

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

This chapter consists of the research background, identification of the problems, and delimitations of the study. It also consists of the research questions, research objectives and significance of the study. The last part of the chapter presents the organization of the chapters.

### **Background of the Study**

Learning English as a second or foreign language is essential in the current globalized world where English is widely used. Many people come from non-English speaking countries take this learning seriously. There are four skills learned in English learning: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. It requires persistence, time, good study habits, and patience to learn a new language (Zulfikar et al., 2019). In addition, learning English needs much practice in order to acquire the language. Furthermore, people need to take a test to measure their language competencies. Besides, people can utilize the test result as their guidance to revise which part of skills they need to improve.

There are various tests to measure one's English competencies, namely standardized test and non-standardized test. The standardized test is a test that assesses students' mastery of certain linguistic skills (Al Habbas et al., 2021). There are some international English standardized tests that are commonly used worldwide, namely TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), and TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication). Apart from those popular tests, many countries set

up their own English standardized test that fits their students' needs, for example the United Arab Emirates has the Emirates Standardized Test (EmSAT), and China has China's College English Test (CET). Both of them are local-scale standardized test. In contrast, Pearson Test of English (PTE), Certificate in Advanced English (CAE), Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) are the globally standardized tests. Besides that, a non-standardised test is specific and only used in a limited area.

The standardized English proficiency test is used to assess one's language skills. English proficiency test has several functions, such as graduation requirements, university admissions, job requirements, and promotion decisions, as well as other crucial societal decisions (Rezaeian et al., 2020). The English proficiency test is not just to measure what level of students' English acquisition but the ability to use language for a range of communicative goals are also referred to as language proficiency (Renandya et al., 2018). People who take standardized tests normally have a target score that they need to achieve. This target score is commonly a requirement to achieve something, such as a requirement to enter an educational institution or a requirement to apply for a job vacancy.

Several factors can influence EPT scores. According to Kristiyanti and Baehaqi (2019), EPT preparation course helps students get a higher score. Generally, there are always two kinds of factors namely internal and external factors. Internal factor is something that can improve the progress and result that appears from one's self, while external factor is something that influences the progress and result that comes from outside. The preparation contains practising similar test questions so that the students get familiar with the test structure and situation. In

line with that, Yuniarti and Pratiwi (2022) found that practising a lot of TOEFL material helped students face the EPT test well. Salwa and Fitria (2018) mentioned that in TOEFL preparatory course, learning method, media, and instructor were the factors that influenced the result of the TOEFL test. Their study found that the learning method had a more significant influence than the other factors.

Silalahi and Sitorus (2021) stated that, occasionally, the perception and insight of students impact what they ascribe to the source of their exam success or failure. This statement strengthens the fact that students' attitude plays a big role during the preparation course. Therefore, students must show their best attitude during the preparation course to absorb the learning material better. In line with that, Eshghinejad (2016) stated that the importance of attitude in influencing language performance is widely acknowledged. In other words, achievement in a target language is determined not just by intellectual ability, but also by the learner's attitude toward language acquisition. Even though students' learning attitude is prominent, students' achievement are influenced by other factors. In line with that, Sato (2019) stated that, in some educational environments, teachers' coaching, and instruction might play an essential effect on students' test preparation behaviour.

However, from the preliminary research done by the researcher, it was revealed that students stated that they actively participated during the preparation class and attended the EPT preparation class regularly, yet almost half of them did not achieve the target score. Those students who did not pass the test then thought that the course did not give a significantly better score. This shows that even though a course preparation aims to help students prepare for their English proficiency test,

it does not mean that the students who attend the preparation course is guaranteed to get a good certain score. This raised a question whether the students' EPT scores are affected or not by their attitude towards the preparation course.

The result of the preliminary study is contrast with Turkarslan & Akdemir (2019), who stated that students' attitudes toward the course, whether they prefer to learn English as a second language or not, what they think and believe about it, and how they behave inside and outside of the classroom are all significant influences on their English proficiency and achievement. In addition, the study of belief in language acquisition has noted that successful learners have been shown to gain insight into their views about language learning processes, their own skills and the application of effective learning strategies in the classroom and beyond (Hosseini, 2013). This means that the positive belief may occur a positive effect on learning. This point of view needs to be proven.

From the preceding issues above, it is such an interesting issue to be explored. The researcher explored by to find out the students' attitude and the students' EPT achievement. In addition the researcher intended to measure the correlation between the students' attitudes and their EPT achievement.

### **Identification of the Problems**

Being English Language Education Department students requires a certain English proficiency level. They must master English skills, namely listening, writing, reading, and speaking skills. Mostly in English Language majors, the courses involve those skills in order to build students' basic skills and achieve a

good outcome. An English Language Education Department (ELED) of a private university in the Special Region of Yogyakarta holds a course, namely International Language Testing (ILT) to prepare the students to face the EPT tests, more specifically TOEFL tests. This course holds a TOEFL pre-test and post-test. The preparation course aims to improve students' ability in terms of the numerous linguistic skills required for the test, so that they can meet a particular grade. The aim above is in line with Erfani (2012) who stated that tests are widely regarded to have a significant impact on language learners and on the teachers who assist them in their preparation.

