. Finally, many people need English courses according to their needs and field of work or education (Hossain, 2013; Otilia, 2015).

ESP is divided into two, namely English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). Not much different from ESP, EAP also pays attention to student needs. EAP is English language learning with the specific aim of helping students learn the target language in a specific academic and cultural context (Alfehaid, 2011, p 31; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Shing & Tam, 2011). The specific objectives intended are according to students' specific needs in learning English compared to general needs, such as in general English. For example, students need training to improve their weak reading skills, courses must also design a curriculum that can help these students' goals, such as focusing specific activities on reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, paraphrasing, and others (Guler, 2004).

The EAP program focuses on learning language skills, namely reading comprehension, academic writing, listening comprehension and note taking, academic speech, and reference skills (Chowdhury & Haider, 2012). All of this learning is also found in the AcEPT preparation course. However, the AcEPT preparation course program is specifically designed to prepare participants to take the AcEPT exam and get a score on target.

In fact, at the end of studies, whether bachelor's or master's, English language skills are one of the graduation and graduation requirements. Each college requires different scores. Gadjah Mada University (UGM) is one of the universities that imposes English language proficiency requirements before carrying out thesis exams at the master's and doctoral levels.

UGM has a special English test known as the Academic English Proficiency Test (AcEPT). The AcEPT test is a certificate that is recommended to be used as a graduation requirement besides TOEFL. At the master's level, the minimum passing score is 450 with TOEFL or 210 with AcEPT, while at the doctoral level, the minimum passing score is 500 with TOEFL or 250 with AcEPT.

There are differences between TOEFL and AcEPT. In terms of price, AcEPT is cheaper than TOEFL. AcEPT also has a higher test frequency than TOEFL which is only once a month. Meanwhile, AcEPT is carried out once a week so there are four times a month. However, in terms of questions, AcEPT is different from TOEFL. TOEFL tests three language skills (listening, structure, and reading), while AcEPT tests five language skills (listening, vocabulary, structure, reading, and composing skills). The differences in questions are illustrated in the following table.

Table 1. Comparison between the TOEFL test and AcEPT test

	TOEFL		AcEPT		
Listening	50 questions	35 minutes	Listening	20 questions	15 minutes
Structure	40 questions	25 minutes	Structure	40 questions	30 minutes
Reading	50 questions	55 minutes	Reading	40 questions	40 minutes
			+vocabulary	30 questions	20 minutes
			+Composing Skill	40 questions	40 minutes
	140 questions	115 minutes		170 questions	145 minutes

(Dyaswati, 2011)

The differences in this table are the reason why the majority of AcEPT test takers have not achieved the required target score. Participants did not pay enough attention to familiarization with the AcEPT questions before taking the test. Therefore, several language institutions in Yogyakarta are competing to provide AcEPT special English language course programs.

The existence of this course program needs to be balanced with an analysis of student needs to achieve the desired targets. This is because currently, English language learning needs to pay attention to the issues of student needs. The existence of students' needs can help teachers determine appropriate materials, media, and teaching methods so that learning becomes effective and can improve students' abilities (Chostelidou, 2011; Chovancova 2014). For this reason, this study was carried out to provide an overview of the needs of AcEPT test participants.

Needs analysis cannot be separated from the EAP course, in developing learning materials, designing the syllabus, and determining teaching methods by teachers (Dehnad et al., 2010). It is even considered important in a course by several researchers (Mohammed, 2016). Therefore, in implementing the AcEPT course it is also necessary to carry out a needs analysis to increase the success of participants in achieving the required AcEPT scores.

Needs analysis must include three things, namely necessities, lacks, and wants (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p55). Necessities can be equated with target language situations, lacks as weaknesses, and wants as learner needs. Apart from these three things, Garrido and Gomez (2009) also mentioned several things that need to be included in a needs analysis, namely learning objectives, students' attitudes towards learning, initial language skills, students' weaknesses, students' language needs, things they want during the course, and the situation. supportive courses. This section has been included in the questionnaire created and distributed to UGM students.

A needs analysis for EAP that is carried out well and includes several things mentioned by Garrido and Gomez can provide positive benefits for learning. These benefits include providing information about students' current and future needs for language, skills, and knowledge, helping teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, providing a basis for preparing assignments, adapting students' needs and desires, providing diagnostic test results, providing information about students' interest in learning, and providing learning according to students' expectations, such as books and assignments (Veena, 2016). The same thing was also expressed by Rostami and Zafarghandi (2014) that identifying students' needs, interests, and goals in participating in EAP can facilitate the achievement of learning goals, motivate students, and evaluate student progress easily.

