

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter discussed the conclusion drawn from the findings from exploring the washback of TOEIC as an English exit test in one tourism vocational higher institution in Jakarta, Indonesia. The chapter also provides limitations of the study. Eventually, this chapter ends with several recommendations for various stakeholders and future

#### **5.1 Conclusions**

This research engaged three distinct stakeholder groups connected to the language testing policy under examination. Although the washback of the test could be explained from the perspectives of teachers and students, the involvement of policymakers contributed to the policy rationales that helped shaped comprehensive view on the testing policy enacted in the research site. The initial research question delved into the viewpoints of policymakers regarding the rationale behind adopting TOEIC as an exit test in the research site. The second question investigated the perspectives of ESP teachers concerning the washback effect on their teaching practices, while the third research question explored students' views on the washback impact of TOEIC on their learning.

A multitude of themes emerged regarding the adoption of TOEIC as an English exit test. First and foremost, the utilization of TOEIC aimed at ensuring that graduates possess language competency aligned with specific workplace standards and communication needs. The second rationale stemmed from TOEIC's global recognition as a standard for measuring English proficiency, thereby enhancing the test's validity and reliability. The third justification rested on its role in verifying students' comprehensive competency across various English language skills. Furthermore, the fourth rationale underscored the test's contribution to students' growth, unlocking doors to future educational and professional opportunities, serving as a catalyst for both academic progression and career success. Lastly, the adoption of TOEIC was perceived as a positive attribute for the

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institution, distinguishing it from others lacking an exit policy. Additionally, students' certificates could complement students' bachelor's certificates (SKPI), further enhancing the overall impact on individual academic and professional journeys.

The second research question explored the washback effects of teaching, focusing on teachers' feeling and attitudes, methods and content. Findings reported positive washback, with ESP materials being emphasised in course syllabi in tourism and hospitality industry. Teachers reported aligning practice with syllabus objectives, incorporating communicative language teaching (CLT) and adapting to students' needs. Document analysis revealed a syllabus tailored to workplace communication skills, using compiled modules and authentic materials. Classroom observations confirmed the use of CLT with the PPP teaching model, prioritising speaking, writing and reading skills. Additionally, three major factors influencing the impact of the test on teaching. Contextual factors such as institution, teacher, and course-level factors helped shaped the impact of the test on teaching. The testing policy, however, had a negative washback on teachers' feeling and attitude resulting from anxiety and disappointment on the students' failure.

The study examined students' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions concerning the TOEIC test and their impact on learning. While experiences showed minimal correlation, with only a slight connection between TOEIC test preparation and internal motivation, students' beliefs exhibited weak to medium correlations. Notably, the belief in language learning for communication had higher correlations with internal and external motivation. Additionally, test perceptions had medium correlations with various learning variables, such as time allocation for language activities and skills. Positive and significant correlations were found between students' perceptions and learning outcomes, with the perception of TOEIC as a learning goal and for employment demonstrating the highest positive correlation with test performance improvement. Overall, these findings underscore the significance of students' beliefs and perceptions in influencing motivation and learning outcomes in language education.

In this context, when students have positive perceptions about certain factors (such as the importance of a particular test like TOEIC for learning or employment), it is associated with better results or improvements in their overall performance. Thus, when students' perceptions increase, the other variable (learning outcomes) also tends to increase in a noticeable and statistically significant manner.

In conclusion, this study has shed the light on the implementation of high-stake testing serving as language exit test in Indonesia, an area that is not widely investigated. On one hand, this study had confirmed previous findings on similar theme situated in other countries, on the other hand, taking the context of English education in VHE in Indonesia added new perspectives to the existing body of literature. This study affirmed that washback phenomena exhibit variations across contexts due to numerous influencing factors. In the context of this study, the effectiveness of the EET was bolstered by various factors, including the implementation of a language development program.

## **5.2 Implications**

This study has clearly asserted the positive washback of TOEIC as an English exit test in tourism vocational higher institution. Thus, the researcher promoted the adoption of language exit test to bring about positive changes of language teaching and learning. Nevertheless, some issues need to be carefully catered to ensure the success of this program. Ensuring language development program along with this policy is obligatory. Additionally, compensation program for low achievers needs to be carefully designed. This program clearly showed the mechanism of those who failed reaching the standardized score. Thus, implications were addressed for vocational higher education institution, and Ministry of education, culture, research, and technology, and teachers and students.

Since the use of language exit tests in tertiary education grows, stakeholders in vocational higher education institution must meticulously structure the curriculum to align with the syllabus's intended learning outcomes. As a result, testing procedures should be coordinated with teaching activities. Given that the

primary goal of language teaching in Vocational Higher Education (VHE) is to prepare students for future job challenges, teaching methodologies should also emphasize communication. Stakeholders should develop language development programs to provide students with linguistic competence that exceeds test benchmarks. TOEIC preparation classes and ESP classes serve the dual purpose of mitigating the test's negative washback effects and ensuring that all students achieve their learning objectives. Nonetheless, these classes must be relevant to the learning objectives.

