

# EFL students' voices on English national examination in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines the students' voices on national examination of English subject using Computer-Based Test (CBT) in Indonesia. The research design in this study applies qualitative research. The participants of this research consist of seven graduated students from senior high school and they used CBT in their National English examination. The data was obtained through in-depth interview. Therefore, the finding of this research defines that most of the students agree with Computer-Based Test (CBT) as standardized of national examination especially in English subject in Indonesia. CBT has the positive contribution for the students, such as it is easy to access, flexible, simpler and more practical than PBT, and it is not time consuming. Besides, it motivates the students to learn English through technology and helps them answer the questions both in listening and reading sections easily. However, the students encounter some difficulties in CBT dealing with internal and external factors namely student's anxiety, the background knowledge of the students, and lack of the school facilities, internet connection, and technical problems.



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## 1. Introduction

Examinations and tests are the fundamental aspects that cannot be separated in school systems in many countries. Test and examination are used to measure the students' ability in learning process and it is used to determine learning objectives that are achieved by the students in an institution (Shah, Friedman, and Kruglanski, 2002). Similarly, examinations are to measure the educational goals and needs but incorporate in a way of managing with the educational system (Maiya & Shivaprasad, 2014). Briefly describes that an examination plays an important role in determining what goes on in the classroom in the forms of what and how the teacher teaches the students about their learning style and it can have an impact on the teaching and learning process (Maba & Mantra, 2017). "Test or an examination (or exam) and an assessment is indeed to measure test-takers' knowledge, skill, aptitude, physical, fitness or classification in many other topics" (Mulyasa, 2013). Hence, test or assessment and an examination have a significant impact on the teaching and learning process because it is used to measure the students' knowledge and skill in the classroom.

Furthermore, the national examination is a process of the evaluation held by the school in order to get the school certificate for high school students in the last year of study. It is used to examine the students' learning process and to obtain, analyze, and interpret their learning outcomes scientifically and sustainably. An examination is a detailed process of evaluating an object or a person (Nugroho, Kusumawati, and Ambarwati, 2018). It means that an examination is an important

process in teaching and learning because it is used to help the teachers in order to know the students' learning ability. In addition, further define that an examination provides the instructions and information of the students' progress in measuring the achievement of learning goals (Handoko, Tolla, and Suprihati, 2019).

An examination is conducted by the teachers to monitor the process, progress, and the improvements of learning objectives of the students in the class room (Coffman, 2009). The purpose of examination is to ensure the process and performance that are achieved by students based on the plan and the objectives of learning (Candrilic & Katic, 2014). Thus, the examination cannot be separated with teaching and learning. In order word, it plays a significant role in teaching and learning because the result of test in a school will give information on the success rate of students' achievement of the learning goals.

Currently, the improvement of information and communication technology (ICT) gives the idea to assist the teachers in assessing their students. It can be said that the advance of technology has changed the way of education. Learning-based technology or electronic learning (e-learning) becomes a new way in transporting teaching and learning process (Ghaderi, 2014). In fact, it is a new way in assessing and testing the students' performances. Moreover, technology is the best tool in integrating and evaluating the students' learning process (Jamiludin, Darnawati, and Uke, 2017). Besides, online test such as CBT can replace traditional Paper-Based Test (PBT) but the composition becomes the main consideration (Phelps, 2010) and CBT has developed in popularity and will become delivering test in the future (O'Donoghue & Singh, 2004). As the opposite of CBT, PBT (Paper-Based Test) has already popular among the students and the students already familiar with it since it easy to handle. However, at times, the quality of the picture in the paper is unsatisfactory because of photocopy result (Sumiati, 2018). As a result, the government, especially in Indonesia promotes the form of the test called CBT in 2015. This innovation aims to decrease the students' cheating behavior during National Examination and the approval of CBT can overcome the weaknesses of PBT. One of the advantages of CBT as it is not time consuming in examining results of test (Jamil, Tariq, and Shami, 2012). "the government asks some schools to conduct national examination by using CBT" (DeSouza & Fleming, 2003). It means that the use of CBT is possible to evaluate more students in short time because of the computer or the advance of technology. As one of the weaknesses in national examination, PBT is spending much cost and the process of checking the answer sheets is very risky. Therefore, national examination using CBT is one of the ways of the government to overcome those problems to happen during the National Examination in Indonesia.