Munby in Dehnad et al. (2010) classifies needs analysis into several approaches. First, an analysis of the target situation provides a detailed profile of the student's language needs. However, this approach has a weakness, namely that data about student needs is not obtained from students. Second, in the current situation analysis approach, information is directly obtained from students through questionnaires or interviews.

This study was conducted to answer several questions related to students' needs before taking part in the AcEPT preparation course program by UGM. The question is as follows.

- 1) What is the attitude of students who will take the AcEPT preparation course towards English?
- 2) What difficulties do students face before taking the AcEPT preparation course?
- 3) What are the students' needs for the AcEPT preparation course?

Method

Participants in this study were fifteen respondents who would take the 2017 AcEPT Course after Eid at PPB UGM Yogyakarta. New course classes will start after Eid. Initially, there were sixteen respondents, but only fourteen people filled out the questionnaire.

Of the total, seven participants were female and seven were male. They come from different departments, three from the Linguistics Department, two from the Agricultural Economics Department, two from the Physical Sciences Department, two from the Economics Department, and the rest each person come from the Public Health Sciences Department, PGSD (candidates UGM students who will major in Social and Political Sciences), Performing and Fine Arts Studies, Animal Husbandry, and Sociology. Apart from that, they also come from different age levels. The differences in participant age are depicted in the following diagram.

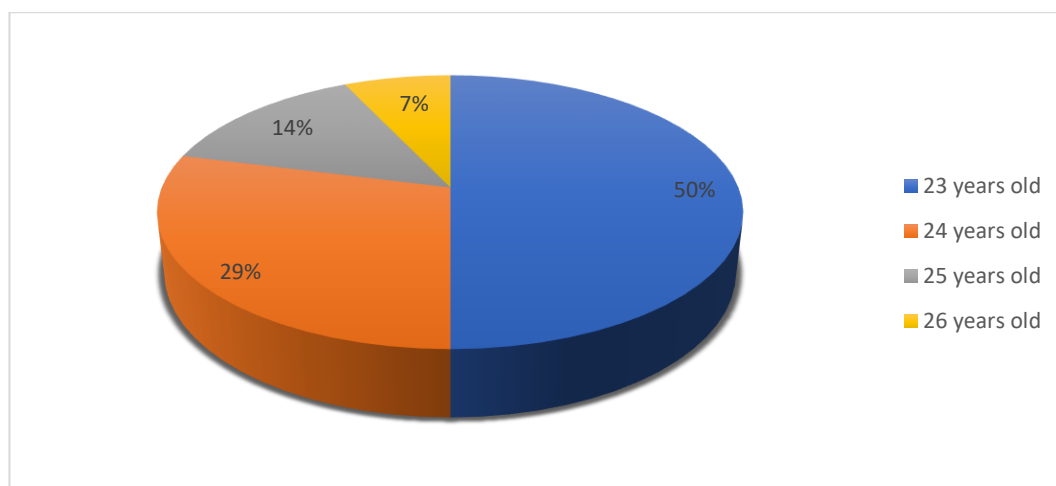


Figure 1. The age levels of participants

Needs analysis is carried out using the type of approach in the second analysis (current situation analysis). This approach was carried out by combining questionnaires and interviews (Cunningham, 2015). Both are used to search for qualitative and quantitative data.

Questionnaires are used to collect data in the form of quantitative data. The questionnaire was created through a combination of several questionnaire references (Richards, 2001, pp. 80-88; Basturkman, 2010, pp. 30-31) which were then adapted to the specifications of this study on the AcEPT test. The questionnaire consists of 30 multiple-choice questions and one fill-in question in the form of additional comments. These additional comments can also be used to support qualitative data. The questionnaire was made in the form of a Google form which was distributed to respondents because the respondents' locations were different from the researchers, here is the link <https://goo.gl/forms/Bn9hCPMMTkjYgUsj2>.

Next, qualitative data was collected through unstructured interviews with four respondents. The questions asked are in the form of clarification of the answers given through the questionnaire. This is aimed at strengthening quantitative data or data triangulation.

Before distributing the questionnaire, the researcher contacted PPB UGM to confirm the implementation of the course in the May-July 2017 period. However, there were no students in that period because they were waiting for the class quota to be filled with up to 20-25 participants. From this communication, researchers were helped to connect to the WhatsApp group for the AcEPT preparation course class. Through this group, a questionnaire in the form of a Google form was distributed. For time efficiency, researchers also contacted test participants personally. The questionnaire data collection was carried out for one week.

After the questionnaire data was collected, the researcher identified the contents of the questionnaire. This identification is to determine the number of participants who will be interviewed. Based on the contents, four respondents need to be interviewed to clarify their answers to the questionnaire. Interviews are conducted by telephone or video call via WhatsApp. During the interview, the voices of researchers and informants were recorded via the Messenger Call Recorder recording application and recording applications that are available on smartphones.