The pre-test aims to show at what level students are at, so the lecturers can give the suitable lesson. On the other hand, the post-test aims to measure students' progress after attending the course. Yet, many students have to face the struggle to meet the target score. This case can be seen from the private university's pre-test score of ILT class. The researcher did a mini-interview with a few of ELED students who attended the ILT course. They mentioned that they always attended the class because they thought that the class was important and would help them get a higher TOEFL score. In line with that, Eshghinejad (2016) stated that the importance of attitude in influencing language performance is widely acknowledged. In other words, achievement in a target language is determined not just by intellectual ability but also by the learner's attitude toward language acquisition.

According to the preliminary study done by the researcher, the students stated that they actively participated during the preparation course and they attended

the course regularly, yet they did not pass the target score. The result of the preliminary study was contrast with some findings and statement from the previous studies in the same topic. Therefore, the researcher is interested to find out the correlation between the students' attitude towards the EPT preparation course and their EPT achievement.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

In this research, firstly the researcher only focuses to find out ELED students' attitudes toward the English proficiency test preparation course. Secondly, the researcher focuses to find out the students' EPT scores. Thirdly, the researcher focuses to find out the correlation between the ELED students' attitude on the English proficiency test preparation course and their EPT scores. The participants of this research were only limited to ELED students who have taken their ILT course.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions were divided into three questions based on the problem description above. Here is a list of the research questions:

1. How is students' attitude on the English proficiency test preparation course?
2. How is student English Proficiency Test achievement?
3. What is the correlation between students' attitudes on English proficiency test preparation course and their English Proficiency Test achievement?

## **Objectives of the Research**

Based on the research questions, there are three purposes for this research.

These are:

1. To determine the attitudes of ELED students toward the English proficiency test preparation course.
2. To determine the EPT achievement of ELED students.
3. To determine whether the students' attitudes toward their EPT preparation course and EPT achievement is correlated.

## **The Significance of the Research**

This study aims to benefit various parties, including teachers, students, and other researchers.

*For the students.* Regarding the findings of this research, this research is important to read for ELED students and another students. This study provides discussion about students' attitude towards EPT, EPT achievement, also the correlation between students' attitude towards EPT and their EPT achievement. Students may consider the result of this study and improve their knowledge on EPT through EPT preparation course.

*For the teachers.* The existence of this study is essential for teachers since this study shows the information about students' attitudes on EPT preparation course, EPT achievement, and the correlation between students' attitude towards EPT preparation course and their EPT achievmen. Therefore, the teachers may use the

result of this study to help students by increase the students' learning attitudes and students' achievement.

***For other researchers.*** By conducting this research, other researchers are able to know the information of ELED students' attitudes on preparation courses for the English proficiency test. Furthermore, other researchers can utilize the findings of this study as a theoretical overview for future research on the same topic, which could lead to a research recommendation. As a result of doing this research, researchers may be encouraged to conduct research further related to the same area of this research.

### **Organization of the Chapters**

There are five chapters in this study. The first chapter is the introduction which explains the study's background on why the researcher is interested in the correlation between students' attitudes towards EPT preparation course and their EPT achievement. In addition, this chapter also presents the research questions, which function as the guide for the study. Furthermore, the study's objective describes the research's specific purposes. Also, the significance of the research presents the benefits of this research towards particular people. Finally, the outline of the research, which shows the explanation of each chapter, is presented.

Chapter two discusses theories related to the student's learning attitude in preparation course for the English proficiency test. Several contents are discussed in chapter two, including the definition of learning attitude and TOEFL as one of the EPT types and some previous studies related to the topic. Finally, this chapter



also discusses the correlation between students' attitudes towards English proficiency test preparation course and their TOEFL-like test scores.

Chapter three presents the methodology used in this research. There are four sections in this chapter. Those are research design which presents the approach used in this research. Secondly, the setting and participants describe where this research was conducted and the characteristics of participants to collect the information. Then, the data collection method describes how the researcher collected the data. Finally, the data analysis explains the steps or procedure of the data collection.

Chapter four presents the findings and the discussions of the research. There are two findings in this research. Those findings were obtained by the researcher from the test on ELED students as participants. The first finding is the students' attitude towards the English proficiency test preparation course. The second finding is students' TOEFL-like test scores as the representative of the EPT achievement. Then the third finding is the correlation between students' attitudes towards English proficiency test preparation courses and their TOEFL like-test scores.

Chapter five contains the conclusion and recommendation. The conclusion discusses the results of the study. The researcher concludes the results from chapter four. In addition, the recommendation presents some suggestions for students of ELED, teachers, institutions, and future researchers that hopefully make a better study in the future.