Standardized testing becomes a part of educational process in Indonesia and it plays the important role in educational system. For policy makers, the result of the standardized test can be employed to evaluate educational organization, policies, and programs to determine the most effective and efficient standardized test (Heafner, 2004). Dealing with the policy regulated by the government in Indonesia, the school should prepare the school tools in implementing the CBT form because the prior form of the test is mostly in PBT (Khoshshima & Toroujeni, 2017). Since it is the new transformation of the test then the students should adjust themselves in order to be familiar with this form of the test. Meanwhile, the use of technology and multimedia can help the students enhance their learning process (DeSouza & Fleming, 2003). It can be said that using technology as a tool in teaching and learning has many advantages for students and they can get the benefit to support their learning process. The students can access some material and additional readings sources from the website using technology (Hensley, 2011). Moreover, learning through technology is more entertaining and engaging for the students because they enjoy working on the project with technology and it makes them completing their task easily (Rehmani, 2003). Also, the students can find and access the supplementary materials online via the relevant websites or resources (Jamil, Tariq, and Shami, 2012). In the other words, teaching and learning through technology provides an alternative method of examination because technology can help the students completing their task or the assignment easier and it is not time-consuming.

Regarding to CBT as a new system of national examination in Indonesia, some schools in Indonesia have been conducting CBT since 2015 but the other schools might not. It was caused by the schools might have different case such as lack of facilities, located in the remote area, the students are not familiar and ready enough with CBT because it is quite a new thing for them. Responding to the problems, the researchers intend to conduct a research entitled: EFL Students'

Voices on English National Examination in Indonesia. In addition, many researchers have conducted similar studies. The first is, the study was conducted by Maiya and Shivaprasad (2014) define that it is a must to have an online examination because the increasing number of students will affect the need of exam papers. The second is Jamiludin, Darnawati, and Uke (2017). This study shows that CBT and PBT have positive and negative sides according to student's perspective. The third is Nugroho, Kusmawati, and Ambarwati (2018). The findings of this study shows that the students have different perceptions on the use of CBT but most of students show similar performance although they use difference ways. On the other hand, the fourth, Sumiati (2018) mentions that the students in the senior high school of Yaspih Rajeg prefer PBT than CBT since the can read the items or the questions in detail. In addition, the latest study is conducted by Handoko, Tolla, and Suprihati (2019). The results of this study indicate that compare to PBT, CBT has more advantages than PBT in term of distribution of questions and answers, time for examining results, and reducing paper used. Hence, the previous studies mentioned as the foundation for the researcher in order to examine the senior high school students' voices toward Computer-Based Test (CBT) as a standardized of national examination in Indonesia. Regarding the previous studies, the researchers investigated the whole subjects tested in national examination. Meanwhile, this research will only focus on the students' voices in English subject because English is a complex subject that assess the students' reading comprehension skill and listening skill in national examination. Therefore, there are two research questions in this research as follows:

- 1.1. What are the advantages of using CBT in English National Examination?
- 1.2. What are difficulties of using CBT in English National Examination?

## 2. Research Method

The main purpose of this research is to explore the students' voices in using CBT as national standardized examination in one of senior high schools in Indonesia. It means that the study explains deeply about the students' voice in undertaking CBT. The appropriate research design in this study is qualitative research, descriptive qualitative in particularly. Qualitative research aims to know and signify the skills and activities of people as they meet, occupy, and aware over the condition (Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie, 1999). In addition, a qualitative study is a procedure of comprehending a group or human problem according to building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in natural setting (Creswell, 1994). Besides, He further states that qualitative research as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning", and (Jackson, Drummond, and Camara, 2007) qualitative research is focus on understanding in the human experience views in humanistic approach because one of an important object in qualitative research is human behavior (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, there are some reasons to use qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The first is to analyze a new phenomenon. The second is to add wealthy detail and hint that illustrates existing knowledge of a phenomenon, generated quantitatively. The third is to understand more about the topic by studying it simultaneously (triangulation). The fourth is to try understanding any social phenomenon from others perspective. The fifth, is to understand the phenomena clearly that are impossible to capture in quantitative approach. The sixth is to understand any phenomenon complexly. Thus, it can be said that the data about students' voices in CBT is explained descriptively.

The research approach in this study is a case study because it attempts to figure out the special case in the students' voices in Indonesia towards online examination or CBT as standardized national examination, English subject in particularly. Case study is used to investigate phenomenon within real-life context (Yin, 1994). Moreover, in-depth interview is used to collect the data of this research. In addition, interview guide approach is also used in this research in collecting the data. Interview guide approach provides an outline of comprehensive data and makes the data collection somewhat systematic for the participants where logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed, and it remains fairly conversation and situational (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011). Indeed, the researcher makes an interview protocol in advance which consists of open-ended questions. An open-ended response to a question permits the participants to make the choice for responding (Ospina, 2004). Moreover, in conducting the interview, the researcher used some tools. Firstly, cellphone recorder was used to record the participants and the interviewer's discussion during the

interview. Secondly, the researcher used a notebook to put the list of questions as well as to note the points of the participants' statements. Thus, qualitative interview is used in this research.