The collected data was analyzed using manual calculations on quantitative data. Data is presented in percentage form in the diagram. Meanwhile, qualitative data from the interview results were transcribed and analyzed based on the elements of interest in the discussion section.

Findings and Discussion

This study produced results that will be described in the following subsections.

English language profile of AcEPT course participants

From the questionnaire, it was discovered that 78.6% of AcEPT course participants had taken the AcEPT test and the remaining 21.4% had never taken the AcEPT test. Participants who have not taken the AcEPT have downloaded the practice questions and purchased a guidebook for working on the AcEPT questions (Respondent C). Before taking part in the AcEPT preparation course program, all participants have received English language learning. All participants receive this learning through various programs. The same number (28.6%) received English language learning through elementary-high school and courses. This number is lower when compared to the participants' learning obtained from the training (35.7%). Meanwhile, learning from universities was only chosen by 7.1% of respondents. These results show a picture of the English language learning carried out by the participants before taking the course (the last time they studied).

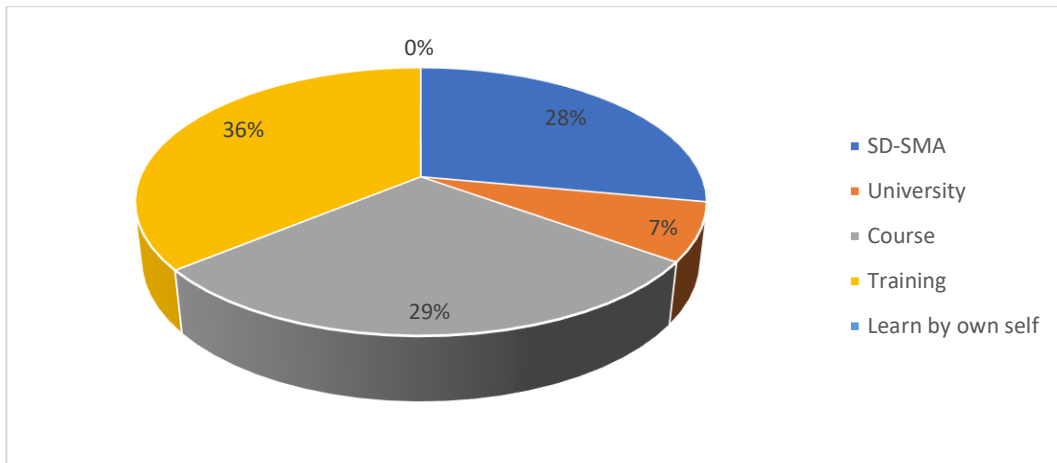


Figure 2. Last English lesson received by the participants

In the diagram, there is a figure of 0% of respondents. This number belongs to English language learning that students carry out independently or study on their own. The option of learning English autodidactically is not an option for participants. Regarding the variety of locations, 92.9% of participants received English language learning for 1-6 months, while 7.1% received courses for 6-12 months. In this long part of studying English, the researcher made a mistake by giving a mandatory check mark so that these results were invalid. This question is mandatory to complete to proceed to the next section. The questions in this section ask about how long it took to learn English through courses, even though there were respondents who did not learn English through courses.

Apart from that, AcEPT course participants are also differentiated based on their English language skills. A total of 57.1% were at basic English proficiency level, while 42.9% were at intermediate English proficiency level. This level of ability is also supported by data on the perception of AcEPT course participants regarding the level of ease of each of the following English language skills.