Despite the acknowledged low level of English proficiency in Indonesia, there is a growing demand for English skills in the workplace. To address this concern, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, particularly through the Director General of Vocational Education, should consider implementing a national policy for international language certification, such as TOEIC certification. Currently, the government has initiated TOEIC training and certification for a large number of vocational secondary school students; however, a parallel policy has not been extended to VHE students. This policy gap should be recognised and addressed to ensure that VHE students are also equipped with the necessary English language skills required in the professional landscape.

One potential solution to the financial burden associated with international standardised tests is the development of a national test. As opposed to the broader scope of international tests, this alternative is more cost-effective and focuses on assessing relevant skills. Although existing national English tests, such as TOEP, serve a limited purpose, individual universities face challenges in developing a high-quality test due to limited resources and expertise required to maintain rigor and standardization. Consequently, a centralised level where well-coordinated collaborative efforts can be organised is essential for the feasibility of this initiative.

With the growing importance of English in various aspects of life, neighbouring countries have implemented robust foreign language policies to improve English proficiency. In light of this, the Indonesian government should strive to establish a language testing centre that can provide assessments for

different levels of education in the country. This initiative would not only ensure the improved quality of English language education, but would also be in line with the global trend of emphasising English proficiency. Urgent action is needed to expedite the establishment of such a testing centre and strengthen the nation's commitment to improving language education.

This study has shown that the majority of teachers and students have a good understanding of the limitations associated with the TOEIC policy. Although they generally express appreciation and acceptance of the policy, consider the TOEIC test to be the most appropriate among international alternatives, and acknowledge its merits as a language exit test, there is a shared concern about its limited ability to comprehensively assess overall communicative ability. In addition, participants are aware that an exclusive focus on test-centred learning falls short of developing the communicative skills essential for future employment. Many respondents express a preference for a test that assesses all four language skills, with a particular emphasis on speaking, which is recognised as the key skill for effective communication. As a result, there is a collective call for educators and learners to advocate for students' needs and address the challenges associated with TOEIC policy, and to encourage policymakers to make the necessary adjustments for the benefit of all stakeholders.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

This study had limitations dealing with participants and data collecting techniques. While other washback studies tended to investigate the washback from several research locations, or compared several institutions with and without exit test(s), this study focused on one institution. Rationale for conducting a washback study in one research site is rooted in the desire to conduct a deep and intensive analysis that can uncover nuanced details specific to the chosen educational context. Moreover, in time of pandemic, it was not easy to gain research approval from institution without English exit test. Furthermore, washback study in one research location were prevalent in previous washback studies (Allen, 2016; Hung & Huang, 2019;

Pan, 2022; Saglam, 2018). By deeper exploration on the policies, practices and perspectives within a particular institution, this study aimed to provide a detailed analysis providing a rich source of insight.

The findings on the change of students' learning due to the test policy was primarily based on self-reported questionnaire which was triangulated with interviews. Furthermore, while the ESP teachers could also be assigned TOEIC classes by the language centre, observing concurrent classes they taught was not possible, and it could add extra load to the study. The absence of baseline study from TOEIC class could be anticipated with several strategies. To begin, strong relationships were established with the participants, fostering an atmosphere of trust and honesty. This was accomplished through a commitment to confidentiality as well as a friendly, respectful, and nonjudgmental conduct. Second, data triangulation was used, students' questionnaire results validated with interviews. Similarly, teachers' interviews were triangulated with observations and document analysis. These observations corroborated teachers' self-reported data on current teaching methods. Based on the previous limitations, it should be noted that the findings may not be applicable to wider population.

Given the research limitations of this study, the researcher provided some recommendations for future research on testing washback. The recommendations are aimed to several stakeholders, such as policymakers, teachers, students, and future researchers. As stated in the implications, the ministry of education and research and technology through the directorate of vocational education should pay more attention to the English language proficiency of the graduates which serves as of employability skills.

Given the research limitations, it is recommended that future research adopts a multi-site approach, combining different institutions to capture the breadth of experience and variation in testing policies. This could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the washback effect occurs in different settings, thereby increasing the generalisability of the findings and contributing to the development of recommendations.

Since students' factor was deemed crucial as to affect the generation of washback, future research should investigate the washback across students from varied level of competencies, as to compare the relationship among students' variable. Additionally, it is also crucial to map the language policy in tertiary education both academic and vocational so that the impact of this policy can be explained from wider population. The information could be for what kinds of test, and the benchmark, and how this program was implemented. It is also crucial to investigate whether or not the institution provide language development program as to maximize the positive washback and minimize the negative washback resulting from academic dishonesty.

This study has shown that high-stakes testing has the potential to improve teaching when carefully planned and implemented. However, English exit test is not a cure-all for low English proficiency in this country. Much effort should be address to enhance the quality of various aspects of education, such as teacher training, curriculum development, classroom assessment, and language practice environments. This study emphasizes the importance of additional research in order to gain a better understanding of the impact of testing and harness its benefits for language teaching and learning.