Concerning to qualitative interview, qualitative interview arises when the researcher asks one or more general questions or open-ended questions and record their answers (Johnson & Christensen, 2011). Then, after getting the participant's permission, the researcher conducts face-to-face interview. Moreover, this research also uses semi-structured interview because it measures the participants' opinions, statements, and views, even it enables the interviewer to gain the participant's experiences. Hence, the researcher selected seven students as the participants of the research in which all of them are graduated students from senior high school in 2017 and they are from two different school as MA Muhammadiyah Al-Furqon, Tasikmalaya and SMAN 1 Praya, Lombok in which their school have different condition in preparing their students to face national examination. Thus, all of the participants in this research already have faced CBT in national examination. The researcher also uses initial name for all participants which are the first participant (P1), the second participant (P2), the third participant (P3), the fourth participant (P4), the fifth participant (P5), the sixth participant (P6), and the seventh participant (P7).

In analyzing the data, the researcher uses coding analysis. It means, the researcher transcribed the interview recording in order to make an interview transcript. Transcribing is a method of changing audiotape recordings or field notes to be written form (Burns & Bush, 2002). After that, in order to analyze the data, coding analysis was used to apprehend the data. Coding is a name or label that the researcher gives to a piece of the text that contains an idea or a piece of information. Coding analysis is divided into four types namely open coding, analytic coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

In order to show a good performance in CBT as a standardized national examination, every school has different preparations for the students which are the school provides the simulations of CBT before national examination and it helps the students to be familiar with CBT. According to P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, the school provided two until three simulations for the students in using CBT before national examination. On the other hand, P5 says that she never took the simulations using CBT before national examination but in every lesson, the teacher asked her to practice using CBT in the class. Furthermore, dealing with the two research questions in this study, which are concern with the advantages of using CBT as standardize of national examination in English subject and the difficulties faced by the students in using CBT in English national examination. Hence, the findings of this study are presented based on the results of interview.

The research defined that there are some advantages and difficulties of using CBT as national standard in English subject as following:

#### 3.1. Listening Section

In listening section, there are some students who argue that using CBT helped them to answer the questions in listening section easily. According to P1 and P4, CBT gives the significant effect for the students especially in listening section because national examination in English subject through CBT, each student use headphone and it makes them easy to understand the speaker in the audio because they can listen to it clearer. It is in line with Handoko (2019), one of the advantages of CBT is practical and flexible as the users can manage the tool based on their need. On the other hand, there are some students who encounter the difficulties in listening section. Even though, the audio is clear but they argue that the most difficult part in English national examination is in listening section. As defined, P2 and P3 state that listening section is the most difficult part in English because they have limited vocabularies and it makes them hard to understand the speaker in audio. In addition, they also deal with the technical problems, such as the errors of the audio and no electricity. Computer-Based Test (CBT), the computer operation really relies on particular circumstances as like the electricity and internet connection (Jamiludin, Darnawati, and Uke, 2017). Similarly, Sumiati (2018) state the reason of the students prefer PBT than CBT since it is not influenced by the electricity and internet connection.

#### 3.2. Reading Section

In reading section, using CBT in national examination especially in English, the students are easy to read the text and CBT also helps them answer the multiple-choice questions in a short time. P6



and P7 mention that National Examination through CBT assists them to comprehend the text because they are more comfortable to read the text on the screen due to the fact that the lighting of the screen has already been set up by the teacher. Meanwhile, P5 mentions that she prefers PBT rather than CBT because after she finished the national examination, her eyes hurt because of facing towards the computer screen for two hours. Likewise, Nugroho, Kusmawati, and Ambarwati (2018), one of factors that influences students' result is exhaustion and fatigue.

### 3.3. The Advantages of Computer-Based Test

CBT is a result of the advancement of technology and it provides some advantages for the students and it makes them having positive attitude toward CBT. In national examination through CBT, each student gets a password and a code that can be used to know his/her question packages. They mentioned some positive contributions of CBT, such as in inputting the personal data, it is simpler than PBT because the students only need to click their personal data or identity on the screen since the personal data has already been provided in the computer. In other words, they do not need to make a circle one by one on the answer sheet as seen in PBT. In addition, if there is a technical problem such as electricity, computer, and internet connection go off. The students do not worry about the test because their answers will automatically be saved in the computer. Additionally, if they want to continue their test, all they need to do is just entering the password that is given by the school. Hence, it can be said that CBT is more secured than PBT. Maiya and Shivaprasad (2014), CBT are more practical to answer and more secured because it is not easy to be torn and soiled as using papers and CBT makes students have more experiences in using technology.