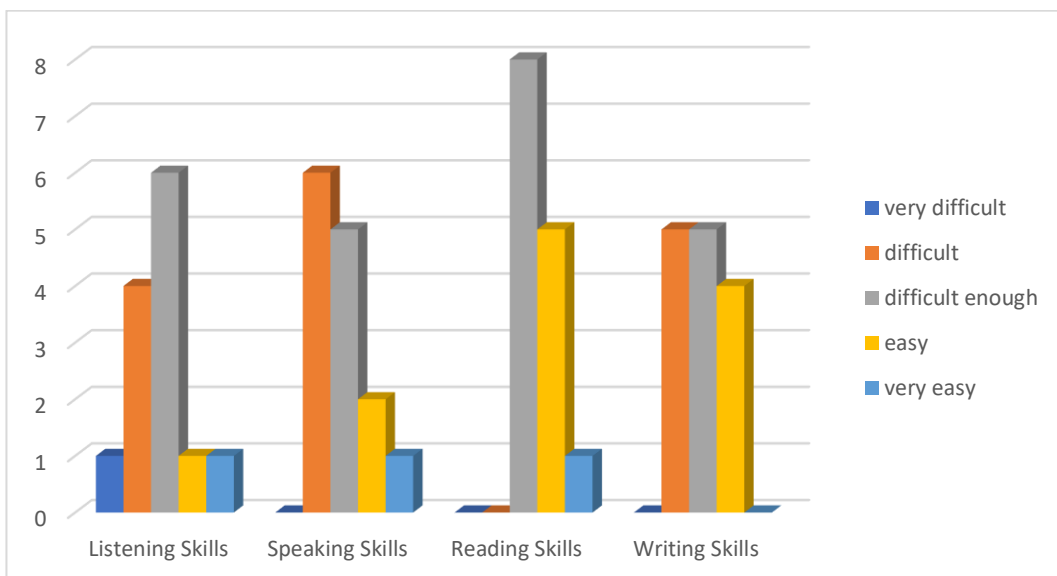


Figure 3. Difficulty level of language skills

Based on the bar diagram, listening skills are the most difficult skills to learn compared to the other three types of skills. Then, writing skills are the next skill that is difficult to learn because they have a significant number of difficult and quite difficult sections. Meanwhile, in the very easy part, not a single participant chose writing skills as the easiest.

An initial description of each participant's difficulties in each language skill is an important point in developing a language learning course. Learning methods and learning materials must balance these aspects. Students with difficult listening skills need intensive training.

Learning objectives for AcEPT course participants

AcEPT course participants don't just want to pass the AcEPT test but rather graduate with the expected target score. A target score of 209-268 is the target for most AcEPT course participants. This is due to the minimum AcEPT score set by UGM as a graduation requirement or requirement to become a UGM master's/doctoral student.

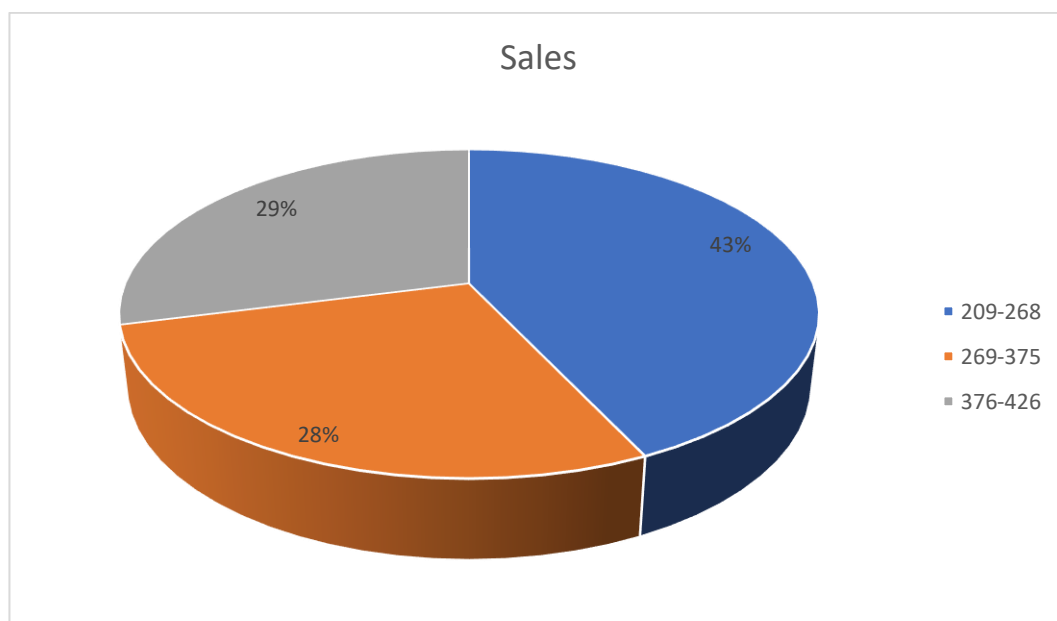


Figure 4. AcEPT target score

Participants who wanted a score of 376-426 wanted to use it as the biggest motivation to stay enthusiastic about learning English and practicing AcEPT questions (interview with respondent A). Respondent A also said that he was worried about setting the minimum required value. If the target score is high, the hope of getting an AcEPT pass will be higher.

Apart from the target score, around 85.7% wanted this AcEPT course to also be used to take other types of test questions. After confirmation, respondent C said that the AcEPT test certificate was only used in the UGM academic environment, but could not be used as an official English language certificate at other institutions, for example applying for jobs or continuing to other universities. Therefore, a respondent also aims to study AcEPT to improve his ability to answer questions on the IELTS English test.

During the interview session, respondent B also shared the number of AcEPT tests he had taken before registering for the course. Respondent B has taken the AcEPT test four times with a stable score between 190 and 200. His score is always less than 10 to reach the target. When asked about the reasons for taking the AcEPT test continuously and not moving to the TOEFL test, respondent B answered the reasons of cost and time. One TOEFL test can be used to pay for four AcEPT tests for a month in a row.

