

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the introduction. It includes background of the study, formulation of the problem, operational definitions, the aim of the study, and significance of the study.

A. Background of the Study

English proficiency has become very valuable in academic and professional success. Stojanovic & Robinson (2020) stated that English proficiency facilitates diverse interactions and improves cultural understanding and collaborative skills. As an international language of communication, English acts as a gateway in various fields, such as education, research, and career development (Abbas et al., 2021). Therefore, higher education institutions recognize the importance of this requirement by implementing an English proficiency test that students must take to ensure they have adequate English proficiency.

The existence of an English proficiency test is not just a graduation requirement. Research has shown that strong English language skills positively affect academic performance, international mobility, and career prospects. Alrasheed et al. (2021) and Malik et al. (2022) show that students with higher English proficiency scores tend to perform better in international academic environments and have wider access to global career opportunities. Furthermore, specific proficiency in English written structure and expression specifically impacts students' ability to produce high-quality academic writing and engage effectively in scientific discourse which is indeed needed especially for students because they must do assignments in academic scope such as essays, reports, and research papers that require a strong understanding of structure and expression (Chen, 2019). In short, English proficiency tests are not only a requirement for graduation, but also affect the academic scope, international mobility, and career opportunities,

especially in mastering written structure and expression that support students' ability in academic writing.

A state university in Tasikmalaya has implemented the English Language Proficiency Test (TELP) as one of the mandatory graduation requirements. Following the Chancellor's Regulation Number 7 of 2023 Academic Guidelines in Article 9, it is stated that students are required to take the English Language Proficiency Test (TELP) as one of their academic obligations. TELP, similar to the internationally recognized Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), consists of three main parts: listening comprehension, structure and written expression, and reading comprehension. One of the state universities in Tasikmalaya uses TELP to assess students' abilities as one of the graduation requirements, with a mandatory passing score of 400-450 (varies depending on the major). TELP is used to assess students' English proficiency.

One of the sections in an English proficiency test, specifically the structure and written expression section in the context of the TOEFL test, evaluates students' understanding of English grammatical structures and their ability to identify and correct errors, often resulting in low scores. Receiving a low score in the structure and written expression section can affect several aspects. First, it can affect the overall English students' academic performance and their future opportunities (Akmal et al., 2020; Misnawati & As'ari, 2023). Second, it shows the students' ability to use English appropriately in an academic writing context (Akmal et al., 2020). Therefore, receiving a low score in the structure and written expression section can affect the overall English proficiency score, so there is a need to improve grammatical accuracy and academic communication skills.

In the context of the English Proficiency Test (TELP) at a state university in Tasikmalaya, this test is one of the mandatory academic requirements that students must complete before they can defend their thesis or final project. A TELP score that meets the passing standard indicates a student's eligibility to graduate and demonstrates their readiness to contribute. Given the important role of TELP in determining students' eligibility to graduate, especially at a university where TELP is a requirement for the thesis examination, it is essential to explore the factors that

contribute to achieving a passing grade in TELP test. Among the three sections of TELP, the structure and written expression section is often the most problematic for students. However, little is known about how some students excel in this section. Based on the TELP (Test of English Language Proficiency) results from two sessions, it was found that the average student score in the Structure and Written Expression section (44,65) was lower compared to Listening Comprehension (55,68) and Reading Comprehension (49,22). Investigating the strategies used by high-scoring students will not only fill a research gap but also serve as a practical reference for prospective TELP participants to improve their test performance, particularly in the areas of grammar and structure evaluated in this section. To address these questions, this study will involve three sixth-semester students from the Department of English Education at one of a state university in Tasikmalaya. These three participants achieved high scores in the structure and written expression section of TELP, with scores ranging from 56 to 60. This study aim to investigate the test-taking strategies used by students in answering structure and written expression section of TELP and to provide insights that can be beneficial to other students in preparing for the TELP test, particularly the structure and written expression section.

A study was previously carried out by Bulan et al. (2023) on the strategies employed by students in English proficiency tests entitled, “Exploring EFL Student’s Difficulties and Strategies in Learning TOEFL ITP of Structure and Written Expression.” This study aim to identify the difficulties experienced by students of English as a foreign language (EFL) in learning TOEFL ITP Structure and Written Expression (SWE) and how they cope with these difficulties. This study employed a narrative inquiry design, with data collected through interviews and questionnaires, and presented in the form of written and oral statements. The participants in this study consisted of 20 respondents selected as a sample because they had participated in TOEFL training conducted by STKIP Yapis Dompur. The students also had a TOEFL learning experience. Additionally, four students were chosen as informants for the interview session. The individuals were chosen via purposive sampling. The data analysis of their study involved identifying patterns

and themes from the qualitative data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The researchers categorized specific difficulties that students encountered in the Structure and Written Expression (SWE) section of the TOEFL ITP by analyzing the responses from the questionnaires. The study discovered that students struggled with multiple clauses, subject and verb inversion, prepositions, verb tenses, single-clause sentences, and subject-verb agreement in TOEFL ITP. However, this study emphasizes the difficulties faced by students, such as problems with clauses, verb tenses, and subject-verb agreement. The strategy section is only briefly mentioned, where students are said to study independently using exercise modules and watching YouTube tutorials. The modules provided during TOEFL training include many practice questions, allowing students to study independently at home. Therefore, their strategy focus is more on practice and self-study than on specific strategies used during the actual test. Nevertheless, their study explored the challenges and strategies in learning structure and written expression. Meanwhile, this research will focus on the answering strategies used by students in the structure and written expression section.

In conclusion, based on the earlier discussion, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled “Exploring Students’ Test-Taking Strategies in Structure and Written Expression of Test of English Language Proficiency (TELP).” This research will incorporate English education students with high scores in structure and written expression on the TELP, with the aim of finding out the test-taking strategies used by high-achieving students in answering the structure and written expression section of the TELP.

B. Formulation of the Problem

Research questions addressed in the present study is, “What test-taking strategies are used by English education students at a state university in Tasikmalaya who have high scores in the Structure and Written Expression section of TELP?”

C. Operational Definitions

To prevent misunderstandings regarding the terms used in this research, the researcher provides definitions that are relevant to this research, as follows:

1. **Structure and Written Expression** : The section of TELP evaluates the ability to recognize language suitable for standard written English. This section has two types of questions. The first form of question involves incomplete sentences. The second type of question has underlined phrases or words.
2. **Test-taking Strategies** : Test-taking strategies are strategies used by students to answer test questions effectively during TELP test, which may include language learning strategies, test management strategies, and test-wiseness strategies. Although these strategies can be applied to various sections of the test, in this study, the strategies specifically refer to those used by English Education students at a state university in Tasikmalaya when answering the structure and written expression section of the TELP test.
3. **Test of English Language Proficiency (TELP)** : A test designed to measure students' English proficiency. It consists of three parts: Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. One of the state universities in Tasikmalaya provides this test as part of graduation requirements. The researcher will concentrate on structure and written expression in this study.

D. Aim of the Study

This research aim to find out students' test-taking strategies in the structure and written expression of TELP.

E. Significance of the Study**1. Theoretical Significance**

This study is conducted to enrich upcoming researchers' insight into the test-taking strategies in the context of Structure and Written Expression section.

2. Practical Significance

This study can be used as a practical guide for students or test-takers preparing for TELP, particularly in the Structure and Written Expression section, and as a guide for instructors and teachers in designing material related to Structure and Written Expression.

3. Empirical Significance

This study is useful for providing empirical insight into test-taking strategies for Structure and Written Expression and will enhance researchers' experience in compiling a scientific paper related to the topic.