Furthermore, the students also mention that national examination using CBT can decrease the number of cheating among students because there are twenty different question packages in English and the questions are ordered randomly. Furthermore, the space between one computer and another is one meter. Thus, the students cannot cheat and also in CBT, the time is more conducive and efficient because they can finish the exam faster and it makes the students comfortable. CBT has many advantages such as easiness in accessibility, flexibility, efficiency, and consistence compared to PBT (Ghaderi, 2014).

Moreover, the students believe that CBT motivates them to study hard through technology because CBT is new for them, so they are worried if they get low score. Similarly, Jamiludin, Darnawati, and Uke (2017), CBT is one of the ways to motivate students in learning English because it can help the students enhance their learning. Additionally, Maiya and Shivaprasad (2014), CBT is the best way to learn English because it enables the students to be familiar with the use of computer, internet, and web and Phelps (2010), the use of CBT in national examination is assumed to rise student's enthusiasm, improve of correctness of data collection, and report the final result of the test in no time. Regarding a result score of students in national examination, CBT enables the stakeholders or the committee of the schools to evaluate the student's score immediately because once after the students finish the exam, the result will be shown automatically. CBT is more practical for both students and teachers because the teachers do need to distribute the paper one by one to the students. It is the same as Nugroho, Kusmawati, and Ambarwati (2018), it is a must to have online examination because the increasing number of students will affect the need of exam papers. They further state that Computer-Based Test offers a number of advantages such as ease of delivery, appropriateness (when the assessment is available and how long it is available), providing of feedback scores and clarifications may be given directly, relations to following and management systems, interactivity. As the result, online test such as CBT can replace traditional Paper-Based Test (PBT) (Heafner, 2004).

### 3.4. The Difficulties in Using CBT

Even though, most of students have positive attitude toward CBT, they also find some problems related to internal and external factors. The internal factors refer to students' anxiety because the new transformation of the national examination's technique may affect their feeling since they are not familiar with CBT and have no idea what the results of their exams will be. Additionally, in CBT, there is the timer and it makes the students rush in doing national examination because if the time is up, it will automatically move to the next part of questions. As in using CBT, the result will come out as soon as the test is finished and it makes the students worried and nervous (Ghaderi, 2014). Furthermore, the external factors are the things that deal with technical problem such as the electricity off, suddenly the computer gets error or broken, and slow internet connections. As the students mention, they are not familiar with CBT and they find the difficulties in operating the

computer. Besides, they have experienced of postponing national examination because the lack numbers of computer and they need to wait for their turn after their friends finish the exam. Similarly, Nugroho, Kusmawati, and Ambarwati (2018) in Computer-Based Test (CBT), the students need extra time in operating the computer which indeed cannot guarantee, they will pass the examination.

#### 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to explore the advantages of using CBT in English national examination and to find out the difficulties faced by the students in using CBT of English national examination. As the result, most of the students in this research agree with CBT in English national examination in Indonesia, they expect that English national examination through CBT will continuously to be applied in Indonesia. There are some advantages of CBT in national examination especially in English subject because the students argue that CBT has positive contribution for the students. It is easy to access, flexible and not time-consuming. In addition, by using CBT in national examination, it is simpler and more practical than PBT because every student has received a code and password from the school and it assists them to input their personal data immediately even their data are already provided in the computer. Furthermore, by using CBT in national examination, it can give the positive contributions for both teachers and students because CBT helps the student finish the exam faster and the teachers also do not need to distribute the paper to their students as encountered in PBT. In English subject itself, CBT helps them in reading section and listening section. In reading, CBT helps them comprehend the text in English easily and in listening sections, it helps them understand the speaker in audio easily because the sound is clearer since each student use headphone. Moreover, examination through CBT can motivate them to study hard since examination in using technology is not easy for them because most of them are still not familiar with the assessment-based technology so it makes them worried about their score of the examination. Furthermore, the students also believed that national examination through CBT can decrease the number of cheating among the students because there are 20 question packages and each student gets different question package for it is distributed randomly.

Nevertheless, when the students use CBT in national examination, particularly in English, they may encounter some problems dealing with internal and external factors. The first is internal factor namely the students' anxiety and background knowledge in English. In CBT, the parts that make students worried and nervous are on the screen in which it shows the timer of completing the questions as well as the results that are shown right away. Also, the students' lack of English vocabulary may affect the students' performance in national examination both in listening and reading sections. In other words, the new transformation of the national examination's technique especially in English may affect the students' feeling. The second factor is the external factor in which it deals with technical problems such as the unavailability electricity, the broken computer, and slow internet connection.

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