The background of participants in taking the AcEPT test also needs to be taken into consideration by stakeholders and teachers in providing learning. This is because participants have experienced failure many times. The demotivation aspect also needs to be considered.

Attitudes of AcEPT course participants towards English

The attitude of AcEPT course participants towards the English language they will study is an influential factor in the success of participants in achieving graduation and the expected target score. A total of 92.9% of AcEPT course participants consider English important to learn. The rest (7.1%) consider the possibility of English important to learn. Respondents who thought this might be the only one. When interviewed, respondent D said that there was no strong reason for him to study English other than to pass a test that would enable him to be accepted at the destination campus.

However, all AcEPT course participants stated that English was related to science and academic activities on campus. "All the journals and books that lecturers ask us to read are in English, so yes, we speak English every day," said respondent B when interviewed.

In the section on English as a barrier to studies, around 21.4% said English was a barrier, while 78.6% said the opposite. Respondent A is one of three respondents who think so. "What I understand is this, when we don't speak English then of course English becomes an obstacle when studying, so my English is just barely there. So when dealing with literature in English it becomes a bit difficult. "That's why I answered that English is an obstacle when studying," explained respondent A. The obstacle referred to by respondent A is related to the use of literature in lectures which are entirely in English. This is in line with what was conveyed by respondent B.

In connection with science and the development of science and technology internationally, an academic is required to be aware of scientific developments through research carried out in the world. It is also an obligation to learn English to understand research results in journals or books. Students who do not master English will experience obstacles while studying.

AcEPT course participants' difficulty in AcEPT questions

The questions in the AcEPT test consist of five parts, namely listening, vocabulary, grammar and structure, reading, and composing skills. In general, all parts of the test were considered quite difficult by AcEPT course participants. The following diagram shows this.

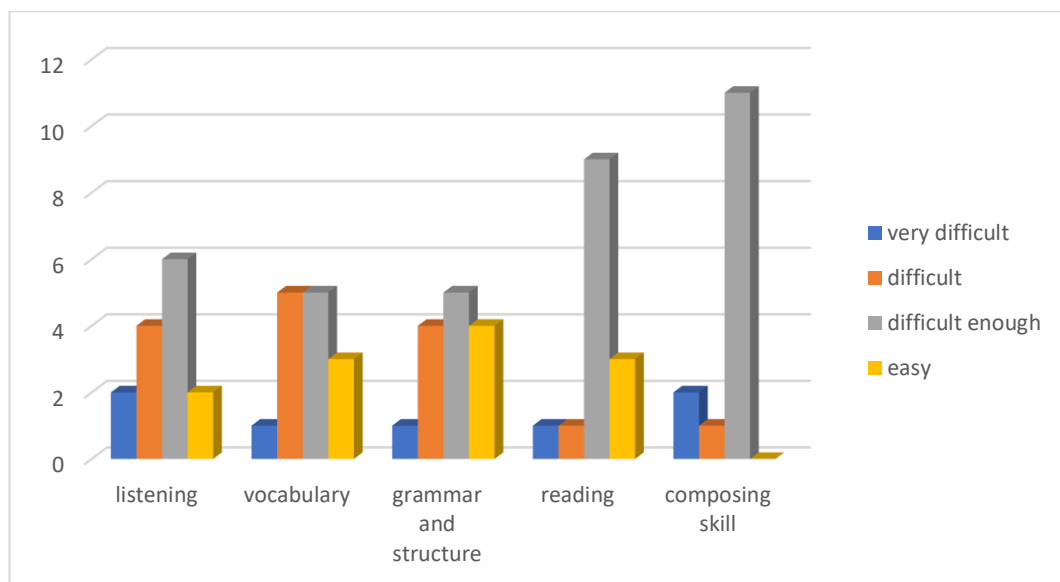


Figure 5. AcEPT question part difficulty level

Based on the diagram, the most difficult part of the question is composing skills. This was because none of the course participants stated that this section was included in the easy category. Overall taking it as a part is quite difficult.

In the AcEPT test, the composing skills section is the part that is most different from most English tests. Each test taker departs with the understanding that the AcEPT test also consists of three parts, just like normal English tests. This thought was also experienced by respondent C. The first time he took the test, respondent C thought the AcEPT test consisted of three sessions, but his assumption was wrong. This is the reason why most participants fail.

In the listening section, AcEPT course participants experienced difficulty in listening clearly to short statements (57.1%) compared to understanding the essence of long conversations (35.7%). Respondent B stated that while listening to short statements, many factors caused the voice not to be heard clearly, namely having to round off answer choices and the conversation taking place too quickly. Meanwhile, almost all of the participants had some difficulty pronouncing words in English.

Wrong word pronunciation can affect understanding when listening to the listening passage. As a result, students choose answers incorrectly. The difficulty for participants to understand short statements and long conversations could also be caused by the pronunciation factor, which the participants only have a small vocabulary for.

Meanwhile, in the vocabulary aspect, this section is the first section that is different from the questions in the TOEFL test in general. In general, this section is integrated into reading or grammar questions. However, in AcEPT, this section is separated into a separate section. Two aspects are of concern to researchers. First, the level of difficulty of each part in the vocabulary questions. Second, the ease with which participants differentiate synonyms and antonyms. Cloze test questions are the most difficult questions for AcEPT course participants. Respondent A stated that the cloze test questions were very tricky because they had to look for vocabulary to complete a paragraph and one paragraph for many numbers. "Confusing," said respondent C. This difficulty could be triggered by the

participant's ability to differentiate between synonymous and antonymous vocabulary. As many as 42.9% of participants could differentiate between synonyms and antonyms, while 57.1% could not differentiate. The lack of ability to differentiate between synonymous and antonym aspects is the cause of difficulties in the vocabulary section. This needs to be followed up with learning that includes this aspect.

Grammar and structure are mandatory parts of the English test. In the AcEPT test, there are three parts to the questions, namely sentence completion, cloze test, and error identification. The cloze test and error identification sections have a balanced portion of difficulty compared to sentence completion. Respondent B said that this question was difficult because he often made mistakes in choosing the words to complete it. "Should I use to be, a passive verb, or use been? "I often make mistakes," said respondent B in a clarification interview.

Grammar tests require all test takers to have a good level of English grammar skills. English grammar consists of parts of speech, phrases, tenses, punctuations, and sentence structure.

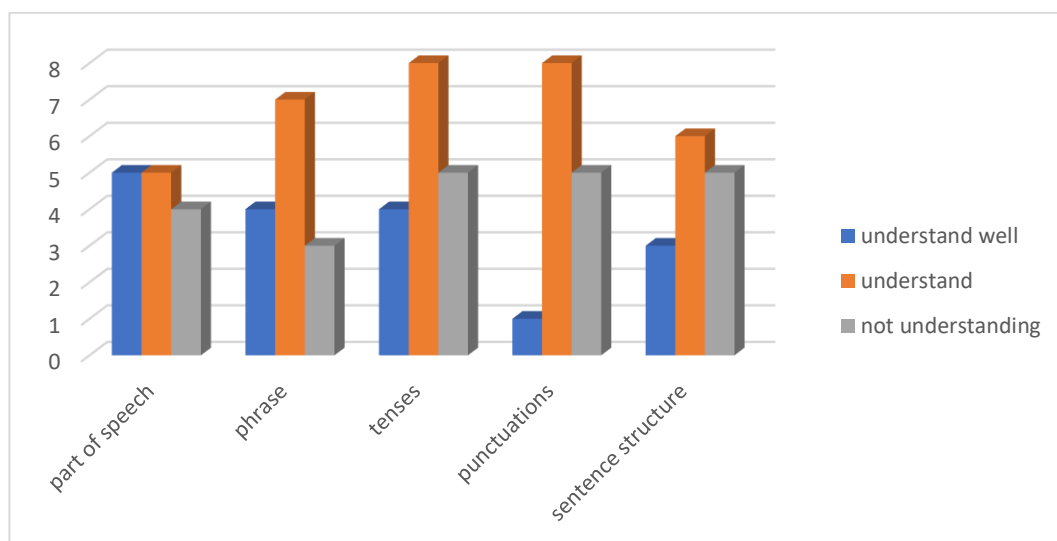


Figure 6. Grammar tests understanding

Based on the diagram, in the punctuations and sentence structure sections, course participants have a level of difficulty in understanding. Meanwhile, participants already understand the tenses section. However, the diagram also shows the different levels of ability between participants. Participants with the ability to understand certain grammar well should not be given too much learning in that part. This is inconsistent with Krashen's $i+1$ principle. Teachers can also apply diverse learning to all aspects of grammar.

The reading section is also a section that is always present in English tests, especially AcEPT. The things asked in this section also vary, starting from statements that are appropriate to the contents of the paragraph, questions that are appropriate to the contents of the paragraph, main ideas, similarities or opposite words, meanings of words, appropriate titles for paragraphs, reference words, position of statements, the author's attitude. towards text, types of text, and reflections on text.

Overall, the participants have shown that they are able and quite capable of doing reading questions. Teachers and stakeholders only need to consider aspects that participants cannot. "Of all the AcEPT questions, the highest score was reading," said respondent A.

This is because 78.6% of respondents were able to skim and scan when working on reading questions. For respondent C, the reading question was related to the minimal time limit. Therefore, the participant's inability to complete the reading questions on AcEPT was due to the time factor. From this needs analysis, the time management part of working on questions needs to be taught to participants to get maximum results. Participants need to be trained to get used to reading long texts and connecting them with the time available.

Composing skills are part of the AcEPT questions that differentiate them from TOEFL questions. This section tests participants' ability to write sentences and form paragraphs. In this section, there are several aspects of the question which are described in the following diagram.

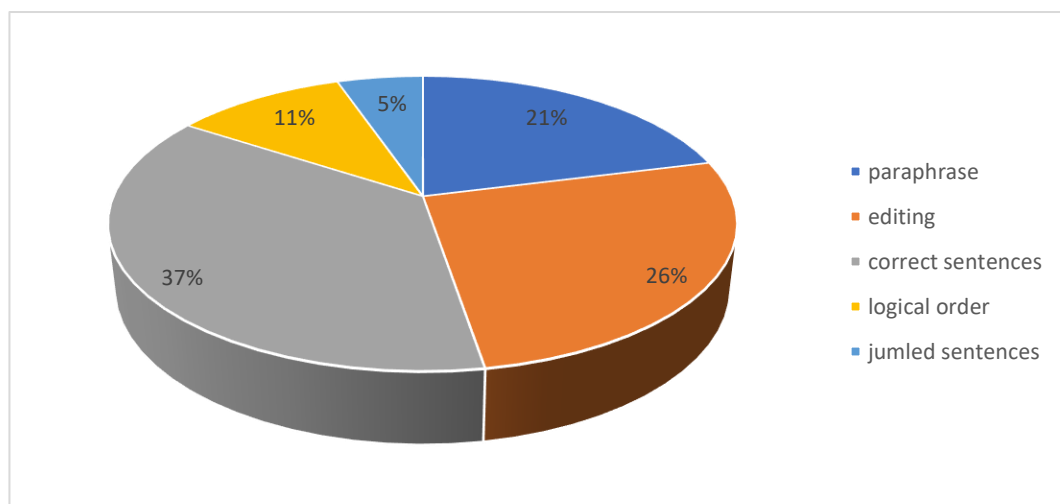


Figure 7. Composing skills level difficulties

Based on the diagram, it can be seen that the difficulty portion of each type of part in composing skills is divided into the same percentage portion, namely 21.4%. The jumbled sentences aspect has the lowest level of difficulty, namely 14.3%. This shows that this section is the most difficult part of the AcEPT questions, especially for beginner test takers.

Respondent B said that the composing skills section was part of the questions in AcEPT which made it difficult for him the first time he did it. "I was surprised by the AcEPT test questions which were different from the usual TOEFL test," said respondent B. This was because respondent B had never encountered questions like that. In his mind, respondent B will encounter the same type of questions as the TOEFL. Therefore, in his first AcEPT certificate, respondent B stated that the composing skills section was the section that got the lowest score of all.

This section needs attention throughout the course. Participants need to be trained to get used to dealing with composing skills questions. If this is not done, the lack of participants in this part of the question cannot be resolved. As a result, the target of graduating with a high score is difficult to achieve.

AcEPT course participants' needs

In the previous section (difficulties faced by AcEPT participants), the most difficult parts of the AcEPT questions were listening, vocabulary, and composing skills. Meanwhile, the participants had mastered the reading and grammar sections quite well. This is appropriate or significantly related to the needs of the part of the AcEPT questions whose ability you want to improve. All participants expressed a 100% desire to improve understanding in the aspects of listening to English pronunciation, general listening comprehension, increasing vocabulary, and understanding composing skills techniques. Meanwhile, in the aspect of wanting to read quickly and accurately and deepen grammar, only 92.86% wanted it.

Apart from that, participants also want to improve their abilities in aspects of productive skills (writing and speaking) included in the course. "So that it can be used during college," said respondent C. The reason for studying is that the need for active English becomes important. Here is a diagram that shows this.

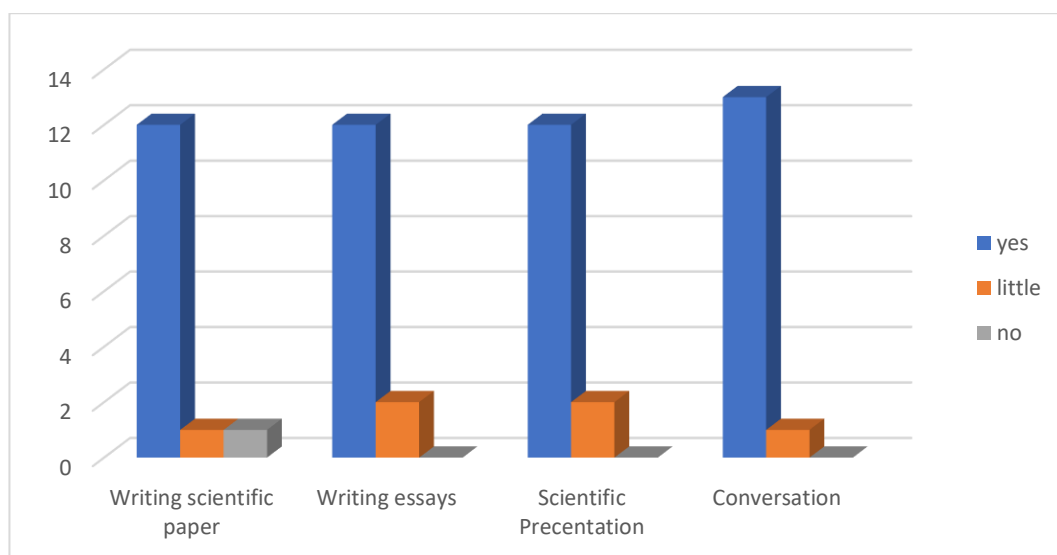


Figure 8. The productive skills that need to improve

Based on this diagram, the highest aspect of productive skills that you want to learn is conversation. This ability is related to active communication with English. Respondent B said that when conducting scientific conferences abroad, English presentation skills can be memorized, but the ability to communicate with conference participants during breaks is an important requirement. Other requirements such as writing scientific papers and writing essays are also needed to qualify for international journals. Writing a full paper in English is more difficult than writing for other purposes, such as a summary.

Apart from that, other respondents also expressed the need to increase the amount of vocabulary in English. A large vocabulary can help with many things and helps with all aspects of language skills. Respondent A also wants the course to have an English area. The English area referred to is the same as English day activities. So, every day participants are asked to communicate in English even in a non-formal setting. According to him, this can improve vocabulary and practice pronunciation.

It is not only aspects of language skills that need to be improved. Other aspects that influence the achievement of passing targets and high scores need to be considered by course organizers. As many as 100% of respondents wanted to be given innovative tips and tricks in working on AcEPT questions. These tips and tricks are closely related to making problem-solving easier.

Around 78.6% want to be taught by native speakers, and the remaining 21.4% want only a few sessions. This desire proves that native speakers are considered to be able to have a broad influence on improving English language skills. Respondent B said that native speakers can motivate him and improve his English pronunciation with a good accent.

In terms of AcEPT simulations to measure learning progress, 64.29% wanted the simulations to be held only once a week. Respondent A provided reasons related to this. According to him, the simulation is only enough once a week to measure ability or progress per week. The rest is more about practice questions. Therefore, 57.14% wanted a larger number of questions than others. Meanwhile, 42.86% wanted the material and questions to be balanced and there were more material choices than no one chose to choose. For the comfort aspect of learning, 92.8% can study in groups.

These facts show that the needs analysis that has been carried out can help course implementation. Shing and Tam (2011) stated that carrying out a needs analysis to identify student needs can help with assignments during the course. Shing and Tam's opinion can also occur through analysis of the desired needs to be studied.

Conclusion

Eslami (2010) stated that many factors must be considered in designing EAP programs for students with different academic and cultural contexts. These factors are the result of a needs analysis of AcEPT course participants which can be concluded as follows.

- 1) AcEPT course participants have a positive attitude towards English. This positive attitude can increase learning achievement.
- 2) AcEPT course participants have higher difficulties with listening, vocabulary, and composing skills questions compared to reading and grammar questions.
- 3) AcEPT course participants expect to be given improvements in listening, vocabulary, and composing skills.
- 4) AcEPT course participants also need training in productive skills, namely conversation, writing scientific papers, writing essays, and scientific presentations.
- 5) AcEPT course participants need tips for working on questions.
- 6) AcEPT course participants need an AcEPT simulation once a week and are given more questions than material.

The needs analysis that has been carried out on prospective AcEPT Preparation students plays an important role in course implementation. This is to Songhori's (2008) statement regarding the important role of needs analysis or needs assessment. In addition, the results of this need analysis can be used by stakeholders and policymakers to develop appropriate EAP course programs (Zohoorian, 2015). AcEPT course organizers can provide learning with more portions in the aspects of

listening, vocabulary, and composing skills. Adjustments to learning modules and active, creative, and fun learning methods also need to be made.

This research has limitations in the aspect of the limited number of respondents. Apart from that, there are several questions in the questionnaire via Google Form which are filled in haphazardly with the same choices from numbers 1 to 11. This is due to the large number of components that must be checked. Therefore, future research can exploit this research gap.

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